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Highlights of 2014

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| January 1 | Latvia becomes the 18th nation to join the Eurozone.

The 20th anniversary of the effective date of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). |
| January 8 | "The 50th anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson's declaration of the War on Poverty. The official U.S. poverty rate tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau was 15 percent in 2012 (the most recent available), compared with 19 percent of the population in 1964, when President Johnson delivered his "war" remarks in a State of the Union message. Even so, a rise in the overall population means that the number of Americans who were poor in 2012—at more than 46 million—was higher than the 36 million in poverty in 1964." |
| January 10 | The U.S. Labor Department reports that the unemployment rate dropped to 6.7 percent in December 2013. |
| January 24 | "Planalytics, a research firm in Pennsylvania and London which tracks the effect of weather on the economy, reports that the "polar vortex" which put much of the U.S. in a deep freeze during January may have cost the economy as much as \$5 billion, the consequence of damaged crops, grounded airline flights, disrupted deliveries, lost work hours, and diminished consumer spending." |
| February 3 | Janet Yellen is sworn in as the first female Chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve's Board of Governors. |
| February 11 | "One week after Standard & Poor's ("S&P") cuts its credit rating on Puerto Rico to junk-bond status, Fitch Ratings does the same over concerns about Puerto Rico's ability to access capital markets. With some \$70 billion of tax-free debt, Puerto Rico has a long-soured economy." |
| February 18 | "The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank of New York issues its Quarterly Report on Household Debt and Credit, which indicates that, as of December 31, 2013, the total |

amount of nondischargeable U.S. student loans hit a new all-time high of \$1.08 trillion, an increase of \$53 billion in the quarter. By comparison, total credit card debt as of the same date was only \$683 billion."

- February 21 "The mortgage giant Fannie Mae reports that it passed a symbolic milestone at the end of the fourth quarter of 2013, generating profits that will push its total payments to the U.S. government higher than the amount it received in the 2008 bailout."
- February 24 "Japan-based Mt. Gox, bitcoin's oldest and once largest exchange, goes offline, reporting that as many as 850,000 units of the virtual currency (6 percent of the entire amount in circulation, valued at \$475 million) had been stolen by hackers, thereby causing the trading value of remaining bitcoins to plummet."
- February 28 "Eurostat reports that inflation in the Eurozone remained stuck at a very low level in February, while the jobless rate was unchanged in January. Consumer prices rose at an annualized rate of 0.8 percent in February, unchanged from the revised figure for January. The "core" inflation rate, which excludes energy and food prices, ticked up to 1 percent from 0.8 percent in January. The jobless rate in January for the Eurozone remained at 12 percent, compared to 10.8 percent for the 28-nation EU."
- March 3 "Forbes releases its annual ranking of global billionaires. Regaining the top spot is Bill Gates, with a total net worth estimated at \$76 billion (up from \$67 billion in 2013). His rise in wealth knocks Mexican telecom tycoon Carlos Slim off the top spot into second place. In total, there are a record 1,645 billionaires. Mr. Gates has been atop the list for 15 of the last 20 years. Technology firms feature heavily on the list, with Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg becoming the biggest gainer in net worth. The world's largest economy, the U.S., continues to have the most billionaires, with 492. By region, Europe boasts the most billionaires outside the U.S., with 468 in total, closely followed by Asia, which has 444 billionaires."
- Russian stock markets nose-dive after President Vladimir V. Putin announces that Russian soldiers will mobilize to the Crimean region of Ukraine to "protect Russian citizens."
- March 7 "The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) reports that the amount of debt globally has soared more than 40 percent to \$100 trillion since the first signs of the financial crisis, as governments borrowed to pull their economies out of recession and companies took advantage of record-low interest rates."
- "A small Chinese solar firm (Shanghai Chaori Solar Energy) defaults on its debt when it fails to make a payment to investors on a CN¥1 billion (\$164 million) bond. The default is the first of its kind in China, whose government is known for delivering bailouts or extended debt deadlines just in time to distressed firms and investment products."
- March 14 "The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (the "FDIC") sues more than a dozen U.S. and foreign banks, seeking treble damages on antitrust claims and punitive damages "to the extent allowable by law" for allegedly suppressing the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) and causing losses at 38 now failed banks."
- March 18 "Russian President Vladimir V. Putin signs treaties annexing Crimea as part of Russia, reversing what he described as a historic mistake made by the Soviet Union 60 years ago and brushing aside international condemnation."
- March 21 "U.S. and European sanctions rattle Russia's economy, with Moscow's stock indexes opening sharply lower, rating agencies threatening to reduce the country's creditworthiness, and hints of trepidation coming from Russia's tycoons. In the first reaction to directly affect ordinary consumers, Visa and MasterCard cease operations with Bank Rossiya, which was targeted by the new sanctions because it serves as a personal bank for senior officials of the Russian Federation. Economists say it is the uncertainty now hanging over nearly every profitable enterprise in

