

ShadowStats Economic Survey No. 1

July 19, 2019

Informal Survey of U.S. Economic Conditions

The Best of Times, the Worst of Times? As a May 5th guest on Greg Hunter's USAWatchDog.com, I started an informal poll of his viewers, requesting e-mails of their experiences with, and anecdotal evidence on current, local economic conditions. Responses flowed in from around the United States, providing insights from individuals in thirty-three states, including some observations from interstate truck drivers. Many thanks to all who participated, taking the time and making the effort to share their observations, and many thanks to Greg Hunter for having me on his program.

Responses Ran 2.7-to-1 on the Downside for the Economy. In aggregate, 26% of the responses on local economic conditions were positive, 70% were negative and 4% were mixed or neutral. Responses ranged from a couple of lines to economic tomes, but each one told a story. All responses on economic activity have been included here, edited to eliminate the personal identification of survey participants and for spelling, typographical errors and occasionally for clarity.

This was not a scientifically designed survey, yet there were enough responses over broad regions to suggest a meaningful dichotomy in current economic conditions in the United States, with some areas experiencing strong growth and activity, mixed with widely spread negative and deteriorating economic conditions in a number of areas, many of which still have not recovered from the Great Recession.

Comments from the same geographic region sometimes ran contrary to each other, reflecting the nature of varying personal and individual economic experience, as well as variations in regional economic activity. In California, for example, comments from the Los Angeles area tended to indicate strong economic conditions, while comments from the San Francisco area tended to be on the downside. A number of areas around the country indicated a positive economic influx of people retiring and/or moving out of high-tax states such as New York and California. Among a number of local observations, one of the more unusual comments came from El Paso, Texas, noting, "Our growth industry is asylum seekers."

Your comments and suggestions are invited and I am always happy to discuss what is happening.
Best Wishes — John Williams (707) 763-5786, e-mail: johnwilliams@shadowstats.com

Individual Responses Follow, Broken Out by State.

ShadowStats Economic Survey Responses

STATE OR CATEGORY (*Italicized States Had No Responses*)

ALABAMA (*no responses*)

ALASKA (*no responses*)

ARIZONA (also see the **TRUCKERS** section)

(Cochise County, Southeastern Arizona) Southeastern Arizona, Cochise County, largest town is Sierra Vista. I am in an unincorporated rural area. Economic downturn here began in 2006, officially 2008, not recovered!

- Land and housing prices ran upward fast to 2008, then sales STOPPED, began picking up about 2-3 years ago, land prices now at 1999 levels. Housing prices inching back up.
- County lost population, about 6,000 drop, now around 125,000.
- Main economic engine is Army's Ft. Huachuca; they have fewer personnel.
- Managerial civilian earners have moved away, even out of state.
- Big push is on by the local government for Economic Development.
- There may be new Port of Entry in the future at Douglas, Arizona, currently an aging facility and is the second largest Port of goods entry in Arizona.
- Many small businesses have closed, vacant buildings. Yes, some new ones open but total activity seems to be static.

My Two Cents!

(Phoenix and Tempe, Maricopa County, see also Illinois, Chicago Suburbs) I split time between Illinois and Arizona.

Arizona Observations. The Tempe, Scottsdale, Phoenix, Mesa, Chandler and Gilbert areas are booming. It's like a mini Beijing of years past with the amount of cranes for new construction. Lots of companies relocating to Arizona. Lots of startups and businesses popping up to service the growth.

I monitor the real-estate market closely through some realtor friends and they indicate it is both strong from a buyer side as well as sellers getting their asking price. There are new developments going on everywhere.

I think people dining out and doing recreation activities is still high in the greater Phoenix area. People are hopping jobs, as there is a strong labor market for high paying white-collar jobs in the area.

So in summary I see the Chicagoland area bad and getting worse, and I see the Phoenix area strong and getting stronger.

ARKANSAS

(Danville, Yell County) It's dead lol sorry to say it looks like the only employer is Wane farms chicken plant in Danville, Arkansas; gas prices 2.54 gallon; rent is running around \$600-and up for like a 2 bedroom older farm house, if you're lucky enough to find one.

CALIFORNIA (also see TRUCKERS)

(San Bernardino County) I have noticed a definite slowdown in our economy over the past 60 days. California is quite different than other parts of the country. Sacramento seems to be deliberately trying to drive the people and businesses from our state. Likely, the big social media giants have a plan to take over this state.

Gas prices have skyrocketed. They want new taxes at every turn. I feel that soon this state will be bankrupt.

When you can drive right up to any McDonald's and be first in line, the economy isn't good. In the early evening about seven, the roads are empty. Businesses are still here but not sure for how long.

(San Bernardino County) [These comments are repeated in the **TRUCKERS** section.] I'm a Truck driver for a chain of grocery stores, delivering to California, Arizona and Nevada. My Distribution Center is in San Bernardino County, California. Lucky for me that I live 15 minutes or less to work. I've listened to many of Greg Hunter's interviews with you and others for several years.

My local economy where I'm at is wow ... help wanted and now hiring signs everywhere in supply chain, warehouse and especially drivers needed. The two large malls that feature Costco, Sam's Club and every big box store that you can imagine are called "Ontario Mills Mall" and "Victoria Gardens." Ontario Mills has a middle and maybe lower middle-income customer base. Victoria Gardens is upper income households that visit this mall. Both malls are always filled to capacity with shoppers. These parking lots are filled to capacity.

I do not see any customers holding back on their consumer spending habits. I'm seeing people of every income level in all the three states that I deliver to: California, Phoenix and Las Vegas spending money like they got money.

Since the housing market collapse of 2007, 2008 and 2009 took place, I've conditioned myself to be a saver and not a spender. Followed Greg's advice and paid off all debt but for my mortgage. I'm observing that many people I personally know to have been hurt badly by The Great Recession have completely forgotten where they were.

I don't see anyone concerned at all about another possible crisis being on our horizon. Almost everyone I know looks at me as a worrywart. No one in my opinion is prepped for a black swan event that may cause a cascade of problems ... I don't know anyone putting away cash for a rainy day ... I am.

So people here have forgotten their pain, and they conduct themselves as if the Bull Run will never end. All our homes have built so much equity in the last few years that I see my neighbors feeling very confident, etc., etc.

(El Segundo, Los Angeles County) El Segundo, California is booming right now. Tech companies like Google are moving in along with LA Times so real estate is being pushed up to astronomical levels. Rents are rising quickly also. Local higher-end eateries are packed almost every night. I was in one in a shopping plaza on a Tuesday night and usually people come for happy hour but the whole restaurant was full. A block of condos near me went on the market for \$1.2-1.8 million. Hard for regular working folks to afford the area now and are moving out. Lots of Teslas here now too.

(Beverly Hills, Los Angeles County) I took this picture at Melrose and Vine after church last Sunday (April 28th). I am in Beverly Hills.



©2019 David Zadick

(Brea, Orange County) I am a Dentist in Brea, California. I talk to many business owners, and things are getting tighter and tighter. I have an Electrician who shut his doors. [My friend in] Heating and Air Conditioning says things are tight. [Another friend] had to close a Jersey Mike's store. The owner of a Main Street restaurant is looking to sell, or he will close. We are all getting squeezed by fewer customers, government regulation and increasing operating costs.

(Simi Valley, Ventura County) I am doing contract work at the company I retired from in Simi Valley, CA. This is due to them asking me, rather than I have to. They have a big space related project, and they have hired a bunch of people.

I walk around the block before starting in the morning, and have noticed that the parking lots seem to have about 25% more cars in them than when I retired two years ago.

Last year I also did contract work for a company in Los Angeles I had worked for previously. I noticed the parking lots had three times as many cars, as when I worked for them six years ago. However, at that time the industrial area they are in was a ghost town.

Also, I have noticed that in the last 40 years I have lived in Simi Valley (a suburb of LA in Ventura County) that the morning traffic has changed from majority flow into LA, to majority flow into Ventura County.

(Tracy, San Joaquin County) Have you noticed any huge warehouses (like brand new) out here – they have been popping up over the last few years – huge facilities like three or so acres in size each – along Routes 205/580, just outside the Bay Area at Tracy, California, and another cluster a few miles south of there.

Well, we got warehouses – lots of them – all ready to occupy – almost all for are lease but empty for the most part ... very suspicious.

(Fresno, Fresno County) I am a heartbroken and financially devastated member of Main Street.

I have not had a real job since 2008, which has devastated my personal economy and family. I have filed zero, or next to zero, on my 1040 and 540 for seven years now, ... my profession was in healthcare, where I held a few utility and provisional patents. ...

I have a clean criminal record, am friendly, I adhere to honesty and morality (as best I can). I believe in a hard day's work. I am bright, have a high IQ [and well educated], am industrious and inventive, but can neither get an honest job, nor invent one, so I have quit trying.

(San Francisco Bay Area) I am seeing the largest number of storefront closings and commercial “for lease” signs in the North Bay as well as in San Francisco proper, since 2009. For example, last week I counted 15 vacant storefronts, as I walked about half a mile along the very prosperous section of Market Street leading up to the Ferry Building. Also noticed an increased presence of homeless people on the streets.

