



GUERCHOM NDEBO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Bloodshed Over, Congo Turns Mostly Tranquil
A year ago, bodies had washed ashore on the banks of Lake Kivu in the eastern city of Goma. Now, vendors cross the water in canoes to bring food to the area. Page A8.

HIRING IMPROVES AFTER SLOW 2025

Increase of 130,000 Jobs,
January Report Finds

By **LYDIA DePILLIS**

The U.S. economy put in a strong showing at the start of 2026, following a year of disruptions that depressed both the demand for labor and its supply.

Employers added 130,000 jobs in January, the Labor Department reported on Wednesday, in a release delayed from last week by a short government shutdown. The unemployment rate fell to 4.3 percent from 4.4 percent a month earlier.

The peppier-than-expected reading is a sign that the labor market might be emerging from a period of extremely slow hiring brought on by a trade war that made companies hesitant to hire, an immigration crackdown that lowered the number of available workers and a federal government firing spree.

Annual revisions to earlier data, which are routine but have been larger than usual in recent years, darkened the picture of 2025. The economy added only 181,000 jobs last year, down from an earlier estimate of 584,000. Not counting the pandemic year of 2020, that is the slowest pace since 2010, the midst of the Great Recession [Page B1].

“The revised numbers tell a more accurate story of what people were experiencing, which was really, really, really slow job growth and stagnation on a pretty major scale,” said Nicole Bachaud, a labor economist with the job search website ZipRecruiter.

For perspective, the economy added nearly as many jobs last month alone than the entire gain during all of 2025. “This is giving a glimpse of what might be a turning point for the market as stabilization is taking place,” Ms. Bachaud said. “This is a pretty significant shift.”

It’s too soon to tell if the January numbers represent a real acceleration. The numbers may have been flattered by a seasonal quirk: Retailers hired many fewer seasonal workers than usual over the holidays. If fewer were laid off

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Epstein Ties Bringing Shame, Or Denials, Around the Globe

By **MARK LANDLER**

PARIS — A French politician, famed as a cultural icon of the 1980s and 1990s. A Norwegian diplomat who played a role in the secret talks that yielded the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians. A well-connected Slovak former minister who served as president of the United Nations General Assembly.

Three prominent officials, tripped up by their associations with Jeffrey Epstein — and they are far from the only ones.

Mr. Epstein, the financier and convicted sexual offender, collected friends and associates in an astonishing array of places. Now, several of them are being brought down by the unsavory details of their relationships — some after Mr. Epstein was convicted in 2008 — which were revealed in nearly

three million pages of documents recently released by the Justice Department in the United States.

Jack Lang, who once served as France’s culture minister, announced on Saturday he would resign as head of the Arab World Institute, a prestigious cultural institution in Paris, after the French authorities said they were investigating reports that he and his family had financial links to Mr. Epstein.

Mona Juul, who had been Norway’s ambassador to Jordan and Iraq, quit after disclosures of financial dealings between her and her husband and Mr. Epstein. Miroslav Lajcak, the national security adviser to Slovakia’s prime minister, Robert Fico, stepped down following the release of

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1967 Israeli Attack of U.S. Ship Becomes MAGA Dividing Line

By **KEN BENSINGER**

On June 8, 1967, the Israeli military machine-gunned, bombed and torpedoed the U.S.S. Liberty, an American vessel floating off the Sinai Peninsula, killing 34 service members.

Those facts are not in dispute. But almost everything else about the attack is driving a wedge through the MAGA movement.

On one side are prominent voices like the podcaster Ben Shapiro, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and Rich Lowry, editor in chief of The National Review. They insist the attack on the Liberty was a tragic case of mistaken identity amid the chaos of the Six-Day War, a conclusion shared by a U.S. Navy Court of Inquiry and the Israeli government.

Those on the other side include the podcasters Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens and Representative Paul Gosar of Arizona. They insist Israel knew the Liberty was an American ship and say the attack is proof that the Israeli government cannot be trusted and is no ally to the United States.



GETTY IMAGES

Damage on the U.S.S. Liberty, seen in Malta after the attack.

While many Americans have never heard of the Liberty, it has become a topic of obsession on the right, which is increasingly divided over America’s relationship with Israel. Conservatives are split between those who are ada

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Determined Ex-Civil Servants Gathering on Campaign Trail

By **EILEEN SULLIVAN**

WASHINGTON — Alysa Kassay, a 30-year veteran of the Internal Revenue Service, had no immediate plans to retire until President Trump began upending the federal work force last year and firing probationary employees without cause.

Mr. Trump was “making things as horrible as he can inside the federal government and then taking an ax and hacking it to death,” said Ms. Kassay, 60, who had managed insolvency specialists in the agency’s collection division.

One day, she said, “I said to my husband, ‘I’m going to run for Congress, and I’m going to change the world.’” She launched her campaign nearly four months later.

Ms. Kassay, who is now running to be the Democratic nominee in North Carolina’s solidly red Sixth Congressional District, is part of a cadre of former civil servants who left the federal government in 2025 and is now seeking office at the local, state or federal levels.

