

Washington Square Citizens League

Discussion Forum

7:00-8:15 pm

Monday, January 20, 2025

January: Looking Backward—Looking Forward

David Kurkowski, moderator

January is named for Janus, the Roman god looking both forward and backward. 2024 may not have been the year you wished for, with two wars raging in Ukraine and the Middle East and a polarizing election at home. BUT let's take a **backward look** at what good things did happen in 2024. Then let's examine **President Trump's campaign promises** to forecast which ones might come to pass. Finally, let's also take a look beyond the presidency to see what **other types of events** are likely. (All articles are edited for brevity.)



Predicting the future has a long and dubious history. Nostradamus (1503-1566) predicted that humans would make contact with aliens in 2025. Closer to home, odds-makers state that the Eagles have a 10% chance of winning the Super Bowl (as of 1/6). To make things interesting, indicate your guess about the year to come. Then make one of your own predictions about 2025.

YOUR GUESS

Event	Will occur	Won't occur
The economy stays relatively robust.		
Speaker Mike Johnson has the worst job in Washington.		
President Trump institutes major tariffs, but Congress refuses to pass a tariff bill.		
President Trump dissolves the Dept. of Education.		
Polio vaccines are no longer required.		
The Affordable Care Act is repealed.		
Netanyahu is still Israel's PM at year's end.		
Iran has a nuclear weapon but not a delivery system.		
WHO declares H5N1 (avian flu) a pandemic.		
Electric vehicles make up more than 10 percent of new car sales.		
New federal dietary guidelines advise Americans to avoid ultra-processed foods.		
Additional states join Florida and Alabama in banning lab-grown meat.		
President Trump ends the year with a positive approval rating.		

Write your own prediction here:

24 good things that happened in 2024

by the Editorial Board, Washington Post, December 30, 2024

Many might remember 2024 for global conflict. Coupled with a polarizing U.S. election marked by apparent attempted assassinations of Donald Trump, good news seemed sparse.

Yet, following long-standing tradition, we took on the challenge of finding 24 good things that happened this year. Our annual search for positive events only gets trickier as time goes on — in large part because the list must grow by one item each year. But we always end up with more than we have room for. We hope our list brings you some end-of-year optimism, too.

1. Pandas are back in Washington.

Nearly a year after D.C.'s last giant pandas returned to China, Qing Bao and Bao Li journeyed 8,000 miles to relocate to Washington. The pair are set to make their public debut at the Smithsonian National Zoo in the new year.

2. The biggest election year in history.

More than 4 billion people — about half the world's population — live in countries where major elections took place this year. Unfortunately, not all 2024 elections could be called “free and fair,” with particularly concerning results in the countries of Venezuela and Georgia. Still, more positive examples of popular sovereignty came in India and South Africa, among other places, where voters forced coalition governments rather than simply ratifying incumbent parties.

3. Many firsts for diversity in Congress.

The results of Election Day in the United States were understandably unnerving to many. Yet the election was secure, free and fair. And there were many firsts for diversity in Congress: Democrat Lisa Blunt Rochester will be the first woman and person of color to represent Delaware in the Senate. Angela D. Alsobrooks, also a Democrat, will be the first Black woman to represent Maryland in the chamber. The pair will be the first Black women to serve together in the Senate. Andy Kim (D-New Jersey) will be the country's first Korean American senator, and Delaware voters elected the first openly transgender member of Congress, Sarah McBride.

4. The popularity of women's sports soared.

Diversity had its moment in sports, too. Caitlin Clark grew WNBA viewership to historic levels. And Team USA women's rugby team won its first-ever Olympic medal .

5. The Olympics were more competitive.

More nations earned places on the podium during this year's Olympic Games in Paris — a promising sign for growing global prosperity. Plus, a record 15.4 million viewers watched the Paris Paralympic Games.

6. Notre Dame was repaired.

The bells of Notre Dame rang again, marking the return of a much-visited landmark more than five years after flames engulfed it. The cathedral's reconstruction is a symbol of resilience.

7. Vladimir Kara-Murza, Evan Gershkovich and others were released from Russian captivity.

Though the prisoner swap that freed these detained individuals should never have been necessary, the long-overdue releases brought much relief to their families and supporters around the world.

8. In South Korea, democracy survived a tough test.

President Yoon Suk Yeol's declaration of "emergency martial law" attempted to subvert the country's democratic processes — and was fortunately short-lived. In addition to widespread protests, politicians came together to swiftly quell the constitutional crisis.