(San Francisco Richmond District) A listener forwarded this May 28th article from the Richmond Review/Sunset Beacon:

“Although the Sunset District is doing a little better than other districts, storefronts along its commercial corridors stubbornly remain empty. A new survey by the Sunset Beacon newspaper shows that many have been empty for more than a year. ...”

“The first survey was conducted in January 2018. A new survey undertaken in April shows that, among all of the main shopping districts, a total of 52 storefronts are still empty more than a year later. ...”

(Placerville, El Dorado County) In Placerville, there are “for lease” signs everywhere. The homeless population is also growing. We don't have the massive problem that San Francisco or LA has. Instead, people set up tents in the heavily forested areas that make up much of the eastern end of the county, and then have to be removed by the Sheriff. We also have our share of drug addicts. Legalizing marijuana sales in the county is not going to help matters.

(Mount Shasta, Siskiyou County) Mt. Shasta is in Siskiyou County. In 2005 there were 600 homes built in Siskiyou County, in 2018 there were 60 homes built. This is no boom for many reasons, but mostly, too many new building regulations from a government that has become too big.

Mt. Shasta is about 40% closed; commercial rent is too high. Yreka is about 50% closed for the same reason. Dunsmuir is about 30% boarded up. All three towns are in worse shape than 2009. This all happened in the last two years.

Oddly, a small town east of here that had completely collapsed, McCloud, California, is doing pretty well because landlords lowered rents and restaurants moved in.

COLORADO

(Salida, Chaffee County) It's a privilege to be able to answer your request to the public on USAWatchDog.com. You asked how my economy is, so here's my outlook on Colorado.

In short, it's booming here. In conjunction with nationwide economic growth, there has been a "legal marijuana" boom here as well. Real estate is out of control, however, the rate of increase of prices has slowed down (thank God) in the last 9 months. Prices still are rising, though, in some small high-end towns, as much as 20% per year.

Jobs seem to be abundant. From what I experience and hear, finding employees is increasingly difficult, therefore wages are rising.

Personal observation: Inflation is showing up in increases of local beer, water, construction materials, rents, real estate, restaurants, ski lift tickets and any tourism expense.

WalMart and big box stores still sell cheap products.

And that's all I can think of.

(Conifer, Jefferson County) As always, we enjoyed your recent interview with Greg Hunter. I am responding to your request for feedback on the economy in various parts of the United States. We live in Conifer, Colorado which is a small bedroom community about an hour West of Denver. Most people who live in Conifer work in the Denver Metropolitan area or commute north to Boulder, or South to Colorado Springs. Conifer does not have any identifiable economic base, so that is why I refer to it as a bedroom community.

From my perspective, the economy in Conifer and the Denver Metro area is booming. Home prices are rising, there is a shortage of homes on the market (so very much a seller's market and has been for about the last 5 years), unemployment is low and I see no evidence of economic struggling. Ninety-five percent of the cars I see on the road, in our Church parking lot, at restaurants and/or the Supermarket are brand new, and everyone I know goes away for big vacations multiple times a year. I am sure I don't see everything but based on what I am able to see, things are going well. I am anxious to see your anecdotal survey results.

CONNECTICUT *(no responses)*

DELAWARE *(no responses)*

FLORIDA

(Ocala, Marion County) Ocala Florida is Booming and building like crazy. I moved to Ocala from Marin County, California in 2013.

(Pinellas County) We live in Florida – Pinellas County – net immigration from high tax states is strong. More affluent people moving in to escape taxes up north – building – real estate – commercial and housing is strong. Very small feeling of recession here, if any.

Florida is an interesting state tax wise. No income tax on the personal side. A small income tax on the corporate side. And then we get by on low property taxes and a sales tax.

Why does this buffer the economics of the states that are now in trouble? (1) Because our sales tax is 1/3 paid by tourists. Tourism is a major industry in Florida. (2) Because economic slowdown is majorly buffered by defections from High Tax States up north. People move to Florida – claim Florida residency to get away from high states income taxes up north. They buy higher than medium priced housing – because for a large part the affluent tax avoidance runners are moving to Florida.

So, construction is good. Even moderately wealthy movers come to Florida. They move into what used to be called trailer parks. Now they are called pre fab housing parks.

(Sarasota, Sarasota County) Economy is good here in Sarasota... at least in the building trades. I do see some older strip malls in the area that are dead. They are talking about converting one into mixed housing and shopping.

Part of that is probably due to the gigantic new mall built out by the interstate.

(South West – Fort Myers, Lee County) I live in Ft. Myers, which is considered Southwest Florida. I have heard from real estate agents that inventory is up and sales are beginning to decline. It's converting into a buyers' market. There are a lot of "help wanted" signs out, but only for lower paying, service type of jobs. Our beach area took a huge hit last year due to blue-green algae and red tide. That hurt tourism, but should come back this year. Gas prices just went up to \$2.75 last week and have declined to \$2.68 this morning. Chico's has its headquarters here in town and is laying off a limited number of workers. Car advertisements are going full force. A large percent of the workforce works in healthcare, particularly for the elderly. They seem secure in their jobs. The people just voted a tax increase to pay for school construction/improvement. High school seniors are borrowing money like crazy to go to college, which seems to be a real growth industry. They have no idea what they're getting into. Hope you can use the observations.

(West Coast – Tarpon Springs, Pinellas County) This area is probably the best place in the Nation due to all the boomers retiring/moving from NY, IL, CA, etc. I'm on a main thoroughfare called US 19. I see the shuttering, and fencing of businesses. Some buildings are even being torn down. Strip centers are empty because businesses are closed. More homeless walking the streets every day; SO SAD!

FOR SALE/FOR RENT signs are everywhere. Many of the nice mansions on nice acreage are for sale as the older folks (me) realize they're just getting too old to take care/clean a big giant home; but they're not selling! Guess the young folks just aren't making the \$\$ we did back in the day.

(North East Central) I don't see manufacturing doing very well in northeast central Florida. I also see stores closing.

(North East – St. Augustine, St. John County) Here in the beautiful City of Saint Augustine, Florida, there is a barrier island called Vilano, that's where I live. I have noticed a slowdown in home sales. The real estate market was very hot in 2014 but slowly declined, where I now see for sale signs all over my neighborhood and some people taking them down because they cannot sell their home. The ones that do have to sell for much lower than expected.

At the nearest grocery store, a cursory trip for fresh goods has doubled in a few years. Eggs, meats, fruit, milk, even coffee down to brownie mix. DOUBLED! Your inflation numbers are spot on!

As I write, a real estate agent was renting a big home across the street from me for years, and she is moving out today because she cannot afford the high rent any longer. The only thing she holds on to is an old Porsche SUV, which looks ratty at best.

Vilano suffered two hurricanes last year, and our insurance rate has gone up some, but for some it has tripled, because their homes flooded twice, making it unaffordable to insure their property. As a result, I see Air BNB rooms popping up in the area, which is a sign of desperation. Fortunately, my Wife and I do not have to sub-let our rooms to strangers, but people are doing so at an increasing number.

Thank you for your wisdom and all the interviews you have gracefully done with Greg Hunter all these years. Please include me in the survey.

GEORGIA

(Greater Atlanta, Fulton and DeKalb Counties) I heard you on Greg Hunter's show recently and I'm interested in receiving one of your surveys.

I live in the Greater Atlanta area and the unemployment and store closures are through the roof. Only certain areas of the city appear to be prospering and gentrification is out of control.

(Atlanta, Fulton and DeKalb Counties) Listened to you at Greg Hunter's site. Atlanta is a boomtown. Growth and money being spent everywhere. Almost every empty lot is being built with expensive houses; huge mega shopping complexes with condos are going in. The airport, the busiest and probably largest in the world, brings in tons of money, although most of it siphoned off by corruption.

Why [the boomtown]:

1. The state of Georgia is business friendly.
2. The exodus from New York and California finds Atlanta tax friendly.

(North West Atlanta Suburbs, Cobb County) I'm in the northwest suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia (Cobb County). I don't really know what other areas of Metro Atlanta are like, since this is an area of approximately 5 million people.

In my neighborhood, we have not seen a reduction in home prices yet – in fact, they have increased and it's a seller's market. The County is a popular one with mid-upper class nice homes and desirable schools, but a lower real estate tax compared to other comparable neighborhoods.

In Cobb County, this past year... we have seen clumps of growth of shopping and restaurants in some corridors. Malls and anchor type stores have decreased or closed. Seems that in the preceding years, stores were closing...strip shopping centers and malls – supposing that more people are shopping online – so who knows?

Food prices seem to have increased 25% in price with smaller packaging.

Gas prices are on the rise just recently to approx. \$2.65 per gallon.

I am 68 and retired, with Medicare, but living comfortably enough to meet my needs. Otherwise, the medical insurance market would kill us all!

Insurance premiums otherwise – increases in Homeowners' policies (rashes of bad damaging storms); auto insurance increases likely due to the horrible traffic (although I no longer am commuting).

