

What a crazy year. The world was tumultuous. Iran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles at Israel, millions more illegal [aliens flooded into the United States](#), and an American election dominated the news cycle. Meanwhile, SpaceX launched its massive Starship, scientist found the cause of Lupus and possibly a way to reverse it, and the [Neuralink Corporation](#) implanted a microchip in a human brain so that a quadriplegic could control a computer mouse with his mind.

A cargo ship collided with the Francis Scott Key Bridge in the Baltimore Harbor causing it to collapse. Monica had a number of shipping containers on the vessel that were stuck on-board for months. Google built a new type of [microprocessor](#) for quantum computing; it ran a calculation in 5 minutes that would have taken a supercomputer 10 *septillion* years to solve. The war in Ukraine reached an impasse as both sides failed to take ground. In a shift that analysts are concerned will lead to a wider war the Russians and the Ukrainians are using more advanced, longer-range weapons to strike deep into each other's nations.



Nvidia, a Silicon Valley company, surpassed Microsoft and Apple to become the worlds' most valuable company. It's personally noteworthy that the founder of Nvidia earned his engineering degree at our alma mater, Oregon State University. The three firms have a market value of over \$3 trillion which makes each of them worth more than all but the eight wealthiest countries on the planet.

U.S. dock workers went on strike demanding a *70% pay increase*; some government apparatchik persuaded the union to back off until after the election for obvious political reasons. The workers then settled for a 60% raise effective immediately.



An investigation into court documents and classified records revealed that the Attorney General, Merrick Garland, authorized the use of deadly force during the FBI raid on President Trump's estate in 2022. A New York court convicted Mr. Trump on 34 felony counts brought against him. The felonies were manufactured by upgrading a single misdemeanor that had surpassed the statute of limitations and where there were no victims.

In a separate case, he was forced to appear for a mugshot.

Most Americans recognized these trials as legal persecution of a political opponent who was running against a corrupt democratic party and its despotic bureaucracy. They know that if the government can do something like that to someone as rich and powerful as Donald Trump then the average American doesn't stand a chance against the tyrannical system if a "civil servant" were to target them.

Hurricanes Helene and Milton killed hundreds on the East Coast while Biden vacationed at his beach house and Harris partied at California fundraisers. The government offered paltry checks for \$750 to victims, with strings attached. Apparently, FEMA had exhausted its funding because officials diverted \$600 million of its budget to illegal immigrants throughout the year.

The Aurora Borealis reached its peak coinciding with an 11-year cycle of magnetic storms on the Sun. Amazing pictures flooded the internet.



The U.S. economy continued to suffer from high inflation, heavy taxes, and oppressive government regulation. The IRS collected [\\$4.4 trillion in taxes](#) last year. This staggering amount is more than the GDP of every country except the United States and China. With this record-breaking revenue, if the government had simply kept its spending at FY2018 level's we'd have a surplus. In order to cover the federal deficit, ruthless, powerful, and prominent democratic-socialist politicians advocated for a "wealth tax", which is indistinguishable from the confiscation of private property.

While the terrorists in Gaza continued to hold more than 100 civilian men, women, and children hostage (including American citizen's), Israel killed most of the Hamas commanders and terminated dozens of top Hezbollah officers and their lieutenants with a sophisticated operation using exploding pagers and walkie talkies. Israeli intelligence even took out the top [Hamas leader](#) when he was staying at a safe house in Tehran.