Russia, rather than any immediate consequence of the sanctions, that poses the gravest threat to the country's long-term prosperity."

- March 24 "The U.S. and its closest allies cast Russia out of the Group of Eight industrialized democracies, their most exclusive club, to punish President Vladimir V. Putin for his rapid annexation of Crimea, while threatening tougher sanctions if he escalates aggression against Ukraine."
- The U.S. Federal Reserve approves the capital plans of 25 of the nation's 30 largest banks as part of the final leg of its annual required stress tests. Citigroup was the most notable bank among those that had their capital plans rejected. The rejections ban Citigroup and the four other banks from increasing their dividends or share repurchases for the next year.
- March 29 "General Motors ("GM") announces a recall of 490,000 trucks and 172,000 compact cars, meaning the automaker has now recalled 4.8 million vehicles in the U.S. during the first three months of the year (roughly six times the number of vehicles it recalled in all of 2013). The most prominent of the major recalls thus far in 2014—involving a defect with the ignition switch on the company's compact cars that has been linked to 13 deaths—has raised questions, including a congressional inquiry, about GM's knowledge of the defective parts during its chapter 11 case and whether claims based upon the defect were effectively discharged when GM emerged from bankruptcy in July 2009."
- April 3 "The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees estimates in a report that it will take decades for Syria to recoup the cost of war. "Even if the conflict ceased now and GDP grew at an average rate of five per cent each year, it is estimated that it would take the Syrian economy 30 years to return to the economic level of 2010," states the report, calling the situation an "economic catastrophe.""
- April 14 "The English version of French economist Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is published. In it, Piketty posits that wealth will accumulate if the rate of return on capital is greater than the rate of economic growth. Over the long term, Piketty argues, this will lead to the concentration of wealth and to economic instability. Piketty proposes a global system of progressive taxes and transfer payments to help create greater economic equality and prevent the vast majority of wealth from coming under the control of a tiny minority."
- April 25 "Russia's credit rating is cut by S&P to just one notch above "junk" status amid a growing push by Western nations to step up sanctions against President Vladimir V. Putin's government as a result of the crisis in Ukraine. S&P cited the destabilizing effects of capital flight from Russia, which it said reached about \$51 billion in the first three months of 2014."
- April 30 "A report from the International Comparison Program (ICP) examining the size of economies based not on market exchange rates but on the purchasing power of parity (PPP) suggests that China will overtake the U.S. as the world's largest economy in 2014, rather than in 2019–20, as predicted by other researchers."
- May 2 "The U.S. Department of Labor reports that the unemployment rate dropped to 6.3 percent, the lowest since September 2008. "
- May 16 "The Indian National Congress, which has headed India's government for nearly all of the country's post-independence history, concedes defeat to the opposition leader, Narendra Modi, as voters render a crushing verdict on their country's flagging economic growth and a drumbeat of corruption scandals. The elections come during a period of rapid transition in Indian society, as urbanization and economic growth break down generations-old voting patterns."
- GM agrees to pay a record \$35 million fine in connection with the U.S. government's investigation into the way it handled the recall of 2.59 million small cars over faulty