Auto dealerships look to be suffering.

I'm not sure that the job market is down – but there are certain professions that are seeking hard to find qualified people. (Mechanical engineers, etc.). There is a push on for students to consider learning trades (plumbing...etc. and telling them the pay is as good as a college graduate in some fields).

I hope this helps you – Thanks for being a source where we can find honesty.

(North Georgia) The North Georgia economy is failing. I am a small business owner. I own a business in Atlanta we employ 50 people. I own two homes one in Cumming, Georgia, 30 minutes north of Atlanta and one in Jasper, Georgia, one hour north of Atlanta in the North Georgia mountains. I spend equal time at both. Cumming, Georgia, at one time was the fastest growing community in America. Fifteen years ago, people moved there to get out of Atlanta; the schools, the community, the quality of life in Cumming Georgia was far superior to anything else nearby. Jasper, Georgia was a sleepy little mountain tourist town filled with beauty. Both are currently failing in my opinion.

Empty storefronts and closed mom and pop freestanding buildings litter both communities now. Once occupied buildings are being left vacant. The new businesses popping up are ones not good for the community; smoke shops and vape stores, pawnshops, thrift stores, and surplus goods retailers seem to be the flavor of the day. Entire car lots with 50-plus year community history are closing. The largest construction that has taken place in years in both communities was done by the county governments when they expanded the jails, the courthouses and the government administration buildings.

The businesses that remain have waving flags and sales banners plastered all over the roads. The level of desperation here in North Georgia is measurable. The Kohls department store wishes they had the volume of customers Goodwill has. One of my favorite local outdoor stores closed recently; the Bargain Barn, 70,000 square feet of everything outdoors, it closed this month. I spoke with a long time employee who said: "people just stopped coming in and we were no longer profitable." *Bargain Barn in Jasper closing after 50 years*

Atlanta is also failing. The crime here is at levels never before seen. The city council has stopped police from responding to shoplifting calls. The jail is letting people out on signature bonds as they are being sued for overcrowded conditions. Homelessness is at an all-time high. Aggressive panhandling looks very similar to holdups. Car break-ins throughout the city are higher than ever before. This is true at my business in Atlanta; we have on average two a week. Those affected never visit me again.

My wife and I made it through 2009 by lending our business money. We believed it was going to be a short-term blip in the economy; wow were we wrong. At some point, we crossed a line where keeping going was going to break us but not going was going to close us. We decided to press ahead. Recently my business has finally paid me back from 2009. I did not think it would happen. I went for years with no income from my business as I suspended mine and my wife's salary. I will not do it again. If this economy fails again, I am not lending it money but closing quickly. I am currently making those plans to pull the trigger and walk away.

You had asked people to write in and inform you of what was taking place. This is where my wife and I are at. I hope this is helpful.

HAWAII

(Honolulu) Lots of empty storefront here. Customers are cancelling service at work more often. New service subscriptions are slowing. Feels like we have turned a corner in the economy and it is now slow.

(Island of Kauai) I live on the island of Kauai. There are no jobs that pay adequate salaries to live here. I was a Vice President with Bank of America in California for years. I moved here in 2010, a displaced, middle-aged worker. Most people here work two and three jobs just to get by, and afford housing costs.

I am a Trumper, and intend to move back to the mainland if he gets a second term. I believe we, my adult sons and I, will miss opportunities living here. The taxes here are so high, not many feel the tax cuts.

IDAHO (also see TRUCKERS)

(Sandpoint, Bonner County) My gut instinct tells me that we are going into a massive depression, which, of course, is part of the reason I left California and moved to Sandpoint, Idaho on Lake Pend O'Reille. Northern Idaho is doing well economically, and we certainly don't have the criminal/homeless/high tax problems of California...thank goodness! More people are trying to move here, but there are not enough homes available.

ILLINOIS

(General) Illinois is in such bad shape the State Government is legalizing marijuana, and you know it's for the tax money. Drive through any small town in rural Illinois and you will find mini casinos and you know that's for the tax money. Not the state I grew up in.

(Chicago Suburbs, see also Arizona, Tempe) I split time between Illinois and Arizona. I have a business in high tech servicing in Illinois and Wisconsin, which touches all market segments. I sell and market semiconductors and other electronic components and electronic systems to OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) in Illinois and Wisconsin. So we see the design cycle of products (working engineers and scientist) but also interface with manufacturing both locally and when it is done elsewhere.

Illinois Observations. Each passing month I see more and more Uber and Lyft signs on cars. That is one eyeball test. The economy has to be struggling because people need to drive on the side to make ends meet or to have some spending money.

We are getting taxed to death and it has hurt the majority of people as it reduces their free cash flow. I believe many people are living hand to mouth and many are drowning in debt. My employees are well-compensated white-collar professionals and I hear the chatter about taxes, education, healthcare, fuel, etc.

"For Sale" signs on both residential and commercial property everywhere I go. Lots of vacant retail or closings.

I see consolidation in many market segments as cheap money and thin margins are driving Merger and Acquisition activity.

I dine out once or twice a day daily and again the eyeball test says people aren't dining out as much as they were a year ago at this time.

It's the most people I personally know that have been unemployed from white-collar jobs and they are having trouble getting hired.

So in summary I see the Chicagoland area bad and getting worse, and I see the Phoenix area strong and getting stronger.

(Peoria, Peoria County) Our economy goes as Caterpillar goes; they are the main employer, with the hospital being #2. Caterpillar has not been doing well, with many layoffs in 2015 and 2016, and still seeing many cases, while not in the news, of people being forced into retirement and or being forced into lower level positions. Hiring mainly consists of bargain entry-level jobs, highly technical only, rarely at management levels or mid-career levels.

Peoria is affected by many staple store closings like Bergners, Shopko, Kmart, Payless... with many restaurant closings ongoing.

Due to the massive departures of execs to Deerfield, and due to permanent layoffs, the housing market is awful, with some homes up for sale for years it seems. Back in 2016, our area, based on realtor input, had an eight-year overhead supply of homes on the market. Things have improved since 2016.

INDIANA

(Terre Haute, Vigo County) Greatly appreciate your appearance with Greg Hunter at USAWatchDog.com. I am responding to your survey request.

I live in Terre Haute, Indiana, also known as the Crossroads of America. Also, home of Indiana State University, making it a college town. I have lived here since 1999. I own two residential properties (mortgage free), and I have no revenues except my savings and monthly SSI. I have three sons-in-law and two sons. All of them have had their job for over a year, except the youngest son who is a prison guard for about nine months now, since he finished his BS degree last summer.

Our City does not have what I would call a Major employer. I grew up in Peoria, Illinois. Home of Caterpillar Tractor Co., so you get what I mean by a "major employer." Here I think the top four would be ISU, SONY, Bemis Packaging and Duke Energy. Farming is the real bread and butter of the area. I would guess employment has increased maybe 2-2.5% over the past year just from talking to people saying they are starting a new job, and that would include UBER if that's even a job? I don't know about wages. I retired last year and haven't had a paycheck since 2008. I was a Commercial Construction Manager the last 17 years of my career. Now I'm no longer even one of the uncouneted. Unfortunately, I also live in an area where social handout seems to be the path of least resistance, even though our City is talking about building a new Civic Center, a new Sports Arena with ISU, and there is talk of a Casino coming to town, which I am not in favor of.

Every morning, except weekends, I drive my wife to work at 7:00 AM. She is an associate teacher for special needs students. We travel about 0.7 miles and turn south on US 41. We travel south about 3.6 miles. We cross one railroad overpass and one private track with lights. We cross the junction of US 41 and I-70. Lots of restaurants and not less than eight hotels. No Truck Stop. After I drop off my wife, I then travel about 4.3 miles north on US 41 to drop of my Grandson at school and return home.

Every afternoon, Monday through Friday, I leave at 1:45 PM to pick my wife up from work. I follow the same route as in the morning both ways for the most part. Except our Grandson is picked up later by his mom. A 30 minute round trip.

Over the past two-to-three months there has been what I consider an increase in the amount of commercial traffic, including train lengths. I've seen an increase in loads of steel, numbers of trucks

hauling petroleum and other liquids, and farm implements. The number of auto carriers seems to be off noticeably, and the amount of farming traffic (grain trucks, tractors, combines, etc.) is way down for this time of year. Box trailers don't seem to have increased or decreased noticeably. I would say the increase in overall traffic is not more than three-to-four percent, although just a little more in the afternoon than in the morning. This is following what seemed like well over a year of slow decrease to no real increase at all.

IOWA (no responses)

KANSAS (no responses)

KENTUCKY

(Covington, Kenton County) In regards to your recent YouTube appearance on USA Watchdog:

Retail - I notice the larger chain-type locations are struggling to a degree, including corporate owned and franchise locations. The exception to this seems to be Home Depot and others like them. There seems to be some life in new retail openings in the area of small-time "mom and pop" businesses. Not sure how successful they will be, I suspect people may be burning up new lines of credit to an extent, going out on a limb/bad timing.

