

Clearly, this year needs to end. Which is why we're looking forward to New Year's Eve — when, in a beloved tradition, thousands of revelers will gather in Times Square to say goodbye to 2024 and welcome 2025. We like to think that on that night, as the seconds tick down to zero and that giant ball starts to descend, the people gazing up at it will all be united, if only for a moment, by a common hope — a hope shared by the millions of us watching on television — specifically, that the giant ball was not manufactured by Boeing.

Also, while we're hoping, let's hope that 2025 will be a better year. How could it be worse?

Try not to think about it.

End

Start

Dave Barry's 2024 year in review

How many goofs can one nation endure? The answer is Boeing in the wind.

Dave Barry is a novelist and a former humor columnist for the Miami Herald.

How stupid was 2024?

Let's start with the art world, which over the centuries has given humanity so many beautiful, timeless masterpieces. This year, the biggest story involving art, by far, was that a cryptocurrency businessman paid \$6.2 million at a Sotheby's auction for ...

A banana.

Which he ate.

"It's much better than other bananas," he told the media.

And that was not the stupidest thing that happened in 2024. It might not even crack the top 10. Because this was also a year when:

- The Olympics awarded medals for breakdancing.
- Fully grown adults got into fights in Target stores over Stanley brand drinking cups, which are part of the national obsession with hydration that causes many Americans to carry large-capacity beverage containers at all times, as if they're setting off on a trek across the Sahara instead of going to Trader Joe's.
- Despite multiple instances of property damage, injury and even death, expectant couples continued to insist on revealing the genders of their unborn children by blowing things up, instead of simply telling people.

- The number of people who identify as “influencers” continued to grow exponentially, which means that, unless we find a cure, within 10 years everybody on the planet will be trying to make a living by influencing everybody else.
- Hundreds of millions of Americans set all their clocks ahead in March, then set them all back in November, without having the faintest idea why. (Granted, Americans do this every year; we’re just pointing out that it’s stupid.)

But what made 2024 truly special, in terms of sustained idiocy, was that it was an election year. This meant that day after day, month after month, the average American voter was subjected to a relentless gushing spew of campaign messaging created by political professionals who — no matter what side they’re on — all share one unshakable core belief: that the average American voter has the intellectual capacity of a potted fern. It was a brutal, depressing slog, and it felt as though it would never end. In fact, it may still be going on in California: a state that apparently tabulates its ballots on a defective Etch a Sketch.

For most of us, though, the elections, and this insane year, are finally over. But before we move on to whatever (God help us) lies ahead, let’s ingest our anti-nausea medication and take one last cringing look back at the events of 2024, starting with ...

January

... when the nation finds itself trapped in a 1970s slasher movie, the kind in which some teenagers (played by the major political parties) are in a creepy house, being pursued by a terrifying entity (played by a rerun of the 2020 presidential election).

The only sane thing for the teenagers to do is get the hell out of there, but instead they pause by the dark, scary-looking doorway leading down to the basement, and — despite the fact that the theater audience (played by the American public) is shouting, “DON’T GO DOWN THERE! JUST LEAVE THE HOUSE YOU IDIOTS!” — the teenagers decide to go down into the basement, only to find OH GOD NOOOOOO ...

And so, thanks to our political system under which the nominees for the most powerful office in the world are chosen by approximately 73 people in approximately four rural states while the vast majority of Americans are still taking down their Christmas decorations again find ourselves facing a choice between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Both candidates carry baggage. Trump is wanted on criminal charges in something like 23 states and, if elected, could become the first president to govern from a secret hideout. His speeches are sounding increasingly unhinged, which is no small feat since he did not sound particularly hinged in the first place.

For his part, Biden keeps saying words that do not appear in any known human language and gives the impression that any day now he’s going to shuffle into a state dinner wearing only a bathrobe. But not necessarily *his* bathrobe.

In other words, we have one candidate who lost the last election but claims he won it, and another candidate who won the last election but might not remember what year that was. America, the choice is yours!

Meanwhile, the nation is facing a number of serious problems. Foremost among them is the situation on the border with Mexico, which at one time was a legally separate nation from the United States but is now basically functioning as a vestibule. This has resulted in a tense confrontation between the federal government and Texas, which is alarming because, in the words of one military analyst, “Texas has way more guns.”