9. Sweden joined NATO.

Sweden's entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization follows Finland's last year. Both additions make for a stronger NATO, which remains critical as Russia's war against Ukraine escalates.

10. Bashar al-Assad's regime fell.

No year would be complete without some 11th-hour surprises — and the fall of the Syrian president's regime came as a shock to many. Though the country's future remains foggy, the fall of Mr. Assad's brutal government resulted in the liberation of thousands held in Syria's notorious prisons.

11. Thailand legalized same-sex marriage.

Amid global backsliding on LGBTQ+ rights, Thailand voted to legalize same-sex marriage, making it the first country in Southeast Asia to do so.

12. A total solar eclipse helped us pause for a moment.

Millions of people around the United States joined us this year, flocking to the eclipse's path to catch a glimpse of the rare event. (Another total solar eclipse won't cross the United States for two decades.)

13. NASA launched a probe to investigate Europa.

This year, NASA sent off the Europa Clipper — the largest robotic probe the agency has built — on a 5½-year journey to Jupiter's most interesting moon.

14. In a boost for nuclear energy, the Advance Act passed.

By addressing a number of regulatory hurdles, the new law is a promising step toward reviving a floundering U.S. nuclear industry, which the world will probably need to fight climate change. Plus, it demonstrates how lawmakers of both parties can find common ground in addressing both growing energy demands and climate concerns.

15. Artificial intelligence proved invaluable to health care.

In many industries, 2024 was the year AI became mainstream. Many studies released this year suggested just how potent the tool could be in health-care settings, particularly at improving accuracy, lowering costs and generating a new generation of treatments.

16. The U.S. economy is doing better than it feels.

In what is probably a covid-19 pandemic holdover, the country's economic mood has been less than cheery. But the good news is that the U.S. economy is in better shape than public sentiment suggests. Wages have grown faster than inflation every month, unemployment is low, and productivity is trending up.

17. Youth vaping fell to its lowest level in a decade.

With millions of young people still consuming nicotine products regularly, the drug's use remains a public health crisis. But recent federal surveys show trends in the right direction as regulators work to close loopholes and enforce rules against marketing flavored vapes to youths.

18. The obesity crisis might have plateaued.

Federal government data released in September shows that the obesity epidemic might have stopped worsening. These recent numbers, coupled with advances in injectable medications used for weight loss and Type 2 diabetes treatment, offer a reason for hope.

19. And overdose deaths declined sharply.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drug overdose deaths fell 17 percent in a one-year period.

20. More states moved to ban legacy admissions.

The decades-long push to end the practice of giving a leg up to the children of university alumni gained traction this year as Virginia and Illinois passed laws phasing out legacy preferences in public university admissions. Maryland and California went one step further, banning the practice at private universities, too. A number of other states considered similar legislation.

21. Communities came together after deadly hurricanes.

This year, disaster struck even “climate haven” cities as Hurricanes Helene and Milton barreled inland and claimed hundreds of lives. In inspiring displays of resilience, communities across North Carolina and neighboring states have come together to weather a long recovery.

22. President Joe Biden issued an official apology for the government’s role in Indian boarding schools.

A Post investigation found more than 3,100 students died at schools built to extinguish Native American cultures — more than three times as many deaths as the Interior Department had reported.

23. Washington rediscovered the uniting power of its own football team.

The Commanders’ unexpected turnaround brought local fans back to the stands and some much-needed optimism to the D.C. region.

24. Ranked-choice voting prevailed in Alaska.

Alaskan voters demonstrated that ranked-choice voting is neither a partisan reform nor a passing fad. Going into the new year, we hope other states will resolve to learn from their successful system.

24 things Donald Trump is promising to do

By Lisa Desjardins, NPR, Aug 7, 2024

Former President Donald Trump is known for his off-script moments. But his signature freewheeling banter also masks important consistency. He is, actually, predictable.

The last 20 minutes at his rallies focus on his platform. A list of pledges and promises that are the core substance of his speeches and campaign. The latter is where we want to focus today: What Trump is saying he will do.

We analyzed three rally speeches following President Joe Biden’s withdrawal from the 2024 race. He made nearly the same promises at each one, each time a cap to his stump speech.

Below is a full list of what Trump promised, alongside some context. Of course, this is not a comprehensive list of every promise Trump has made, rather, a focused look at what he is promising *right now* on the campaign trail.

