



The Lancaster County Democrat

August 2023

Nebraska Democratic Women's Caucus of CD1

Event Summary

By Chris McCoy

The Nebraska Democratic Women's Caucus of Congressional District 1 hosted a Saturday morning get-together on July 29th in Lincoln, Nebraska. The meeting was held at Russ's B&R Stores administrative offices and featured 2 fabulous guest speakers: Nebraska Senators Carol Blood and Jane Raybould.

The goal for the event was to recruit volunteers and candidates for 2024 and everyone involved in planning is quite pleased with the results. Twenty-three people from Cass, Dodge, Lancaster, Sarpy, and Wayne counties participated either in person or virtually. Event organizers are currently following up with participants to capitalize on the enthusiasm.

Senator Raybould provided some helpful active listening techniques to utilize when talking to voters and shared her perspective on this most recent legislative session which sparked lively discussion. Senator Blood talked about important considerations for anyone thinking about running for office. She also reflected on the challenges she has faced during past campaigns. She offered words of encouragement to those in attendance who recently ran for office but didn't win.

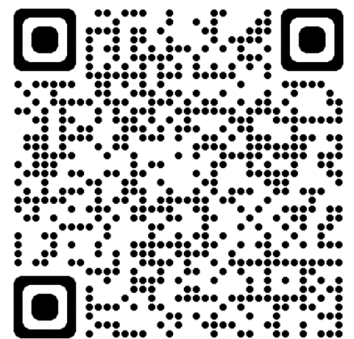
Feedback received from participants was positive with many suggesting we put on a program like this quarterly and in other counties. Stephanie Nantkes, NDWC CD1 Co-Chair, also reported that the CD3 NDWC plans to offer a similar event soon.

The event organizers would like to sincerely thank our speakers and everyone who participated in this empowering event.

Additional Information and NDWC CD1 donations link/QR code:

Event Organizers:

- Stephanie Nantkes, NDWC CD1 Co-Chair
- Deanna Pulse, NDWC CD1 Co-Chair
- Christa Yoakum, Former NDWC Chair
- Chris McCoy, CD1 Secretary and LCDP volunteer
- Mary Fischer, LCDP volunteer



<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/nebraska-democratic-women-s-caucus-1>

Understanding Possible Unions at Starbucks

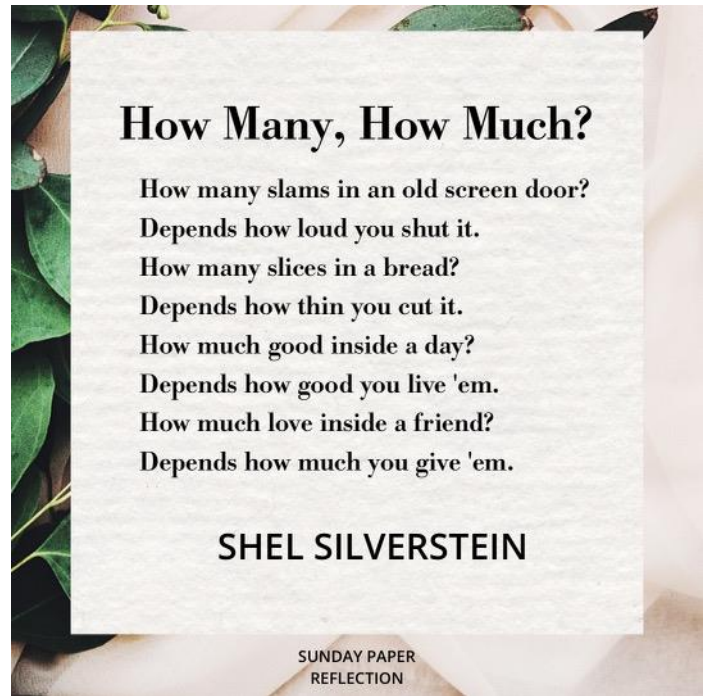
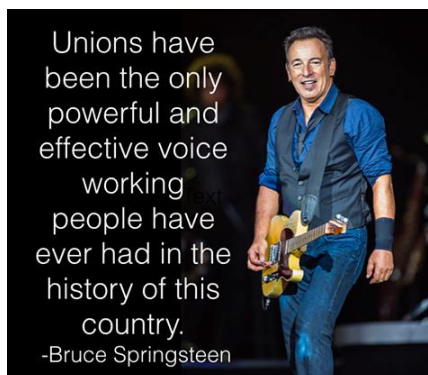
By John Markey