In government news, the Pentagon is harshly criticized for taking more than three days to notify the White House that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had been hospitalized. This prompts the administration to check up on the rest of the Cabinet, only to discover that at least four other secretaries are missing and the secretary of commerce apparently died three years ago.

Abroad, fighting continues to rage in both Ukraine and Gaza, although these conflicts are no longer getting a ton of attention in the U.S. media because of all the news being generated by Taylor Swift.

In a troubling aviation incident, an Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max 9 flying at 16,000 feet suddenly develops a refrigerator-sized hole in the fuselage when an improperly attached panel blows off, terrifying passengers who have reason to wonder whether the airline crew, instead of making a big deal about the position of everybody’s tray table, should maybe be checking to see whether the plane has been correctly bolted together. As a safety precaution, the Federal Aviation Administration grounds all Max 9s and advises passengers on other Boeing aircraft to “avoid sitting near windows.” For its part, Boeing states that “at least the plane didn’t lose a really important part, like one of the whaddyallits, wings.”

Speaking of big corporations making questionable products, in ...

February

... Apple launches the much-anticipated Vision Pro, a virtual-reality headset costing more than your grandfather paid (just ask him!) for his first car. But it’s worth it because when you put it on, thanks to a revolutionary “spatial computing” system coupled with 12 cameras and a 23 million pixel display, you look like an idiot.

Special counsel Robert K. Hur concludes his year-long investigation into Biden’s handling of classified documents by releasing a 388-page report concluding that Biden “does not appear to have all his oars in the water.” An angry Biden immediately holds a news conference, during which he heatedly denies Hur’s assertion and (this really happened) refers to Egyptian leader Abdel Fatah El-Sisi as the “president of Mexico.”

In other White House news, CNN, after reviewing documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, reports that the Biden family’s German shepherd, Commander, bit Secret Service personnel in at least 24 incidents, eclipsing the record previously held by Dick Cheney.

Meanwhile, Trump, who is appearing in court more often than Perry Mason, is found guilty by a New York civil judge on charges of financial fraud, aiding and abetting, aggravated contempt, disorderly obstruction, second-degree vagrancy and loitering with intent to conspire. The judge fines Trump nearly half a billion dollars and bans him for the next three years from riding in any motorcade more than six cars long. Two days later a defiant Trump attends an event called “Sneaker Con,” where (this also really happened) he unveils a line of footwear, including the gold-colored Never Surrender High-Top sneaker (actual marketing slogan: “your rally cry in shoe form”).

In a highly controversial decision, the Alabama Supreme Court rules that frozen embryos are, for legal purposes, children, and therefore must immediately be thawed out and provided with iPhones.

Tucker Carlson conducts a two-hour interview with Vladimir Putin, offering westerners a rare opportunity to find out what the Russian leader really thinks. It turns out he thinks Carlson is a useful idiot.

In a Super Bowl for the ages, two teams compete against each other under the watchful gaze of Taylor Swift.

Speaking of spectacles, in ...

March

... Biden, seeking to dispel persistent rumors that he is an elderly man, delivers a State of the Union address consisting almost entirely of shouting. This performance does not significantly improve his poll numbers, but it's a big hit with members of the Washington press corps, several hundred of whom decide, independently, to describe the speech as “fiery.”

In their response, Republicans, always looking for new ways to demonstrate their incompetence, elect to have Sen. Katie Britt (Alabama) deliver a disturbingly melodramatic talk from (why not?) her kitchen, where she gives the impression that she has just ingested a wide range of pharmaceuticals, and nobody, least of all Britt, knows which one is going to kick in next.

Yet another federal budget crisis is averted at the last minute when Congress passes a \$1.2 trillion spending bill, which will enable the government to keep spending insanely more money than it takes in. The U.S. debt is now growing at the rate of a trillion dollars every 100 days, but fortunately this is not a problem because it will be taken care of by future generations. “No problem! Just put it on our tab!” is the view of future generations, and that is why we love them.

In other high-finance news, Trump's lawyers tell a New York court that he cannot raise the nearly half-billion dollars he needs for an appeal bond, having been turned down by more than 30 bond companies and an individual known as Anthony “Tony Three Nostrils” Avocado. Trump gets a break when an appeals court lowers the amount to \$175 million, which Trump says he definitely has, although he left it in his other pants.