- ignition switches. GM's agreement with the U.S. Transportation Department includes "significant and wide-ranging internal changes" to the way it reviews safety issues and decides on recalls.
- May 18 Swiss voters reject proposals to implement the world's highest minimum wage. About 76 percent of voters in the wealthy nation dismiss the proposal made by the Swiss union SGB and backed by the Socialist and Green Parties for a minimum wage of CHF 22 (\$25) per hour.
- May 19 "Credit Suisse, Switzerland's second-largest bank, agrees to plead guilty and pay more than \$2.6 billion, the biggest criminal tax penalty ever, to settle charges that it helped Americans bilk funds from U.S. coffers. The bank admitted that for decades it engaged in practices such as destroying documents and setting up sham accounts to help thousands of Americans evade taxes."
- June 5 "GM issues a 325-page report detailing how for 11 years it turned a blind eye to an ignition-switch problem linked to at least 13 deaths but pinning the blame largely on what the report described as incompetent lower-level employees, leaving top brass untouched. The report, which will be the subject of upcoming congressional hearings, describes shortcomings of GM engineers but concludes that the highest levels of the company were not made aware of the problem."
- June 8 "Gallup reports that in May the U.S. Standard of Living Index climbed to its highest point since the polling agency began surveying the issue in 2008. The index rose to 47, compared to 14 in October and November 2008 at the height of the Great Recession."
- June 9 "President Obama directs the U.S. Department of Education to expand a program to ease student loan repayments for about 5 million more people. Under the 2010 "Pay as You Earn" law, borrowers make repayments of no more than 10 percent of their monthly income; the benefit currently applies only to those who started borrowing after October 2007, shortly before the recession began. Obama's order would widen the eligibility to people who took out loans before October 2007. The new rules would take effect in December 2015."
- June 24 "The Conference Board, a New York-based private research group, reports that consumer confidence in the U.S. rose in June to the highest level in more than six years as an improving job market bolsters households. The index climbed to 85.2, the strongest reading since January 2008. A separate report released by the U.S. Commerce Department shows that sales of new homes rose in May by the most in 22 years, indicating that the industry is rebounding from a winter-induced lull at the start of the year. Purchases jumped 18.6 percent, the biggest one-month gain since January 1992, to a 504,000 annualized pace."
- June 28 "Puerto Rico's governor, Alejandro García Padilla, signs into law restructuring legislation that provides a judicial debt relief process in Puerto Rico's courts modeled on chapter 9 and chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code for certain public corporations."
- June 30 "A U.S. Census Bureau report indicates that the proportion of people living in areas of poverty increased by 7.7 percentage points from 2000 to 2010. The latest figures, collected by the American Community Survey from 2008 to 2012, showed that one in every four U.S. residents lives in an area with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent."
- July 2 "The 17 financial institutions designated as systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs) file "living wills" with U.S. federal regulators, detailing how the institutions would be wound down if they were to fail."
- July 3 "The Dow Jones Industrial Average surpasses 17,000 for the first time."
- July 9 "U.S. Federal Reserve officials agree to end the Fed's bond-buying program in

