

## The Fortnightly Rant

### When Do Clothes Make the Man?

The so-called United States of America\* seems to have entered a new phase of being. Let us call it a state of quantum politics.

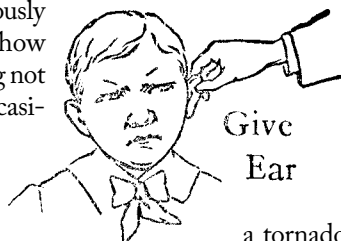
Quantum physics, we are told, is the study of how matter and energy behave at the most fundamental level. Quantum politics is the study of how power behaves in an unprecedented environment where traditional legal and moral restraints have been removed, and a significant portion of the public has seceded from reality.

Tuesday night provided a fine specimen of this new regime in operation. The person recently re-installed at the head of the Executive branch—despite two prior impeachments, a slew of felony convictions, and widespread agreement among those who don't drink the cult's Kool-Aid that he is the last person on Earth who should have the job—told the assembled members of Congress that “the days of rule by unelected bureaucrats are over.”

To its credit, his audience did burst out laughing. Back in their districts, though, their constituents probably didn't think the joke was all that funny. There, government workers are being fired left and right—but not at random. Elon Musk, the unelected bureaucrat whom the president was conveniently ignoring, is firing them according to some bloodless algorithm, while his many government contracts are raking in two million dollars a day.

It seems fair to ask how the hell we got here. Some say it is thanks to the Hand of God, which spared Trump from the assassin's bullet. We have a different story.

Our predicament, we believe, is the result of an escalating series of billionaire-friendly rulings on campaign finance law, issued by a meticulously-constructed Supreme Court assembled according to plans drawn up by a shadowy cabal of businessmen half a century ago. They allowed Musk to legally place a \$100 million bet on a candidate who had previously managed to somehow go bankrupt running not one, but a series of casinos. When Musk won the jackpot last November, his net worth was around \$260 billion. He staked 1/2600th of his fortune on a man who cheats at golf, is now \$83 billion richer, and gets to fire whomever he pleases.



Is this what our sainted, slaveholding Founding Fathers truly had in mind? We doubt it. Could this be quantum politics at work? We believe so.

Let us test our thesis with a little experiment, by way of an age-old question: do clothes make the man?

A little over a decade ago, then-president Obama appeared at a press conference while neatly dressed in a tan suit. This, according to politicians and pundits on the right, was in inexcusable affront to the nation's dignity.

When Musk showed up in the Oval Office three weeks ago, though, wearing an “Occupy Mars” t-shirt under a peacoat, that same crew of critics voiced no objections. While the president sat mute, Musk stood and explained how the government works now.†

As they say, life comes at you fast. The planetary alignments seem to have shifted over the next couple of weeks. By the end of February, personal attire had regained the level of critical importance it had during the reign of King Louis XIV.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine, perhaps distracted by the demands of fighting off Russia, had the gall to wear his usual attire to the Oval Office: quasi-military olive drab sweater and pants. Brian Glenn, Chief White House Correspondent of Real America's Voice, and therefore an awesomely important personage in his own right—belligerently asked Zelenskyy, “Why don't you wear a suit? ... Do you own a suit?”

Trump then threw him out of the White House—not Glenn, which might have been appropriate, but Zelenskyy.

In response to Trump's inexplicable trade war, the Dow plunged 650 points on Tuesday. That evening the president said, with all the grace of a man stepping on a rake, “I look at the Democrats in front of me, and I realize there is absolutely nothing I can say to make them happy.” He was wrong, of course. As Jimmy Kimmell noted: “You could quit.”

Sadly, even that unlikely event probably wouldn't do the trick. Between Musk's DOGE and Trump's trade war, he has turned a tornado loose in our metaphorical trailer park. After de-funding FEMA first, of course.

† That must have been “Bring Your Child to Work Day,” because the head of DOGE had his four-year son XÆ A-Xii in tow. By the time the event was over, the Resolute desk had acquired a layer of mucus from XÆ A-Xii's nasal passages. The notoriously germophobic president has since ordered that the 150-year old desk be “lightly refinished.” None of this seemed to bother the right wing's pearl-clutchers, but if we had the time we'd FOIA the GSA and find out what that little breach of decorum cost the taxpayer.

\* The name alone is a problem. At least, it is if you're aiming for truth and accuracy—which, we must admit, in the context of today's news media, is the equivalent of having a white people problem. “Oooh, look who's getting all precious and fastidious. Is it The United States *is*? Or is it The United States *are*?” Be easy, critics, or we'll just give it the name it deserves: “The Nutball Circus.”



### The DOGE Charade

by Phil Mattera

Donald Trump and Elon Musk keep claiming that their scorched-earth approach to re-making the federal government is made necessary by the prevalence of fraud and waste. Musk's DOGE attack-squad tabulates its progress on a Wall of Receipts that currently purports to have saved Uncle Sam \$65 billion.

That number appears to have been plucked out of thin air. The savings for the 2,300 individual contracts listed on the site add up to only \$9.6 billion, and even that amount is shaky. For example, the single biggest savings, \$1.9 billion, is attached to a Treasury Department contract that is reported to have ended during the Biden Administration.

DOGE gives no details of any fraud it may have found in the contracts. That is not surprising, since it is impossible to have done a careful examination of that many contracts in such a short amount of time.

Large numbers of the contracts are linked to agencies the Trump Administration is in the process of dismantling. USAID accounts for 246 contracts with total purported savings of \$4.2 billion. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has 404 listings with savings of \$109 million. The Education Department, reported to be headed for the chopping block, has 119 contracts with supposed savings of \$659 million.

It seems clear DOGE targeted those contracts because of the agency involved, not any evidence of misconduct. Among the remaining 769 contracts, there are many that seem to be targeted for ideological reasons. They include numerous awards whose descriptions refer to now-taboo areas such as DEI or environmental justice.

There are more than 100 listings for subscriptions, especially for expensive services such as Politico, Bloomberg Law, and Lexis Nexis. Those may not always be worth the cost, but there is nothing corrupt about the need for an agency to have good access to information.

Then there are listings for contracts that have not gone into effect. The second biggest saving amount, \$318 million, is attached to an Office of Personnel Management pre-award. How can there be fraud when there is no contractor yet?

DOGE's list also contains numerous entries with obvious errors. These include instances in which there are two links pointing to different contract awards, making it unclear which one is meant to be included. For example, there is a \$149 million savings connected both to a contractor called Advanced Automation Technologies Inc. (for three assistants) and to Airgas USA for refrigerated liquid gases.

By pointing to DOGE's sloppy work, I do not mean to deny the existence of contract fraud. The problem is that Musk's people, whether through ignorance or design, are looking in the wrong places. They

seem to be ignoring the types of large contractors that have repeatedly been found to have cheated federal agencies.

The classic examples are the big weapons producers. As of now, DOGE lists only \$8 million in savings from Defense Department contracts—and those are mainly from DEI awards and subscriptions. The same is true for the Department of Health and Human Services, even though healthcare is a major source of contractor fraud.