1. On Day 1, “we will begin the largest deportation operation in American history.”

Context: Trump is pledging to deploy a “massive dragnet” to arrest and deport millions of undocumented migrants. He has told crowds, and Time magazine in April, that he would use local law enforcement to do this as well as, potentially, the National Guard and active duty military. He has indicated in his speeches that he would first target “criminals,” mentioning violent crimes like murder and rape.

2. “My very first day back in the White House, I will terminate every single open border policy of the Biden-Harris administration, and we will seal the border.”

Context: Trump has promised to restore some of his hardline immigration policies that the Biden administration has reversed. He gave a run-down of this in Minnesota, saying, “I will restore the travel ban, suspend refugee admissions, stop the resettlement, and keep the terrorists the hell out of our country.”

Trump’s initial ban of people arriving from Muslim countries was ruled unconstitutional, but he revised it to focus on potential threats, though it still largely included Muslim countries.

In addition, Trump would bring back “Remain in Mexico,” which aimed to force asylum seekers to wait in Mexico before they could cross into the United States to claim asylum. That policy has faced legal, human rights and political pushback on both sides of the border.

Trump has also indicated he may try to use Title 42 emergency powers for immigration purposes, especially in returning child migrants to families. And he has left open the idea of again separating migrant families, though a court has ruled that policy cannot restart during the next administration.

3. “We will drill, baby, drill.”

4. “We will end inflation and make America affordable again.”

A pledge to end inflation ranks high on the 2024 Republican Party platform, though inflation has been down. And as for the promise to “make America affordable again”? With Trump offering no specifics, that’s up for interpretation.

5. “I will terminate the Green New Scam,” and end the electric vehicle mandate.

Context: As readers may know, the Green New Deal is a set of progressive-left climate and workplace ideas, most concretely written into legislative proposals by Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y. The Green New Deal is not U.S. law, but Trump is using it in speeches to bash an unspecified range of ideas from the “radical left.”

Regarding EVs, Biden put in place a new federal regulation in March that required automakers to increase fuel efficiency of their cars substantially over a number of years. That requirement would force many car companies to convert vehicles to electric or partially electric to meet the standard. Biden’s policy has faced an avalanche of lawsuits already. Some believe it may be legally doomed, regardless of who becomes president, following a recent Supreme Court ruling.

6. “We will pass massive tax cuts for workers” that include no tax on tips.

Context: This is a complicated area. Trump wants to extend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act tax cuts that went in place during his administration, but they're set to expire in 2025. This would affect millions of Americans. Some 80 percent of households saw a tax cut in 2018 because of the TCJA, according to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center. This would not be a new tax cut, but rather a proposal to stop taxes from going up.

Trump does not mention this in his speeches, but Politico has reported that he has told business leaders he would like to **lower** corporate taxes, which will keep their 2017 tax cuts regardless. Those do not expire.

7. "I will revoke China's most favored nation status."

Context: China was granted permanent and "most favored" trade status in 2001 by Republican President George W. Bush, meaning the U.S. generally should offer China trade terms that are as good as any other trading partner with the U.S.

8. "I will pass the Trump Reciprocal Trade Act, that means that if China or any other country makes us pay a 100 or 200 percent tariff or tax, we will make them pay a reciprocal tariff or tax of 100 or 200 percent immediately, right back."

Context: Trump explains this concept succinctly here. He would lean into any tariff war, retaliating "eye-for-an-eye" for a tariff imposed by other countries. Trump argues that this will protect American jobs, especially in manufacturing and other competitive industries. But others, including the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute, say it would end up being an economic mistake, raising prices for American consumers across the board and harming workers the most.

9. Shortly after regaining the Oval Office, "I will have the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine settled ... quickly."

10. "I will prevent World War III."

11. "I will restore peace through strength."

Context: World War III has been mentioned a ton in Trump speeches. Here's how he put it in a speech in Charlotte, NC: "I will prevent World War III. We're heading to World War III, we're heading right into the teeth of it ... I will restore peace through strength."

12. "In my next term, we will build a great Iron Dome missile defense shield over our country, a dome the likes of which no one has ever seen before, and it will be entirely made in the USA."

Context: Trump is referencing Israel's project Iron Dome, a series of missile defense capabilities that aim to destroy short-range weapons launched against the country. It is not clear what threats Trump aims the dome to address.

13. "I will not cut one penny from Social Security or Medicare, and I will not raise the retirement age."

Context: Social Security's trust funds will be depleted by 2035, according to this year's trustees report. At that point, without any action by lawmakers in Washington, payments to seniors will be cut by 27 percent. Trump's promise misses the important context that without any action, there will be cuts to these benefits.

