

Economic and policy expectations for a Trump presidency

President-elect Trump will inherit the strongest domestic economy in 50 years. Job growth, wage growth and GDP growth are all strong, and inflation has returned to its normal plodding path. We could be at the midst of a long expansion.

It is not hard to gauge the policy choices Trump will prefer. Project 2025, of which I've written, will tell us what we need to know about economic and fiscal policy. It is a detailed roadmap and will animate much of what happens in the executive branch over the coming years. Much, but not all, of Project 2025 will require compliance in the House and Senate. That seems unlikely, at least until the next election.

Project 2025 tells us to expect a big expansion in political appointees to civil service, from 4,000 to 20,000, which appears to be possible without the support of Congress. With that, we'll see efforts to pressure states to expand universal school vouchers, reduce environmental regulation and expand energy production on federal lands.

Much of this won't come to pass, since it falls to the purview of state governments or will be tied up in courts for years. So, like these changes or not, don't expect them all in four years. This, of course, depends upon the next administration's compliance with the Constitution, a dubious proposition to be sure.

Project 2025 also contains varied proposals that would reverse benefits to veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, restrict access to abortion-related medications, abolish the department of education, and link federal classroom funding to schools that follow approved curriculum.

Almost all of Project 2025 builds a bigger, more expansive and intrusive federal government. Most of it comes from legislation to expand socially conservative ideas, using the strong arm of government.

We should expect much more of that from this administration.

The U.S. economy won't be much affected by the slow changes to these sorts of policies, and the tough political fights they entail. Nothing in Project 2025 wrestles with the real fiscal challenges — debt, taxes and entitlement spending. Nor does Trump have a plan to deal with public debt. As with his first term, we should expect public debt to grow substantially in his second.

There's also been a flurry of statements on the campaign trail that offer more immediate risk to the economy. Trump has spoken disapprovingly of an independent Federal Reserve. That would take a compliant Congress, which he won't have, but the appointment of a different board of governors and chairman could vastly reduce its independence.

Trump has promised the mass deportation of illegal immigrants. He did nothing about illegal immigration in his first term, so we might expect more of the same. Illegal immigration in the U.S. is down from its 2007 high of 12.2 million persons to somewhere between 10.5 and 11.5 million today. So, absent misleading claims, the challenge of illegal immigration is lessening over time.

The costs of deportation are huge. Bus and rail costs for voluntary deportation would run well over \$50 billion, and take well over a year. We simply don't have the buses on the U.S. to move 11 million people to, say, Mexico in a year. Moreover, the cost of mobilizing tens of thousands of national guard troops to aid in deportation would be well over a half-trillion dollars.

Deportation and mobilization would also remove millions of workers from an economy that is already starved for workers. This would spike the deficit, since illegal immigrants pay much more in taxes than they receive in services. It would also slow economic growth. So, on this issue, expect much of what Trump has shown a propensity for — bold claims and little action.

Trump has also claimed he would expand tariffs, perhaps dramatically. Here, Congress has given the president enormous latitude in setting tariffs for national security claims. Presidents from both parties have abused this power, so Trump will be able to levy virtually whatever tariff he wishes, in whomever he wishes.

The tariffs are purportedly designed to increase U.S. manufacturing employment. One key problem with that claim is that there's overwhelming evidence that tariffs reduce domestic factory employment. Indeed, Trump's 2018 tariffs pushed the Midwest — whose factories were especially susceptible to tariffs — into the brink of recession in 2019. Today, factory employment in the Midwest is well below the January 2017 levels when Trump first took office.

A 10 percent tariff on all imported goods, and 20 percent on Chinese goods, as Trump proposes, would quickly push the U.S. into recession. Prices on all manufactured goods would rise, and we would expect retaliatory tariffs to likewise reduce demand for U.S. goods and services abroad. This is a hard lesson to re-learn, but we appear a hardheaded people.

It must be said that many of the Kamala Harris economic proposals were also unhelpful to long-term economic growth. Her tariffs were more modest, but still short-sighted and counterproductive. The Democrats also lack an effective plan for debt reduction and hold ridiculously optimistic views of their place-based economic development programs.

But there is one big difference between the 2024 candidates.

The U.S. economy has dominated the world for most of the past century and continues to do so today. Over that time, we've endured a lot of very bad economic policies, but continued to thrive.

Our twin pillars of strength lie in our national reputation in two areas: First, we are a magnet for attracting and creating human capital — educated people with skills, drive and entrepreneurial talent. Second, we abide by the rule of law in the conduct of our elected officials, commerce and international affairs.

Trump's policies deeply risk the first of these, in making the U.S. an unwelcoming and risky place for foreign nationals. Trump's conduct while in and outside of office makes mockery of the rule of law. If his lawlessness continues, as we must expect, a weakened and poorly performing economy will be among the least of our concerns.

MICHAEL J. HICKS, PHD, is the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research and the George and Frances Ball distinguished professor of economics in the Miller College of Business at Ball State University. Hicks earned doctoral and master's degrees in economics from the University of Tennessee and a bachelor's degree in economics from Virginia Military Institute. He has authored two books and more than 60 scholarly works focusing on state and local public policy, including tax and expenditure policy and the impact of Walmart on local economies.



MICHAEL HICKS



Letters to the Editor

Thank you for everything you did for the election

To the Editor:
Many thanks to the candidates who took their personal time to run for office. It is pretty challenging to raise funds, make signs, train the volunteers, travel, make speeches, and persuade voters.

Many, many thanks to the county clerks, staff, and poll workers who expedited the voting process.