What gets forgotten in the claims about fraud coming from Trump and Musk is that the federal government already had a robust system for fighting contractor misconduct. Audits were done by agency inspectors general—who have now been fired by Trump—and prosecutions were launched by the Justice Department using the False Claims Act. Over the past decade, the DOJ has collected about \$30 billion in fines and settlements.

That is serious fraud fighting. What we see in DOGE is instead the illusion of an attack on corruption that serves as a smokescreen for the Trump Administration's scheme to dismantle large portions of the federal government. It remains to be seen how long they can keep up the charade.

Philip Mattera writes the Dirt Diggers Digest. Republished by inequality.org, this piece is published here under a Creative Commons 3.0 License.

## BETTER OLD NEWS THAN NEW LIES

**Society News and Personal Notes**  
Police Officer Richard D. Smart, who has been confined to the house for a number of months with a broken jaw caused by a blow from St. George, the tramp, whom he was about to arrest, reported for duty at the police station, Monday, and

met with a warm welcome from his comrades.

**Portsmouth's Small Share**  
The naval appropriation bill as agreed upon by the house naval committee, appropriates an aggregate of about \$24,000,000, a decrease over the current fiscal year of

\$7,000,000. \$13,500 is appropriated for “new work” at this navy yard, and it [is] to be hoped that the senate will increase this so that in the conference committee where the battle

## With Dropped Enforcement, Trump Accused of Inviting a Corporate Crime Spree'

by Jessica Corbett

**U.S.** President Donald Trump "is handing out 'get out of jail free' cards to corporate lawbreakers," declared Rick Claypool, author of a Tuesday report about the administration ending probes and enforcement actions against dozens of companies.

Claypool is a research director for the watchdog Public Citizen. His report "covers 429 separate investigations and cases against 361 corporations over alleged lawbreaking—including at least 25 involving allegations of criminal misconduct."

During the first six weeks since the inauguration, the researcher found, the Trump administration halted or moved to dismiss actions against 89 corporations—or 25 percent of the companies in Public Citizen's tracker of prominent cases.

"The consequences for the public when corporations face a diminished threat of enforcement are disastrous," Claypool warned in a statement. "Meanwhile, honest businesses that are not Trump administration insiders—or that refuse to play along with the ultra-MAGA ideological agenda—may face serious disadvantages from Trump's politicized approach to enforcement."

As his report, Corporate Clemency, details, the beneficiaries of the recent dismissals are:

- All 42 corporations facing Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) cases and investigations (seven dismissals have been sought so far);

- Twenty corporations facing Department of Justice (DOJ) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) cases and investigations into possible Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations;

- Eight corporations facing DOJ Civil Rights Division cases and investigations (one dismissal, a case against Elon Musk's SpaceX, has been sought so far);

- Seven corporations facing DOJ Environment and Natural Resources Division cases and investigations;

- Seven cryptocurrency corporations facing SEC cases and investigations, five of which the Trump administration has filed to dismiss; and

- Six employers facing Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) cases for discrimination against transgender and nonbinary workers, which the Trump administration has filed to dismiss.

"Additionally, firings of National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) members and EEOC commissioners mean these regulators lack the quorum needed for finalizing enforcement decisions, including NLRB cases against 100 corporations included in the tracker," the

report explains. "There are nearly 27,000 open NLRB cases in total."

The corporations that began the Trump administration with the greatest number of probes or cases in the Public Citizen tracker are Musk's Tesla (eight) and SpaceX (four), billionaire Jeff Bezos' Amazon (seven), Big Pharma's Pfizer (five), banking giant Wells Fargo (four), and the insurance company UnitedHealthcare (four).

The report highlights that "of the 361 corporations facing federal enforcement actions, 56 have close ties with the Trump administration," 17 of which "are benefiting from the enforcement pauses that have halted investigations and cases."

The document also identifies 34 companies that collectively gave at least \$34 million toward Trump inaugural festivities.

Amazon and Pfizer each gave \$1 million, as did many others: Adobe, Apple, AT&T, Boeing, Coinbase, ExxonMobil, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, Goldman Sachs, Google, Hyundai and its affiliate, Johnson & Johnson, Kraken, Lockheed Martin, Meta, Microsoft, OpenAI, Stanley Black & Decker, Stellantis, and Toyota.

Ripple, Robinhood Markets, and Uber gave even more, while Abbott Laboratories, Bank of America, Citibank, Coca-Cola, CoreCivic, Ericsson, Hewlett Pack-

ard, and Syngenta gave less or an undisclosed amount.

Apple and OpenAI's contributions came from the companies' chief executives, Tim Cook and Sam Altman, while Uber had a corporate donation and one from CEO Dara Khosrowshahi. All three of them appear on the report's list of "Big Tech oligarchs seeking corporate clemency from the Trump administration," alongside Musk, Bezos, TikTok's Shou Zi Chew, Mark Zuckerberg of Meta—which owns Instagram and Facebook—and Sundar Pichai of Alphabet, the parent company of Google.

"President Trump talks 'tough on crime,'" the report says, "but his administration is once again betraying a preference for going soft on corporations that break the law."

Public Citizen co-president Robert Weissman similarly called out not only Trump—who was convicted of 34 felonies—but also Attorney General Pam Bondi and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel, who all "blowiate about how tough they are on crime."

"The reality is the Trump administration by its actions is inviting a corporate crime spree," Weissman said in a statement. "Not only does the wholesale abandonment of cases against alleged corporate wrongdoers let bad actors off the hook, it invites—and virtually guarantees—a

surge in consumer rip offs, endangerment of workers, poisoning of the air and water, discriminatory employment practices, and more."

Public Citizen's analysis comes amid mounting alarm over Trump's so-called Department of Government Efficiency, led by Musk, the richest person on Earth. As Common Dreams reported Monday, the Center for Biological Diversity noted in a new lawsuit that Trump's executive order establishing the government-gutting initiative requires all federal agencies to form DOGE teams.

The center's complaint stresses that "Mr. Musk and other billionaire and tech executives working with DOGE stand to benefit personally and financially from the DOGE teams' work, including by securing government contracts, slashing environmental rules that apply to their companies, and reducing the government's regulatory capacity and authority, including by targeting specific agencies, statutes, and spending decisions that affect their businesses."

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The temperature and the wind both eased up enough last Saturday to make strolling around in the square—even sitting motionless for a while—a fairly pleasant experience. Nice to see something still operating normally.



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### BETTER OLD NEWS THAN NEW LIES

from page one

will be fought out we may stand some chance of obtaining what the department asks for.

#### The Chronicle Speaks

Inasmuch as the editor of the *Evening Post* has seen fit to give a garbled and lying report of the meeting of the Board of Instruction... the *Chronicle* is obliged in defense of a member of its staff [probably *Gazette* editor W. Scott Smith] to make public certain things which occurred that evening in the board, which might better have been allowed to remain unpublished....