14. "I am going to keep you out of wars."

15. "We have people at the top [of the military] that are woke, and they're all gone. We are going to get rid of them so fast."

Context: Trump said this in St. Cloud, Minnesota, only. Trump asserted that most military generals are not “woke,” but that some are. Trump is pledging to get rid of those who are “woke.”

16. “We are going to rebuild our cities into beacons of hope, safety and beauty better than they’ve ever been before.”

Context: Trump says he would work with Democratic mayors and governors to achieve this, but has not provided details.

Trump regularly raises concerns about crime in America, especially in cities. Politifact checked these statements and found Trump’s words about rising crime rates to be “mostly false,” because violent crime rates have fallen for most of the country. Property crime has risen, including car thefts. In addition, the conservative American Enterprise Institute has written about data showing that urban Americans are slightly more likely to say they’re “pretty happy” with their lives than rural Americans.

17. “We will take over the horribly run capital of our nation ... and clean it up, renovate it, rebuild it.”

Context: Trump’s vision for the nation’s capital is to require traditional and neoclassical architecture, based on Renaissance ideas of Greco-Roman aesthetics. Trump has also said of D.C. that “we are going to take over the management, the leadership of it.” Residents of the nation’s capital do not have a vote in Congress, but for 50 years Congress has allowed them “home rule,” so that their city council can generally oversee how the city operates. Congress and the White House retain a kind of veto power. Trump allies are pushing to end D.C. home rule.

18. I will sign an executive order that cuts federal funding “for any school pushing critical race theory, transgender insanity and other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content onto the shoulders of our children.”

Context: There is a lot to unpack here. But Trump has largely not defined precisely which policies he would attempt to penalize. At the same time, there is a legal battle over interpretations of Biden administration rules that declare Title IX protections based on sex include safeguards for LGBTQ+ youth. Trump’s policies would need to follow federal court guidance, once established.

19. I will defund any school that has a vaccine or mask mandate.

Context: Medical experts say the implications of eliminating vaccine mandates would be enormous for schools and for public health.

20. “I will keep men out of women’s sports.”

Context: Trump is proposing a ban on transgender women from participating in young women’s sports.

21. “I will fully uphold our Second Amendment.”

Context: Trump has indicated that he would oppose most, if not all, new restrictions on gun usage and ownership.

22. “We will protect innocent life.”

Context: On abortion, Trump supports the current status quo, that is to say that states have the right to restrict or nearly ban abortion as they choose. This stance on abortion has put him at odds with some of his base voters who would like a national ban. But Trump has indicated he would not support that.

23. “We will restore, very quickly, free speech.”

Context: This short phrase leads to an extensive plan for “free speech” reform that Trump announced in 2022. He would use presidential power to limit what rules federal agencies, universities and tech companies could employ to address speech, including controversial ideas. Trump claims that a combination of news media, social media platforms and a “deep state” arm of the government have sought to suppress his speech.

24. “I will secure our elections.”

The Kiplinger Letter has been making annual predictions since 1923.

10 Predictions for 2025 from The Kiplinger Letter

As the calendar arrives at the new year, here are 10 of our top forecasts for 2025, which figures to be nothing if not full of surprises.

1. The economy will stay relatively robust

The economy will stay relatively robust, with GDP growth downshifting from 2.8% in 2024 to a still-respectable 2.4% in 2025. Note that that pace likely exceeds the long-run potential for growth, which appears closer to 2%. Slow growth in the workforce should keep GDP gains moderate for the long haul, but 2025 will outperform. But, a full-blown trade war could slow growth. We are not expecting one, and think Donald Trump will use the threat of big tariffs to win concessions from trade partners while imposing targeted duties. But there is a risk that other countries retaliate and tit-for-tat tariffs spiral out of control this year.

2. Inflation will not be completely curbed in 2025

The headline inflation stats are likely to look promising early in the year. But, in the second half, look for them to perk up again.

3. Look for the dollar to remain strong in 2025

Look for the dollar to remain strong, and possibly gain even more in 2025.

4. Crypto speculation will further intensify

Cryptocurrency usage and speculation will further intensify in 2025, with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) set to approve several new crypto ETFs (exchange-traded funds) which make it easier for retail investors to dabble in crypto. Eventually, as more people hold Bitcoin through various vehicles, it should start to stabilize and trade more like a stock.

