



RED FLAGS: The national debt has grown steadily since the 1970s. Recovery efforts from the 2008 Wall Street collapse and other crises have exacerbated the nation's debt.

ECONOMY

National debt hits \$40 trillion mark

By **STEPHEN DINAN**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The federal government has topped \$40 trillion in total debt for the first time in history, setting a record for red ink. The Treasury Department announced the ignominious milestone Wednesday, though the mark was crossed a day earlier. Watchdog groups called the figure a flashing warning sign, and urged a wake-up call for Washington. “The more we borrow, the

Watchdog groups call milestone a warning sign for the country

more we exacerbate inflation, squeeze out other priorities in the budget, and leave ourselves vulnerable to emergencies at home and turmoil abroad,” said Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. The U.S. crossed the \$30 trillion mark just four years ago, under President Biden, and the

\$20 trillion mark in 2017, during President Trump’s first term. “It’s shocking that we’ve doubled the federal debt in less than 10 years, and we must change course,” said Michael A. Peterson, CEO of the Peterson Foundation, which tracks spending and debt. The exact debt figure as of Tuesday was

\$40,047,425,768,420.22. The debt held by the public, which most analysts consider a more important yardstick of fiscal health because it doesn’t include transfers inside the government such as Social Security Trust Fund IOUs, stood at about \$32.3 trillion. That’s nearly the size of America’s total annual gross domestic product, which stood at about \$34 trillion. Crossing the 100% mark has

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MIDDLE EAST

Gulf nations find alternate oil routes



EXPORT OPTIONS: Middle Eastern nations are exploring new routes to export oil because of the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz. The new pathways could become permanent and reshape how the Gulf region exports crude. The efforts, however, will take time.

By **TOM HOWELL JR.**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The crisis in the Strait of Hormuz is forcing Middle East nations to explore new routes for critical oil exports, easing the global supply crunch and reducing Iran’s ability to use the waterway as a source of leverage. The new pathways could become permanent and reshape how the Gulf region exports crude. Efforts to re-route oil can be arduous, however, and attempts

Crisis in Strait of Hormuz prompts pathway exploration

to rebuild or resuscitate old pipelines will take time. “Gulf Arab oil producers are seeking to diversify their export options to avoid the Strait of Hormuz, but they face a capacity issue,” said Gordon Gray, a former U.S. ambassador to Tunisia and professor of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula affairs at George Washington University.

“Alternate routes can only make up half of the estimated 20 million barrels that used to pass through the Strait of Hormuz on a daily basis,” he said. Tehran in March severely curtailed commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow channel between Iran and Oman, in retaliation for U.S.-Israeli airstrikes that began on Feb. 28.

Vessels have to navigate possible mines in the strait and sporadic attacks, making the passage perilous and causing a global energy shortfall that resulted in higher oil prices. Prewar flows of oil through the Strait of Hormuz accounted for about 20% of global consumption. Disruptions in the strait have curtailed shipments to less than half of preconflict levels, with daily fluctuations depending on the threat level in the

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FLORIDA

Socialist candidate wins Democratic Senate primary

To face Republican Moody

By **SUSAN FERRECHIO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

JACKSONVILLE, FLA. | Florida’s Democratic voters picked a socialist candidate for U.S. Senate in Tuesday’s primary, advancing state Rep. Angie Nixon, who wants to close prisons and calls drag shows “wholesome entertainment.”

Ms. Nixon’s victory in the primary was a stunning upset over her well-funded Democratic opponent, Alex Vindman, who rose to national prominence in 2019 when he testified against President Trump during the first of his two impeachments.

Mr. Trump savored Mr. Vindman’s defeat. “How cool is that?” the president wrote on social media. Tuesday’s results in Florida notched another victory for a growing army of socialists across the nation in the 2026 elections. Candidates touting socialist agendas have secured primary wins in Colorado, the District, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania by honing in on voter anger and frustration about the rising cost of living and promising free healthcare, free daycare and rent freezes. Ms. Nixon’s win nevertheless raised eyebrows in a state where Democrats are a shrinking percentage of the electorate and where Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, has governed as a solid conservative and remains



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STUNNING UPSET: State Rep. Angie Nixon defeated Alex Vindman in the Democratic Senate primary in Florida.

popular. Mr. Vindman was endorsed by Senate Democrats, among them: Sens. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, Mark Kelly of Arizona, and Jack Reed of Rhode Island. Ms. Nixon secured endorsements from members of Congress’ “Squad”: Reps. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan. Ms. Nixon beat Mr. Vindman despite his campaign’s massive financial advantage. She raised under \$1 million and spent about \$700,000. Mr. Vindman, who moved to Florida in 2023 and ran as an anti-Trump champion, raised \$16 million and spent \$9 million trying to win the Senate primary.

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MILITARY

Pentagon reviewing nuclear conflict plans

Taking look at guidance for weapons

By **BILL GERTZ**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Pentagon is conducting a review of nuclear weapons use that seeks to provide the president and military leaders with greater options for using tactical nuclear weapons in a regional conflict while preventing an escalation into global thermonuclear war, according to a senior defense policymaker. Elbridge Colby, undersecretary of defense for policy, said he is working closely with Adm.

Richard Correll, Strategic Command chief, in conducting “a review or sort of relook at the employment guidance” for nuclear weapons. Details of the nuclear review remain secret, but the outlines were disclosed by Mr. Colby earlier this month during a speech and remarks to a Strategic Command conference in Omaha, Nebraska. “We have to be able to provide strategic deterrence and a

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IN BRIEF: Then-Rep. Eric Swalwell, California Democrat, was in a relationship with a Chinese national named Fang Fang. The FBI wanted to warn him in 2015 that she was a spy.

CONGRESS

Swalwell weighs in on sex-trap spycraft

By **ROWAN SCARBOROUGH**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Rep. Eric Swalwell, a new member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence in April 2015, sat down for a classified briefing from the FBI on Capitol Hill. The briefing was about him. Mr. Swalwell was in a relationship with a Chinese national named Fang Fang, who went by Christine Fang in the U.S. The FBI wanted to warn him that she was a spy for Beijing. “Swalwell was briefed regarding the intelligence cycle and methods by which foreign

governments and their agents target politicians,” says a declassified FBI memo. “Specifically, the briefing discussed Fang Fang and her connections to (redacted) and the Chinese intelligence services.” Two years later, in March 2017, Mr. Swalwell came to the House Select Committee on Intelligence hearing amid the Democrats’ Trump-Russia inquiry. At the time, Democrats were gorging on their party’s purchased Russian-sourced dossier

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