In a possibly related development, Trump announces that he is selling — we are not making this up — “God Bless the USA” Bibles for \$59.99 a pop.

“It’s my favorite book,” he states, moments before being struck by lightning.

(No, that did not happen and you are a bad person for even fantasizing about it.)

In aviation news, a Boeing plane flying from Australia to New Zealand suddenly goes into a nosedive, injuring 50 people. Another Boeing plane, taking off from the San Francisco airport, loses a piece of landing gear. A Boeing spokesperson says that the company, after conducting an in-depth review, has tentatively identified the root cause of the recent problems.

“We think it’s gravity,” said the spokesperson. “It seems to be getting worse.” As a safety precaution, Boeing is advising pilots to avoid taking off, and simply taxi the planes from city to city, which the spokesperson says “might result in delays, especially to overseas destinations.”

Speaking of exciting things happening in the sky, in ...

April

... the nation is enthralled by a total eclipse, a rare celestial occurrence in which the Earth, sun and moon align in such a way as to cause a large number of people to deliberately travel to Indianapolis. Huge crowds in the path of the totality watch excitedly as the sky gradually turns completely dark — a spectacular sight that most people will never witness again in their lifetimes, unless they’re still around at sunset.

In other natural phenomena, a 4.8-magnitude earthquake with an epicenter in central New Jersey rattles the northeast. New York City is completely paralyzed, although not because of the earthquake; it’s always completely paralyzed. But for a few seconds there is slightly less honking.

New York remains in the news with the onset of the single most exciting thing ever to happen to CNN: yet another trial of Trump. In this one, he’s charged with falsifying business records as part of a scheme to guarantee that every single human being on the planet, including members of primitive tribes in the Amazon jungle, would be aware that Trump had a one-night stand with adult-film star Stormy Daniels.

At least that's how it worked out.

True Fact: The first witness called by the prosecution is a man named “David Pecker.”

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a contender to be Trump's running mate, bolsters her case with a new book in which she reveals — apparently on the advice of the same public relations firm used by Boeing — that she once shot and killed her family dog, Cricket. Many people are appalled by this revelation, although Noem's supporters note that she would be a handy person to have around the White House if Commander ever comes back.

Speaking of commanders: Biden, campaigning in Pennsylvania, suggests — twice — that his uncle was eaten by cannibals after his plane went down off the New Guinea coast during World War II. The prime minister of Papua New Guinea objects to the president's cannibal story on the nitpicky grounds that it is not true. Nevertheless the president seems to sincerely believe that it happened, and it was HIS uncle, dammit.

As the tragic situation in Gaza worsens, American college students on a growing number of campuses engage in protests and other dramatic actions intended to draw attention to the single most important issue facing the world: the feelings of American college students.

Speaking of drama, in ...

May

... Stormy Daniels tells a New York jury in explicit detail about her encounter with Trump during a 2006 celebrity golf tournament, testifying that when she came out of the bathroom in Trump's hotel suite, he was waiting for her wearing only a T-shirt and boxer shorts, and before she could stop him he proceeded — without wearing a condom — to falsify business records.

True trivia fact: Trump finished 62nd in that celebrity tournament. The golfer who finished 43rd was Dan Quayle.

On weekends, when he's not in court, Trump continues to campaign for president. While discussing immigration policy at a rally in New Jersey, he makes the following statement, printed here verbatim:

"Silence of the Lambs. Has anyone ever seen 'The Silence of the Lambs?' The late, great Hannibal Lecter is a wonderful man. He often times would have a friend for dinner. Remember the last scene? 'Excuse me. I'm about to have a friend for dinner,' as this poor doctor walked by. 'I'm about to have a friend for dinner.' But Hannibal Lecter. Congratulations. The late, great Hannibal Lecter."

This statement raises a number of questions, including:

1. What?
2. Seriously, what?
3. Is it possible that it was actually Hannibal Lecter who ate Biden's uncle?

Speaking of Biden, his poll numbers continue to be bad as voters express their unhappiness about the economy, especially inflation. This is very frustrating for White House spokespersons, who are constantly pointing out that inflation is no longer a problem on whatever planet it is that White House spokespersons live on. Unfortunately, it's still a problem here on Earth, where prices are significantly higher for basic needs such as food, gas, housing and tickets to the Met Gala, which cost only \$50,000 last year but jumped to \$75,000 this year, leaving many attendees so broke that they are forced to attend wearing what appear to be Halloween costumes.