- July 14 October, putting an explicit end date on the experiment for the first time and closing a controversial chapter in central-banking annals, its results still the subject of heated debate. The central bank has reduced bond purchases by \$10 billion increments in 2014 to \$35 billion a month, from a peak of \$85 billion. The tentative plan is to reduce bond purchases in increments at the next three policy meetings, including a \$15 billion reduction in October, leaving the Fed to buy no bonds in November."
- July 18 "Citigroup Inc., the third-largest U.S. bank by assets, agrees to pay \$7 billion in fines and consumer relief to resolve government claims that it misled investors about the quality of mortgage-backed bonds sold before the 2008 financial crisis. The settlement includes a \$4 billion civil penalty, the largest of its kind. It also includes \$500 million to be paid to state attorneys general and the FDIC. The remainder comprises various forms of consumer relief to be provided by the end of 2018."
- July 29 "Reflecting a growing trend, U.S. drugmaker AbbVie announces a plan to buy U.K.-based Shire in a \$54 billion deal, from which AbbVie will emerge as a subsidiary of the U.K. firm. It is the latest example in a flurry of tax-motivated acquisitions known as "inversions," in which a large U.S. firm acquires a smaller target company domiciled in a tax-friendly jurisdiction such as Ireland or the U.K., with the deal structured in such a way that the foreign minnow swallows the domestic whale."
- July 31 "The EU approves a package of expanded sanctions against Russia over the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where Moscow has been widely accused of supporting separatist rebels. The new sanctions target Russia's state-owned banks and will restrict sales to Russia of arms, some kinds of technology, and some equipment used by the oil industry. European diplomats also drew up a list of people who will face individual sanctions, including at least three close associates of Russia's President, Vladimir V. Putin."
- August 5 "A U.S. federal judge orders Bank of America to pay a \$1.27 billion fine for fraud perpetrated by Countrywide Financial Corp., a mortgage company acquired by the bank in 2008. In October 2013, a jury held Bank of America liable for bad loans Countrywide had sold to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as part of its "Hustle" mortgage-lending program as the housing market soured in 2007 and 2008."
- August 12 "A report is issued by S&P entitled "How Increasing Income Inequality Is Dampening U.S. Economic Growth, and Possible Ways to Change the Tide." In the report, S&P argues that unequal distribution of income is making it harder for the nation to recover from the recession and achieve the kind of growth that was commonplace in decades past."
- August 12 "The U.S. Federal Reserve and the FDIC report that 11 big banks must take "meaningful action" to address shortcomings in their Dodd-Frank "living wills" submitted in early July, including assumptions that regulators called "unrealistic or inadequately supported." According to the report, "[T]he plans submitted by the first-wave filers are not credible and do not facilitate an orderly resolution under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code."
- August 12 "The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank of New York releases its latest Quarterly Report on Household Debt and Credit, which shows that total U.S. household debt fell 0.2 percent from the first quarter of 2014 to \$11.62 trillion (from \$11.65 trillion). Among the report's highlights: (i) mortgage debt fell \$69 billion to \$8.10 trillion (mortgage delinquency rates are also falling, with 3.4 percent of mortgages more than 90 days delinquent, down from 3.7 percent in the previous quarter); (ii) student loan debt balances increased by \$7 billion to \$1.12 trillion (10.9 percent of outstanding student loan debt is more than 90 days delinquent or in default, down from 11 percent in the first quarter); (iii) auto loan debt increased by \$30 billion to \$101 billion, the highest volume of originations since the third quarter of 2006; (iv) home equity line of credit (HELOC) balances dropped by \$5 billion to \$521 billion; and (v) total delinquent debt totaled \$724 billion, or 6.2 percent of outstanding household debt, down from 6.6