Unions have been in the headlines lately, from a potential strike by the Teamsters against UPS to strikes called by the Writer's Guild and then SAG-AFTRA. The most notable action, though, to the Lincoln Central Labor Union and the Nebraska State AFL/CIO is happening right here in Lincoln. The employees at a local Starbucks, 27th and Kensington, have petitioned to start a union. The only Starbucks in Nebraska so far to do so. If successful, the employees would be part of Starbucks Workers United, a national union formed to represent the employees of Starbucks stores.

The SWU has announced a National Day of Action on Monday, August 7, asking local groups friendly to labor to organize local events across the country. The NE State AFL/CIO and the LCLU wanted to wait until we heard from local employees before setting something up in Lincoln. It's short notice but we just recently heard and are setting up an event to hold signs at the Starbucks stores at 3302 O St. and 2801 Pine Lake Road from 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM. We can't do anything at the 27th and Kensington location because that is the day of their vote, and we don't want to do anything to interfere with or jeopardize it.

Anyone is free to join us at the 33rd & O and 28th & Pine Lake locations. If you enjoy products from Starbucks, please consider the Kensington location and ordering your beverage union strong to show support. We want these Starbucks employees, and all other workers in Lincoln to feel the city has their back if they decide to unionize.

The Teamsters have reached a tentative deal with UPS, likely avoiding a strike, but the deal must be ratified by the members. Meanwhile, the Writer's Guild and SAG-AFTRA are on strike over badly needed increases in compensation and changing technology. Residuals from streaming services and the use of artificial intelligence are primary drivers of the strike.



Bidenomics: It's Getting Better All the Time

By Dennis Crawford



Every time a new Democratic president takes office, the Republicans predict doom. Back in 1993, Newt Gingrich predicted that Bill Clinton's tax increase on the wealthy would bring on the worst recession since the Great Depression. Instead, Clinton's economic policies created 22 million jobs, reduced unemployment from 7% to 4% and created a record budget surplus.

The Republicans doubled down on gloomy predictions when Barack Obama was president. John Boehner predicted “Armageddon” and Ben Sasse boldly predicted that America would “cease to exist.” Once again, the Republican predictions didn’t age well. Obama reduced the unemployment rate from 10% to 4.7%, created 12 million jobs and reduced the annual deficit by 67%. The economy created jobs in what was then a record 75 consecutive months.

Trump — like all recent Republican presidents — destroyed the progress made by the previous Democratic president. Trump’s failed response to the pandemic wrecked the good economy he inherited from President Obama. When Trump was in office, the unemployment rate increased from 4.7% to 6.7%, 12 million Americans lost insurance, 8 million Americans fell into poverty and the annual deficit increased from \$585 billion to \$3.1 trillion.

Republicans like to ignore Trump’s last eleven months in office and contend that everything was awesome in February 2020. That argument fails on two points. Between 2017 to February 2020, Trump was simply coasting on Obama’s hard won economic gains. In addition, like football, Trump’s presidency didn’t end at the conclusion of the third quarter. If football coaches were judged by the score at the end of the third quarter, Scott Frost would still be the Nebraska football coach.

Once again, the Republicans predicted doom and gloom if Biden was elected president. During the 2020 campaign, Trump prognosticated that, “The policies of the left would unleash an economic disaster of epic proportions.” He claimed that a Biden win would “destroy our country . . . We will go into depression.”

I like it when Republicans predict that a Democratic president will wreck the country. That always means that better times are ahead. As Warren Buffett likes to say, “Never bet against America.”

That long term historical pattern has continued under the Biden presidency. We are currently experiencing the Biden Boom. Just last week there was more bad news for the MAGA Republicans. Thanks to Bidenomics, the economy continues to improve. Let’s roll the tape.