In other presidential news, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., seeking to set himself apart from the two flawed major-party candidates and offer voters a rational alternative, tells the New York Times that doctors found a dead worm in his brain.

Meanwhile, in a spectacular, much-anticipated natural phenomenon, trillions of cicadas emerge from the ground, watch 15 minutes of cable TV news and elect to die.

As the month draws to a close, Trump is found guilty on all 34 felony counts of whatever it is that he was charged with. The convictions deal a fatal blow to his candidacy.

Ha ha! We are of course joking. The convictions, like all the other legal actions against Trump, are a massive boost for his candidacy, energizing his supporters and generating tens of millions of dollars in donations, an outcome that could have been predicted by anybody with a rudimentary understanding of Trump's appeal, although it apparently did not occur to the geniuses behind this particular legal strategy.

Speaking of strategies that do not work out as planned, in ...

June

... the Biden reelection campaign struggles to change the public perception — largely created by videos showing the president looking lost and confused — that the president is sometimes lost and confused.

Democrats insist that these videos are “cheap fakes,” and that in fact Biden is sharp as a tack, but unfortunately the public never sees this because he only exhibits this sharpness when there are no cameras around to capture it, kind of like Bigfoot.

So there's a lot on the line when Biden and Trump square off in a much-anticipated prime-time debate, which was proposed by the Biden campaign, apparently on the advice of Boeing.

It's obvious from the start of the debate that the president is struggling. He has trouble finishing, or even starting, his sentences; he spends much of the debate staring vacantly into the distance like a man who's trying to remember where he put the remote control, unaware of the fact that he is holding it.

In short, it's a very bad night for Biden.

Q: How bad is it?

A: It's so bad that, by comparison, Trump seems, at times, to be almost lucid.

Actually, it's worse than that. It's so bad that *even professional journalists* can see how bad it is. In fact suddenly everybody in Washington is acutely aware of the president's decline, which previously had been apparent only to the rest of the world population.

And so as we move into ...

July

... Democrats are in a state of panic. Behind the scenes, party leaders desperately want to get Biden off the ticket, but he repeatedly insists that he's going to be the candidate. This leads to an awkward national conversation:

BIDEN: I'm staying in the race.

PARTY LEADERS: You have our full support, Mr. President! Whatever you decide!

BIDEN: Okay, as I said, I'm staying in the race.

PARTY LEADERS: It's your call, sir! Run or don't run! It's totally up to you!

BIDEN: Again, I'm definitely running.

PARTY LEADERS: Whether you stay in or drop out, we fully support either choice! Including dropping out!

BIDEN: I SAID I'M RUNNING DAMMIT.

PARTY LEADERS: We await your decision, sir!

And so on.

Just when it appears that the presidential race cannot get any more insane, Trump goes to Butler, Pennsylvania, to hold a campaign rally, for which the security has apparently been outsourced to Boeing. Trump is shot in the ear by a man who is somehow able to climb — unimpeded, with a rifle — onto the roof of a building that not only is within range of the speaker's platform, but also has *three police snipers stationed inside it*. Really.

The attempted assassination shocks the nation but also bolsters Trump's popularity. He has a commanding lead in the polls as, a few days later, he accepts the presidential nomination at the Republican convention (theme: "TRUMP!") with a triumphant speech lasting slightly longer than veterinary school.

Democrats are now in utter despair. Biden continues to insist that he's running; the party has no choice but to renominate him and face almost-certain defeat in November.

Then, in a sudden reversal, Biden announces that he's quitting the race after reassessing the situation and waking up next to the severed head of a thoroughbred racehorse. Party leaders lavishly praise Biden for saving democracy, then decide, via what is undoubtedly a democratic process, to replace him with Kamala Harris.

Other than that, it's a quiet month in politics.

