

Economy booms, but tech layoffs still pile up

The once-thriving industry sheds workers as it tries to boost profits

BY GERRIT DE VYNCK, DANIELLE ABRIL AND CAROLINE O'DONOVAN

SAN FRANCISCO — The first time Julian Chavez got laid off, from his job as a digital ad sales rep at web.com, didn't turn him off from the tech industry. Neither did the second time, when he was laid off from ZipRecruiter. By the third time, though, Chavez had had enough.

"I really loved what I did," said the Phoenix-based Chavez in a text message. "But the layoffs got me jaded." Now he's pursuing a graduate degree in psychology.

Chavez is one of hundreds of thousands of tech workers who've been laid off in the past two years in what seems like a never-ending wave of cuts that has upended the culture of Silicon Valley and the expectations of those who work at some of America's richest and most powerful companies.

Last year, tech companies laid off more than 260,000 workers, according to layoff tracker Layoffs.fyi, cuts that executives mostly blamed on "over-hiring" during the pandemic and high interest rates making it harder to invest in new business ventures. But as those layoffs have dragged into 2024 despite stabilizing interest rates and a booming job market in other industries, the tech workforce is feeling despondent and confused.

The U.S. economy added 353,000 jobs in January, a huge boost that was around twice what economists had expected. And yet, Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Discord, Salesforce and eBay all

SEE LAYOFFS ON A10

China courts state officials as ties fray in Washington

BY LILY KUO AND CATE CADELL

When mayors from cities including Carmel, Ind., and Oxford, Miss., went to China recently, they were feted in ways big and small. They test-drove the newest electric-vehicle models, some with seats that doubled as massage chairs. They were hosted by a deputy provincial governor and treated to aged Maotai, Mao Zedong's favorite liquor, from one Chinese official's private collection.

Their counterparts in China, starved of international visitors and potential investors during four years of pandemic and border controls, were "overjoyed" to receive the American mayors, said Min Fan, executive director of U.S. Heartland China Association, a U.S. nonprofit group that organized the trip for six mayors to five cities in China late last year.

"Everywhere we went, whether it was Hong Kong or Wuhan, they hadn't had a delegation like this for a long time," she said. Even more Chinese cities wanted to host them, Fan added. "Cities were fighting to get on our itinerary, but we literally couldn't."

Chinese provincial and city

SEE CHINA ON A7

"I'm trying to get to the level where I'm passing something down that really matters, so I can be set and my kids can be set, and they don't need to push so hard."

Canethia Miller, a mother of three and participant in the Strong Families, Strong Futures pilot program



A boost toward a better future

Three mothers describe how receiving \$10,800 as part of a D.C. pilot program changed their lives

BY MICHAEL BRICE-SADDLER

In 2022, the D.C. government announced a pilot program that offered 132 new and expecting low-income mothers \$10,800 over the course of a year — no strings attached — intended to assess how unconditional cash payments could improve their families' outcomes and economic mobility.

Facilitated by the nonprofit Martha's Table, the \$1.5 million Strong Families, Strong Futures pilot was limited to families in Wards 5, 7 and 8, which contain some of the District's poorest neighborhoods. The city's program was based on similar successful cash-transfer pilots that have now been modeled in at least 100 U.S. jurisdictions and drew 1,553 applications in just three weeks, requiring a lottery system to winnow down the final group.

All 132 mothers had to choose whether they wanted 12 monthly payments of \$900 or the entire amount immediately in a lump sum, a unique feature of D.C.'s pilot. About 75 percent chose the lump sum — which was better for those also receiving government benefits, for whom monthly payments from the pilot were more likely to be flagged as additional income, potentially affecting their eligibility, said David Lloyd, the deputy chief of programs at Martha's Table.