“Over 13 million new jobs, including 800,000 manufacturing jobs. Unemployment below 4%, the longest stretch in the last 50 years. Inflation has slowed every single month for the last 12 months.” Joe Biden.

U.S. consumer confidence jumped to a two year high as inflation continued to decline.

There are lots of economic developments breaking Biden’s way of late:

- inflation cooling
- labor market stays hot

— recession calls downgraded

— chips investments booming

The Labor Department reported that 161 million Americans were employed in April, marking the highest level ever and surpassing the previous peak of 158.8 million under Trump.

The share of people between 25 and 54 working or seeking jobs rose this year to the highest level since 2002.

Women’s employment has hit an all-time high. In June, the national share of employed women ages 25–54, considered prime working age, hit 75.3%, the highest ever recorded.

Job satisfaction is at a 36-year high.

Bidenomics has the U.S. economy at the top of the G7.

LOWEST inflation rate

STRONGEST economic recovery by GDP

RECORD job growth

DROP in long-term unemployment

SOLID IMF outlook

The U.S. economy accelerated to a 2.4% annual growth rate from April through June. Morgan Stanley credited Biden’s economic policies with driving a surge in the U.S. economy that is so significant that the bank was forced to make a “sizable upward revision” to its estimates for U.S. gross domestic product.

The stock market (SP500) is up about 35% since Biden was elected.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said that the Fed staff is no longer predicting a near-term U.S. recession. Said Powell, “Given the resilience of the economy recently, they are no longer forecasting a recession.”

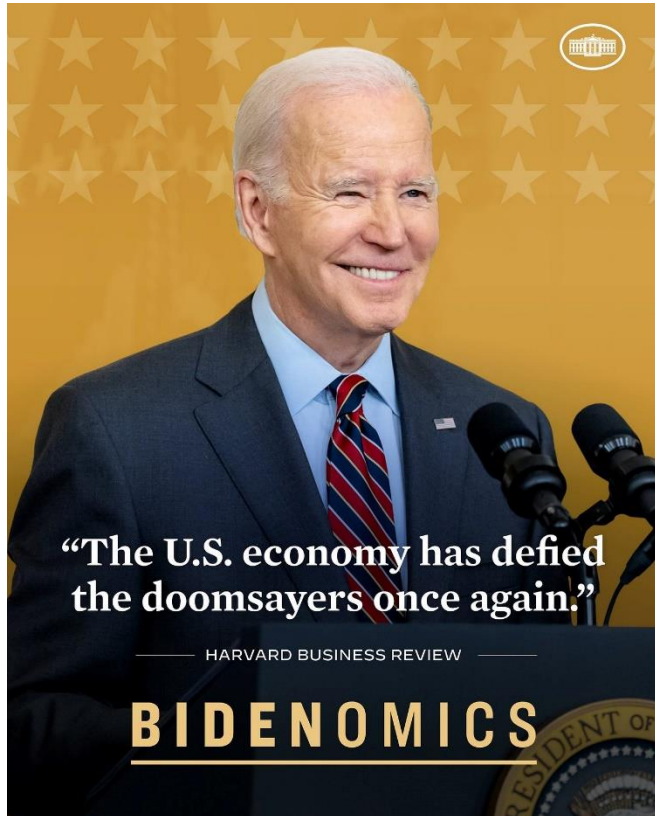
Spending on construction of manufacturing plants nearly doubled in the last two years after growing only 2 percent during the Trump Administration.

“A surge in government funding and related private investment is beginning to find its way to businesses and communities across the country, building electric vehicles, new bridges, airport upgrades and a host of other infrastructure and green energy projects that are juicing the economy — just when it needs it most,” the *Washington Post* reported.

It turns out investing in our people, and being pro-labor and manufacturing grows the economy. Bidenomics is rooted in the reality that the best way to grow the economy is from the middle out and the bottom up. Consumer spending accounts for about 70% of America’s gross domestic product. Putting more money into the pockets of America’s middle class and working families is the key to a strong economy.

Donald Trump is right about one thing. In 2004, he said, "I've been around for a long time and it just seems that the economy does better under the Democrats than the Republicans."