In other news, a massive worldwide internet disruption paralyzes global air travel, along with banks, hotels, hospitals and other industries, when Arnold A. Frinkledorp, an 87-year-old retiree who is attempting to send an email to his sister from his AOL account, accidentally presses the alt, backslash, left arrow, F3, ampersand and right parenthesis keys simultaneously — which apparently nobody has ever done before — thereby triggering a Windows glitch that causes more than 8.5 million computers to crash. The disruption winds up costing businesses more than \$5 billion, although, on the plus side, Mr. Frinkledorp's email (a meme of a cat wearing sunglasses) is successfully delivered to his sister, who accidentally deletes it.

As the Olympic Games get underway in Paris, tens of millions of viewers tune in to NBC to watch three action-packed weeks of Snoop Dogg reacting to French things. The Games take full advantage of the city's scenic venues, including the Seine, which is used for the swimming leg of the triathlon race after health authorities assure competitors that intensive cleanup efforts have removed “the vast majority” of the turds.

Speaking of competition, in ...

August

... the race for the presidency kicks into high gear as fired-up Democrats hold their convention in Chicago. The first-day highlight is a grateful and heartfelt farewell to Biden, who speaks in the prestigious 2:30 a.m. time slot and is never heard from again.

The focus then shifts to the nomination of Harris, who is running on a platform of joy, and being joyful, and a general vibe of joyfulness, as well as a set of policies to be specified later that will take America in a new, completely different direction and in stark contrast with the policies of whoever is running the country now.

The convention gives Harris an immediate boost in the polls, and suddenly Trump faces a serious challenge, to which he responds, during a two-hour speech to a rally in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania: “I say that I'm much better looking than her. Much better. Much better. I'm a better-looking person than Kamala.” Fox News confirms this.

Meanwhile, the two vice-presidential candidates, Tim Walz and JD Vance, engage in a spirited exchange on the issues, reminiscent of the Lincoln-Douglas debates:

WALZ: You're weird.

VANCE: I'M not weird. YOU'RE weird.

WALZ: No, YOU'RE weird.

VANCE: No, YOU'RE weird.

WALZ: No, YOU'RE ...

Speaking of weird: Independent candidate Kennedy, following up on the revelation that he has a dead worm in his brain, reveals that he once picked up a roadkill bear, which he (we've all done it) left under a bicycle in Central Park as a prank. Three weeks later Kennedy suspends his campaign and urges his followers to vote for Trump, assuming they are able to chew through their restraints.

Two astronauts are stuck aboard the International Space Station when the Starliner spacecraft that was supposed to return them to Earth develops mechanical problems. You will never in a million years guess the name of the company that built this spacecraft.

Meanwhile down here on Earth things are also not going so great as we move into ...

September

... when suddenly, with no advance warning, the biggest issue in the presidential election is the question of whether Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, are eating people's pets. They are not, but this fact does not prevent Trump from raising the issue in a televised debate with Harris, during which Trump gives the impression that his debate prep consisted entirely of getting his hair dyed a slightly more believable color.

"In Springfield, they're eating the dogs," he states, "The people that came in, they're eating the cats. They're eating, they're eating the pets of the people that live there."

For her part, Harris repeatedly stresses the message that she is a regular middle-class person from the middle class who totally relates to the problems faced by middle-class people like herself, and she definitely intends to fix these problems once she is elected to high government office.

Harris is widely considered to be the winner of the debate, on top of which she is endorsed by Taylor Swift, which is a big deal because the singer has more than 280 million Instagram followers and 53 votes in the electoral college.

A week after the debate, police capture a would-be assassin who was spotted with a rifle on a golf course where Trump was playing. There was a time in America when this event — the second serious assassination attempt on a major presidential candidate in two months — would be considered a big story, but in the hellscape that is 2024 politics it dominates the headlines for considerably less time than the mythical pet-eating Haitians.

As the election draws closer emotions are running high. It's also an increasingly tense time in the Middle East, where Israel and Iran appear to be on the verge of all-out war. But the good news is that at least the hurricane season has been relatively peaceful ...

Okay, scratch that. In late September, Hurricane Helene causes horrendous devastation in six southeastern states, and then in ...

October

... Hurricane Milton ravages Florida. It's a brutally difficult time for millions of Americans, but the good news is that at least nobody tries to politicize the disasters or use them to spread idiotic conspiracy theories about sinister forces controlling the weather ...

Okay, scratch that also.