5. The housing market will see some progress

The housing market won't heal in 2025, but it will see some progress. Mortgage rates will ease slowly as the year unfolds, but that won't be enough relief to bring many buyers into the market. What will help is that supply should improve as a few more owners list their homes for sale, which is a step in the right direction. As a result, price gains should slow from 2024's pace. Folks thinking about selling their home should expect fewer offers, which again points toward moderation in price increases after the rapid run-up since the pandemic. Overall, house sales figure to remain very low.

6. Who will have the worst job in Washington? Speaker Mike Johnson.

The Louisiana Republican will be presiding over an extremely thin House majority (with possibly just one vote to spare early in the year, before some vacancies are filled). The House GOP is fractured, and some of Johnson's biggest detractors are members of his own party, notably hardline conservatives.

Meanwhile, the pressure will be on to get bills through the House, now that the GOP has the Senate and White House. Johnson will be forced to rely on Democratic votes to pass some major bills.

7. Senator Rand Paul will be a thorn in Trump's side

One of President-elect Trump's biggest thorns in Congress in 2025: Republican Senator Rand Paul (KY). The libertarian-leaning lawmaker has never been one to bow to his party's leadership directives without sufficient cause and cares little what colleagues think of him, even if he holds up legislative priorities.

8. AI and Windows 10 will drive firms to upgrade computer stock

All signs point to a great refresh of PCs among businesses of all stripes. Two reasons: A Windows 10 support deadline and the rush to embrace AI. Microsoft ends Windows 10 support on October 14, 2025, which will prompt many firms, government agencies and other organizations to upgrade or risk security problems. And to better harness generative artificial intelligence, companies will want AI PCs, which contain a special neural processing unit to run AI models on the devices.

9. Expect 2025 to be another banner year for American liquefied natural gas

This is due in part to a series of new export facilities set to come online next year, including Corpus Christi LNG Stage 3 in Texas and Plaquemines LNG in Louisiana. Of the 27 million metric tons of new global LNG supply expected in 2025, nearly 90% will come from North America. The U.S. is the world's largest exporter of LNG.

10. The Ukraine-Russia conflict is likely to edge toward some sort of resolution

Odds for some sort of cease-fire in the Ukraine-Russia conflict have risen because of Donald Trump's election. The president-elect's plans aren't entirely clear, but he has promised to restore relations with Russia and seems inclined to end or scale back aid to Ukraine as a means to force Kyiv to the negotiating table.

Things we think will happen in 2025

by Dylan Matthews, Bryan Walsh, Marina Bolotnikova, Kenny Torrella, Izzie Ramirez, and Dylan Scott, VOX, Jan 2, 2025

For the sixth year in a row, the staff of Future Perfect convened in December to make predictions about major events in the year to come. Each prediction comes with a probability attached to it. That gives you a sense of our confidence.

And as we have every year, we'll be keeping track of how our predictions fared over the course of 2025, and report back to you at the end of December. In 2023, 10 of 17 predictions came true. —*Bryan Walsh*

The United States

Congress passes a major tariff bill (20 percent)

Donald Trump's 2024 campaign was perhaps the most pro-tariff of any candidate since William McKinley: He promised 60 percent taxes on imports from China, and 10 percent on everywhere else.

In victory he's only gotten bolder, calling for 25 percent tariffs on Canada and Mexico, in flagrant violation of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a free trade deal made by Trump.

The bad news for consumers and the world economy is that Trump has substantial discretion to impose tariffs as president without consulting Congress. But that discretion isn't unlimited, and probably doesn't permit the kind of 10 percent across-the-board tariff Trump promised. Plus, Republicans want a revenue source to help offset the cost of making Trump's 2017 tax cuts

permanent before they expire at the end of next year. This raises the question: Will Congress pass a tariff measure on its own that not only implements Trump's ideas, but lets them endure under future presidents?

My guess is no. There was a time in the distant past, let's call it "2015," when Republicans were the party of free markets and free trade, and some members of Congress haven't forgotten that. Early reporting suggests that many GOP figures in the House and Senate are hostile to the idea of including tariffs in a tax package. Republicans can only lose three senators and two House members out of their caucus and still pass bills, which gives them very little margin for error, and makes it very difficult to pass legislation that splits the caucus like tariffs.