In contrast, the GOP's strategy is to cut taxes for the rich and corporations and hope that someday they create some jobs. It didn't happen after Trump and the GOP cut taxes in 2017 for the rich and corporations. There was no investment boom and 85% of the corporate tax cuts were spent on stock buybacks.



What makes the Biden boom so interesting is that the "liberal" media has been perpetually surprised by the strength of the economy. The press won't acknowledge the economy is strong because they believe that they would be taking sides. In reality, the press is siding with the GOP with their negative coverage of the economy.

"Has there ever been this great a gap between the media narrative and the reality? Has there ever been this much unanimity on a so-far wrong recession prediction?" Paul Krugman.

"If you are in the media you don't have to call it Bidenomics but you should at least report that economic data is exceeding expectations. And if you were one of the experts trashing our rescue packages as dangerously large, it would be nice to hear from you." Brian Schatz

"Weird to me watching reporters skipping over giving credit to Biden for the economy and going right

into "why isn't Biden getting credit for the economy?" It's because you are turning a remarkable economic turnaround into a "here's why this is bad for Democrats story." Brian Schatz

Not coincidentally, Biden's poll numbers are improving. The American people are beginning to notice that the economy is strong despite all of the doomsaying from the press and the GOP.

Here are the most recent polling results in July.

- Monmouth 47-40
- Quinnipiac 49-44
- YouGov/Yahoo 47-43
- Morning Consult 43-41
- Ipsos/Reuters 37-35
- YouGov/Economist 42-42 (Trump had a 4 point lead here in June.

Averaging these together gives Biden a 3.5 point lead over Trump. A late June NBC News poll had Biden up 4, and a new AARP poll of battleground House districts has Biden up 4, by a 47%-43% margin.

Apparently, it turns out that voters like creating jobs and lowering inflation more than getting indicted for federal offenses. Who could've imagined that?



Meanwhile, the House Republicans have shown that they simply can't govern. It's been a total clown show in the GOP House. What have they been up to?

The House Republicans have shown us pictures of Hunter Biden's penis, investigated UFOs and announced their intention to shut down the government on September 30 when the government runs out of money. "We don't fear a government shutdown," proclaimed Rep. Bob Good (R-Va.), "Why not?"

At the same time, Kevin McCarthy and Don Bacon are on board with plans to impeach President Biden even though they have admitted that they don't have any evidence. Apparently, the House Republicans are planning to impeach Biden for ruining their recession plans.

The choice in 2024 couldn't be more clear. Do you want to see pictures of Hunter Biden's penis and to impeach Joe Biden? Shutdown the government? UFO investigations? Vote Republican.

Do you want lower inflation and unemployment? Expanded health care?

Vote Democratic. The choice is clear! Vote Blue to protect this progress!

It's the MAGA Republicans or America in 2024. Choose wisely.

Law passed last year to reduce nitrates in Nebraska water 'hasn't left the ground,' sponsor says

By Paul Hammel

Reprinted with permission from *The Nebraska Examiner*

A new state program, approved in 2022 to help reduce nitrate pollution in drinking water, is struggling to get started, more than a year after it became law.

Legislative Bill 925, the Resilient Soils and Water Quality Act, provided \$1.25 million over five years to hire a non-government "facilitator" to organize small-group, educational meetings with farmers to promote conservation practices that reduce nitrate pollution in groundwater and surface water.

But so far, no facilitator has been hired, and education sessions are still being mulled. A website is in the works, however, and a five-page annual report was produced in December while an employee with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources is sorting out the best way to use the funding.

Former State Sen. Tim Gragert, who led passage of LB 925, said Friday [July 28, 2023] that overall, the program "hasn't left the ground" while nitrate problems in Nebraska's water resources persist.

"It's kind of disappointing," Gragert said.

"Nitrates in our water are just terrible in some parts of Nebraska and it's not getting any better," said the senator, who left the Legislature last year after deciding not to run for re-election.

Gragert said that his hometown of Creighton had to install a reverse-osmosis system in 1990 to lower nitrate levels to healthy levels in groundwater there.

'Blue baby syndrome'

A [2020 report from the University of Nebraska](#) said that Creighton and four other nearby

rural towns had spent nearly \$9 million — at a cost of \$2,200 person — to supply clean drinking water.