The assertion of the *Post* that Messrs. Gooding and Batchelder

resented the remarks of Mr. Moore is as false as is its black-hearted and black-visaged author, and the animus of the lie is fully understood. If the gentleman whom the *Post* assails were content to sink his individuality and join the gang of political cutthroats who control the vile sheet which is maintained solely to help wreck the political party to which it professes allegiance... he would be held in high honor with the character assassin and the political bumper—but he would have lost his own self-respect and the esteem of all honest men....

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The indictment of the members of the whisky trust, and also a Boston dentist for attempting to influence a grand jurymen against bringing in an indictment, has furnished the sensation of the week in Boston. The outcome of the trial is eagerly awaited by the people of the whole country.

#### Murder

Murder dire and dread was committed at the navy yard Wednesday afternoon, the 3rd inst., by a blood-thirsty yeoman, who feloniously did

assault and kill a storehouse cat by tying her up in a bag along with a weighty invoice of old metal, and consigned her to Davy Jones' via Piscataqua river.

#### Items About Portsmouth and Vicinity

*Mr. Editor:* The attention of the Board of Health should be called to the condition of the buildings on Market street, and especially to those near Market square. The smell on a clear, cold morning, arising from the condition of the faulty sewerage, is enough to cause an epidemic among the inmates of the buildings, and it is reported several cases of incipient typhoid fever has [sic] already developed among those who are obliged to spend a large portion of their time in this busy locality. Last year the aldermen tried to remedy the evil by the construction of a sewer, but it was defeated in the common council, who did not seem to be intelligent enough to comprehend the great danger to the public health by the confinement [of] sewerage in the basements of the stores in this

Better Old News

to page six

What do we choose to remember with memorial markers, buildings and community projects?



To learn more about memorials and what else we choose to remember go to [PortsmouthGenome.org](http://PortsmouthGenome.org) Join the conversation. A Portsmouth Peace Treaty Forum project.

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*A Move Toward Bipartisanship?*

# Trump Imposes Big New Tax on Red and Blue States Alike

by Eloise Goldsmith

As the Trump administration's purge of federal workers continues and tariffs imposed on key U.S. trade partners Mexico and Canada take effect Tuesday, multiple economic indicators are warning of potential pain ahead.

On Monday, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta released an estimate for GDP performance in the first quarter of 2025, which showed an economic contraction of 2.8 percent. The "GDPNow" estimate is a model-based projection that is not an official forecast from the Atlanta Fed, but it does paint a different economic picture from just a few weeks ago, when the same model-based projection estimated growth of almost 3 percent in early February.

"Basically unprecedented for a new administration to inherit a strong economy and immediately tank it as both businesses and consumers internalize its agenda," wrote Bharat Ramamurti, a former deputy director at the National Economic Council, in response to the prediction from the Atlanta Fed.

Stocks also tumbled Monday

after Trump announced that 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico would go into effect the next day. Trump reiterated that the U.S. would impose an additional 10 percent tariff on China, on top of 10 percent tariffs that were already in effect.

Meanwhile there are signs that consumer confidence is declining. The research group, the Conference Board, released its Consumer Confidence Index for February on Tuesday, which showed the largest monthly decline in consumer confidence since August 2021. "Respondents to the board's survey expressed concern over inflation with a significant increase in mentions of trade and tariffs, the board said," according to The Associated Press. The retail giant Target said Tuesday that consumer confidence is waning, according to CNN.

In a video discussing the Atlanta Fed's "GDPNow" estimate, journalist Krystal Ball reminded listeners that billionaire Elon Musk, the man Trump has deputized to help oversee cuts to the federal spending and bureaucracy, said that the work of his Department of Government



Efficiency would cause pain. Musk in October 2024 said that then yet-to-be-created body's work would "necessarily involve some temporary hardship," according to Vox.

The Trump administration has so far cut tens of thousands of workers; but even if Trump successfully carried out his proposed mass firings of probationary workers (which a judge recently said were likely illegal), possibly impacting 200,000 people, that "on its own, is not recessionary," according to economist Ernie Tedeschi, director of economics at the Yale University Budget Lab, who was interviewed by CNBC.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics February employment situation report will be released on Friday, and economist Dean Baker, who works for the left-leaning Center for Economic and Policy Research, wrote Tuesday that the numbers "are not likely to pick up much of the effect of the DOGE cuts." That's partly because the data will not capture the time period when many of the cuts went into effect, according to Baker.

The impact of tariffs, however, is more certain. China, Mexico, and Canada account for over 40 percent of U.S. imports, and key goods imported from the three countries include crude petroleum, cars, com-

puters, telephones, and car parts and accessories, according to the *The New York Times*.

Tariffs are essentially a tax on imported goods that economists say are largely passed on to consumers.

According to analysis released in early February, the Peterson Institute for International Economics found that the tariffs that were previously announced but went into effect on Tuesday constitute the "the largest tax increase in at least a generation."

Taking into account the 25 percent tariffs on goods from Canada (aside from the lower rate for Canadian energy) and Mexico, and the 10 percent increase in tariffs on imports from China, "the direct cost of these actions to the typical, or median, U.S. household would be a tax increase of more than \$1,200 a year."

After the Trump administration announced the tariffs on Mexico and China, which the White House said were being implemented to pressure the three countries into halting the flow of fentanyl and immigrants, Trump agreed in February to delay their imposition on Canada and Mexico for a month after those countries announced concessions.

The left-leaning economist Paul Krugman called the tariffs on Mexico and Canada, two countries with whom Trump once helped negoti-

ate a free trade deal, "a profoundly self-destructive move."

"It will impose huge, possibly devastating costs on U.S. manufacturing, while significantly raising the cost of living—without any visible justification," he wrote.

### An Unconstitutional Rampage

Trump and Musk are on an unconstitutional rampage, aiming for virtually every corner of the federal government. These two right-wing billionaires are targeting nurses, scientists, teachers, daycare providers, judges, veterans, air traffic controllers, and nuclear safety inspectors. No one is safe. The food stamps program, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are next.

It's an unprecedented disaster and a five-alarm fire, but there will be a reckoning. The people did not vote for this. The American people do not want this dystopian hellscape that hides behind claims of "efficiency." Still, in reality, it is all a giveaway to corporate interests and the libertarian dreams of far-right oligarchs like Musk.

Eloise Goldsmith is a staff writer for *Common Dreams*. This work is licensed under *Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)*. Feel free to republish and share widely.



Recruitment and hiring were already on hold at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Now Defense Secretary Hegseth has sent civilian workers an email headed, "What Did You Do Last Week?" We're a little unsure how limiting the workforce and assigning nonsensical busywork is going to help keep our attack submarine fleet safe and effective, but what do we know?

**Beware of Cruise Ships**  
— a Bar Harbor reader

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**Murph's Fortnightly Quote**  
*"The opposition party is the media. All we have to do is flood the zone. Every day we hit them with three things."*  
 — Steve Bannon (2019, PBS' Frontline)

"Capital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombie maker; but the living flesh it converts into dead labor is ours, and the zombies it makes are us."  
 — Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*  
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**Flood the DOGE Zone**

Dear Editor:

Patience wearing thin and horror growing, we dissidents out here should snail-mail postcards to Musk at DOGE, telling him five things we did last week. Address: Eisenhower Executive Office Building, 1650 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20504.

