



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 26, 2018

Tepid Government Slowdown Hasn't Slowed Shoppers

Holiday shoppers apparently couldn't care less about any government shutdown or slowdown: [U.S. retailers notched one of the busiest holiday seasons in years](#), meeting and in some cases exceeding forecasters' already rosy outlooks.

Total retail sales, according to Mastercard's SpendingPulse indicator, rose 5.2 percent from November 1 through December 19 compared to last year, with five more shopping days left before Christmas. And ever-lower gas prices are adding nearly five billion dollars to families' budgets every month, which bodes well for the economy into next year.



None of this appears to be registering with liberals writing for left-wing progressive papers such as the *Washington Post*. On Saturday, three *Post* writers lamented the government "shutdown" and counted the reasons for their lament: 400,000 government employees will continue to work without pay just to keep things humming; Trump's sudden announcement that he was withdrawing troops from Syria and Afghanistan bodes ill for America's safety through resultant increases in terrorist threats; the decline on Wall Street is a dependable harbinger for a recession next year; Trump's untoward firing of his defense secretary, who claimed that Trump's decision to reduce America's military presence in the Middle East would "undercut the global order the United States helped build over the past seven decades"; and so on.

Since Tennyson said that "a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies," let's review the *Post*'s half-truths. Those 400,000 government workers freely giving themselves to their jobs without pay ignores the historical fact that in previous government shutdowns they invariably received back pay for their time. Trump's withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria involves about 2,000 personnel, while the Afghanistan cutbacks affect about 7,000 military personnel. These withdrawals are another of Trump's campaign promises kept — belatedly, but kept nonetheless.

The decline in stocks on Wall Street has little to do with underlying economic weakness and everything to do with the Fed's deliberate intention to slow the Trump economic juggernaut. As Jonathon Trugman noted, writing for the *New York Post*, "this correction is all on the Fed.... With good growth, good employment, and no inflation to speak of, [its latest hike in interest rates has] sent the market spinning into a state of disbelief."

As far as Trump's firing of Defense Secretary James Mattis, Mattis should never have held the job in the first place. As Shannon Pettypiece noted in *Bloomberg*, quoting those on the inside, "[Trump] now regrets going against his instincts last year when he approved a plan to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan at the urging of his foreign policy advisors."

The tepid government slowdown leaves most agencies and services unaffected. The Post Office will still



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strive to deliver the mail on time; food-safety inspectors will remain at their posts; TSA employees will still be invading people's personal privacy in their neverending search for bombs and other explosive devices; the military services will remain on duty; and welfare agencies such as Social Security, Medicare, SNAP and the myriad other government welfare programs will continue sending out checks to their beneficiaries. Even museums have remained open while national parks, of course, have posted "government shutdown" notices on their premises.

Trump is continuing to be Trump, while shoppers continue to astonish forecasters by ignoring the scarcely measurable federal government slowdown and spending more and more time shopping at the mall or online. As Marc Lotter, a member of President Trump's 2020 advisory committee, said: "President Trump believes one of his strengths is [that] he is actually doing the things he told people he would do. One of the reasons why the president was elected was because we have had politicians of both parties for many, many years saying one thing on the [campaign] trail ... and then [once in office] doing another."

Perhaps that is why those writers for the *Post* published half-truths in their attempt to justify their laments: Trump is determined to carry out his agenda, and that agenda is very different from the *Post's* agenda.

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