The state's 2022 annual report on groundwater quality found that nearly 30% (157 out of 550) of the state's public water systems had to test more often — quarterly — for nitrate levels to discern if they exceeded the level deemed unsafe for drinking — 10 parts per billion.

Nitrates can cause "blue baby syndrome" where babies' skin color changes and they can become irritable or lethargic. Nitrates have also been [linked to birth defects](#) and some cancers.

Gragert, who worked for the federal soil conservation service for three decades, said that because growing corn — which requires nitrogen fertilizer — is such a huge business in Nebraska, policymakers are willing to "turn their heads" to the problem.

"There's a real lack of education, even though we have some really sharp producers out there," the senator said.

Tom Riley, the director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, was out of the office Friday [July 28, 2023] and unavailable for comment.

But Kent Zimmerman, a supervisor at DNR who is dealing with the healthy soils law, said, "I wouldn't say nothing is happening."

He said the job of implementing the resilient soils/water quality law was handed "at the last minute" to DNR, which regulates surface water.

'Don't upset the apple cart' attitude

Zimmerman said that other groups have tried "learning events" like those envisioned by LB 925, but they've had mixed results and seem to draw the same people. So he's now trying to discern whether there's a better way to move forward and utilize the \$250,000 a year in funding.

"While soil health seems like a great thing, what I've discovered is there's a 'don't upset the apple cart' attitude out there," Zimmerman said.

"I don't think they thought this one through," he added.

Gragert and others involved in a task force that studied the issue for more than a year before LB 925 was passed disagree. The task force consisted of authorities on nitrates and farming practices.

The senator said the bill was intentionally drafted to require a non-government facilitator to lead the effort because many farmers don't trust government officials visiting their land.

The idea, Gragert said, was to use other farmers as mentors to promote a voluntary, grassroots effort toward a "*healthy soils*" practices — like cover

crops and better fertilizer management — that can reduce nitrate problems.

That approach, he said, is the best way to break through the reluctance of some farmers to consider practices that don't contribute to more nitrate in surface and groundwater.

Gragert said it's not true that nitrogen fertilizer is being taken away from farmers. Instead, it's about using it more efficiently.

DNR thought to be more cooperative

The facilitator, he added, was also supposed to seek grant funding so the water quality work could continue after state funding was scheduled to run out, in five years.

The DNR was chosen to help facilitate the program, Gragert said, because it was viewed as being more cooperative than another option, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Zimmerman, the DNR official, said the agency is in the final stages of hiring a company that put together a website on best farming practices to avoid nitrates in water in South Dakota.

"Rather than have one person doing everything, I think we're looking for a group approach," he said.

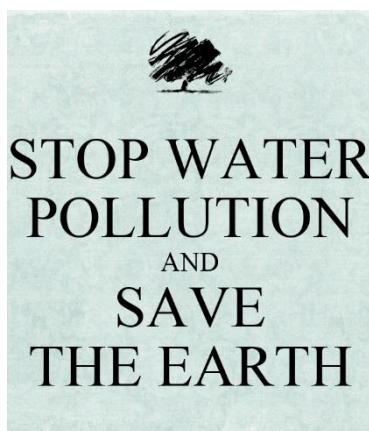
If they hire a facilitator who is not a government employee, that would probably be a couple of years off, Zimmerman said.

"Oh, man," was Gragert's response.

Right now, he said, there's a lot of momentum nationally and within corporations to address nitrate problems and getting LB 925 off and running shouldn't wait.