Real Estate - Many people talking of "flipping" and new construction. Talk of 12 to 15 people waiting in the wings for each new building lot coming on the market. It feels a lot like 2006, like we're in a real estate "blow-off" top. I see new multi-family projects going up also. I suspect lagging financed projects from the landlord boom of 4 and 5 years ago. Also new commercial building, which seems absolutely crazy, considering the empty retail space out there in the market (more easy money access for some?).

Inflation - Prices on everything seem to be going up quickly. I'm not sure how they can claim there's no inflation and people believe it. Especially, meats and other perishable just in time commodities, appears that prices on some things have actually doubled in the last 5 to 7 years. I haven't been in the market for an automobile in many years, although I have noticed the unbelievable prices on some of these vehicles.

Thanks for what you do and I hope this info helps with your analysis of our economy.

(Louisville, Jefferson County) I am responding to the request you made on USA Watchdog for local anecdotes. I will first provide you with my own personal anecdote and then go on to explain current general economic conditions in Kentucky.

I work full time at The Louisville Zoo where I have been employed for 23 years. In addition, I have a side business/hobby that involves me breeding snakes and selling them online to pet industry consumers. I am 46 years old and have been breeding and selling snakes since I was 15 years old. I had my best year of sales in 2006 when I grossed around \$55,000. In prior years, I might have results where I lost \$10,000 or made \$20,000. Prior to 2006, a great year was \$30,000. In 2007, I barely broke even and in 2008, it was as if a switch had been turned off. In order to stay afloat I had to resort to all kinds of things I never considered before...like trading, giving huge discounts, selling wholesale instead of retail, etc. 2008 to 2016 were VERY rough times for me, since what I am selling is non-essential. After the 2016 Presidential Election, it was as if that switch was suddenly turned back on. Sales went through the roof and have remained that way. Personally I attribute this to how the consumer feels and not the

economic reality, but there is no denying that sales have returned to normal levels I saw prior to 2008, but not to my best year in 2006.

Switching to the economic conditions in Kentucky I will provide some background information so that I can then describe what is happening and how it is impacting where I have been employed for 23 years. In general, Kentucky voters swing Republican in Federal elections but vote Democrat in local elections. The Kentucky House and Senate had been in Democrat control for 96 years running up to 2016. Kentucky went full Republican in 2016 as a direct result of how badly Democrat policies had failed and caused harm to voters, especially pensioners and workers in the coal, manufacturing, and small business sectors. In the early 2000's the pension funds were fully funded and in great shape, but Democrats took funds out of the system to fund social programs and also stopped making the required payments into the pension system. Kentucky now has the worst, second worst, or third worst funded pension system in The USA...depending on which system of metrics you use to calculate status. Newly elected Republicans have been unable to get the votes needed to salvage the system and it is now too late to do so. Since there are no new revenue streams and since no cuts have been made, the only option is for them to demand higher payments from all employers, which include all of the cities. In 2008, cities were forced to make drastic cuts, and they never recovered. Now cities are faced with either raising taxes or making further cuts. In Louisville leaders voted not to raise taxes and so, the Mayor has just outlined the cuts. Fifty police jobs have been removed. Two fire stations have been closed. EMS jobs are cut. Libraries, pools and golf courses are shut down. Our Zoo has been administered by City Government since it was founded in the 1960's. It is now being forced to go private. With a shrunken staff of around 125 full time staff since 2008 cuts, 14 new positions have now been removed to meet the budget for 2019, while the zoo is still run by the city. Who knows how deep the cuts will be once things go fully private. In Louisville, all of these cuts are being made in order to meet the additional 25 million dollar bill to pay for the pension system. And next year they will need that same 25 million increase but will also need 10 million more. Then the next year 10 million more. After 2023, they will have to pay 20 million more and it just keeps escalating each and every year. It is easy to see where all of this is headed. Right now, cities are doing everything they can to make the ever-increasing payments but at some point, they will not be able to bear this burden. In court cases, the rulings have always confirmed that it is the role of city governments to provide police, fire, ems, and roads...and not to cut services to pay for employee pensions. There are over 500,000 Kentuckians who get these pensions and that number grows every year as the baby boomer generation retires. These people do not save anything and spend all of these funds buying products and fueling the economy. As their pensions are reduced and cut off, it will result in a deepening recession and depression within the local economy.

What I just described is huge and will have a long and lasting destructive impact on the economy in Kentucky, but that is just one aspect that involves the pension crises and how it will impact everything. There are so many other problems as well and in addition to this pension issue. Manufacturing jobs are all but gone here. An example of what remains is GE here in Louisville, where both of my brothers are employed. It has been sold to a company in China. This company is allowing union contracts to expire for now, but they openly announce plans to cut wages and benefits and even threaten to move operations to China or Mexico. The small business sector is in ruins. Every town square has multiple empty storefronts. As you described in your interview with Greg Hunter, small town America has never recovered from 2007-2008. There are 120 counties in Kentucky. Last year the Leslie County Sheriff had to lay off his entire police force and he is now the only officer in that county. This trend is growing and spreading to other counties. As it does, the response is like an invitation to criminals. Even in cities like Louisville, the presence of homeless panhandlers is exploding. This explosion may be downplayed by

media sources, but can be clearly detected by the number of new laws being passed to address the issue. While driving today I saw beggars at six different intersections on a short jaunt to the grocery store.

This is getting long, so I will stop citing the numerous additional examples and close with personal opinions based on decades of local observations. When people identify problems here in Kentucky, they look to government to address and fix those problems. People here take action to resolve problems by voting and participating in elections. I find it difficult to understand how in the world the citizens of Kentucky believe that the way to fix the pension crises is by allowing the same government who stole all the money, to be entrusted with retaining control over the funds. Even after this pension system has been totally mismanaged, most Kentuckians now also look to Government to resolve their health care issues. It is hard to imagine how so many people have had a front row seat watching their government rob their pension system, but who will then ask the very same thieves to also take over and run their health care system! In Kentucky, you can't find a problem that the people do not decide to ask their government to fix for them. In Kentucky, people look to their government to provide help, support, or even complete and total control and resolution to every single possible human responsibility ranging from such minor things including trash disposal and the cleaning of sidewalks in front of their homes, to things as major and important as personal bodily health management. This general condition is so extreme here in Kentucky that I am unable to think of a single aspect of daily life that people do not want the government to become involved with. As a result, people here do not think it is their place to take personal actions to resolve their own problems. They do not save for retirement, because the government is supposed to do that. They do not save money or make dietary or exercise adjustments for their own health, because the government is supposed to take care of that, too. Being in such a state, the people of Kentucky are doing nothing to address the state of our economy either. That is not their job to do, the government does that!

I do not mean to call out the people of Kentucky. I think this is going on in every State. That is my point. Currently, States are unable to print their own currencies...and they are going broke very quickly. The Feds have been against bailing out States for obvious reasons...but if they did so under the cover of helicopter money, it would be something embraced by voters Nationwide. It would also kick the can down the road for perhaps decades. BUT with that said, it would also make the eventual pain so much more extreme.

LOUISIANA

(Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge Parish) I live in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Our economy is slowing greatly. We have more houses for sale on the market today than we've had since 2009.

MAINE

(Northern Maine) Survey results. Hi John, I've followed your work for years.

The northern half of Maine is the same type of area that you live in. Small towns, farming and logging. EVERY town is in the same condition, 30% to 40% of Main Street is closed. Our family business, which is 100 years old, with basically no debt is barely hanging on. Our restaurants, hotel and vending business is horrible. This area is in recession now. The average person survives by adding more debt weekly and monthly. It isn't pretty up here,

Thanks for all your work John. This survey is a GREAT IDEA!!

MARYLAND (*no responses*)

MASSACHUSETTS (*no responses*)

MICHIGAN (*no responses*)

MINNESOTA

(Eden Prairie, Hennepin County) Eden Prairie is a South West suburb of Minneapolis with about 65,000 population in one of the more affluent areas here. Houses in our neighborhood are in the \$350,000 to \$400,000 range (one of the more modest in this ‘burb, which was named the nation’s top city chamber of commerce maybe 5 years ago), but that has been rising as 30-year rates decreased from 5% back down to 4% since the Powell pivot (every home for sale went quickly over the past two months and didn’t last long, so if you’re selling, now’s the time—again, ours is one of the more affordable areas for self-financed homes here).

Economy’s not great in other measures though. Gas is going up, and diesel. Grocery prices are rising. The Eden Prairie mall, which used to be bustling, has more and more closing stores (Sears last year, Kohls next?) and no one to occupy the shuttered and walled over smaller retail shop spaces around anchors – Potemkin village? – even with the new multi-billion light rail being extended out to the local bus station that goes downtown.

Several new retirement and assisted living and young workers’ apartments finishing construction, but who knows what the occupancy will be with all the new apartments downtown, and young workers preferring that, and many eschewing car ownership).

Relatively strong area, but more people are shopping for groceries at WalMart and Target than at the Cub Foods warehouse discounter, or local stores like Lunds and Byerlys, and Jerry’s Foods next to our subdivision.