My five: 1) Feb. 17th Presidents' Day protest in Concord, N.H. (against Trump and Musk's attack on our democracy). 2) Critical-of-him postcards sent to Trump and Chief-of-Staff Susie Wiles. 3) Feeding my five hens and collecting their eggs, cleaning their room before trip to Palm Beach (condo there). 4) Taking canned goods and a warm winter jacket to the homeless in Tilton, N.H., several men being military vets. 5) Buying and reading (paper copy) my *New York Times* every day and watching Colbert's "The Late Show" every night.

Lynn Rudmin Chong  
Sanbornton, N.H.

Lynn:

Your suggestion reminds us of a famous scene in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," but—as is so characteristic of our times—in reverse. Or upside down, or inside out, or backwards. Director Frank Capra depicted good guy Jimmy Stuart being deluged with baskets full of letters and telegrams from his home state demanding his expulsion from the Senate. The letters are the product of an astroturf smear campaign being orchestrated by corrupt politicians and amplified by crooked newspapers and radio stations. The film, of course, has a Hollywood ending: a corrupt Senator makes a dramatic confession; Jimmy Stuart is exonerated, and gets the girl, to boot.

The thought of jamming DOGE's gears with postcards is appealing. We can't see any reason not to try. But there is no way this approach could be sufficient.

The Editor

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**Two Can Play That Game**

Hi, Editor,

A few days ago, there was a video clip of Trump talking to a smallish group of (maybe) governors. (I wasn't listening carefully, at first.) He gets

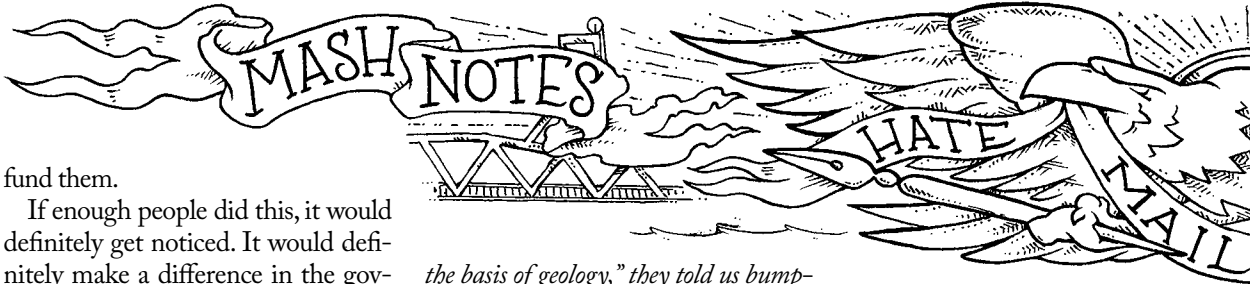
to being prideful about his ban of transgendered students in girls' sports. Mentions that not everyone is cooperating yet—for instance, Maine. He says something nasty about that—and the governor of Maine, part of his audience, pipes up with something about Maine "following the federal law." To which Trump replies, "We are the federal law." (More famously spoken as, "L'État, c'est moi".)

Anyway, the two of them have a little tiff. He tells lies. He tells her that the people of Maine are with him on this and that her future in politics is bleak. Then—here's the important part—he tells her that, unless she violates her state constitution and existing federal law, unless she complies with his ban, he will cut off *all* federal funds that go to Maine. Education, health-care, police support—everything. And, he warns her that this wouldn't make her very popular.

Withholding of funds is one of Trump's favorite tools. In his beginning days, it took the form of not paying contractors for the work they did on his casinos and hotels. Some of them, unable to hold out and/or bear the legal expenses, settled for Trump's lowball offers. Others just wound up getting stiffed when the "successful businessman" declared another bankruptcy. In more modern times, withholding of funds was used to attempt to pressure Ukraine into opening up an investigation of Biden. And, even more recently, his manipulation of the legal system and its opportunities for delays has kept him from paying most (if not all?) of the recent judgements against him.

Anyway, the important part was: If you don't do what I want, I'm not sending you any money.

It occurred to me that we, the people, can use this principle to mount a protest against the Kingship of Trump. We can refuse to pay our taxes. File your tax return (as required by law). But, if you owe anything, put it in an escrow account and, instead of a check, enclose a letter. It can be brief. Something in your own words, explaining why, if the regime will not obey the laws of the land, you will no longer



fund them.

If enough people did this, it would definitely get noticed. It would definitely make a difference in the government's bank account. *I.e.*, it would \*register\* as a protest with some teeth.

And, in terms of ever paying for your misdeed, Trump has helped you out. The DOGE boys are firing a big bunch of IRS agents. The staff that's left will be swamped by all the normal tax returns. They won't have time to deal with the conscientious objectors. And, when Trump gets his little hands into fine tuning more IRS dismissals, I'd guess he'll diminish the investigative squad. Chances are good that you'll never hear from the IRS at all.

Anyway, it's an idea. And now, at tax time, is when it could be effectively put into action.

Paul Fischler  
Rochester, N.H.

Paul:

You and Lynn [see above] seem to be thinking along the same lines. Again, while not, in itself, likely to reverse the course of this administration, this is certainly not a bad idea. Taken together, perhaps they might begin to have a synergistic effect.

This pairing reminds us of an instance in which an energized populace halted a federal juggernaut. In January of 1986, the Department of Energy announced the Crystalline Repository Project: 26 areas east of the Mississippi would be studied and compared; the lucky winner would get a high-level nuke dump. One candidate was the Cardigan Pluton, a mass of granite underneath the area where Sullivan, Cheshire, Merrimack, and Hillsborough counties converge.

To the apparent surprise of DOE officials, contractors from Battelle, and other, less identifiable figures pushing the project, local residents were not enthusiastic to see their property values annihilated, just to give the owners of commercial nuclear power plants a handy place to throw their radioactive trash.

"This decision will be made solely on

the basis of geology," they told us bumpkins, (the editor then living more or less at Ground Zero).

Local opinion, we were told, would not be a criterion in the multi-year selection process. The people pushed back anyway, in whatever manner they could. Elected officials from all the towns formed a Task Force which raised polite, technical objections—mostly based on groundwater, permeability, and such. Ordinary townspeople protested in a variety of ways, some polite, some less so. Most memorably, at one unforgettable public hearing in Henniker, N.H., a slight, gray-haired woman said, loudly and emphatically, with a distinctive New Hampshire accent, "You betta watch it. I keep a shotgun by my doah."

Six months after the multi-million dollar project was announced, it was quietly cancelled. You never know what you can stop unless you try.