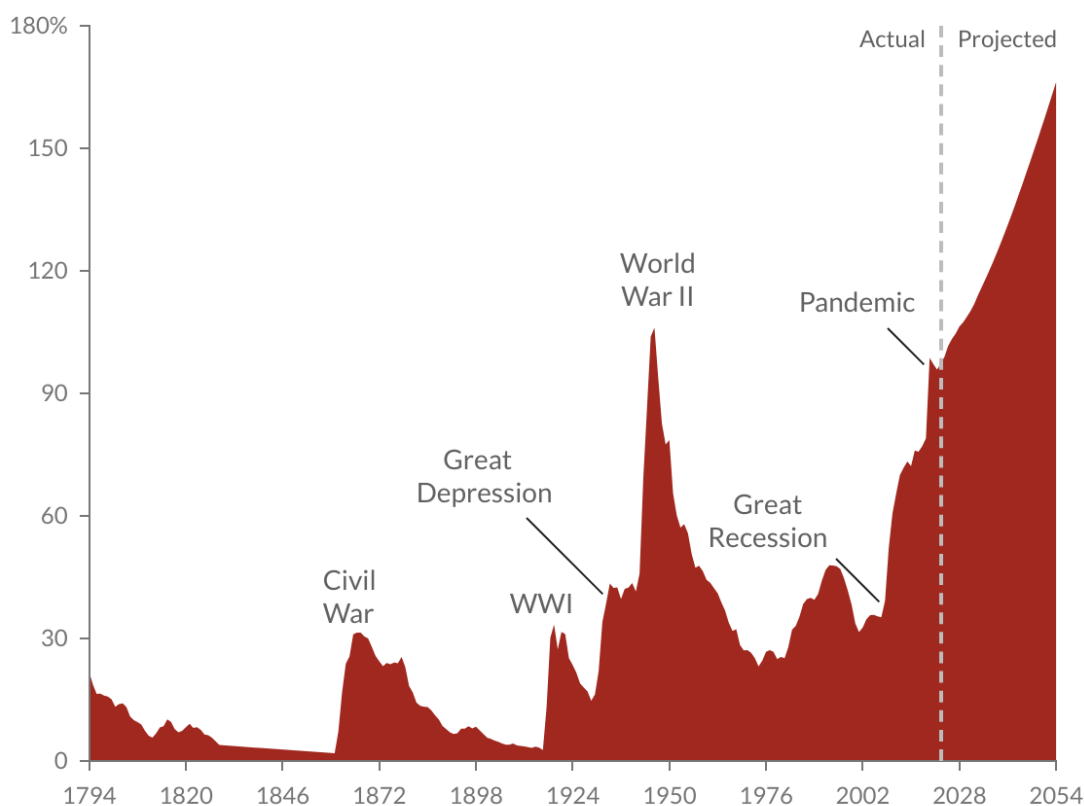
In an act of war, Iran fired over [300 rockets and drones](#) at Israel. A few months later it fired another [180 ballistic missiles](#) at the tiny U.S. ally. In both attacks Israeli forces, with the assistance of allies, shot down virtually all incoming threats. Iran then launched an attack on American forces stationed at [al-Asad](#) air base in Iraq injuring several U.S. servicemen. I was stunned when the Whitehouse formally offered its condolences to Iran after President Raisi, a.k.a. the Butcher of Tehran, was killed in a helicopter crash. The pariah nation of the Middle East is officially labeled as the number one state sponsor of terrorism in the world. Then, demonstrating complete incompetence, Biden built a \$320M pier on the Gaza shoreline to provide food & aid to Hamas. Symbolic of his foreign policy, the [pier promptly sank](#).

With Hezbollah incapacitated by Israel and while Russia was bogged down in Ukraine, the ruler of Syria lost his two most powerful allies. [Syrian rebels overthrew the Assad regime](#). Fearing for his life, the king and his family fled Damascus. Given the rebels are an Al Qaeda offshoot, I doubt that this change will benefit the region or world at large.

The U.S. national debt reached [\\$36 trillion](#) this year; in 2025 we'll spend [\\$1 trillion on interest](#) payments alone. This insane level of spending is unsustainable and will eventually lead to either destructive hyperinflation, suicidal renunciation of federal debt, or the seizure of all private assets. There are signs that a generation of American's, those ages 20-35, understand that the debt poses a threat to their financial stability. That demographic voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump who campaigned largely on reducing the size, reach, and cost of the government. After the election the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was launched with Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy heading it up. While DOGE is not a real department (only congress can create departments for the administrative branch) it has the political power and a mandate that can compel the House of Representatives to enact significant spending cuts on the federal government. When only [6% of federal employees physically report](#) to work and with a [vacancy rate in national buildings of 80%](#) the majority of federal jobs could be eliminated with no impact to most Americans.

## Federal debt is on an unsustainable path

Debt Held by the Public (% of GDP)



Source: Congressional Budget Office

Note: Reports include long-term and 10-year outlooks.



Source: <https://www.pgpf.org/our-national-debt/>

In what seemed like a scene from a Sci-Fi movie, after the SpaceX “Starship” blasted off, the company [caught it’s Falcon Heavy booster](#) with a mechanical claw 40 stories tall when it returned to the launchpad. The Starship is designed to carry 100 humans at a time to interplanetary space and will be operational in 2025. Look for the private company to send some of these massive Starship’s to Mars in 2026. The first launches will be remote controlled and most likely be loaded with pre-fabricated habitats, seeds & freeze-dried food, solar power plants, and some Cybertrucks. In all of human history this is a great time to be alive.



This is an awesome video of the Falcon Heavy booster catch:



Boeing Aerospace suffered a serious setback in June when its new space capsule carried two astronauts to the International Space Station for a one-week mission. Thrusters on the spaceship malfunctioned and the astronauts are now stranded on the ISS until a new capsule can retrieve them next year. In the meantime, for the first time since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972, NASA landed a [rover](#) on the lunar surface. Also, this year, China returned a sample to Earth from the far side of the moon.

There was a total eclipse visible over much of the U.S. in 2024. Monica & Mark travelled to Austin to visit family and friends and catch a glimpse of it. We're planning a trip to Spain in 2026 to witness another total eclipse. If you want to meet us there, please let us know.