SEE PILOT PROGRAM ON A14



PHOTOS BY KATHERINE FREY/THE WASHINGTON POST

TOP: Erika James put some of her funds toward a first birthday party for her son, Loyal, on Jan. 22, 2023, in Capitol Heights. ABOVE: Stacie Adams, right, threw a birthday party for her daughter Zoe, 4, second from right, a day earlier in Alexandria.

A Taylor Swift endorsement? It's delicate.

Democrats want some shine from the megastar, but if they try too hard, it could backfire

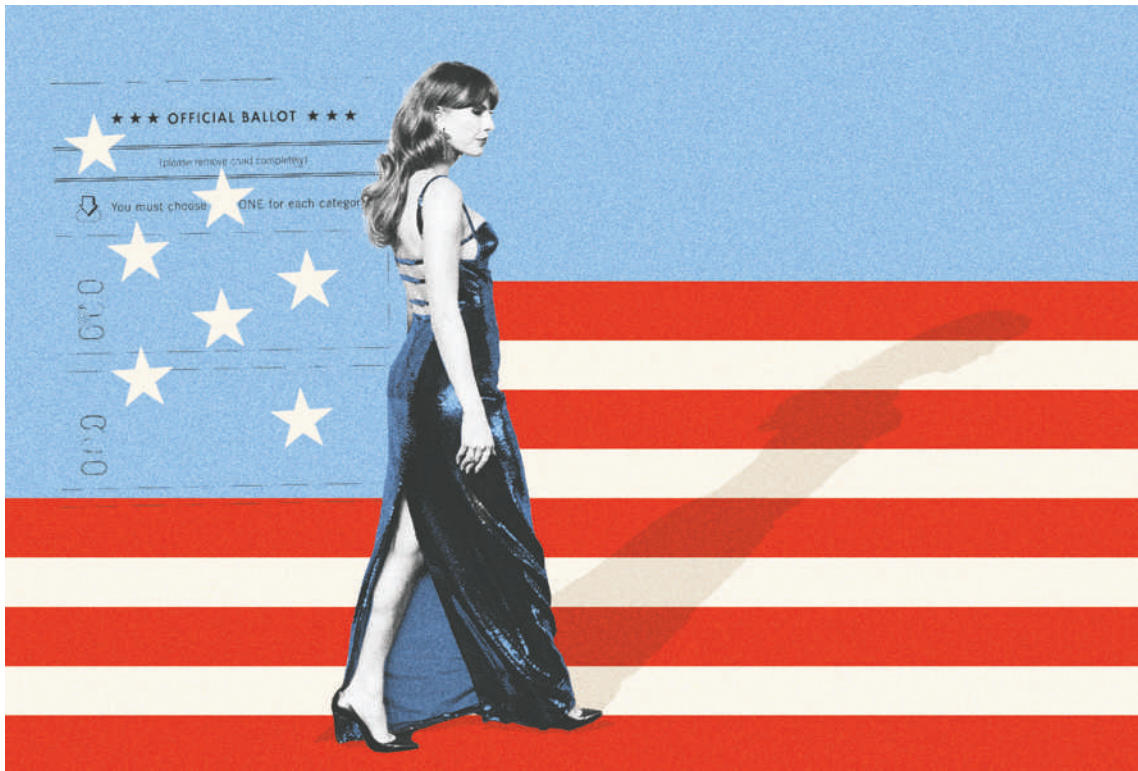


ILLUSTRATION BY MARIA ALCONADA BROOKS/THE WASHINGTON POST; MICHAEL TRAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

BY KARA VOGHT AND ASHLEY PARKER

Last Thursday, in a not-quite dive bar on the east side of Capitol Hill, five Democratic staffers crammed into a leather booth with beers and white wines to discuss the latest spasms of political drama swirling around the leader of their movement.

"I want one single person to be normal about this and treat her like a human being," one Hill staffer said of Taylor Swift.

"All the MAGA people have been super annoying this week," said another.

After nearly 90 minutes, one dared to wonder aloud if Taylor's relationship with her football-playing boyfriend, Travis Kelce, was, in fact, a publicity stunt. The others screamed.