In presidential election news, Trump makes a campaign appearance at a Pennsylvania McDonald's, during which he wears an apron and serves some people at the drive-through window. This is the kind of hokey photo op stunt that politicians have been doing forever, so you'd think this would be no big deal, right?

Wrong. It is a *huge* deal. Thanks to Trump's uncanny ability — it is his superpower — to drastically reduce the functional IQ of professional journalists, this event dominates the national political coverage for days. Newsweek runs a story headlined "Was Donald Trump's McDonald's Shift 'Staged?'" The New York Times runs at least six — that's right, *six* — stories about it, including one asserting that, among other infractions, Trump "shoveled a scoopful of fries the wrong way" and "committed what appeared to be a number of health code violations."

Somehow Trump survives all this journalism. He continues to crisscross the nation promising tax breaks for pretty much every category of U.S. resident including domestic animals, and giving increasingly improvisational speeches during which every thought fragment that seeps into his brain spurts instantly from his mouth without any kind of review. For example: Speaking to a rally in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, Trump informs the crowd that their beloved hometown hero, Arnold Palmer, had an unusually large putter. (We don't know whether the New York Times assigned a team of reporters to investigate this claim, but we would not rule it out.)

In another suave outreach move, the Trump campaign, ever sensitive to accusations of racism, holds a rally in Madison Square Garden featuring a comedian who jokes that — prepare for hilarity — Puerto Rico is garbage.

On the Democratic side, the Harris campaign, which has spent more than \$1 billion but is still struggling to clearly define the candidate's vision for the presidency, settles on an upbeat closing message: "Whoever she is, she's not Donald Trump." At exactly the same time Harris is making her big final pitch to voters, Biden, who is still technically the president, somehow gains access to Zoom and lends the Harris campaign a helping hand by declaring, in response to the Trump-rally Puerto Rico joke, that roughly half of the U.S. electorate is garbage. Thanks, Joe!

Meanwhile, in an issue that neither party talks about because fixing it would require political courage, the national debt goes over \$35 trillion, moving the nation still closer to the inevitable financial catastrophe that will leave future generations completely screwed. Fortunately, as we have noted, future generations are fine with this. "Don't worry about it!" they would say, if they could speak to our current political leadership. "We know you're busy leading!"

On a happier note, for the 14th consecutive year the World Series is won by a team other than the Yankees.

In space, a large communications satellite unexpectedly explodes, creating debris that threatens other satellites. In the spirit of mercy we will not name the company that made the defective satellite, other than to say it rhymes with "blowing."

Speaking of unexpected, in ...

November

... the voters finally go to the polls for the most important American election since at least the dawn of time. All the expert political analysts and professional pollsters using scientific methodology agree that the race is extremely tight, a toss-up, a dead heat — especially in the crucial battleground states. It's too close to call! The experts are certain of this.

On election night, the TV networks are teeming with political commentators prepared to analyze and dissect and crunch the numbers far into the night as the nation settles in for the long, grueling process of determining the winner — a process that everyone agrees could go on for days, possibly even weeks, because of the extreme razor-thin closeness of the ...

Never mind. In roughly the same amount of time it takes to air a Geico commercial, the networks determine that Trump has decisively won the election, including all of the so-called battleground states and four Canadian provinces. It's a stunning result and a massive failure by the expert political analysts, who humbly admit that they had no idea what was happening, and promise that from now on they will be more aware of their limitations.

We are of course joking. In a matter of seconds these experts pivot from being spectacularly clueless about what was going to happen in the election to confidently explaining what happened in the election.

One theory is that it was not a great idea for Democrats to insist that Biden was fine until it was embarrassingly obvious that he was not, then replace him, via a secret process, with a candidate who was not great at talking and did not run in a single primary and who previously advocated positions that many Americans were not crazy about, which is why they voted, sometimes reluctantly, for Trump.

One branch of the Democratic Party accepts this theory and begins the painful but necessary process of self-examination. Another branch prefers to believe that the party is fine and the real problem is that most Americans are sexist, racist, pro-fascist morons, which might not be a winning message for Democrats going forward, but it does enable this branch to feel better about itself.

For his part, Trump has no doubt whatsoever that the American people have given him a mandate to deport anywhere up to 60 percent of the U.S. population and — in his words “turn this great nation around by appointing wildly unqualified individuals to the Cabinet.”