The Editor

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**Eggs-Zactly**

Dear Editor,

One of the main reasons people voted for trump [sic, passim] was the price of groceries, specifically, eggs. Despite inflation being tamed by President Biden, eggs were still a bit higher last November than before the covid pandemic, which killed over 300,000 needlessly during trump's first presidency. A slim majority voted Republican, for cheaper eggs.

How's that working for us? Ummm, not so good. Eggs are now twice the price they were when Democrats lost the election. Some blame bird influenza; some blame inflation. Trump's pick for Health and Human Services, RFK Jr., is unlikely to control the bird flu since he is anti-vax. If bird flu jumps into the human population, thousands more people will die. You can thank Republican Senators who confirmed RFK's nomination, along with the

other incompetent Cabinet Secretaries, whose only qualification is to follow trump down to oblivion.

Republicans' policies bring cheaper eggs? You've been fooled again.

Bruce Joffe  
Piedmont, Calif.  
Bruce:

You left out another cause of high egg prices: corporate price-gouging.

The Editor

====

**RFK Jr. Is Gambling With Our Lives**

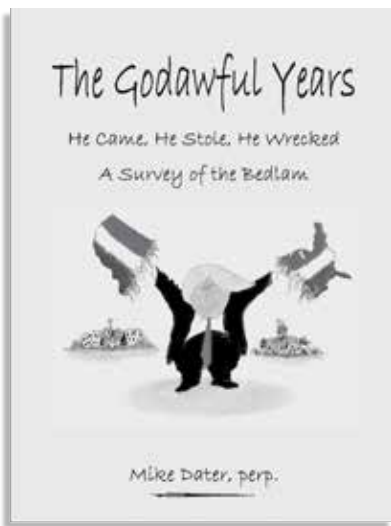
Dear Editor:

Last week the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cancelled its scheduled March 13th meeting of the Influenza Advisory Board, when the next influenza season vaccine components would be established. The FDA is under the control of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), headed by Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. The decision to cancel this meeting raises very serious concerns regarding the timely availability of a safe and effective influenza vaccine for the 2025-26 influenza season. In normal times, this decision is made in March in order to give vaccine manufacturers the needed time to produce and distribute sufficient amounts of vaccine before the onset of the influenza season.

If a safe and effective influenza vaccine is not available in sufficient quantities, or not at all, prior to the onset of the influenza season, the consequences will be catastrophic in terms of public health, the economy, public safety, military readiness, medical costs and social disruption. Each year about 47 percent of Americans receive an influenza vaccine. For people over age 65 it is about 51 percent. In the U.S., from 2010-2020, the average number of deaths due to influenza was approximately 36,000, according to the CDC.

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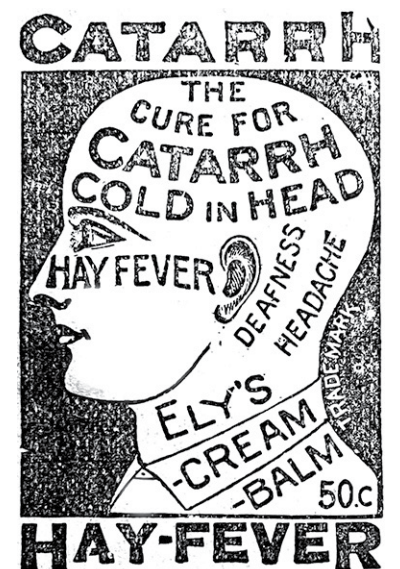
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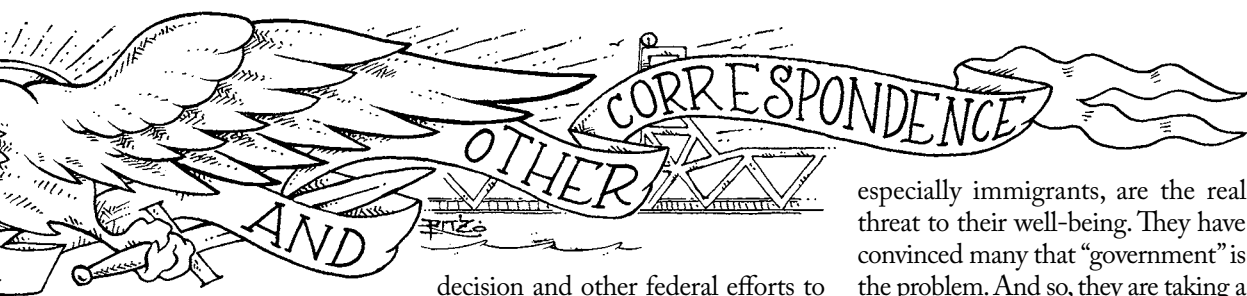
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The number of deaths depends on the virus strain and vaccine rates.

The mortality due to influenza among people aged 65 and older is very concerning. In the U.S., 90 percent of all flu-related deaths are in people aged 65 and older. That demographic accounts for between 50 to 70 percent of all flu-related hospitalizations.

The unavailability of an influenza vaccine will not only impact the health of the population, it will impact every aspect of society. If people are unable to work due to illness, or to care for sick family members, this will impact our economy. Excess need for medical care, including hospitalizations, will greatly increase health care costs for everyone. A large influenza case load can disrupt and overwhelm already stressed medical capabilities. If police, fire, emergency services, health care workers, and the military are not immunized, and experience high levels of influenza, our public safety, health care, and defense can be severely impacted. As a former Air Force public health officer, I was responsible for the annual influenza vaccine program on my base. It was seen as a mission critical program, to insure that our population was protected, in order to avoid a disruption in our capabilities due to an influenza outbreak. For the same reason, this is why most health care facilities require influenza vaccination of their employees.

Dr. Tina Tan, MD, the President of the Infectious Disease Society of America, put it best. She stated; "Cancelling a critically important FDA meeting that is vital to the development of effective flu vaccines for the next flu season is irresponsible, ignores science, and shows a lack of concern for the protection of the public from this potentially severe disease. This

decision and other federal efforts to undermine well-established science about vaccine safety puts everyone at risk, especially when we are currently experiencing the worst U.S. flu season in more than a decade. Cancelling this meeting means vaccine makers may not have the vital information and time they need to produce and distribute targeted vaccines before the next flu season. If the FDA meeting is not immediately rescheduled, many lives that could be saved by vaccination will be lost."

The most basic function of government is to protect the health and safety of its people. As Secretary of DHHS, Mr. Kennedy has the duty and obligation to fulfill that mandate. Unfortunately, it appears that he is putting his own ideology ahead of the health of the American people.

Rich DiPentima, RN, MPH  
Portsmouth, N.H.

*Rich:*  
*What the heck—a little flu, a little measles, a little bird flu—maybe all these viruses will cancel each other out. We've made it this far, right? Humans are pretty tough. As we understand it, people can even survive brain worms and still go on to serve as top government officials. Of course, it helps if you toughen up a bit by living on a roadkill diet.*

The Editor

=====  
**Money Is Destroying Democracy**

To the Editor,  
The top one percent of Americans have taken \$50 trillion from the bottom 90 percent since 1975 (Rand Corp, 2020). This vast transfer of money upward is the result of an economic system increasingly skewed against the working person.