MISSISSIPPI

(South Central, Hattiesburg) Here in south central Mississippi, stores are closing left and right. Here, the economy seems to be on the edge of major collapse. I live in Hattiesburg, where the only industry keeping the whole thing from falling apart is the Hospital and related medical community. We have the largest medical community in south Mississippi and there are no jobs. Unless you work at McDonalds, Wendy’s, etc.

Downtown Hattiesburg is a boarded up ghost town. The mall has lost 50 percent of stores. Payless, Toys ‘R Us, Gander Mountain, restaurants left and right are gone. Mom and pop stores are things of past. People seem to be just waiting for someone to turn off the lights.

And the Government tells us things are great. No inflation. They certainly are not in touch with the real world.

MISSOURI

(Springfield, Greene County) The following is excerpted from the **TRUCKERS** section (**Cross Country/Springfield, Missouri**). Meanwhile closer to home in Springfield, Missouri, our big Battlefield Mall had four new closures in the last month. It's the most closures that I've seen even during the Great Recession. The new closures don't include the previous closures that have yet to reopen with new stores. We kept our Sears store and 90% of available rental space is filled, but Springfield only has this one big mall.

MONTANA

(Helena, Lewis and Clark County) How's the economy in Helena Montana? Bad. All my opinions of course. I understand some about economics, but don't spend anytime digging to find facts to support my theories:

Montana's economy is primarily based on agriculture, and secondarily on natural resources. Many farmers and ranchers are crushed by low sale prices, however, with the flooding and destruction in the mid-west, the price may recover quickly. Also hindering this, Montana had a hard winter for the past two years, and that's hampering crop and livestock yields.

Natural resources continue to be hammered by phony money (Fed Fiat Money). The pricing of gold, silver, and even more consumable products like lumber are really down – Trump's deal with Canada to disallow subsidized lumber will help some. Besides, the environmental push, since the mid 80's, has continued to destroy productivity.

More concrete, in my neighborhood, I continue to see investments in "assets" like fancy cars, rather than in making our land productive. It seems like people are becoming frantic to get their cash into things they can "use" - albeit the typical bad or depreciating assets. (Side note, I would consider them consumables not assets - cars, boats, houses, etc., but anyway) The turnover rate of junk vehicles is amazing. I doubt any of them are investing in gold, silver, or other tangible assets. (My neighborhood is mostly government dependents of one form or another, very economically depressed.)

Also, I've been searching for a new job, pretty aggressively, for the past year, with no offers. I think that's a common story, I know a few guys at work are in the same position. I have over twenty years of experience, and a great collection of accomplishments, but am stuck at line-level management. I attribute that to very few companies want to risk being very aggressive, and are rather looking to keep the lights on.

NEBRASKA

(Northeast Nebraska) Pursuant to your invitation to email you with local economic reports: The economy in Nebraska and South Dakota is in the tank. Farmers going broke, store closures, home prices falling.

Thank you very much for your work

NEVADA (also see TRUCKERS)

(Las Vegas) I am a retired (for several years) commercial building contractor in Las Vegas, Nevada. The construction activity here, with the exclusion of strip hotels, is off the charts. Residential construction is ridiculous, developments are popping up everywhere, and they appear to be selling at just as quick a clip. Apartment construction is everywhere. Commercial construction of all types is as much as I have seen; from strip centers and fast food to office, commercial and warehouse is going gangbusters. The financial spigot seemed to open up several years ago.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

(Marlborough, Cheshire County and an Indicator from the Cayman Islands) Economy is good – Number of closed mall stores is decreasing. Unemployment is low. Property taxes are fairly stable. Efforts to improve the economy by the Republican governor are opposed by democratic senate and house.

Grand Cayman – For the past 15 years, I have kept a close eye on the economic conditions in Grand Cayman. There is an odd relationship I noted: The economic conditions in Grand Cayman seem to be a leading indicator of conditions in the U.S. about 1 year in advance!

1) There is very significant building activity in Grand Cayman. Increased expenditures on infrastructure (roads, communications, seaport construction and airport construction).

2) People are driving progressively more like they really don't care if they hit someone. Each year over the past few years, the drivers are more aggressive.

3) Prices of most everything except gasoline (price is stable) are higher. Up about 8% over last year. This is a trend that is in its third year.

Conclusion about Cayman Islands economy – negative – Not a good place to invest because the economy is more likely to fail than improve.

Conclusion about NH economy – neutral – The anti-business efforts of the legislature are likely to damage the otherwise very good economic outlook.

NEW JERSEY

(Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County) On Greg Hunter's show this morning, John Williams asked for feedback on local economies. I am an elected Township Committeeman in Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey.

This year, Trenton has eliminated huge dollar amounts on state aid to our school districts, \$1 million over 5 years for mine, and much larger amounts in other districts across the state. Municipalities have already sent out large numbers of pink slips to teachers and other staff and BOED's, and municipalities are in the process of substantial tax increases this year that will continue every year for the foreseeable future.

(Morristown, Morris County) I live in a town where a defense contractor employs a large portion of the population, so things are booming, and I keep stacking Silvertokens.

There are no empty storefronts on Main Street, but a mall two miles outside the heart of town is about 50% vacancy.

(Northern New Jersey) Just listened to your interview with Greg Hunter. As always, you are one of the very few voices of truth and sanity about what is going on in this economy.

I live about seven miles from Manhattan, in northern New Jersey, and stores are closing like mad around here, too. Within the last few weeks, two closings: TGI Friday's and Subway, just like that. And we are in a densely populated, high traffic area. Also, real estate prices are collapsing. \$190,000 condo shaved eleven thou off its price overnight, and I'm sure that's just the beginning. Ditto a home I'd been watching selling for over a million and sitting on the market since at least last October – wham!, a price drop of \$100,000. And it's still not moving.

More and more storefronts closing on main drag, eateries especially hard hit.

You suggested dropping interest rates to infuse liquidity into the system. But people are tired of getting no interest on their bank accounts, and you could run the risk of a bank run, no?

So we're damned if we do and damned if we don't. And the aging demographic is having a devastatingly deflating effect on demand in the economy.

NEW MEXICO (no responses)

NEW YORK

(Watertown, Jefferson County) I live in Watertown, New York (Fort Drum) and it is an economic oasis in a sea of economic despair and slowly dying for decades of upstate, western New York.

I do travel extensively in western upstate New York (have for decades) and it continues its path of economic death.....the many vibrant and healthy towns and cities ALL suffering from the extreme taxation and regulations of New York. It seems to me most of the farms have shut down to be replaced with a few mega dairy farms and the few remaining family farms are close to bankruptcy. It is interesting to see the change over 50 years here, the houses once maintained are not, many times junk filling the yards. There is no incentive to fix your house, or repair it since the towns will increase your taxes. Sad.

(Afton, Chenango County) John, this is rural Afton, New York, Upstate, 30 miles North of Binghamton and near Sidney New York, which has an Amphenol aerospace manufacturing plant, which started as Bendix 75 years ago. It was recently expanded and renewed with New York State dollars. I am 82, so have seen a lot.

The growth here is Dollar Stores expanding, the best being Dollar General. They are rapidly replacing old time grocery stores. Sidney has a large chain Price Chopper grocery store, where I estimate 10% inflation only in the last year, seeing big jumps up. Sidney also has one of the few remaining K-Marts, which appear to bring in merchandise (some lopsided inventory) from other closed stores, and their prices are insanely high. You see few shoppers there. I am speaking of a 30-mile radius here. It is over 25 miles to Lowes and WalMart. We have had four local grocery stores close in the past one-to-two years. Also two department stores and a lumberyard. Used car lots are full. Also big stocks of new cars sit on display. The advertising push is to lease cars or buy at 72 months. I guess they expect the grandchildren to pay it off. I grew up in World War II—the veterans are nearly all gone. It was a different world then.

NORTH CAROLINA (also see SOUTH CAROLINA)

(Coastal North Carolina/South Carolina Border) Mr. Williams please let me thank you for your work. It is good to have an honest source.

I live on the border between North and South Carolina on the coast. Retail stores are closing in the older malls and there are a great deal of vacancies. Strip malls with stores about a 1000 square feet – lots of vacancies. Yet new smaller malls are being built – all the outdoor variety. Not sure why?

We have very low taxes and our government pensions are well covered. Many people moving in from the Northeast. I sit on the local planning board and we have higher than normal new houses that are being built. Real Estate prices are rising but in the single digits. We have beautiful weather, low crime and uncrowded roads, but many people, who are proud here, have to have two jobs each for both parents to make it.

Each winter there is a drive for winter clothes for the children and school supplies. Many good parents just can't afford them. When the winter weather goes into the low 30's, often school is called off, because the school board does not want children waiting at the school bus stops without decent warm clothing. I just cannot believe this is happening in my America. It is so wrong!

(Wilmington, New Hanover County) I am a currency trader of 5 years now (took me that long to get consistent) who's known for quite some time now that your numbers are far closer to reality since the new models don't paint an accurate picture. I perceive business owners use your reports to have a more reality-based picture in order to plan.