- August 20 percent in the first quarter."
- August 26 "Bank of America and the U.S. Justice Department reach a record \$16.65 billion settlement, capping the most sweeping federal investigation into the sale of troubled mortgages by a Wall Street bank since the 2008 financial crisis. The landmark settlement requires Bank of America to pay a \$9.65 billion cash penalty and provide about \$7 billion in relief to homeowners and blighted neighborhoods."
- August 27 "In yet another corporate tax inversion, Burger King agrees to buy Canadian chain Tim Hortons for \$11 billion, confirming plans to move the fast-food brand's headquarters north of the border."
- August 27 "The S&P 500 Index closes above 2,000 for the first time."
- September 17 "The Congressional Budget Office ("CBO") projects that the U.S. budget deficit will fall to its lowest level since 2007 as a share of the economy. The projected shortfall will be \$506 billion in the 12 months ending September 30, compared with an April projection of \$492 billion and a \$680 billion gap posted the previous year. For 2015, the deficit is projected to shrink for a sixth straight year, to \$469 billion, capping the longest stretch of fiscal improvement since 2000, near the end of an era of surpluses. The deficit reached a record \$1.4 trillion in 2009."
- September 22 "The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the nation's poverty rate fell to 14.5 percent in 2013, down from 15 percent a year earlier, the first statistically significant drop in poverty since 2006, when it was 12.3 percent. The report shows significant improvements for children. The poverty rate for children under 18 declined last year for the first time since 2000, and the number of children in poverty fell by 1.4 million, to 14.7 million."
- September 22 "With its industrial production growing at the slowest pace since the global financial crisis began and foreign direct investment in a tailspin, China takes the unusual step of using monetary stimulus in an attempt to forestall further economic weakness by lending CN¥100 billion, or \$16.2 billion, to each of the country's five main, state-controlled banks."
- September 22 "The World Bank Group releases an analysis showing that if the Ebola virus continues to surge in the three countries affected most—Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone—its economic impact could grow eightfold, dealing a potentially catastrophic blow to these already fragile and poverty-stricken nations."
- September 26 The U.S. Treasury Department announces rules intended to make it more difficult for U.S. companies to lower their tax bills by means of corporate tax inversions involving mergers with overseas companies located in countries with lower corporate tax rates. The changes will affect prospective deals only.
- September 29 "The U.S. Pentagon estimates that it is spending as much as \$10 million per day on its new air war against ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), sometimes referred to as "ISIL" (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)."
- October 3 "Forbes issues its annual list of the 400 wealthiest Americans. Bill Gates is the richest American for the 21st year in a row, with a net worth of \$81 billion. Warren Buffett occupies the No. 2 spot (he has been No. 2 since 2001), with a net worth of \$67 billion. Larry Ellison comes in at No. 3, with a net worth of \$50 billion. Brothers Charles and David Koch tie for fourth place (\$42 billion each), and Wal-Mart heiress Christy Walton (the wealthiest woman in the world as well as the U.S.) comes in at No. 6 with \$38.2 billion."
- October 8 "The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the unemployment rate fell to 5.9 percent, the first time it has been below 6 percent since July 2008."
- October 8 "The CBO estimates that the U.S. deficit for FY 2014, which ended on September