Even more astonishing, people earning \$1,000 an hour have convinced people earning \$30-\$70 an hour that people earning \$10 an hour,

especially immigrants, are the real threat to their well-being. They have convinced many that "government" is the problem. And so, they are taking a chainsaw to needed government positions to "save money." Positions that keep the national parks open; help people with their taxes; keep planes flying; promote medical research, public health, clean water, highway safety; support agricultural research....

And what are they doing with this "saved" money? The Republican Party is putting the finishing touches on a \$4.5 Trillion permanent tax cut for the wealthy!

The election of Donald Trump, with his cabinet of billionaires, could well be the final nail in the coffin of any power the working class or middle class has. It is time for Republican as well as Democratic voters to fight back!

Let your voice be heard, call or write your congressman, speak out at political events, organize.

Michael Frandzel  
Portsmouth, N.H.

*Michael:*  
*Back in the olden days, when half of the population lived on the farm, most everyone had access to a pitchfork. These days, not so much. Amazon sells them for about \$30, but buying a pitchfork from Jeff Bezos would kind of defeat the purpose. Besides, if one were to show up in D.C. or Concord with such an implement, the result might not be optimal.*

*You know what this country needs? A good YouTube video on how to make pitchforks out of papier-mâché.*

*We'll never forgive those damn Nazis for tainting torches in Charlottesville. If ever there was a time for that classic old combo....*

The Editor

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**Look in the Mirror, Musk!**

To the Editor:  
Elon Musk claimed his job was to eliminate waste and fraud. He and a bunch of 19- to 26-year-olds have ordered mass firings in departments

they know nothing about. If someone points out that those fired were really needed, such as people taking care of our nuclear weapons, they say "oops," then try to cancel their actions. They cut off money for foreign aid which the Secretary of State had to restore. This has happened in many departments. This is incompetence.

There is also fraud, such as repeatedly calling an \$8 million savings \$8 billion, and claiming to have saved \$55 billion while the *Wall Street Journal* says the savings is \$2.6 billion.

If the Trump administration really wants to get rid of waste and fraud it should begin with firing Elon Musk and his team of incompetents and frauds.

Walter Hamilton  
Portsmouth, N.H.

*Walter:*  
*Not only is Musk's campaign farcical and incompetent, the premise on which it's based is entirely bogus. The reason the government is short of money is because Republicans decided long ago that our poor, deserving rich have suffered enough, and must never be asked to pay taxes at all.*

*The Social Security tax is capped at \$176,100. Eliminate that cap and the system is sound and solvent long into the future. Reverse the Reagan, Bush, and Trump tax cuts, and the deficit would disappear. But nooooo....*

The Editor

=====  
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**End N.H. Vehicle Inspections**

To the Editor,  
Imagine driving home to Derry after a long day, your 2009 Honda CRV running smoothly, oil undercoated, brakes checked by your own hands. Yet you're glancing in the rearview mirror, heart racing, fearing a cop will pull you over. Life is busy and you happen to be a few days late to renew your inspection sticker. As a 26-year-old lifelong Granite Stater, I feel this dread yearly. Why? A redundant tax disguised as a "safety" sticker, despite my meticulous care, haunts me, threatening fines and stress.

I want a New Hampshire where we're trusted to maintain our vehicles without overreach. No more \$50 fees

to inspection stations, no more forced repairs for trivial flaws that don't crash cars. Brian Chase, a N.H. State Police vet with 35 years of experience, confirms: only two percent of crashes stem from component failure, and N.H.'s strict inspections don't change that. Only 11 states mandate annual vehicle inspections. We'd save millions annually, easing the burden on young Granite Staters like me and our elderly fixed income neighbors.

The path forward is clear: support House Bill 649 to scrap this outdated program.

Join me and let's act! Call and email your State Reps today and ask that they vote in support of HB 649.

Derek Proulx  
Derry, N.H.

*Derek:*  
*Congratulations! Your letter has jammed our editorial gearbox.*

*We could argue in favor of stickers because the roads are hazardous enough without having to worry about one of those two-percent vehicles coming across the median at us on I-95 in Greenland.*

*Or, we could argue against stickers because we can remember only too well driving a serviceable rust bucket we could not afford to replace.*

*So, we'll just throw up our editorial hands and embrace the ambiguity.*

The Editor

=====  
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**MAGA's Simplistic Mentality**

To the Editor  
Here is what I have figured out about the MAGA mentality.

I want to take as my starting point the "slaughter of the innocents" in the federal government—the mass firings, layoffs, probationary terminations, demands to justify their existence and document their workloads, etc. What a crazy way to run a government, isn't it? If businesses ran their workforces like this, they would never be able to find and hire another employee. Word would get out. And maybe that is exactly the message here. While MAGA is in charge, you need not apply to the federal government. Go find work

*Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.*

*to page six*

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from page five

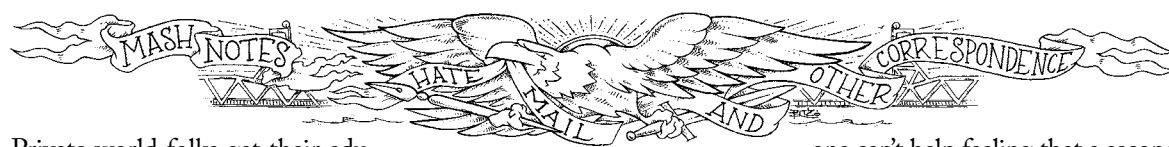
somewhere else.

According to the very simplistic MAGA way of thinking, the federal government is an evil institution except for the defense department. Not even the postal service can be trusted. The federal government is conceived in ignorance, raised in misery, and given a lifetime existence by people who don't know anything about business and life.

In the first place, government is best conducted on the state and local levels if it is needed at all. What is really needed on those levels are roads and energy development, agriculture and country music, harvest festivals and the 4th of July, and maybe a few non-profits. What is not really needed there, but is a bonus in America, is public education and public health care. Corporations and the church are ready and willing to handle people's education, health care, and welfare needs, with maybe a little support on the margins from local government.

Behind the corporate and religious worlds, as a backup, is the real and very capable God-ordained shadow government system—the system of aristocracy, or private government by the wealthy. This system of government is headed by a God-anointed king who loves and believes in the private system of everything. That is why the wealthy must be elected to public offices at all levels, so they can do the bidding of the king and make sure public welfare does not happen.

Private folks do not need any government supervision and especially not any regulation of their money.



Private world folks get their education at church (and they are very well informed there) and at the private institutions and agencies set up by the aristocracy for the benefit of their offspring.

When the rich see an area that needs some support, they will graciously step in with the needed philanthropy. Even wealthy Hollywood stars, athletes, and music moguls have already gotten the hang of the way of "nobility." It has long been called "noblesse oblige," or the obligation of the wealthy to fix everything. That system has finally been put in place in America with our newly entitled class of centi-millionaires and billionaires. It just needs to be used.

