



## ELECTION 2024

# Economy's boons may be liability for Biden

Latest inflation reading makes it more likely rates will stay elevated

BY ABHA BHATTARAI AND TYLER PAGER

The booming economy is exacerbating a key vulnerability for President Biden heading into the height of campaign season, as inflation and interest rates could remain higher until deep into the final weeks of the presidential election.

Fresh data last week shows inflation picked up again in March, in the latest sign that the economy is overheating. Unexpectedly strong job growth, wages and consumer spending are a plus for most Americans but bad for inflation. The higher inflation reading makes it more likely that the Federal Reserve will keep interest rates — and mortgage rates — elevated until late in the year, possibly until days after the election, eluding much political gain for Biden.

“It’s really a case of bad luck,” said Karen Dynan, a professor at Harvard University and former Treasury Department chief economist. “The Biden administration has made some big strides but it’s up against one of the most disruptive economies in decades. Rate cuts would be a welcome development for a lot of people, but the prospects for cuts have really changed given what’s happening with inflation.”

Gasoline prices, in particular, have always played an outsize role in how Americans feel about the economy. The average price of a gallon of gas has been creeping

SEE INFLATION ON A12

**The Sunday Take:** Stubborn costs undercut Biden’s success story. **A2**



Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) announced a breakthrough bipartisan deal last weekend.

# Advocate for online privacy has slowed work for years

BY CRISTIANO LIMA-STRONG

When Maria Cantwell first ran for the U.S. Senate, she championed what was then an unconventional political cause: internet privacy.

“What you do on your computer should be your business, and no one else’s,” Cantwell, the dot-com millionaire and former U.S. House member, said in a 2000 campaign video that showed her huddled around a clunky white desktop monitor with a group of schoolchildren. The internet, she said, should remain “a tool for learning,” not for governments and private companies to “invade your privacy.”

Twenty-four years later, Cantwell (D-Wash.) has finally unveiled a bipartisan agreement aimed at achieving that vision. But the path ahead remains murky. As the Senate Commerce Committee

SEE CANTWELL ON A16

# Iran launches aerial attack at Israel

## ALL-OUT EFFORT TO SHOOT DOWN SWARM

Strikes threaten to further inflame a volatile Mideast

BY STEVE HENDRIX, DAN LAMOTHE AND ALEX HORTON

JERUSALEM — Iran launched a massive attack of more than 200 missiles and drones toward Israel late Saturday, a stunning assault that put the Israeli military on high alert and threatened to unleash more violence in an already turbulent region.

Interceptions by Israel’s sophisticated air and missile defense systems began overnight, causing loud booms over Jerusalem and air raid sirens to sound across the

country. The military warned citizens to brace for an attack of undetermined scale, as combat aircraft filled the sky over much of Israel. Officials closed schools and banned large gatherings as some airports in the region halted operations.

American military forces also shot down some Iranian attack drones, said U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive and fluid operation. It did not appear that any U.S. facilities or personnel in the region were targeted by the Iranian onslaught, President



AMIR COHEN/REUTERS

An antimissile system seen from Ashkelon, Israel, on Sunday after Iran launched drones and missiles toward Israel.

Biden said in a statement condemning the “unprecedented” violence.

A spokesman for the Israel Defense Forces, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, speaking in a short televised briefing about 3 a.m. Sunday in Israel, said that the attack was ongoing and that the IDF had intercepted the “vast majority” of weapons launched at the Jewish state, though at least one person — a young girl — was reported injured.

SEE ATTACKS ON A11

**Aid package:** Evangelicals press House GOP on stalled funds. **A9**

**U.S. arms:** Progressives search for ways to shut pipeline to Israel. **A10**

**No entry:** Germany bars doctor who worked in Gaza, ends talk. **A21**



PHOTOS BY JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

# ‘WHERE DO WE PUT THE BODIES?’

Migration’s human toll overwhelms a border county in Texas

BY ARELIS R. HERNÁNDEZ, MARINA DIAS AND DANIELE VOLPE IN EAGLE PASS, TEX.

The undertaker lighted a cigarette and held it between his latex-gloved fingers as he stood over the bloated body bag lying in the bed of his battered pickup truck.

The woman had been fished out of the Rio Grande minutes earlier. Now, her body lay stiff as mortician Jesus “Chuy” Gonzalez drove away from the muddy boat ramp and toward an overcrowded freezer, passing mobile homes and a casino along the way.

