

The investigation, and why it matters

Snapshot of September 9, 2026 · live version at onlyactivism.com/emergencies/

The United States has been under at least one declared national emergency, continuously, since November 14, 1979 — **17,101 days** as of this snapshot. Six-month reviews performed by Congress since 1976: **zero**.

Where this came from

This investigation started inside a conspiracy theory. An 825-page sovereign-citizen manual — secret trusts, gold-fringed flags, a personal exit from the law available for a fee — turned out to contain exactly one fully verifiable claim: Senate Report 93-549, which opens,

"Since March 9, 1933, the United States has been in a state of declared national emergency."

That sentence is real. The Senate wrote it in 1973, found four emergencies running concurrently — one of them forty years old — and counted some 470 statutes handing the president extraordinary power whenever the switch is flipped.

So we pulled the thread and checked everything against the primary record: the statutes, the Federal Register, the court files. The invented claims collapsed on contact (they get their own autopsy in [The Tracer](#)). What survived is this file.

The machine

A declared national emergency is a legal switch. Flipping it unlocks roughly 137 statutory powers — military construction money, asset freezes, communications authorities, reserve call-ups — most available on the president's signature alone, with no requirement that the emergency be an emergency.

Congress saw the problem in the 1970s and built a brake: the National Emergencies Act of 1976 terminated the standing emergencies and required every new one to be declared specifically, renewed annually, reviewed by Congress every six months, and terminable by both chambers without the president's signature. Then the brake failed in both directions. In 1983 the

Supreme Court voided that termination mechanism, so ending an emergency over a president's objection now takes a veto-proof supermajority. And the six-month reviews — the entire point of the act — have been held zero times in fifty years. Renewal takes a one-page notice. The oldest emergency on the books has been renewed that way by eight consecutive presidents.

Why it matters

For decades most of this was boring sanctions plumbing — asset freezes on foreign regimes, renewed by ritual. The boring uses normalized the tool for the ambitious ones. In 2019, a declaration rerouted military construction funds into a border wall Congress had explicitly refused to pay for; Congress voted to stop it, and the veto held. In 2025, emergency powers set the tariff on nearly every import in the country — emergency law, visible on your receipts — until the Supreme Court struck the program down 6–3 in February 2026, the biggest emergency-powers ruling since the steel-seizure case of 1952. Within four days the same tariffs were back under different statutes. Two centuries of this ratchet are drawn on one line in [the Timeline](#).

The arsenal not yet used is still on the books: a 1942 law that lets a president take control of communications facilities by proclamation, an asset-freezing power that already reaches American citizens, and roughly 56 pre-drafted secret emergency orders no Congress has ever been allowed to read.

None of it is hidden. Every emergency is declared, renewed, and published in the Federal Register, on schedule, every year. The review the law requires just never happens — so it happens at onlyactivism.com/emergencies/: every declared emergency on the books, live from the federal record, with a running counter on each. The deck the country is being played with.

Sources: Senate Report 93–549 (1973) · National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. §1601 et seq. · Federal Register API (renewal notices) · Brennan Center emergency-powers tracker · Youngstown Sheet & Tube v. Sawyer (1952) · Learning Resources, Inc. v. Trump (2026). Civic education, not legal advice. The Standing Emergency is a Jackal File — onlyactivism.com.