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Good as gold?

A mid-term accounting for America's 'Bottom 50%':

Have President Trump and his Republican Congress been screwing you? Let us count the ways...

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I began this exercise during the 8-hour flight back from overseas to take stock as Americans gear up for November's mid-term elections. Many are framing the mid-term elections as a referendum on how the president and Congress have performed. The rolling tally begins with negatives and ends with positives. Though it incorporates suggestions from friends and colleagues, the list contains a large amount of personal and professional bias. I encourage others to go through this exercise.

Your assessment may be very different.

First: How have they hurt you?

President Trump and his obedient GOP Congress quickly passed [tax cuts](#), but mostly for well-off and the rich. They threw a few dollars to low-income and middle-income families but also cut their access to [Medicaid](#), [SNAP](#) (food assistance), [SSI](#) benefits, [health care](#), and [veteran's benefits](#).

Without the [constitutionally required](#) approval of Congress, the president [imposed broad tariffs](#) which, like sales taxes, are [regressive](#), meaning they burden the lowest-income families the most.

The president and his Congress choked off access to the child tax credit for low-income people, drastically raising the child [poverty rate](#), while maintaining the credit and other tax breaks for the better off.

They let Covid-era ACA subsidies [expire](#), which pushed millions of people to drop health coverage and left others with steeper premiums and deductibles.

They worked to subvert [unions](#) and undermined [worker safety](#).

They reignited [wartime spending](#). Attacking Iran – with no clear objective – is sapping funds from federal programs back at home. While the arms industry profits, rank-and-file soldiers now shed their blood. Ordinary people suffer.

The war triggered high prices for gasoline, fertilizer, and other products, in effect layering another tax on the American people. There's a good chance the conflict -- which Trump and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [began](#) and Congress has declined to stop -- will leave the United States in a much weaker position globally.

The Administration raised the risk of sparking a major war by letting Israel [determine](#) US foreign policy for its benefit, not ours.

The president repeatedly has made the US look like [fools](#) on the [international stage](#).

The president and GOP Congress have been financially reckless and stoked the runaway [national debt](#). This will choke the government's ability to help Americans for generations to come and corrode the [nation's capacity](#) to fight a war against a major adversary if, and when, the need arises.

They starved IRS capacity to audit wealthy [tax cheaters](#).

President Trump has catered to the rich and well-connected in multiple ways: He has granted favors for donors, family, and friends. Corporate bailouts. Pardons from criminal conviction. And [self-dealing](#) galore.

He protected privileged cronies who abused and raped teenage girls by denying Congress and the American public full access to the Epstein files. (Ask [Majorie Taylor Greene](#).)

He promoted a "Roaring 20s" stock market and profiteering by owners of capital. Historically bloated [equity prices](#) now raise the risk of a [recession](#) or depression along with widespread financial loss and hardship.

As a candidate, Trump promised to tame inflation and make life more affordable. But he delivered rising inflation and strained family budgets.

He promised more jobs but brought in billionaire Elon Musk to fire thousands of federal workers.

The Trump Administration kicked thousands of hard-working taxpayers out of the country while neglecting to bring in [workers](#) through **legal** immigration needed to power the US economy.

Like their predecessors, the president and Congress did nothing to deal with Social Security's looming [insolvency](#). He decimated Social Security staff, reducing the agency's [capacity](#) to respond to beneficiary inquiries and concerns.

He [promised](#) to include all workers in the country's retirement savings system – but has yet to follow up with legislation necessary to accomplish that goal. Half of US workers remain left out with zero long-term savings.

The president and the Republican Congress failed to hold ICE accountable for [killing Americans](#).

He and his administration relentlessly attacked basic [rights and freedoms](#) protected by the US Constitution.

He bludgeoned [American universities](#) by freezing funds under the pretext of blatantly false accusations of antisemitism. He constantly tried to censor and intimidate news media that enable political discourse that is essential for democracy.

President Trump modelled [lying](#), exaggerating, distorting, [corruption](#), and [self-aggrandizement](#) as acceptable practices. (Add your own links.)

The president and Congress weakened the country's public health, education, data collection, research, and emergency management infrastructure, making significant cuts to cancer research and igniting an exodus of scientific talent from American research institutions.

He degraded the [environment](#) and wasted public funds, cancelling alternative energy investments and leaving the country more oil-dependent while (stupidly) choking off the world supply oil from the Persian Gulf.

Anything else can you think of? Now, for the positives.

What have they done for you?

The president kicked out thousands of illegal immigrants that employers exploit and use to underprice US labor. This action could help American workers gain leverage to bargain for higher wages and benefits and better working conditions.

The president and Congress cut taxes on some tips and overtime -- which to him is like flipping a few quarters to a caddie hauling his golf clubs enroute to the next hole.

He provided cultural relief from liberal DEI overkill and the obnoxious imposition of “pronouns,” which under Democrats had mutated along with the number of genders.

While liberating words and phrases from elite censorship, he almost singlehandedly brought words like “retard” back into everyday use. Then again, the insulting language streaming from the president’s mouth could be placed in the list of negatives.

For many, the president has provided a daily fare of free entertainment, running the government like a TV reality show starring cabinet heads picked mostly for their looks, not brains and talent. For others, the White House spectacle is a cause for alarm. The president’s frenetic blundering and corrective zig zags could be scripted into a satire (“The East Wing”?).

Can you think of anything else?

Now make your own list and compare the sides of the ledger. Judge for yourself whether President Trump and Congress have improved life for working class and middle-income Americans. Or have they been giving you the shaft? Some might consider whether the regime’s assault on liberal culture overkill has been worth the [economic](#) and civic damage.

As noted at the outset, mid-term elections are often a referendum on what the president and Congress have done. Which candidates would improve your list -- and your life? Which would make things worse?

Karl Polzer is founder of the [Center on Capital & Social Equity](#), which explores inequality and advocates for the “bottom 50%.”