"We've been here for an hour and you're saying this *now*?"

The women belong to the Hill Swifties, a group chat of congress-

SEE SWIFT ON A9

Senate reveals border package

BIPARTISAN BILL HAS A RISKY PATH AHEAD

Deal includes foreign aid, aims to stem crossings

BY LIZ GOODWIN AND LEIGH ANN CALDWELL

After months of talks, Senate negotiators on Sunday released a sweeping bipartisan border security deal that is aimed at discouraging migrants from crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

The \$118 billion national security legislation also includes billions of dollars in funding for Ukraine, Israel and the Indo-Pacific, but it has a politically perilous path ahead. Even before seeing its contents, lawmakers on both the right — and, to a lesser extent, the left — flanks in Congress have slammed the measure and House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) has called it "dead on arrival" in the chamber. Former president Donald Trump, who has made the border a core campaign issue, opposes the deal.

Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) announced that he would hold the first procedural vote on the legislation on Wednesday, leaving the bill's boosters little time to sell its provisions. "Senators must shut out the noise from those who want this agreement to fail for their own political agendas," he said in a statement Sunday evening.

The legislation — a top priority for President Biden — would, if passed, mark the first significant action taken by Congress on immigration in decades. It attempts to close loopholes in the asylum

SEE BORDER ON A5

NRA limps into election season amid internal strife

BY BETH REINHARD AND SILVIA FOSTER-FRAU

In 2016, the National Rifle Association endorsed a Republican presidential candidate with a spotty record of supporting gun rights — then helped catapult him to the White House with a record-setting \$31 million in campaign spending.

"Donald Trump didn't get a lot of help from major Republican institutions, but he did from the NRA," NBC political guru Chuck Todd said as Trump declared victory on election night. "This is a big night for the NRA."

It was a crowning achievement for the gun-rights lobby, capping decades of power brokering in Republican primaries and statewide races, and setting the stage for the NRA to wield outside influence during Trump's presidency.

But as the former president stages his political comeback, the NRA has tumbled from power. Internal feuds, corruption allegations and an onslaught of litigation have ravaged the group's finances and public image. Longtime chief executive Wayne LaPierre stepped down amid a civil corruption trial in New York expected to last until mid-February,

SEE NRA ON A4

IN THE NEWS

Middle East attacks After an outcry over U.S. airstrikes, the White House urged the Iraqi government to act more quickly against Iranian-backed militias. A7

Fulton County A judge must decide what comes next in a case against Donald Trump thrown into turmoil by misconduct claims. A3

THE NATION Legal bills are putting the Trump campaign in a financially precarious position, The Fix's Aaron Blake writes. A2
A historic and potentially deadly storm slammed California. A9

THE WORLD Shows on the Chinese-backed app ReelShort are part soap opera, part TikTok, all heavy-handed drama. A6
Parisians voted to triple parking fees for SUVs in the city center. A8

THE ECONOMY Apple insists its \$3,500 Vision Pro ski goggles are not virtual reality but "spatial computing." No one seems to agree on what that means, Shira Ovide writes. A11

THE REGION FAFSA delays are affecting a D.C. scholarship program. B1

Three MS-13 gang members were convicted of murder in a spate of 2019 killings in Northern Virginia. B1
The D.C. Council is set to vote on comprehensive crime legislation. B1
A man died during after he was shot during a carjacking rampage in D.C. and Maryland. B1

STYLE As Facebook turns 20, some of the social media platform's earliest users reflect on its younger days — and their own. C1
Carl Weathers, who died last week at 76, was a beloved sideman of the action-movie '80s. One film showed his chops as a headliner. C1

BUSINESS NEWS.....A11
COMICS.....C6
OPINION PAGES.....A12
OBITUARIES.....B4
TELEVISION.....C4
WORLD NEWS.....A6

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The Washington Post
Year 147, No. 53752