- October 20 30, came in at roughly \$486 billion, \$195 billion less than in FY 2013 (dropping, as a share of the economy, to 2.8 percent of GDP from 4.1 percent in FY 2013). The main reasons for the reduction are an improving economy, higher taxes, and continued spending restraint."
- October 26 "The European Central Bank ("ECB") launches a private-sector asset purchase program whereby it will buy rebundled packages of debt to shore up the flagging Eurozone economy. Because the ECB's purchases are focused on private-sector assets rather than sovereign debt, some are referring to the bond-buying program as "private quantitative easing," or "PQE.""
- October 29 "The ECB reports that European banks are €25 billion (\$31.7 billion) short of the money they would need to survive a financial or economic crisis, the result of a yearlong audit of Eurozone lenders. The ECB states that 25 banks in the Eurozone—including nine in Italy and three in Greece—showed shortfalls in their own capital. No major European banks have failed the central bank's stress tests."
- October 31 "The U.S. Federal Reserve officially announces an end to its quantitative easing (QE3) bond-buying program. Combined, the three rounds of QE undertaken by the Fed since 2008 have generated trillions of dollars for the American economy through a process in which the central bank has perpetually pumped money into long-term government bonds, as well as bonds backed by home mortgages."
- October 31 "The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts reports that bankruptcy filings for FY 2014 (ending September 30, 2014) totaled 963,739, down 13 percent from the 1.1 million bankruptcy filings in FY 2013. This is the lowest number of bankruptcy filings for any 12-month period since 2007. Business bankruptcy filings totaled 28,319, down from the 34,892 business filings reported in FY 2013. Nonbusiness bankruptcy filings totaled 935,420, down from the 1,072,807 nonbusiness bankruptcy filings in the previous fiscal year. Chapter 7 filings totaled 642,366, down from 753,995 in 2013. Chapter 11 filings totaled 7,658, down from 9,564 in 2013. Chapter 12 filings totaled 372, down from 405 in 2013. Chapter 13 filings totaled 313,262, down from 343,651 in 2013."
- November 4 "After insisting for more than a year that its aggressive monetary policy was sufficient to revive Japan's economy and end deflation, the Bank of Japan unexpectedly announces that it will increase the amount of money it pumps into the country's financial markets by buying larger quantities of government debt. The central bank surprises analysts and investors by expanding its program of bond buying—an initiative similar to the stimulus just ended by the U.S. Federal Reserve—to increase Japan's monetary base by ¥80 trillion a year (\$734 billion), up from a previous range of ¥60 trillion to ¥70 trillion."
- November 7 "Mid-term U.S. elections result in sweeping gains by the Republican Party in the Senate; the House of Representatives; and numerous gubernatorial, state, and local races. The Republicans gain control of the Senate for the first time since early January 2007 and increase their majority in the House. Overall, the elections result in the largest Republican majority in the entire country in nearly a century, with 54 seats in the Senate, 247 (56.78 percent) in the House, 31 governorships (62 percent), and 68 state legislative chambers."
- "The judge presiding over Detroit's bankruptcy case effectively ends the largest municipal insolvency in U.S. history, confirming a sweeping restructuring plan that eliminates more than \$7 billion in debt while rehabilitating crippled city services. The plan, which is supported by virtually all of Detroit's financial stakeholders, pays pensioners more than bondholders, frees up \$1.7 billion to reinvest in essential services, and keeps the city's rare-art collection safe. The decision marks the climax of Detroit's relatively quick spin through bankruptcy. Two California cities, Stockton and San Bernardino, have each spent more than two years under court protection. In contrast, Detroit, a city of around 690,000, required only 16 months to complete its restructuring."

- November 14 "The U.S. unemployment rate drops to 5.8 percent, a six-year low."
- "The U.S. Postal Service reports that it lost \$5.5 billion in FY 2014, marking another year of red ink despite a second year of growth in operating revenue and a 9 percent increase in the organization's shipping-and-packaging business."
- "The Japanese government reports that the nation's economy shrank an annualized 1.6 percent in the second quarter, an indication that Japan has fallen into a recession. The second straight quarter of contraction adds to signs that the world's third-largest economy has been slow in healing from the blow to consumption that resulted from the first tax increase in April."
- November 17 "The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, which insures pensions for about 41 million Americans, reports that its deficit for FY 2014 rose to nearly \$62 billion, the widest deficit in the agency's 40-year history, compared with a \$36 billion shortfall in FY 2013. The deficit in multi-employer plans jumped to \$42.4 billion from \$8.3 billion in 2013. Officials state that without changes, the multi-employer insurance program will be insolvent in 10 to 15 years. Overall, the agency has run deficits for 12 straight years. The gap has grown in recent years because the weak economy resulted in more corporate bankruptcies and failed pension plans."
- November 18 "Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe calls for early elections, framing the election as a broader referendum on his economic recovery measures, known as "Abenomics." Political analysts say the call for an election is an admission by Mr. Abe that Abenomics, intended to pull Japan out of its two-decade slump, is losing steam. The program, a mix of increased government spending and an aggressive pumping of cash into the economy by Japan's central bank, spurred an economic recovery, lifted the stock market, and won praise as a potential model for other developed economies."
- November 21 "The Chinese central bank announces a surprise cut to interest rates, in the clearest sign yet that policymakers are growing increasingly concerned over the pace of China's economic slowdown."
- November 25 "The U.S. Commerce Department reports that the U.S. economy expanded at its fastest pace in more than a decade during the spring and summer, an indication that the U.S. sits on a solid foundation despite increasing global uncertainty."
- November 27 "Saudi Arabia blocks calls from poorer members of the OPEC oil exporter group for production cuts to arrest a slide in global prices, sending benchmark crude plunging to a fresh four-year low and setting the stage for a battle for market share between OPEC and non-OPEC countries. A boom in U.S. shale oil production and weaker economic growth in China and Europe have already sent crude prices down by about a third since June."
- December 2 "Moscow for the first time acknowledges that the economy will fall into a recession in 2015. The combination of sanctions and plummeting oil prices is catching up with Russia's economy, wobbly in the best of times for its overreliance on commodity exports. The ruble has been in a free fall, driven by Russians' fears of economic isolation and their eagerness to change rubles into dollars or euros to move wealth out of the country. Western sanctions over Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and its backing of rebel groups in eastern Ukraine have crippled Russian banks by restricting them to short-term credit. The weakness in oil prices only complicates matters. Oil and natural gas make up about 60 percent of Russia's export earnings."
- December 9 "U.S. congressional leaders reach a deal on a \$1.1 trillion spending package to fund most of the federal government through the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015. The bill will be passed by the House of Representatives on December 11 and by the Senate on December 13. Attached to the bill is a measure that would alter 40 years