Two caveats, though. One, I'm predicting about a tariff bill and not new unilateral tariffs from Trump because I think the odds that Trump does new tariffs using presidential authority are nearly 100 percent. Two, the only reason my estimate isn't lower is that there's been some bipartisan interest in a "carbon border adjustment," or a sort of carbon tax that only applies to imported goods. The idea has gotten Republican support because while it does acknowledge that global warming is real, it also sticks it to foreigners. That's a tariff, and I think the likeliest kind to make it into a tax package (though I still bet against it).

Trump dissolves the Department of Education (5 percent)

The Department of Education, whose main duties are administering student loans and financial aid for higher-ed institutions and distributing funds (around \$39 billion in 2023) to local schools under programs like Title I (for poor districts) and IDEA (for disabled students), was created in a 1979 act of Congress. Passing a normal bill repealing that act would require 60 Senate votes to break a filibuster, which means winning over seven Democrats to the idea, which isn't going to happen.

So legislation abolishing the department (already written by GOP Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota) would have to pass through budget reconciliation, which lets certain legislation pass with a mere majority in the Senate. But reconciliation has strict requirements limiting the content of legislation that can be passed that way, and in particular provisions of bills that are only "incidentally" related to the overall level of spending or taxing tend to be struck down by the Senate parliamentarian as contrary to the Byrd rule, the main governing principle behind the reconciliation process.

The Affordable Care Act is repealed (30 percent)

From the moment the Affordable Care Act was signed into law on March 23, 2010, the Republican Party has been obsessed with repealing it. They even shut down the government over it. Then, in 2017, the dog finally caught the car: Republicans had both houses of Congress and the presidency, and in theory the opportunity to repeal the law.

They didn't.

Sure, the tax law that year eliminated the individual mandate to get health insurance, but that turned out to not be as important to getting people coverage as the ACA's authors thought. The rest of the bill — its dramatic Medicaid expansions, rules protecting people with preexisting conditions and letting young adults stay on their parents' insurance, subsidies for individuals to buy health insurance if their employer doesn't provide it — remained intact.

Even "skinny repeal," a bill that zeroed out only a handful of provisions of the law, failed to pass the Senate when John McCain made his famous thumbs-down gesture, but matters had only even gotten to that point because several other senators didn't want to vote for sweeping Medicaid cuts, like those entailed by simply repealing the ACA in its entirety.

Will they try again in 2025? I'm skeptical.

Trump will have a positive favorability rating (25 percent)

Americans have a charming habit of deciding to like the newly elected president as soon as the election's over, and Donald Trump's favorability rating has gone from 8.6 points underwater on Election Day to only 1.9 points negative on December 19. But how long do presidential "honeymoon" periods last? Not very long, as it turns out. Obama, Trump I, and Biden alike all saw their approval ratings dip below 50 percent by the end of the first year (Trump was never even above 50 when he started!)

Moreover, Trump is unusually loathed by a huge segment of the population and is promising massive tariffs that I suspect will prove unpopular once they start raising the prices of everyday household items. So I feel pretty good predicting Trump will be below water at year's end.

Elon and Trump are still friends at the end of the year (40 percent)

Trump and Musk are not subtle or taciturn men, and when they dislike someone they have a tendency to scream that loudly many, many times, so I don't anticipate it being hard to decide where they stand at the end of 2025.

The list of one-time Trump allies who eventually came to denounce him is too long to include in full here, but let us briefly remember, say, 10: Anthony Scaramucci; Mike Pence; John Kelly; John Bolton; HR McMaster; Stephanie Grisham; Alyssa Farah Griffin; Betsy DeVos; and of course, Michael Cohen.

It does not seem like an ambitious prediction that Musk will eventually join their ranks. His role as the head of the new Department of Government Efficiency seems guaranteed to put him on a collision course with Trump's Cabinet officials and with congressional Republicans, and probably also with his cochair Vivek Ramaswamy.

What if Musk wants to slash Medicare and Social Security, which Trump has promised to defend? What if he wants defense cuts and Trump wants a tougher posture toward China? What if Musk pushes for reconciliation with China, with whose government he is extremely close (Ramaswamy once called Musk "a circus monkey" working for Xi Jinping)?

I won't predict the exact inciting episode that causes Trump and Musk to fall out. But I feel like I know how these guys operate, and I think it's more likely than not that they *will* fall out.

The world

Benjamin Netanyahu is still Israel's PM at the end of November 2025 (75 percent)

What a difference a year makes. In December 2023, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was incredibly unpopular, his image severely damaged by his government's total failure to anticipate the deadly October 7 attacks by Hamas. Polls indicated his Likud party might win only 17 of 120 seats in Israel's Knesset. Israel was on its way to becoming an international pariah because of the destructive way it was waging its war in Gaza, and Israelis were furious about the government's failure to rescue the hostages held by Hamas, even after a November 2023 deal to bring some home. Oh, and Netanyahu was only a few months removed from massive street protests and was facing corruption charges.

