

USA: The Fear of Losing Everything

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By: Arnaldo Musa / Cubasi  
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Republicans are very concerned about Donald Trump's declining popularity, which has fallen to 39% in the last days of December, threatening the party's legislative majority in the midterm elections.

As a result, 18 Republicans will leave the House of Representatives to run for governor, believing they have a better chance now that they once again have the financial backing of Elon Musk, the richest man on the planet, who had previously clashed with Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio and threatened to create a party that would oppose both Republicans and Democrats.

Meanwhile, the economy is floundering for those with the least, and even for those in more comfortable financial positions.

One of my female friends has to drive from late afternoon until the following morning, and even work Saturdays and Sundays, to pay her rent and try to ease the pressure of rising electricity, grocery, and insurance costs. Her two daughters, who were high school graduates, had to drop out of college and now deliver food.

Kathy and Jeffrey Manny, from Brandon, Vermont, decided not to renew their Affordable Care Act coverage for 2026. Their plan premium will rise to nearly \$2,670 a month, up from \$625 this year; the cheapest plan they could find costs \$1,870 a month.

Although the couple had high out-of-pocket medical expenses, their Obamacare policy gave them peace of mind in case one of them faced a serious illness or accident, Kathy Manny told CNN. Being uninsured in 2026 will be "very stressful," she said.

"Every time Jeffrey goes to work, I'm going to think, 'Jesus Christ, I hope nothing happens to him today,'" said Manny, 61, his voice breaking, "because everything I've worked for my whole life could be lost to bankruptcy."

They are Republicans, and like millions of others who support Obamacare, they want the subsidies extended. Most

Republicans on Capitol Hill do not.

Jeff, a freelance musician in New York City who earns so little he didn't have to pay a premium this year or last, waited until mid-December to enroll in his state's exchange. When he saw that the cheapest plan for 2026 would cost him \$275 a month, he closed his laptop, knowing he couldn't afford it and would be left without insurance. Instead, he went back to looking for a job to replace the one he had just lost.

The fact that Republicans in Congress aren't renewing subsidies infuriates Jeff, 50, a registered Democrat who asked that his last name not be used to protect his privacy. "We can find money to build an arch and a ballroom that are completely unnecessary and tax cuts for billionaires," he said, referring to President Donald Trump's construction plans and the Republican Party's internal agenda package. "But we can't provide health insurance for people in this country. It's unthinkable," he added.

Some small business owners are opting out of their Affordable Care Act policies by 2026 because of rising premiums and the expiration of federal assistance. However, as reported on MSN, some can't afford to go uninsured because they have medical conditions and need care. The rising premiums are forcing them to make difficult decisions.

Songa, a Republican who owns several real estate businesses with her husband, said they are considering partnering with another company in hopes of obtaining group health insurance with lower premiums if they have a larger workforce. She asked that her last name not be used to protect her and her company's privacy. The Minnesota couple will have to pay more than \$2,150 a month to cover themselves and their daughter, down from about \$1,000 in 2025.

## DISTRUST

Consumer confidence in the economy was shaken in December as Americans grew anxious about inflation and the impact of Trump's tariffs.

The Baird Conference reported Tuesday that its consumer confidence index fell 3.8 points to 89.1 in December from the upwardly revised reading of 92.9 in November. That is close to the reading of 85.7 in April, when Trump implemented his import tariffs on U.S. trading partners.

A measure of Americans' short-term expectations regarding their income, business conditions, and the job market remained steady at 70.7, but still well below 80, the marker that can signal an impending recession. It was the eleventh consecutive month that the reading remained below 80.

Consumers' assessments of their current economic situation fell 9.5 points to 116.8, showing that prices and inflation remained consumers' biggest concern, along with tariffs, despite Trump's repeated claims that inflation is a Democratic fabrication.

Perceptions of the job market also declined. The December survey by Conferencia Baird reported that 26.7% of consumers said jobs were "abundant," down from 28.2% in November. Additionally, 20.8% of consumers said jobs were "hard to find," up from 20.1% the previous month.

The government reported that the economy gained 64,000 jobs in November but lost 105,000 in October. Notably, the unemployment rate climbed to 4.6%, the highest since 2021.

The labor market has been stuck in a "no hiring, no firing" state, with companies hesitant to make decisions due to uncertainty surrounding tariffs and high interest rates. Job creation has fallen to an average of 35,000 per month, compared with 71,000 in the year ending in March. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell recently said he suspects those numbers will be revised even further downward, according to the Associated Press.

In fact, wages for the poorest Americans grew rapidly between 2020 and 2023, according to data from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, far outpacing wage growth for wealthier workers. At that time, employers were competing to hire a limited number of workers.

That situation changed in 2025. In September, the 12-month moving average of average wage growth was lower for American households. According to the income distribution, it was 3.7%, compared to 4.4% for the highest

earners.

Those at the bottom of the income scale don't have the value of their homes to help them. They don't have stock portfolios to back them up. And they find it more difficult to access credit. They depend primarily on their wages outpacing inflation.

In short, respondents' opinions about their family's current financial situation fell into negative territory for the first time in almost four years, despite the official announcement that the economy had expanded by 4.3% in the third quarter of 2025.

And these are just a few details about the world's largest economy, without even considering the enormous violence, drug addiction, social inequality, and poverty, where millions are forced to sleep outdoors due to an unscrupulous policy that is also practiced globally.

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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