The unusually large collection of former federal workers who have jumped into political campaigns — many but not all as Democrats — illustrates one of the byproducts of the administration’s aggressive attacks on the bureaucracy. While many employees left their posts feeling deeply demoralized, others say the attacks mobilized them to try to serve in new ways.

The New York Times identified at least 36 novice candidates who worked in the federal government until last year, including some who left after careers that spanned decades. Others were in the early years of what they hoped would be a long and rewarding stint in public service.

Some of those running were fired, laid off or pressured to resign. Two — both running as Republicans — said they left the government because they wanted to serve in Congress, and the timing was right.

Twenty-three of the former civil servants are running for Congress this year, and of them, 14 are trying to unseat incumbents. Many face steep odds and big learning curves. They are grappling with the mechanics of fund-raising and adjusting to putting themselves out front to meet voters after working largely in the back-

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States Push to Put Plug-In Solar on Your Porch

By **CLAIRE BROWN**

As the Trump administration stymies hundreds of commercial solar and wind projects nationwide, legislators in 24 states want to literally put the power in the hands of the people by allowing modest solar energy systems on balconies, porches and backyards.

Last year, in an unanimous vote, Utah became the first state in the nation to pass a law allowing residents to plug small solar systems straight into a wall socket. These systems, which retail for around \$2,000, produce enough electricity to power a laptop or small refrigerator.

In just a matter of months, legislators in 23 other states have announced similar bills, including California and New York. If



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A plug-in solar panel installed outside a home in Baltimore.

passed, the legislation would eliminate one of the technology’s biggest barriers in the United States: homeowners or renters could install plug-in panels systems, in most cases up to 1200 watts, without approval from their local utility.

G.O.P.’S CASH LEAD GIVES DEMOCRATS MIDTERM ANXIETY

WIDE GAP IN FUNDING

Ruling Expected by Court
May Give Further Lift
to Republicans

By **SHANE GOLDMACHER**
and **THEODORE SCHLEIFER**

For the first time in years, Democrats are sounding the alarm about money problems.

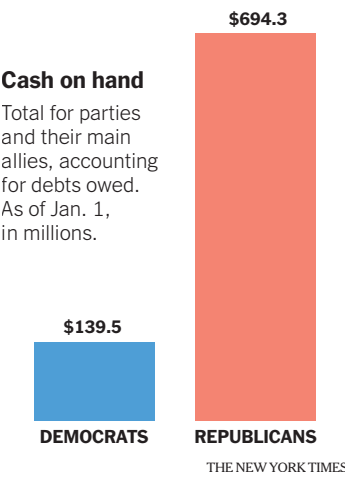
The Republican National Committee began this year with nearly \$100 million more than the Democratic National Committee.

The Supreme Court is widely expected to loosen restrictions on party funds in the coming months in a way that could help Republicans take fuller advantage of their fund-raising edge.

President Trump is sitting atop a super PAC with more than \$304 million — a huge sum for which there is no Democratic counterweight.

The world’s richest man, Elon Musk, has re-engaged with the Republican Party after his blowup with Mr. Trump last year, donating tens of millions of dollars in the last two months and attending the recent wedding of a top Trump aide at Mar-a-Lago. And Democrats worry that well-funded super PACs tied to the cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence industries, which have cozied up to Mr. Trump, could further fuel a Republican financial edge.

All told, new federal records show that the three leading arms



of the national Republican Party and the two super PACs aligned with House and Senate Republicans entered this year with more than double the cash of the equivalent Democratic groups. The Republican groups had a combined \$320 million, compared with roughly \$137.2 million for the Democrats after accounting for debts.

“Any Democrat who isn’t concerned isn’t serious,” said Bradley

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THURSDAY STYLES D1-8

Requiem for Marc Jacobs
The designer, whose collections have grown irrelevant, revisits his heyday with clothes you can wear. PAGE D5

Riding the A.I. Wave
Tech entrepreneurs in their early 20s live modestly in San Francisco while hoping to make millions. PAGE D1

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Shooting Suspect Is Named
The Canadian police said an 18-year-old killed her mother and stepbrother before shooting several at a school. PAGE A6

Menu Caters to Jews in Syria
The offering of kosher food is one of many signs of how much has changed since the Assad regime fell. PAGE A4

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Amateurs vs. Wall St. Ph.D.s
Economists have noticed that betting markets like Kalshi and Polymarket are pretty good at predicting not just political events but economic data. PAGE B1



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Stefania Constantini, a 2022 gold medalist in curling, is just Stefi to her neighbors in her Italian hometown. PAGE B6

Welcome to Tanking Season
A loaded N.B.A. draft is looming, and a third of the league has little incentive to win. How bad will it get? PAGE B11

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People Power in Twin Cities
Two months after federal immigration agents began operations in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, residents say they have found strength in uniting as a community. PAGE A12

El Paso Airport Is Closed
White House officials said Mexican drug cartel drones breached U.S. airspace. But the Defense Department’s new counter-drone technology may have prompted the shutdown. PAGE A20

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One Lunch for Cast and Crew
At the Oscar nominees’ luncheon, stars like Timothée Chalamet and Teyana Taylor mingled with documentarians and makeup artists. PAGE C1