Fast-forward to December 2024, and polls suggest Netanyahu's Likud party would win 25 seats if elections were held today, more than any other party. Israel has all but destroyed Hezbollah, by far its most capable opponent, and has isolated Iran, arguably its most existential threat. After the sudden

fall of Syria's Bashar al-Assad, Israel has even captured territory formerly under the Syrian government's control. And President Joe Biden, who at least occasionally pushed back against Netanyahu, is about to be replaced by President-elect Donald Trump, who has signaled that he will happily give Israel a freer hand in Gaza.

Netanyahu has been prime minister of Israel for roughly 17 of the past 28 years. Every time it seems like he's in an unwinnable position, he seems to find a way to wriggle out of it. I have every expectation that will continue in 2025.

There will be a ceasefire in Ukraine (75 percent)

The war in Ukraine is just short of its third anniversary. The very fact that Ukraine has continued to fight this long defies most early prognosticators, many of whom expected the government in Kyiv to collapse not long after the Russians invaded. (An exception there, as Future Perfect readers know, is the State Department's perspicacious Bureau of Intelligence and Research.) But the longer the war goes on, the more Russia's sheer size and willingness to sacrifice unbelievable numbers of soldiers has outweighed Ukraine's ability to fight back, even with the material support of the US and European allies.

President Biden has mostly been a steadfast ally, but he'll be leaving office on January 20, replaced by Donald Trump, who has made no secret of the fact that he has little interest in continuing to support Ukraine. Both sides are still fighting hard to gain and protect territory, but it seems clear that's being done by both Ukraine and Russia to put themselves in the best possible position before expected peace talks. Exactly what form that will take is difficult to predict, and a ceasefire doesn't mean a permanent peace. But I would be shocked to not see a durable pause in the fighting some time in 2025.

Iran gets nuclear weapons (30 percent)

For the purposes of this prediction, "getting nuclear weapons" means producing enough fissile material to fuel a nuclear weapon. Actually producing a usable nuclear weapon — including miniaturizing a warhead enough to fit on a missile — might take another several months to a year or more, and thus probably falls outside the 2025 time frame.

Iran is already on the brink of sufficient enrichment — estimates are that it would only take about a week for Iran to enrich enough uranium for five fission weapons. So the question here is primarily one of international politics. Iran had a terrible 2024. It directly attacked Israel with missiles twice, only to see both salvos largely neutralized by missile defense systems, while Israel's own retaliatory attack on Iran was far more successful. The Lebanese militia Hezbollah, Iran's most powerful proxy, was all but annihilated by Israel, which continues to operate in parts of southern Lebanon. And the return of Donald Trump brings a president into office whom Iran has been accused of trying to assassinate.

Put that all together, and the Iranian regime finds itself in a very insecure place and may look to nuclear weapons as a way to level the playing field. At the same time, relatively new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has made overtures to the West and seems to understand that the only path to economic relief for his country is a new deal that limits the nuclear program in exchange for easing economic sanctions.

The Iranian regime's number one priority is its own survival, and my best guess is that they will decide that the risk of going full speed on a nuclear program isn't worth it, at least for another year. (There's also the possibility that accelerating its nuclear work could lead to a military intervention by Israel or

the US that would stop the program in its tracks.) So I think on balance that Iran won't join the nuclear club in 2025 — though it's not a prediction I make with a great deal of certainty.

Science and technology

The World Health Organization (WHO) will declare H5N1 a pandemic in 2025 (25 percent)

While it may feel as if infectious disease pandemics have become a regular occurrence, they still remain highly rare. Since 1918, there have been five influenza pandemics: the Spanish flu of that year, the 1957 Asian flu, the 1968 Hong Kong flu, the 1977 Russian flu, and the 2009 swine flu.

But there's evidence that outbreaks of new infectious diseases are increasing, as the Covid pandemic amply demonstrated. And the H5N1 avian flu has been infecting a growing variety and number of animals, and more recently, people. On December 18, California, where 34 human cases of the virus have been detected, became the first state to institute a state of emergency over bird flu. New research suggests just a single mutation could be enough to potentially increase the virus's ability to spread from person to person, which would be a prerequisite to becoming a pandemic. (Right now, H5N1 only rarely seems to be able to spread between people, and only in very limited fashion.)