Maverick County purchased the trailer during the pandemic to handle covid-19 victims. It was designed to hold 20 bodies but on this day held 28 — the putrefied remains testifying to two dozen shattered dreams of reaching the United States. Only half had names.

Gonzalez didn’t flinch as he swung the freezer’s doors open. He has been around so much death that the stench of decomposition no longer bothers him. A large silver Virgen de Guadalupe dangled from his chest as he maneuvered the woman into a wooden barrack.

Nearby lay the body of a man whose arms were frozen as if he were blocking a blow. His jeans and shoes were still covered in river mud and his face marbled with sickly discoloration. Several members of a Venezuelan family who drowned together were also



**FROM TOP:** A corpse in Eagle Pass, part of Maverick County, Tex. National Guard members load into boats to patrol the Rio Grande. A cross marks the grave of a deceased undocumented immigrant.

scattered inside the trailer. They had been there since mid-November.

Record-level migration has brought record-breaking death to Maverick County, a border community that is ground zero in the feud between Texas and the Biden administration over migration. Whereas in a typical month years ago, officials here might have recovered one or two bodies from the river, more recently they have handled that amount in a single day. While border crossings draw the most attention in the national debate about immigration, the rising number of deaths in the Rio Grande has gone largely unnoticed.

First responders have run out of body bags and burial plots. Their rescue boats and recovery trucks are covered in dents and scratches, scars from navigating through the brush to retrieve floating bodies. County officials say they don’t have the training or supplies to collect DNA samples of each unidentified migrant as required by state law, meaning bodies are sometimes left in fridges for months or even buried with scant attempt to identify them.

At one point in 2022 as the body count rose, officials buried migrants in a potter’s field, their graves marked with crosses made out of PVC pipes. Over the past

SEE BORDER ON A14

# Europe’s far right seizes moment amid farmers’ revolt

Uprising is powering a backlash and upending environmental efforts

BY EMILY RAUHALA AND VIRGILE DEMOUSTIER

MAEN ROCH, FRANCE — The farmers standing with their arms crossed outside a sheep barn in rural Brittany were absolutely furious, completely *en colère*. For a visiting centrist politician, that made for an earful. For Europe’s far right, it has provided an opening.

In recent months, angry agricultural workers have rolled their tractors into Paris and other cities across Europe, blocking roads, spraying manure and setting things on fire. Farmers are mad about high costs and low prices, about the prospect of free trade deals, about the constraints of climate regulations, about what they say is a failure of political elites to understand what it means to grow wheat or raise sheep.

Their revolt is reshaping European policy — officials who previously promised to put the environment first and lead the world in a green transition have scrambled to walk back some of their own rules.

And in a year of key elections in both Europe and the United States, the farmer uprising may foretell a sharp right shift.

The European far right is skillfully seizing the moment, promising an agricultural overhaul and a chance to stick it to the city slickers. By inserting themselves into the farm fight, far-right figures have the potential to broaden their appeal. They can also continue to rail against elites and make the case for nationalism, as symbolized by salt-of-the-earth farmers.

French far-right icon Marine Le Pen and her party have seemed particularly eager to channel agricultural outrage. “They have co-opted the movement as their own,” said Mujtaba Rahman, managing director for Europe at the Eurasia Group, a political risk consulting firm. “This is a cynical and opportunistic move by the far-right, but it is proving effective.”

In the Netherlands, fury over a proposal to meet E.U. nitrogen pollution targets by reducing livestock herds helped propel a farmers’ party into a surprise first-place finish in provincial elections last year and is among the reasons the party has backed far-right nationalist Geert Wilders in coalition negotiations.

In Germany, when planned subsidy cuts in the agriculture sector brought farmers into the

SEE FARMERS ON A20

## METRO

A D.C. store that survived the 1968 MLK riots and gentrification has closed.

## BUSINESS

In Utah, a drone factory works to break China’s hold on the market.



## ARTS & STYLE

Phish is a jam band run by a control freak, perfect for the Sphere.

## TRAVEL

Vegas gets automated with robot manicures, cocktails and pizzas.



## SPORTS

O.J. Simpson avoided athlete activism in favor of enhancing his status.

## BOOK WORLD

How did Ian Fleming create James Bond? He looked in the mirror.

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