**Karen Griggs
Ashley**

Thankful for result of election

To the Editor:
I would like to express thanksgiving to God for a reprieve from the oppressive Biden administration. The culture war is not over, though. I encourage others to avoid complacency. The left will continue to assault common sense and common decency to further their goals.

The Trump administration will need to take strong actions to establish order. These actions will not be popular with the so-called progressive crowd.

Prepare yourself for the vitriol and misrepresentations of the left through their media skills. CNN, MSNBC, ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS, New York Times, Washington Post and Associated Press (AP) are examples of leftist media skills, in my estimation.

Reforming the entrenched bureaucracy aka the "swamp" or the "deep state" should be one of Trump's primary objectives.

Bureaucrats are appointed individuals that are not accountable to the American voter.

One of the primary strategies of the left is the "long march through the institutions". Leftists seek to occupy positions of power through gradual infiltration into the leadership of institutions.

Our political institutions have been heavily infiltrated by the left. The Obama administration and Biden administration have populated the bureaucracies with leftists over time. Some were appointed by Trump during his first administration because he naively trusted the judgment of others.

Multiple credible insiders reported that bureaucratic leadership expressed open defiance of Trump's directives during his first term. Classes were offered to inform the staff how to subvert his leadership.

It will be unpopular, but Trump needs to fire a lot of subversives within the bureaucratic leadership.

If you don't think culling subversives is necessary, I encourage you to consider that these agencies have supported continual, disingenuous lawfare against President Trump, implementation of gender ideology in public schools, promotion of abortion and LGBT policies in other countries, and persecution and prosecution of non-violent January 6 protesters, pro-life Christians and concerned, vocal parents at school board meetings.

Regarding Noble County and surrounding counties, I am encouraged to see 75% of the electorate voted for Trump.

I suspect public schools will continue to push the leftist agenda, though. Parents and concerned citizens need to remain vigilant.

The ultimate problem is the leftist worldview.

We can vote out leftist political officeholders. However, the leftist worldview is heavily embedded within the education community which includes administrators, principals, counselors, teachers and associated unions, associations, organizations and bureaucracies.

Teacher unions are particularly egregious malefactors. They are operatives for the Democrat party, contributing \$43 million to Democrat campaigns and liberal causes in 2023-2024.

It will require vigilance from school board members and parents to ensure these players do not continue to influence students toward acceptance of leftist beliefs like divisive identity politics, historical revisionism, anti-Americanism, comprehensive sex education and gender ideology.

Realize a common tactic of the left is to rename their campaigns when the public becomes wise to them. They use noble-sounding terms like diversity, equity and inclusion to hide their insidious nature.

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Lipstick on a pig doesn't transform it into a human female. Changing catchphrases doesn't transform the underlying woke concepts, either.

It is wise to avoid unhinged witch hunts, though. Indiana is conservative and many teachers reflect conservative values. I encourage school board members and education professionals to be transparent about their values and faith. Transparency facilitates trust.

I am saddened John Klaassen was not elected to the ENSC at-large school board position. John regularly attends school board meetings and has been very responsive to my comments, concerns and questions. He may not be as well-known as others, but he deserves serious voter consideration in future elections.

See my blog at christiannewsjunkie.com (no hyphens) for a more detailed version of this letter.

**Robert Sparkman
Rome City**

We are going to get what we voted for

To the Editor:

Well, we all were expecting a first with this presidential election, and we got one. The first convicted criminal elected president of the United States. And it was a fair and valid election. I'm not going to whine and complain about the election being stolen because, like the last presidential election, it wasn't. Neither will I participate in an assault on the Capitol, because there won't be one. We Democrats believe in the rule of law. I can't even complain about the Electoral College, because Trump won the popular vote as well. Trump won, fair and square. But I am not as concerned with why Harris lost as much as I am with why Trump won.

There are many now attempting to affix the blame for Harris' loss. Perhaps they did overestimate the effectiveness of the ground game, or maybe they weren't aggressive enough in various attack ads. Perhaps there were significant shortcomings in their campaign strategies. However, I don't believe the responsibilities for their loss lie entirely with them; rather, it is obvious that Kamala Harris lost the election due to the fact that at this point in history, over 50% of Americans would elect any white male rather than vote for a woman, especially a woman of color.

There have recently been two highly qualified women who have run for president, and both were defeated by the worst man possible. And speaking of being well qualified, Trump's qualifications seem to be several bankruptcies, owning golf courses, and being the host of a reality/game show.

Donald Trump is a huckster of gauche, \$399 a pair sneakers, \$60 (\$1,000 for personally hand-signed) "God Bless the U.S.A." Bibles (printed in China) that violate the separation of church and state required by the Constitution, and vastly over-priced "Swiss" watches that experts say were probably made in China as well. He is also a convicted felon and sexual abuser who was fined \$83 billion by a civil court. Both of these guilty verdicts were reached by juries of his peers. It's a great day in America for felons.

In conclusion, Donald J. Trump won the 2024 presidential election fair and square. However, the voters of America need to take a hard look at what 50% of them have done. They have elected a convicted felon whose campaign promises are to be a dictator, weaponize government agencies to go after people he doesn't like, repeal actions that protect the environment (because climate change is a hoax), deport massive numbers of Brown people which will throw the economy into chaos, and "drill, baby, drill," even though last year the United States produced more crude oil than any other country in the world any other time in the last six years (International Energy Statistics).

Are these the goals of the "Land of the Free"? Do these actions represent the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of the nation that says "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." No. These campaign promises of the president-elect are nearly opposite. With Trump as president, we may as well send the Statue of Liberty back to France or tear it down, for we will no longer be the nation that is lifting its "lamp beside the golden door."

**John Stevens
Angola**