The federal government is currently besotted with all kinds of unnecessary services. What people need to do, rather than rely on the federal government for all their needs, is to get out of bed in the morning and go to work. On the weekend, they need to get out of bed and go to church. The private world of industry, commerce, and banking, together with the correct denomination of Jesus' church, will solve all problems. People need to grow up and take care of themselves, so the government doesn't have to do it.

The common working folk need to understand that it is not really that important for them to go to public school, or to get public health, or to rely on social services when their families fail. The private sector in America takes care of all needs

and wants, which for the working man and woman should be very minimal. They need to work, marry, stay together in marriage, produce children, go to church, and rely on salvation in the next life rather than comfort and salvation in this life.

The rich are entitled to comfort, but the working people are not. Their job is to do what they are told. That is why MAGA has absolutely no concern about dropping domestic programs like vaccinations, student loan forgiveness, and FEMA, and international aid programs like USAID. The only aid program folks need for their daily lives is belief in Jesus Christ and Donald Trump. The only aid program folks around the world need from America is the "lethality" of American armed forces. Those two great programs will keep the world safe and sound.

Kimball Shinkoskey  
Woods Cross, Utah  
*Kimball*  
*Uh, yup.*  
*The Editor*

#### A Second Iron Curtain

Sir,

Winston Churchill, in 1946, famously remarked that "from the Baltic to the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the continent" thereby separating the Stalinist east from the, albeit imperfect, western democracies.

With the events of the last two months and the possible realignment of international positions

one can't help feeling that a second iron curtain could begin descending along the eastern seaboard of the United States.

David Severn  
Portsmouth, N.H.  
*David:*

*Perhaps we could stave off this dire future by constructing a huuuuge iron cage around the main MAGA miscreants.*

*The Editor*

#### Putin Could Have Done No Better

To the Editor:  
For nearly a century, the United States has sided with democracies around the world. Recently, we watched the president and vice president of the United States switch sides on an ally, Ukraine, in the middle of a war. They adopted Russia's talking points, even claiming that Ukraine started the war. If Putin wished to destroy NATO, separate the U.S. from its allies, and oust the U.S. from its position as leader of the free world, he could do no better.

This development marks the end of the United States as the leader of the free world, a place we have held since WW II. It is in line with recent decisions of the administration to end USAID, to cut off all aid to Ukraine, including aid to keep its power grid operational, to levy tariffs on imports from our allies, and to fire those JAG officers who advise as to international and military law.

The result is that our allies will no longer trust us, and our enemies have learned they can manipulate us.

## BETTER OLD NEWS THAN NEW LIES

from page two

section. When the hot season comes look out for sickness and contagion from this district.

Oliver Goldschmidt run [sic] the locomotive of the forenoon train from Portsmouth to-day in place of

Engineer Jack McCarthy. — *Dover Republican*

This attempt to make Oliver Goldsmith into a Dutchman is resented by his friends in Portsmouth.

#### Whipple House Burned

At about 11:20 o'clock Tuesday forenoon, a neighbor rushed into the

kitchen of the Whipple house and informed Mrs. Getchell that smoke was issuing from one of the upper story windows and that the building must be on fire. . . . a message for aid was sent to this city by telephone and an alarm was rung out . . . in a very few minutes Kearsarge steamer No. 3, drawn by four horses and driven by John Sam. Wendell, Jr., was on its way to Kittery. In just 18 minutes Mr. Wendell drove up in front of the burning building and in less time than it takes to tell it, old Kearsarge was making the shingles fly from the now blazing roof and showing the bystanders what an effective stream of water would do in rapidly extinguishing a conflagration. . . . the navy yard engines undoubtedly stayed the progress of the fire to a very large extent, but taking

into consideration the fact that the fire had steadily gained up to the arrival of our steamer, and that in ten minutes after she reached the spot the flames were practically extinguished, it was potent to all that one good steamer like the Kearsarge was worth half a dozen of the ones upon which the government relies for the protection of its vast property at the navy yard. . . .

The origin of the fire was undoubtedly incendiary and was the work of Herbert Goodsoe of Kittery, who has been boarding with Mrs. Getchell for a few days past, and is in a demented state. He acknowledged setting the fire and says that a plot to kill him was in progress and that he determined to frustrate it by burning the building. . . . He was placed in the care of Officer Jackson and

an inquiry into his mental condition will doubtless lead to his being sent to a lunatic asylum. . . .

#### The Missing Marine

Private George Watts, U.S.M.C., stationed at the barracks at the navy yard, has been missing since Thursday evening last, and fears are entertained that he has fallen into the river. Watts was on liberty last Thursday and visited this city, starting out to walk round to the navy yard in the evening, and was seen to go through the toll-gate at Portsmouth bridge by a police officer who knew him. Since that time he has not been seen and there is little doubt that he is dead, his enlistment being up in June and the government owing him quite a large sum of money. A

to next page

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## The Federal Government is Too Small

by Algernon Austin and Jordan Billings

When Donald Trump was born, the federal government workforce made up 4.5 percent of all nonfarm workers (see chart at right). Today, the federal workforce makes up only 1.5 percent. This is a massive two-thirds reduction from Trump's birth year. Contrary to the claims of Trump, Elon Musk and others, the real problem with the federal government is that it is too small to properly secure the health, safety, and overall well-being of the people of the United States. Cutting it further will make a bad situation worse.

The tragic crash of an American Airlines jet into a U.S. Army helicopter on January 29 brought the issue and the danger of the understaffing of the federal government to the forefront. According to the *Washington Post*, two air traffic controllers were doing the work of four at the time of the incident. The *New York Times* reports that nearly all of the nation's air traffic control centers are understaffed. There are air traffic control facilities in the New York City area—some of the busiest air spaces in the country—that have nearly 40 percent of their positions unfilled. Nick Daniels, the president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, stated that two-fifths of the union's members are working six days a week, 10 hours a day and suffering from stress and fatigue. If Congress doesn't fix this problem, we shouldn't be surprised if there are more disasters.

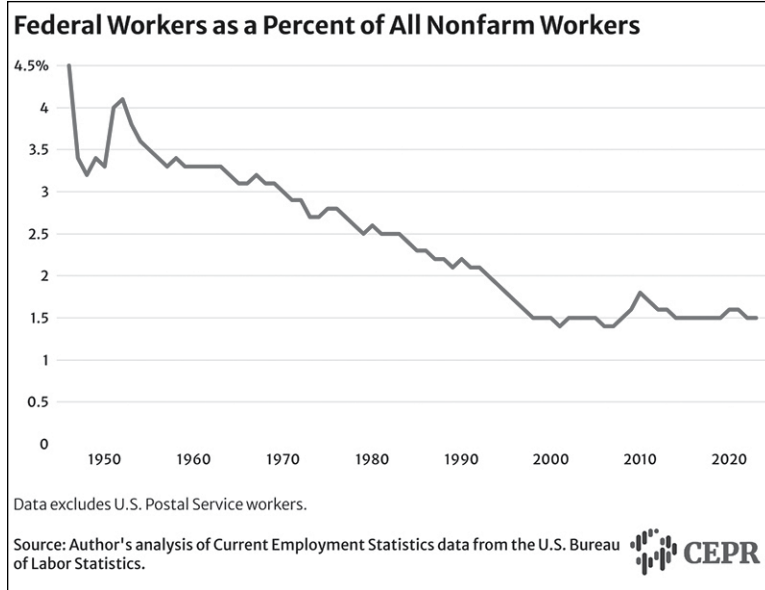
Veterans Health Administration facilities are also suffering from severe staffing shortages. For example, across fiscal year 2024, 86 percent of facilities reported medical officer shortages, and 82 percent reported

nursing shortages. These shortages mean that veterans may not receive care in a timely fashion or may receive suboptimal care – which can occur when, for example, nurses are forced to work in units where they lack the needed specialized knowledge, experience, and skills. Congress can support veterans by providing adequate resources.