The American election gave us whiplash:

- Donald J. Trump was convicted as a felon
- Biden dropped out of the race after he displayed clear signs of dementia during a televised debate
- Kamela bypassed the primary process and was installed as the nominee by the Democratic National Committee
- Trump was shot in the head and injured during an attempted assassination
- Robert F. Kennedy Jr. dropped out of the race to back Trump for president
- Trump was nearly assassinated a second time while on a golf course
- U.S. intelligence disclosed that Iran was plotting to assassinate President Trump

When the President-elect was [shot](#) at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania his instinct had him immediately rise up from the ground with blood on his face and pump his fist in the air yelling “fight, fight, fight”. Within minutes Elon Musk, a libertarian who voted democrat in every election of his life, endorsed Donald Trump for president. Even Mark Zuckerberg, who spent **\$450 million** of his personal fortune to defeat Trump in 2020, called Donald “a badass” and has since supported him.



In the end, Trump carried every swing state, took the electoral college 312:226, won the popular vote, seized the Senate, and held the House.

Democrats, from Harris-Walz to down ballot candidates, lost across the board because:

- Inflation is up over 20% since the Biden took the Whitehouse in 2020
- Crime is rampant in liberal cities and homelessness has spread across the nation
- There were multiple reports of illegal immigrants raping and murdering American women and children
- The government prosecuted parents, religious institutions, and companies who resisted DEI
- People were fed up with their little girls being forced to compete against men in sports and undress in a locker room in front of them
- News broke that 400,000 criminal aliens had been imported to the U.S. by Biden-Harris (including [15,000 murderers and 13,000 rapists](#))
- Americans recognized the threat to their prosperity that out-of-control federal spending and the resulting national debt is
- The executive branch was exposed for secretly [flying 300,000 illegal aliens](#) to the United States

Kamela didn't help herself by holding no press conferences and only accepting a handful of interviews with supportive media using mostly canned questions and softball interviews. More often than not she revealed herself to be unintelligent at best. She rambled on without saying anything meaningful whenever she spoke without a script. The result was that she consistently came across as inauthentic, or worse, deceptive.

Americans aren't accustomed to this level of political urgency and division. For much of our history, most voters assumed that regardless of the outcome, the ship of state would rest in relatively steady hands whether it was a democrat steering it slightly-left or a republican charting a center-right course. After the eight-year legal campaign targeting Trump, his aides, and supporters, hardly anyone believes that anymore.



In his parting act Joe gave Hunter a retroactive, blanket pardon going back 10 years. Most recognized that the pardon was granted so that Hunter couldn't be compelled to testify and expose how Joe Biden and his family [received \\$31 million from China](#) alone. The president continues to destroy his legacy by granting clemency to some rotten people including a judge who jailed troubled children in return for kickbacks; he's now considering [pre-emptive pardons](#) for Anthony Fauci and Liz Cheney both of whom likely broke the law.

In 1776, the United States rose from an outpost of 4 million people in the North American wilderness and miraculously defeated the British Empire. America went on to secure a uniquely powerful place in world history over the next 200 years. An idea of American exceptionalism took root in the U.S. and in the minds of aspirational people around the world in the late 19th-century. It is the belief that the United States is infused with an unprecedented set of cultural values, political foundations, intellect, ambition, and creativity that make it different and better than any other nation on Earth. Unencumbered individualism inspired Americans to unprecedented feats of technical achievement, economic growth, and military might. In spite of democratic socialist attempts to brand us as a racist, unfair, and morally bankrupt nation, the idea of exceptionalism lives on in the vast majority of citizens and people around the world.

Our nation has given individuals the opportunity to succeed and to be rewarded in ways that Europe and Asia, with all their history, has not. Immigrants have found upward mobility and chances to prosper in the United States based on talent and ambition rather than on family connections. In fact, about 80% of American millionaires are self-made. Our exceptionalism is why we won two world wars and changed human history in dramatic and surprising ways. American's spawned innovation that created most of the major inventions over the past two centuries, from the lightbulb and the telephone to the internet and the airplane. We put powerful computers in the hands of almost every person on Earth. And, to this day, the only human beings to walk on the moon are Americans.

As for us, our family is heartbroken over the loss of our sister Lisa Cottrell. She passed away suddenly and unexpectedly this year. For decades we've started everyday realizing that 90% of our day is good when all of our family and friends are alive and healthy. We're now lost and struggling with the anguish; we don't know how we'll recover. Monica & Mark continue to live and work in the Silicon Valley. Andrew is an engineer at Samsung and living in Sacramento. Liam graduated this year with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and started a job as an aerospace engineer.

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,  
from the Cottrell Family*

*When the people fear the government - that is tyranny. When the government fears the people - that is liberty.  
Thomas Jefferson*