With that, I saw you on Greg Hunter yesterday (from a couple of months back I believe) and saw you welcomed conditions on the ground.

We are in Wilmington NC and have been since 1989.

As you may already be aware, the Northern retirees have been pouring into this state for a good number of years now.

They sell their houses up there, move here where they can build the same home they had up there for less than half the cost, enjoy the warmer weather, and take their nice pensions along with them.

Too bad for the states they left, leaving the remaining to pick up the difference in taxes since they are no longer contributing back into the base.

Wilmington (New Hanover County) along with the immediate surrounding counties once had a thriving Industrial Base.

Since NAFTA and the allowance of China into the WTO (while the eyes of the world were on 9-11), it has evolved into a service-based economy.

The City of Wilmington has been exploding with new home construction for some years now and the city itself is 90% built out. Millions in new road construction is ongoing.

Small businesses have been popping up everywhere. It is no longer just the retirees moving here.

Craft Breweries and Food Trucks seem all the rage as well.

I'm guessing the middle age influx is responsible for much of the new businesses.

Lots of help-wanted signs and fast food is paying around 9 to 10 bucks an hour to start.

New Apartment Complexes along with storage facilities have been and continue popping up everywhere.

Next door over the City Bridge to the south. Brunswick County has also seen a significant housing boom due to lots more land available for development.

Then on the other side of Wilmington, headed north, we have Pender County. Even more land available for development with millions slated for road construction that way for the next 10 years.

Lots of large and cleared parcels of land commercially zoned and for sale. The traffic from Pender County coming into Wilmington has already gone from sleepy to short bumper-to-bumper conditions on certain parts of the drive in.

To the South, on the Cape Fear River, the small City of Southport has come alive. When we moved here in 1989, we knew it had a history, but business wise it was dead. In fact, rather depressing. But today it is thriving. The Beach area of Oak Island has also changed dramatically since they gave it a water system years back.

So, Southport is where the summer homeowners and rentals go to get that small city cultural experience.

Okay just wanted to give you a look on the ground here. Keep up the great work John!

NORTH DAKOTA (no responses)

OHIO

(Columbus) The economy here in Columbus Ohio is booming. If you don't have a job, it is because you do not want to work.

The IRS is killing me, being a very small home business owner.

(Amish Region) We are a unique company in the fact that most of our product (custom cabinets, doors, etc.) is re-branded into other companies lines due to the fact that they can't produce what is required in some aspect or other. On to the economy, what we see here is very troubling. The labor stress as you mention is extreme in our "Amish" area. What is happening, companies such as LUK, GOJO, Daisy, Crow Works (a Buffett owned company) are moving into Amish country to suck up the labor. Fortunately, the work force here still can and wants to work and does so, however, at an ever expanding wage level. At our company, we pay our average worker at \$18.50 per hour, and with bonuses, they will be at roughly \$23-\$23.50 per hour. The problem I have is we can currently take business away from other larger competitors due to the better labor force, however, I am scared to grow this company bigger due to the fact to attract more labor I will need to raise my labor rate. We also will have to invest in more equipment and building expansions, which is rather costly.

With the clowns in office right now, I don't feel that there is enough stability in the economy to warrant any further expansion, as it is subject to Trump's idea of the day. I do appreciate the fact that he is trying to bring the manufacturing sector back, but whoever is advising him has never run any manufacturing facility, as evidenced by the stupidly appointed idea of tariffing China on plywood to the tune of 260%. Why in GOD'S green earth would you not tariff the finished product as in RTA cabinets, doors, or finished millwork of any kind to the tune of say oh 25-35%. Our raw product cost would have remained the same but our finished goods would have been jacked up 25-35%, thereby putting profits and wage increases on the table for Main Street American workers.

Now let's talk about liquefying the American work force, the banks would love to have credit worthy people walking through the door! It is troubling to me as a business owner, because I can feel the "pressure" in my conversations with our customer base. It does not matter where they are located, from Brooklyn, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, Dallas, to Orlando and Oshkosh, everybody in the building world is kind of tense with tight profit margins.

OKLAHOMA (*no responses*)

OREGON

(Central Oregon) I am in central Oregon.

The local economy would appear on the surface to be flourishing. However it seems to me to be all HOT AIR. There is nothing of any substance taking place. Breweries, pot shops, tourism and continued building with no economic base. We are in a big bubble and it will not only pop like the last time ... it will BLOW!

I am 70 and have seen these things before. Thank you for all that you do,

(Southern Oregon, Ashland, Medford) Husband and I are retired, live up here in Southern Oregon, Ashland, Medford since 2014. We are financially comfortable with retirement funds, however, watch our spending. This is what I see around here.

1. Definitely increase in homeless; I hear just as bad up North in Portland. Begging at intersections, camping along creeks, and see increased number of trailer parks off I-5 in the trees, people are living full time in small trailers.

2. Younger millennial ages having challenges finding decent full time jobs.

3. Cost of utility services increasing every few months. We cut back on cable stations to save, water costs increased last year, now will only water yard two times a week this Summer or will have high water bill.

4. Who in their right mind does not notice food prices sky rocketing. At least here in Southern Oregon there are many family farms, orchards, wineries a plenty, we will be purchasing local food all Summer.

5. Housing prices have become high for this area, were reasonable three to four years ago reasonable. Now comparable to Sacramento area. Real estate seems to doing well, even overpriced three bed, two bath sell within a couple weeks. Last year houses sold in a couple days.

(Bend, Deschutes County) [Supplemental] Thank You Mr. Williams ... I will be looking forward to your regional report... that would be great...and fun to be part of it... Might be an interesting way to gather some interesting but non-scientific info that might be useful... and help draw a much more clear picture for people of what is really going on... Yes, as I said – here – there are backhoes and migrant landscape/framers crew everywhere... One would not know there is a downturn if one did not hear from you and Greg's Reports...

So many people (sheeple) just believe what is said on Fox Business, etc.! lol Totally clueless about gold, value of the dollar, the massive sell off of Treasuries etc... and believe there 'needs' to be war drums over Venezuela – Russia helping them because Western banks refused to give loans to them like many other nations to get thru the rough times of the oil price drop from \$120 a barrel... which because they were not very diversified, was and has been a struggle. They were once a strong ally of the U.S. – Poor policy that we – the banks turned their backs on them... Now we are upset they went looking for loans from someone else?

[Initial Comments] Am in Bend Oregon... quite a few people moving here FROM California and even Washington... running from their high taxes... BUT Oregon is pushing up their taxes and user fees and with the change in deductions many people who SAW more take home pay... now realize it is heading out back to the state and local governments after filing...

Trump's cut will have little if any effect here... other than an uptick in house building while those people from other states can find buyers so they can get out! lol Only to find AFTER THEY GET HERE... their heating costs and food costs are much higher up here as well!

Irrigation water rates are at an all-time high as well ... o soon enough they will learn ... here ... is just a bit less smog ... but poverty with a view !!!!

PENNSYLVANIA

(Northwest of Pittsburgh) Let me say that I appreciate your honesty.

I live about 35 miles northwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We have lost all of our Sears and K-Mart stores. We lost our Macy's and our Penney's, Payless and others are on the bubble.

On inflation, about 6 months ago our gas prices were around \$2.47 a gallon. Now about \$3.20 and we do have one of the highest gas taxes in the country.

Here is my thought on the unemployment numbers and jobs creation numbers. Let's use 200,000 new jobs supposedly created or filled in a month. In the same month, 250,000 people lose their jobs. We did not gain; we lost.

Across the Ohio River from where I live, Shell Oil is building a multi-billion dollar ethane cracker plant. The actual construction involves around 10,000 construction workers. They built seven or eight new motels to house these men. When the job is finished, the plant will employ around 600 people. There is absolutely NOTHING to see or do here. They will probably have to close most of them.

I do not ever see government numbers showing the impact of the flooding in Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska. Many farmers lost everything and according to NOAA, the heavy rains and flooding will continue for all of May. If the farmers cannot get into plow, or have to plant late, imagine the impact. I have not believed the government's numbers for a long time.

RHODE ISLAND (no responses)

SOUTH CAROLINA (also see NORTH CAROLINA)

(Coastal South Carolina/North Carolina Border) Mr. Williams please let me thank you for your work. It is good to have an honest source.

I live on the border between North and South Carolina on the coast. Retail stores are closing in the older malls and there are a great deal of vacancies. Strip malls with stores about a 1000 square feet – lots of vacancies. Yet new smaller malls are being built – all the outdoor variety. Not sure why?

We have very low taxes and our government pensions are well covered. Many people moving in from the Northeast. I sit on the local planning board and we have higher than normal new houses that are being built. Real Estate prices are rising but in the single digits. We have beautiful weather, low crime and uncrowded roads, but many people, who are proud here, have to have two jobs each for both parents to make it.

Each winter there is a drive for winter clothes for the children and school supplies. Many good parents just can't afford them. When the winter weather goes into the low 30's, often school is called off, because the school board does not want children waiting at the school bus stops without decent warm clothing. I just cannot believe this is happening in my America. It is so wrong!