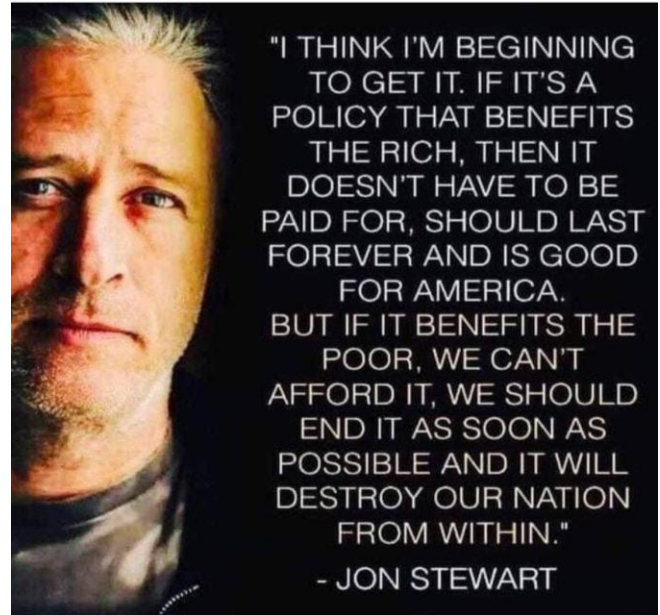
Still, Gragert acknowledged, it's a complicated problem involving farming practices, confined animal feeding operations and lawn fertilizer that will take a comprehensive approach.

"This is problem that was created over many, many years, and a solution isn't going to be immediate either," he said.



It's Not A Spending Problem. It's A Revenue Problem.

By Dennis Crawford



The D.C. Republicans believe that rich people don't have enough money and that the poor and middle class have it too easy.

A long-time Republican talking point on the budget is that we allegedly have a spending problem and don't have a revenue problem. They have it exactly backwards. It's time to fact check Republican gaslighting on spending and taxes.

The GOP is gaslighting us on spending when they claim that spending is allegedly out of control. Let's look at the facts. Federal spending was 31.2 percent of GDP in 2020. Federal spending was 25.6 percent of GDP in 2022. Federal spending will be 24 percent of GDP under Biden's budget. Spending is down significantly since Biden took office.

What is never mentioned by the mainstream press and the GOP is that in the absence of the failed Bush 43 and Trump tax cuts, we would have a balanced budget.

According to the Center for American Progress on March 27, 2023: "Tax cuts initially enacted during Republican trifectas in the past 25 years slashed taxes disproportionately for the wealthy and profitable corporations, severely reducing federal revenues. In fact, relative to earlier projections, spending is down, not up. But revenues are down significantly more. If not for the Bush tax cuts and their extensions — as well as the Trump tax cuts — revenues would be on track to keep pace with spending indefinitely...."

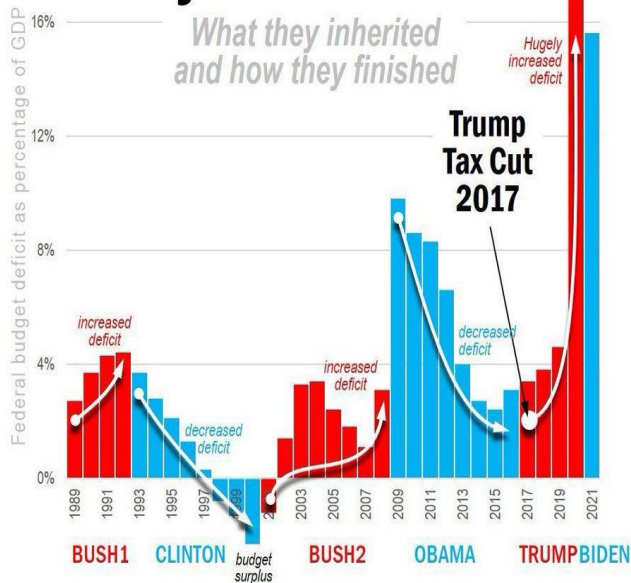
In other words, the current fiscal gap — the growing debt as a percentage of the economy — stems

from legislation that cut taxes, disproportionately for the very rich. . . . If Congress wants to decrease deficits, it should look first toward reversing tax cuts that largely benefited the wealthy, which were responsible for the United States' current fiscal outlook."

Another long-time false GOP talking point is that tax cuts pay for themselves. According to the GOP aligned Committee For A Responsible Budget in 2017, tax cuts reduce revenues. "While well-designed tax cuts may grow the economy (often not as much as tax reform), there is no case in which they could grow the economy enough to be self-financing. At best, tax cuts can finance a fraction of their costs through faster growth — and maybe not even that. . . Past tax cuts in 1981 and the early 2000s have led to widening budget deficits and lower revenue, not the reverse as some claim."

