

# The Delray Democrat

## No, He Didn't, and No, He Can't<sup>1</sup>

*Michael K. Cantwell*

Trump claims he built a beautiful economy and says that he can do it again. No, he didn't, and no, he can't.

The economy about which he brags ad nauseam was built by the Obama-Biden administration on the ashes of the Great Recession left by George W. Bush. It is a testament to the health of the economy Trump inherited that neither his trade wars nor his tariffs were able to wreck it.

Still, Trump weakened the economy even before the pandemic. In the last 36 months of the Obama-Biden administration, jobs and wages rose faster and unemployment fell faster than during Trump's first 36 months.

Trump did not cause the pandemic, but he was totally unprepared, despite repeated warnings. His incompetent and chaotic response exacerbated the death toll and plunged the country into a Second Great Depression. It was a failure of leadership unrivaled in American history.

Even worse, the human carnage was a direct result of Trump placing his political life above the physical lives of the American public. It was always clear that the way to slow the spread of the virus was to shut down non-essential parts of the economy. Yet Trump resisted calls to do so and then pushed for a hasty reopening because he feared an economic slowdown would imperil his reelection.

### ***Trump Is a Failed Businessman: He Only Played a Successful One on TV***

One of the most often repeated of his 20,000 proven lies is Trump's claim to be a successful businessman. He played a spectacularly successful one on television, but in real life he was a dismal failure.

Just a year after opening, the Trump Taj Mahal was [\\$3 billion](#) in debt and filed for bankruptcy in 1991. Trump himself was also personally liable for \$900 million. The next year Trump's two other casinos were \$888 million in debt and also filed for bankruptcy. And Trump's Plaza Hotel was \$550 million in debt when it was filed for bankruptcy in 1992.

After they emerged from bankruptcy, Trump consolidated them into Trump Hotels and Casinos Resort, which piled up \$1.8 billion in debts and filed for bankruptcy in 2004. Five years later, they filed again, citing \$1.2 billion in debt.

Trump's reverse Midas touch reached beyond the businesses he touched to businesses that touched his. Casino investors lost [\\$1.5 billion](#), and many small contractors were driven out of business after Trump stiffed them.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Delray Democrat*, October 2020, p. 1

Trump used these losses to reduce his taxes. In 1995, he reported \$916 million in tax losses, which he then carried forward to offset taxable income in subsequent years.

As The New York Times revealed [recently](#), this enabled Trump to pay no taxes in 10 of the last 15 years and only \$750 in 2016 and 2017. Trump says that's because he's smart, but it's because of his business failures. It seems the only real money he made was *posing* as a business genius. And he used that money to go on a buying spree, mostly for golf courses that have lost \$300 million, not exactly the sign of a smart businessman.

Trump is [personally liable](#) for \$421 million in loans coming due soon, and his tax deductions are being challenged by the IRS. If he loses, Trump will owe the IRS as much as \$100 million. He could also face prosecution for tax fraud.

Some of the filings examined by the Times violate rules a smart person would know but a tax cheat would ignore. Courts have consistently held hairstyling is a [nondeductible](#) personal expense even for television personalities. Claiming the deduction would constitute tax fraud if the cost had been reimbursed. Not only did Trump take a \$70,000 deduction for hairstyling, but executives who worked on *The Apprentice* told the Times that it is extremely unlikely Trump even paid for his hairstyling in the first place and that in any case would certainly have been reimbursed if he had.

Another rule bars companies from deducting payments to an independent contractor if the contractor is also an employee. Yet one of Trump's companies [claimed](#) payments of \$747,622 to an unidentified independent contractor whom the Times determined is almost certainly Ivanka Trump. Because she is an employee of that company, the expense is not deductible and is potentially yet another incidence of tax fraud.