EVs will make up more than 10 percent of new car sales in the US by the end of Q3 2025 (65 percent)

By the third quarter of 2024, EVs made up 8.9 percent of new car sales in the US, according to an analysis by Kelley Blue Book. There've been reports that electric car sales are slowing, but given their consistent past growth rates, plus the fact that interest rates are coming down, I think we'll hit 10 percent by the same time this year without much trouble.

Bitcoin's price will at some point in 2025 breach \$200,000 (70 percent)

The digital gold rush probably still hasn't reached full frenzy, believe it or not. Bitcoin recently topped \$100,000 in value for the first time, but we are going to have to think bigger. Bitcoin just saw its value more than double over the course of 2024. I think it's more likely than not it'll repeat the feat.

A new application for psychedelic therapy drugs is submitted to the FDA (20 percent)

Last year was an eventful one in the saga of psychedelics seeking a return to mainstream medicine.

Roughly 38 years of planning came to a head when Lykos Therapeutics — a for-profit outgrowth of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, founded in 1986 — submitted an application to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for MDMA therapy to treat PTSD.

Despite widespread expectations it would succeed, the FDA did not grant approval, unsettling psychedelic companies, advocates, and the industry at large.

The FDA didn't outright reject the application, but asked for another Phase 3 clinical trial, which will likely take a couple of years to complete and resubmit to the FDA. With Lykos going back to the drawing board, who's going to take the next swing at FDA approval?

My prediction: no one, at least not in 2025.

We certainly won't see any companies announce a Phase 3 trial, complete it, and package the findings into an application to the FDA all within the span of one year. So it's difficult to imagine any pathway toward an FDA approval in 2025. There are still some slightly cracked backdoors that could usher psilocybin into accepted medical use within the year, like the FDA granting an emergency use

authorization (EUA), which could even force the holy grail of a true psychedelic renaissance — rescheduling it to a lower category of the Controlled Substances Act — before getting FDA approval.

So while I think the chances of normal FDA approval in 2025 are basically zero, considering the EUA backdoor, plus the general state of accelerating weirdness of the world these days, bumps our estimate up to 20 percent that we wind up with a federally authorized medical use of a new psychedelic drug in 2025.

The 2025–2030 federal dietary guidelines advise Americans to avoid ultra-processed foods (30 percent)

The concept of “ultra-processed foods” is overly broad, arbitrary, and even liable to vilify foods that are good for us. It does not make sense as a policymaking tool. The scientific panel that’s advising the creation of the 2025–2030 federal dietary guidelines, due out this year, acknowledged as much in December, when it concluded that there’s not much reliable evidence linking ultra-processed foods to poor health outcomes.

The final dietary guidelines, which are jointly created by the US Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services and play an important role in shaping federal nutrition programs like National School Lunch, often aren’t fully aligned with the scientific committee’s recommendations. But where they differ, it’s often to benefit powerful food industries, like the meat industry and producers of sugary snacks. And a sweeping recommendation against ultra-processed foods would be consistent with neither nutrition science nor corporate interests.

So whatever the hype about Robert F. Kennedy Jr. cracking down on ultra-processed foods, I expect the final document to come to more or less the same conclusion as the science.

At least one additional state bans lab-grown meat in 2025 (80 percent)

Earlier this year, Florida and Alabama banned the production and sale of “lab-grown” or “cell-cultivated” meat. Cell-cultivated meat is real meat but made without slaughtering animals — instead, startups take animal cells, place them in a large steel tank, and feed them a mix of ingredients, like sugars, minerals, vitamins, and amino acids, for several weeks until they can be harvested as meat.

The bans were transparent efforts to protect the respective states’ livestock industries and score political points by further pulling meat into America’s culture war. It’s a somewhat hollow victory for the culture warriors and red state governors — cell-cultivated meat is still incredibly expensive to produce and has only been sold in small batches for limited runs at a handful of US restaurants.

It’s an emerging technology, and there’s still uncertainty as to whether the startups that make it will be able to scale their operations to produce a meaningful amount of meat. But if they do figure it out, these bans could be a real headache in the future, both for the companies’ bottom lines and America’s climate goals, as cell-cultivated meat has potential to cut agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.

Nevertheless, lawmakers in other states are lining up behind Florida and Alabama to pass their own bans. While it won’t affect the cell-cultivated meat startups much in the short term, it would contribute to political hostility that could spell doom in the long run.