The Committee For a Responsible Federal

U.S. Federal Deficit by President



Budget has been heavily funded by Republican billionaire Pete Peterson. This organization has long supported cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and other safety net programs. They aren't leftists.

As I will discuss, by any objective measure, the Bush 43 and Trump tax cuts have failed. The expensive tax breaks for the wealthy never trickled down.

By the time Bush left office, the economy had collapsed and was hemorrhaging 800,000 jobs per month. According to Ron Brownstein of *The Atlantic*, "While Bush was in office, the median household income declined, poverty increased, childhood poverty increased even more, and the number of Americans without health insurance spiked."

Bush was the only two term president in American history to preside over a decline in middle class incomes during his two terms as president. Moreover, at the time, Bush had the worst job creation record since Herbert Hoover.

The Trump jobs record was worse. In 2020, the U.S. economy lost a net 10 million jobs. Weekly unemployment claims between March and December 2020 exceeded the worst week of the 2008–09 recession. Trump left office after nearly 50 straight weeks of the worst job losses in American history. Trump was the first president since the Great Depression to leave office with fewer jobs in the country than when he was inaugurated.

Republicans will argue that we should measure Trump's record as of February 2020. They like to pretend that the last eleven disastrous months of Trump's presidency never happened. While Trump didn't cause the pandemic, his performance made everything worse. In 2020, the U.S. had the worst economic outcome of any first world country due to Trump's incompetence.

In any event, let's now give Trump every benefit of the doubt and imagine that his presidency ended eleven months early. Trump promised that the 2017 tax cuts would: 1. Deliver a \$4,000 pay raise to the middle class; 2. Pay for themselves; 3. Kick off an investment boom; 4. Generate 6% GDP growth. 5. Generate more job growth.

None of this happened. Even before the pandemic, middle class incomes rose a paltry 1% adjusted for inflation; the deficit increased from \$585 billion to \$1 trillion; 85% of the tax cuts were spent on dividends and stock buybacks; there was no investment boom; GDP growth was no different than it was under Obama; and job growth declined by 20%. By Trump's own criteria, the 2017 tax cuts were a failure.

Despite this record of failure, the GOP wants to extend the Trump tax cuts. That would add \$3.5 trillion to the national debt. The reality is that we could substantially reduce the deficit by repealing the failed Bush and Trump tax cuts for the rich.

"The modern American right doesn't care about deficits, and never did. All that talk about debt was just an excuse for attacking Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and food stamps." Paul Krugman
The D.C. Republicans believe that rich people don't have enough money and that the poor and middle class have it too easy.

Please share this information because the mainstream media and the GOP never mention these facts.

Then he turned the corners of his mouth down into a frown, emulating the famous feline.

"Everything is terrible, according to them," he said. "We're doomed!"

A big problem for Democrats is we are too often reluctant to declare that things are getting better. In 2000, Al Gore ran away from Bill Clinton's economic record. In 2016, Hillary Clinton rarely mentioned that unemployment had declined from 10% to 4.7% under President Obama. We don't focus on our accomplishments because there's always something more to be done.

Now just imagine if you will that if under a Republican president, that we're creating more than 300,000 jobs per month with inflation going down, which is incredibly rare. If a GOP president were in office, the Republicans would be shouting about it from the rooftops. (Of course, this would never happen during a GOP Administration — the Republicans are wreckers.)

Don't take this progress for granted. In 2000 and 2016, some of us were complacent and stayed home or voted third party. The last two Republican presidents destroyed their predecessors' progress and presided over deep recessions. We can't let that happen again. The Republicans are dangerous when they are in power.

The choice in 2024 is America or the MAGA Republicans. Choose wisely. Now let's get it done!

It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.

Short-term
thinking is the
greatest enemy of
good government.

Anthony Albanese

"ACT AS IF WHAT
YOU DO MAKES A
DIFFERENCE...
IT DOES."

WILLIAM JAMES

"

"

VOLUNTEERING IS AN ACT OF
HEROISM ON A GRAND SCALE. AND
IT MATTERS PROFOUNDLY. IT DOES
MORE THAN HELP PEOPLE BEAT THE
ODDS; IT CHANGES THE ODDS.

— BILL CLINTON



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