Congress should also do more to prevent bank failures. The lack of Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) examiners meant that the condition of Signature Bank and Silicon Valley Bank worsened without oversight until both of the banks failed in 2023. The FDIC continues to face a staffing challenge. There are too few people in the FDIC examiner pipeline, and too few with sufficient knowledge and experience to effectively monitor the modern complexities of banking.

One reason why our immigration system is such a mess is because Congress has not provided the resources needed to adequately staff immigration courts. In 2019, there was a backlog of over a million immigration cases, and the backlog tends to grow each year. Congress has greatly increased the funding of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, but it allows the immigration court system to be underfunded and understaffed. Congress needs to rectify this situation.

Each year, the United States loses many tens of billions of dollars in tax revenue, disproportionately from the wealthiest individuals and corporations, because of understaffing at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This revenue could be used to address all of the problems identified above: hiring more air traffic controllers, hiring more doctors and



nurses to see to the health of veterans, employing more FDIC bank examiners, employing more immigration judges, or addressing any number of other problems.

Thanks in part to modernization funding provided by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the IRS has finally been able to grow its workforce. This helped to address the strong decline in staffing at the agency from 1992 to 2017. Although there are still fewer IRS staff today than in the 1990s, Congress has unwisely cut the IRA funding in half. The IRS faces a high rate of attrition from its aging workforce, with taxpayer services (i.e., tax examiners, clerks, and customer service staff) facing rates as high as 36 percent a year. Hiring and retention issues pose a great threat to the IRS's ability to effectively secure tax revenue. Without adequate staffing, rich tax cheats will escape from detection and average taxpayers will suffer from poor service and errors.

The federal government is not adequately staffed to fully and effectively address the needs of the American people. The examples of

the understaffing of the federal government discussed here are not the full story. There are other federal offices in similar situations. Congress should conduct a full investigation of understaffing before considering any cuts to the federal workforce. Several of the major cabinet-level agencies have had significant cuts in staff. Other measures show that Congress has continued to place more demands on the federal workforce without a commensurate increase in staffing. Some may argue that the shift of federal government work to private contractors (who can be more expensive) means that there is no understaffing. But the examples above belie that claim. The contractor workforce is either not in all of the critical areas needed or their numbers are insufficient to address the tasks. Either way, the federal government is too small.

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## It's Time for a Democratic Democratic Party

by Jim Hightower

Once again, Sen. Bernie Sanders is showing that he's a leader who actually leads.

While top Democratic Party lawmakers are hunkered down in their Washington bunker, immobilized by the Trump-Musk oligarchic coup on America's democracy, the feisty "little-d" democrat from Vermont is out in grassroots America, rallying workaday people with his National Tour to Fight Oligarchy. His effort has even caused the lethargic Democratic establishment to speak out. Against Bernie!

The party's clueless cadre of insider consultants mocked Sen. Sanders' for focusing on Trump's clique of profiteering oligarchs: "Americans don't understand the word oligarchy," they clucked.

Excuse me, smart ones, but once again, you're wrong. The oligarchy has become quite well-known to us commoners, who've suffered from their healthcare outrages, voter suppression, anti-union greed, rampant price gouging, etc. To the shock of elites in both parties, Sanders has even taken his "Fight Oligarchy" campaign into red congressional districts, drawing thousands of mad-as-hell in such Republican states as Iowa and Nebraska.

In a symbolic rejection of Bernie's on-your-side populist rebellion, Hakeem Jeffries—the Democratic leader in the U.S. House—rushed out to Silicon Valley to hug the billionaire oligarchs of high-tech! Far from confronting the rise of monopoly power, Jeffries assured the Tech Bros that the "Party of the People" is there to serve them.

Meanwhile, Democratic congressional leaders held an internal "gripe-fest" last week. Not griping about Trump's authoritarian assault—but about their own grassroots constituents inundating them with calls and emails demanding that they grow spines and start fighting the rising oligarchy.

Sen. Sanders is showing the way for the Democratic Party to become... well, democratic! Connect with him at [berniesanders.com](http://berniesanders.com)

=====  
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from previous page

thorough search for him was made in this city, and the snow drifts in Rice's hollow on the road to Kittery Foreside and along the tracks....

### Pretty Rough on Dover Society

One of Dover's leading society young men was seen carrying home a cuspidore under each arm after the fire last night. — Dover Republican, 5th inst.

*New Hampshire Gazette*  
March 10, 1892

### A Decided Compliment

An agent of a Phonograph company was sent here the other day to get Messrs. C.W. Gray and Horace P. Montgomery to sing into one of the instruments so that their rich and harmonious voices may be heard all over the country and by generations

yet unborn.

### History of Portsmouth Navy Yard

Senator Chandler has introduced a resolution to have printed 500 copies of Rear Admiral Preble's History of the Portsmouth Navy Yard.

A well known Great Bay fisherman, who balanced his ledger a few days ago, found himself in debt \$1.25 for his winter's work. The cause was the many nets which have driven the smelts from their regular grounds. We understand that a petition will be circulated for signatures, praying the legislature to repeal the present law and enact one which will stop the netting and seining in Great Bay and its tributaries the whole year.

A man named George Montgomery, who was before the police court at Dover on Tuesday, for being

drunk and raising a row in a house in that city the previous evening, explained to the court that he had just arrived from Portsmouth, and that the reason a club was found in his pocket was that he had to carry it in this city to defend himself from toughs. He was assessed \$8.76.

William P. Boynton, a printer of Bar Mills, Me., aged 37, while despondent, committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor.

### Kittery

It is seldom that so much courage is seen as was shown by one of our young ladies Friday night. A salve

peddler, who had more aboard than was good for him called at a house and insisted upon coming in. As the young lady and her mother were alone, they did not care for callers so the girl ordered him away, and as he did not leave enforced her order with four shots from a revolver and the peddler was then in a hurry to attend to his business elsewhere.

We understand that Mrs. Getchell has rented the Lewis house, and will be ready to begin housekeeping in the course of a week.

*New Hampshire Gazette*  
March 17, 1892

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