Okay, he didn't actually say that, but he did nominate Rep. Matt Gaetz (Florida) to be attorney general, which is like nominating Jeffrey Dahmer to be surgeon general. Gaetz is soon forced to withdraw his name from consideration after Trump is informed that the U.S. Senate, for all its shortcomings, is not completely insane.

Another controversial Trump nomination, this one for secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, is Robert F. “Roadkill” Kennedy Jr., who used to think Trump was basically Hitler but now thinks he's great. Kennedy is deeply suspicious of vaccines, Big Pharma, the CIA, fluoride, seed oils, WiFi, Froot Loops and chemicals in general. He also wants to make America healthy again by reducing the consumption of the overprocessed junk foods that have turned many Americans into big fat waddling tubs of lard, like ... okay, like many Americans.

In environmental news, 70,000 world leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, aides, activists, consultants, celebrities, media people, caterers, chauffeurs, bodyguards, grifters, masseurs, masseuses and private-jet pilots gather for COP29, the massive conference held every year by the United Nations to solve the pesky problem of global climate change. This year's host nation is Azerbaijan, which, as a corrupt authoritarian state whose main source of income is selling billions of dollars worth of oil and gas, naturally wants everybody to stop using so darned much oil and gas. The conference is once again a huge success as measured in metric tons of hors d'oeuvres consumed, and everybody agrees to gather again next year for COP30, on the off chance that global climate change is still going on.

Speaking of comically futile gestures: The Australian Senate passes a law banning children under 16 from social media. This law will be enforced by adults who have to ask their children for technical support when they accidentally lock themselves out of their iPhones.

Speaking of protecting children, in ...

December

... Joe Biden, who repeatedly promised that he would not pardon his son Hunter, cements his legacy as the most Joe Biden president ever by pardoning his son Hunter, thus forcing the Democratic Party to change its mantra from “Nobody is above the law!” to “Hey, it’s complicated.” The wording of the pardon document is quite broad, covering “all offenses committed between 2014 and 2024, including any currently unsolved bank robberies, not that we are suggesting anything.”

The pardon outrages many Republicans who would be fine with it if Trump did it, while it’s fine with many Democrats who would be outraged if Trump did it. For that is how our system of checks and balances works.

Meanwhile, Trump is acting as though he’s already the president: meeting with foreign leaders, signing treaties, vetoing legislation, authorizing drone strikes and ordering the beheading of “Peach” and “Blossom,” the two turkeys Biden pardoned for Thanksgiving.

Helping Trump with the transition is his new best billionaire friend Elon Musk, the genius tech visionary who’s going to make the federal government efficient by implementing “outside the box” measures such as:

- Having veterinarians install locator chips in all federal employees.
- Replacing both the Air Force and the Internal Revenue Service with laser-equipped orbital space robots.
- Combining the departments of Energy, Transportation, Labor, Agriculture, Interior and Justice into a single agency called “The Guv,” which will be physically located in Taiwan but accessible via an app.
- Renting Hawaii out for proms.

It’s an exciting time to be alive, as post-election America begins to discover, with varying degrees of excitement, what it voted for.

After numerous sightings of mysterious lights in the sky over New Jersey, government officials seek to calm an increasingly alarmed public.

“We’ve investigated these lights, and there’s absolutely nothing to worry about,” states Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, who adds, “on an unrelated note, people should keep their children indoors.”

In other news, a horrific crime on a New York City sidewalk leads to a national conversation about the U.S. health-care system, which reveals that a truly disturbing number of people believe the following three things:

1. The health-care system is bad.
2. Therefore, killing people is okay.
3. Especially if the killer is cute.

Clearly, this year needs to end. Which is why we're looking forward to New Year's Eve — when, in a beloved tradition, thousands of revelers will gather in Times Square to say goodbye to 2024 and welcome 2025. We like to think that on that night, as the seconds tick down to zero and that giant ball starts to descend, the people gazing up at it will all be united, if only for a moment, by a common hope — a hope shared by the millions of us watching on television — specifically, that the giant ball was not manufactured by Boeing.

Also, while we're hoping, let's hope that 2025 will be a better year. How could it be worse?

Try not to think about it.