SOUTH DAKOTA (See NEBRASKA)

TENNESSEE

(Nashville, Davidson County) On Greg Hunter's show, you asked for local testimony on the economy.

Nashville, Tennessee, the healthcare industry capital of the U.S., has been booming since 2013. They recently said 100 people a day are moving here, but I think that's slowing now. Mostly for healthcare jobs. I fix computers for a living, and two thirds of the businesses I go to are healthcare. Also, there's a booming tourist industry, and the city skyline has completely changed with hotel and mixed-use condo building. It's becoming harder to live here. The housing teardown/rebuild boom is all large McMansions or "long houses" that take up the whole yard. There are corner beggars and homeless tents under a few freeway underpasses, but I suspect everyone who wants a job has one. Places like auto parts and hardware stores cannot find knowledgeable workers at what they want to pay. Downtown where the tourists are, dishwashers make \$15.00 per hour. I make only \$13.50 per hour as a warranty repair field technician of 20-plus years. Had I not bought a foreclosure for cash in 2012, I would be in DEEP DOODOO financially. Keep up the good work.

TEXAS

(Austin, Travis County) The last several years have seen increased construction of apartments, new homes, and shopping centers, along with a significant increase in traffic and congestion. There was a store closure in my immediate area but it was Sears and a Petco. My daughter living in Pinellas County, Florida has seen a big shopping center built in the last couple years and new retail stores being built even up to the present.

(Colleyville, Tarrant County) In response to the interview with Greg Hunter requesting the state of my local economy:

I live in Colleyville, Texas. Colleyville is in North Texas in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Ninety-percent plus of Colleyville would be considered upper middle class. I spend most of my shopping time in Southlake, Grapevine, and Colleyville. Both Southlake and Colleyville are considered upper middle class. Grapevine is also in that category, but to a lesser degree.

Businesses in the area are always closing down with new businesses eventually taking their place. Recently, I noticed a local bar in Colleyville that was quite popular had shut down. Then my spouse pointed out that it had moved. I don't know the circumstances of this business. So I can't say it was a reflection on the overall area economy. Retail space seems to be more full than in the past in Colleyville. But I think in the past the retail space to population ratio was quite low. The local religious institutions have bought much more land and expanded in recent years. They don't have to pay property taxes.

I do notice that the people here are pretty cautious with their money. Yes, many in the area have money. And they are quite careful how they spend it. If something is a good deal, they buy it. If something is not a good deal, the product stays on the shelf a long time.

I visit the local cemetery about once every two weeks, since my first spouse passed twelve years ago. Just looking at the recent number of new graves, it appears that the death rate is higher.

I think the system is doing what it can to hurry along the death rate to lessen the retirement costs. I used to be able to read the obituaries and figure out the average age of those dying. But now the paper often does not even include the person's age at death. So one cannot get an idea of how the local death age is changing. I know that National Geographic put out an article last year that stated the average age in the U.S.A. had gone down for three consecutive years. This had not happened for about 100 years.

If the system can increase the death rate of older people significantly, then this will help the unfunded liabilities like Social Security and Medicare. Would the system do that? You bet it would! This is one to deal with the unfunded liabilities. I don't agree with this approach. But I do think this is exactly what is going on to some degree.

The food quality has definitely dropped for the average person locally and throughout the U.S.A. in the last few years. This year I purposely budgeted more money going to "Organic" foods. I drink a lot less alcohol and caffeinated drinks than in the past. I have figured out how to stay alive a lot longer. Improving the quality of what I eat and drink helps towards a longer life.

The biggest change in spending for most people in the community where I live is that they are spending a lot more for property taxes thanks to TAD (Tarrant Appraisal District) going up significantly on property taxes. Some are moving to lower tax areas while others with significantly more money are moving in.

I don't have a lot of money, living mainly off of social security and a two retirement checks each month. Yet, my house and vehicle are paid for. I have very low debt, which is 100% credit card at no interest until April next year. I will easily pay off that low debt before any interest is due.

This month of May, I have enough extra money to buy a new refrigerator and new bed for one child. Also, I have extra money this month for a steel roof frame and roof for a house I am building in the Philippines. Next year I will go there and live in that house for around six months. The cost of living there is much lower.

(Dallas/Fort Worth, Dallas and Tarrant Counties) I live in the Dallas/Fort Worth area ~ supposedly booming. Mainly what's booming is the southern California style traffic. In the last couple of years, I've noticed that several, decades-old small businesses, have gone under.

My husband and son both survived layoffs at their companies, just in the last two months.

Many more houses are vacant in the neighborhood.

(El Paso, El Paso County) I enjoyed your interview with Greg Hunter.

Local business conditions:

- There are hundreds of thousands of square feet of vacant retail space in El Paso.
- Thousands of manufacturing jobs are gone.
- There is at least 1,000,000 square feet of vacant manufacturing space.
- Some "strip shopping centers" have 50% to 70% vacancy rates.
- Retail stores are closing everywhere.

Issues with the Mexican Border and Immigration:

- About 700 Customs and Border Protection agents were "pulled" from the ports of entry to assist asylum seekers.
- As a result, imports from Mexico have slowed to a crawl.
- A month ago, an inbound trailer from Juarez might clear customs in two hours.
- One of the TV stations reported on a truck, which got in line in Mexico at 3:00 am and cleared customs at 5:00 p.m. Obviously, this is costing trucking costs to skyrocket.

- The auto parts “just in time” manufacturing business model using parts made in Mexico may collapse if this continues.
- Our growth industry is asylum seekers.

(Gladewater / Longview, Gregg, Upshur and Smith Counties) I am from Gladewater Texas, I thank you for the true evaluations you make of global and financial markets. Here is a small excerpt of my local area’s overall economy:

City limits composed of approximately 50% tenant/renters.

Shop owners have seen an uptick in overall prices of goods, upstart businesses are feeling a crunch on liquidity.

My family’s businesses of rental properties and vehicle towing and impoundment have seen at least a 10% increase in delinquencies on rental payments and car notes for the beginning of this year. Lots of part-time job availability, few full-time jobs with benefits.

Fuel prices Gas \$2.80, Diesel \$2.99, many of my family members have had to change auto, home and health insurance providers due to 20%-plus increases in premiums from last year, me included. Hope this little bit helps with your analysis.

(Leander, Williamson and Travis Counties) I live in Leander, Texas off Route 183 in Northern Austin Texas – Near Liberty Hill, Leander, and Cedar Park – “Suburbia” of North Austin.

This area here is BOOMING. It cannot grow fast enough! We moved from Ohio to Austin 6 years ago, and everywhere we go we are told “just a few years ago this was empty fields.” And it is true. Just behind our home was an empty field, now it is a HUGE shopping center. It is still in Lease-up: <https://theshopsatsangabrielridge.com/>.

If you take a moment to look at the above website, you will see the THOUSANDS of homes / communities, which are being constructed now around this area. In just the few years we have been here, it is absolutely shocking how quickly so much is grown. When going down Route 29, 183, or 183A Toll (frontage) roads, we see new buildings constantly going up or opening of new businesses. We have a local magazine, which tracks new businesses, openings, real estate sales, etc. called Community Impact: <https://communityimpact.com/leander-cedar-park/print-archives/year/2019/>

House pricing have spiraled out of control. Our 2,000 square foot home, which we built new for \$200,000 is now worth \$265,000. In comparison, our home is CHEAP. Many homes in Bryson, Santa Rita and other communities START in the low \$300,000s. Crystal Falls has homes easily in the \$600k+ range. There is a Jack Nicholas Gated Golf course on Route 29 called Cimmaron Hills, which has homes in the \$1 million-plus range. This is near Georgetown Texas (off I-35), which is also booming.

When driving down the road in our 4 year old sedan worth about \$10,000 – we see BRAND NEW vehicles, which retail for \$50,000 to \$100,000. BMW, Tesla, Mercedes, King Ranch /Texas Edition Quad Cab Trucks, Audi, Porsche, Lexus, etc., etc. In Texas, when you get a new vehicle, you are required to get a new plate. Our plate from four years ago starts with "D." The new vehicles have plates with "K," "L" and "M."

Our vehicle has an OLD plate starting with a "D." I believe this whole area is being built with HUGE, MASSIVE DEBT.

I know Austin is one of the fastest growing cities in the USA. So maybe what you are seeing is the “exit” from CA. We have so many people here from California – which is making our Red State turn Purple. In my voting district in the last election, HALF voted for HRC and HALF for Trump. In conservative Williamson County, this is not what it was (from what I was told by native Texans). This is a personal pet peeve of mine.... as people are fleeing their home state but keeping their Democratic Voting

with them. I also think when people from New York and California and sell their tiny home for \$500,000 – they have more purchasing power here in Austin, Texas, which is driving up prices (as is demand). Coming from an area of \$300+ per square foot for a home, to an area of \$100 to \$200 per square foot – they are able to purchase more with their California money.