- December 14 of federal law by allowing cuts (for the first time) to the benefits of current retirees covered by multi-employer pension plans, of which there are 1,400, covering 10 million U.S. workers."
- December 16 The governing party of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wins a landslide victory in the parliamentary elections that Mr. Abe described as a referendum on his economic-growth policies.
- "The battered Russian ruble plunges to a record low against the dollar, as investors fear that the Russian central bank's surprise move overnight to jack interest rates up to 17 percent will not be enough to alleviate the pressure exerted on the currency by falling oil prices and Western sanctions."
- December 17 President Obama signs a bill imposing yet another round of sanctions on Russia for its activities in Ukraine.
- "More than 50 years after the U.S. broke diplomatic ties with Cuba, President Obama announces that the U.S. will begin taking steps to normalize diplomatic relations with the nation, including opening an embassy in Havana but falling short, at least for the time being, of lifting the commercial, economic, and financial embargo, which can be repealed only by congressional action."
- A report released by Pew Research Center indicates that the wealth gap between the top 20 percent of U.S. earners and the rest of America has stretched to its widest point in at least three decades.
- "At the U.S. Federal Reserve Board's final meeting of 2014, Chair Janet Yellen announces that the Fed is edging closer to raising interest rates from record lows, given a strengthening U.S. economy, but that the central bank will be "patient" in deciding when to do so and that she foresees no rate hike in the first quarter of 2015. The Fed Chair also states that she is prepared to let the U.S. unemployment rate fall from its current 5.8 percent to exceptionally low levels because doing so could help cause inflation to rise closer to the Fed's 2 percent target."
- December 19
- "Six years after President George W. Bush began the auto bailout, the Obama administration declares a profitable end to the sweeping federal interventions on Wall Street and in Detroit, announcing the completion of a final sale of stock of GM's former finance arm, Ally Financial Inc. In the end, the Troubled Asset Relief Program ("TARP") and the Detroit bailout yielded \$15.35 billion in profit. Through TARP and other efforts, taxpayers injected \$426.35 billion into banks, other financial institutions, and auto companies. The government's sale of stock and other securities, and its receipt of interest payments, brought in \$441.7 billion."
- December 23
- "The Dow Jones Industrial Average surges above 18,000 for the first time, after data released by the U.S. Commerce Department shows that the U.S. economy posted its strongest growth in more than a decade, providing the strongest evidence to date that the recovery is finally gaining sustained power, more than five years after it began."
- December 27
- "Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approves a \$29.17 billion stimulus package meant to boost consumer spending and regional economic activity, seeking to revive an economy in recession."
- December 28
- December 29 The longest war in American history comes to an end as the U.S. and NATO bring the combat phase of their mission in Afghanistan to a close.
- "A report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will be 320,090,857 by January 1, 2015. The U.S. is the third-most-populous nation in the world, behind China, with 1.36 billion people, and India, with 1.25 billion people. The new report estimates the world population at 7.21 billion."

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