I know my location in NW Austin will be an “outlier” in your analysis – as it seems "Everyone is moving to Austin"... and it is true. Williamson County is one of the hottest places, I believe, in the United States right now. What scares me is that which bloats so quickly, might contract just as quickly when things change. And I know this whole place is FUELED by MASSIVE DEBT.

(San Antonio, Bexar County) I was just watching John on Greg Hunters show. I would point to two things:

First, I am in San Antonio and am involved in the Oil Industry. It first seems like food prices keep spiraling upward.

On another note, I have noticed a major slowdown in the oil fields on the production side the last two months. With oil at \$62, you would think they would be going hard, but production work seems to be slowing down in South Texas, AND I was in Midland on Friday [May 3rd] and was kind of amazed at how much idle equipment I saw!

UTAH

(Salt Lake and Utah Valley) Salt Lake and Utah Valley economy still pretty strong. Lots of multi-family housing being built. Lots of road construction. I see technology jobs posted on billboards, most retail & fast food have job posting on reader boards. We lost a few national retailers and do have a fair amount of vacant retail storefronts. A couple of food retailers are moving into the area Lucky stores and Winco.

(Real Estate Activity) The economy here is as hot as it ever has been. Real estate prices have far exceeded the pre-2008 recession highs ... in some cases by nearly a third. New cars are everywhere, used car dealerships have dramatically increased in the past few years, retail appears to be doing well with a few exceptions like Payless, Sears, Shopko, Macy's, etc.

The construction business is insane! Facebook is building one 1 million square foot data center and planning on building five more. Commercial and office buildings are going up everywhere. I can't bid everything that comes across my desk. My margins are quite good; I don't have to discount much to get a job. I currently sell and install resinous (epoxy) flooring and have been since 2005, so I have a close eye on the construction industry here. It seems that much of the spending is reckless and almost every project is over budget. Most every project is on a fast track schedule as well.

It seems to me that residential real estate prices have topped out and may now be turning slightly downward. Inventory has consistently been tight due to homeowners being unable to afford more.

Most everything in our economy is very good... but I realize that it is all fueled by debt. Nothing goes down in cost, it just goes up, and the system we live under keeps us spending. It's quite frustrating.

VERMONT (*no responses*)

VIRGINIA

(Main Street Surry, Surry County) Surry County Virginia is a rural county, and only has a population of 6,700 people. It is located 40 miles from Richmond, Virginia, and 50 miles from Norfolk, Virginia. The city of Surry is located in the center of the county, and we had a Hardware Store there for over a 100 years. Unfortunately, it went out of business in 2017. The storeowner said that, "Hardware sales, particularly went down in 2012 to 2016."

(Virginia, Not Otherwise Indicated) One thing nobody is talking about is the hit we took on 2018 Income Taxes. We made the same amount of money as 2017, and the new tax rules took away a bunch of deductions, and we owed \$5,000 more in Federal taxes compared to 2017. I don't believe the economy is healthy. New car sales have collapsed with the higher auto loan interest rates (5% plus). As a baby boomer, I'm stuck paying \$83,000 in student loan debt for my daughter, and she had to live at home for a year to pay her \$33,000 in student loans back. There is no extra money for anything. I am dramatically lowering my expectations for life going forward. Now they are talking about taxing gasoline to pay for infrastructure. I feel like I work just to pay the government. My pension got ripped off by IBM, and I'm working until I die, or become disabled. Things are not as rosy as they say, John.

WASHINGTON

(Little Norway, Kitsap County) During your last appearance [on Greg Hunter's USA Watchdog website], you asked for anecdotal reports on how the Main Street economy might be doing in our communities. The short answer is that, at least here in what's called Washington's "Little Norway," the Great Recession did deep harm to our businesses and families, but there has been an extremely slow recovery to a somewhat-lower-than-peak economic level with no general retrenchment so far.

(Pacific County, Southwest Washington Coastal Area) This comment is for your survey: Always enjoy your interview with Greg Hunter USA Watchdog and always learn something new and interesting, so thank you very much.

I live in the Pacific Co. /Grays Harbor quadrant of the Southwest Washington coast area. Once a hub of all things relating to forest/timber/lumber products, but very distressed now. I relocated down here from Seattle Washington Metro as a retiree. Could not afford the city on limited income. What I cannot understand is the house prices ... so high in relationship to job availability/wages, and it is like this across the State of Washington, Oregon and Idaho in small towns. I cannot figure this out. And PUD/Electric continues to rise regardless of added infrastructure. I have watched these two industries steadily rise since 2008...

WEST VIRGINIA (*no responses*)

WISCONSIN

(Superior, Douglas County) Notice that the main mall in Superior, Wisconsin has only one or two stores left. The big anchor stores like Younkers and JC Penney are long gone over the past couple of years. K Mart and Sears stores in Duluth, Minnesota closed with nothing replacing them, the Shopko store is closing.

(North Central) Over 20% to 30% are shuttered here in north central Wisconsin.

(Ghost Towns) Moved here from Illinois twelve years ago. Wisconsin is a disaster now. Some smaller towns are ghost towns, no business left. Some malls have already completely closed. Recently, restaurants now are starting to close.

WYOMING (no responses)

GENERAL—NO STATE OR SPECIFIC REGION INDICATED

(Think of Rome) You are right on with your analysis of what's going on!

The economy has been going in the toilet for years in an apparently planned approach. We see it out here big time. The deterioration in purchasing power of the dollar, the stress on families and even the people that have been personally prudent. The reduction in quality and quantity of products are reduced and still more expensive as well.

Unfortunately, MOST people have their head buried in the sand and are only looking at their day to day activities. It's like that frog in the pot of water that is slowly getting hotter.

The political system is corrupt and out of control. The Bankers have won. I'm not looking for improvements. I'm expecting a financial failure that could take this country out of existence. This appears at all levels of government now.

Think of Rome.

(In Big Trouble)

Inflation is killing us:

- My healthcare insurance is up 50%
- This year's car insurance up 17%
- Tires are up 10%, auto parts in general up more than 10%
- Food goes up every month; e.g. bag of my favorite popcorn went up 10%

This country in big trouble

TRUCKERS

(Location Not Specified) A trucker friend of mine – He said everyone was making money hand over fist for the last three years or so, and then two weeks ago [late-April], it was (his words) “Like someone turned the spigot off.” [ShadowStats has had similar verbal advice from other truckers.]

(Cross Country/Springfield, Missouri) I’m an Over the Road Team Driver, so I crisscross the United States a couple of times a week. About 30% of stores are closed or have going out of business signs. I’ve been shocked at the massive number of homes and some businesses that cannot maintain their buildings. The buildings look like their owners haven’t had money to keep up with maintenance in over ten years.

Meanwhile closer to home in Springfield Missouri, our big Battlefield Mall had four new closures in the last month. It’s the most closures that I’ve seen even during the Great Recession. The new closures don’t include the previous closures that have yet to reopen with new stores. We kept our Sears store and 90% of available rental space is filled, but Springfield only has this one big mall.

As a trucker, we’ve seen an explosive growth in the number of new truck stops, thanks to the new electronic log mandate. Most shippers and receivers are only open for one or two shifts, most truckers now have to shut down at the same time every day, causing a demand for more truck parking. Only the truck stop companies have stepped up. The government just keeps running studies into the need for more parking and the carriers are useless. Lots of road construction, I don’t complain, the roads are that bad.

(California, Nevada, Arizona/ San Bernardino County, California) [Repeated from the **CALIFORNIA** section.] I’m a Truck driver for a chain of grocery stores, delivering to California, Arizona and Nevada. My Distribution Center is in San Bernardino County, California. Lucky for me that I live 15 minutes or less to work.

My local economy where I’m at is wow ... help wanted and now hiring signs everywhere in supply chain, warehouse and especially drivers needed. The two large malls that feature Costco, Sam’s Club and every big box store that you can imagine are called “Ontario Mills Mall” and “Victoria Gardens.” Ontario Mills is a middle and maybe lower middle income base customers. Victoria Gardens is upper income households that visit this mall. Both malls are always filled to capacity with shoppers. These parking lots are filled to capacity.

I do not see any customers holding back on their consumer spending habits. I’m seeing people of every income level in all the three states that I deliver to: California, Phoenix and Las Vegas spending money like they got money.

Since the housing market collapse of 2007, 2008 and 2009 took place, I’ve conditioned myself to be a saver and not a spender. Followed Greg’s advice and paid off all debt but for my mortgage. I’m observing that many people I personally know to have been hurt badly by The Great Recession, have completely forgotten where they were.

I don’t see anyone concerned at all about another possible crisis being on our horizon. Almost everyone I know looks at me as a worrywart. No one In my opinion is prepped for a black swan event that may cause a cascade of problems ... I don’t know anyone putting away cash for a rainy day ... I am.

So people here have forgotten their pain, and they conduct themselves as if the bull run will never end. All our homes have built so much equity in the last few years that I see my neighbors feeling very confident, etc., etc.

(Idaho) This year has seen a dramatic decline in trucking rates, which affects a great many drivers quite negatively, myself being one of them.

#