

# Thanksgiving 2025 in America: Misery for workers, unprecedented wealth for the elite

**Tom Hall****26 November 2025**

Thanksgiving in the United States is taking place under conditions of deepening social and political crisis. For the vast majority of the population, there is nothing to be thankful for. The scenes of abundance and social harmony painted by Norman Rockwell in the middle of the 20th century—always an idealized fiction—stand in stark contrast to a society in 2025 at the breaking point, dominated by a ruling class unmoored from reality.

A review of the basic social indices produces an image of a bankrupt social order. According to the most recent government figures, 1 in 7 Americans in 2023 were food insecure, with the rate 1.5 times higher for children. The situation has only worsened due to the cutoff of food stamps, on which 42 million people rely, combined with \$180 billion in additional cuts over the next decade that will reduce or eliminate eligibility for half of all recipients. The government has recently announced it will make all beneficiaries re-enroll, supposedly to combat “fraud,” throwing millions into uncertainty.

The impact of these cuts and the government shutdown is already devastating. The Houston-area “Super Feast” Thanksgiving charity event, which normally feeds 25,000 people, expects double the normal attendance this year. A *New York Times* article on food insecurity in Middletown, Ohio, where Vice President JD Vance grew up, quoted one worker: “I actually had a customer, who had not received their SNAP (food stamps), ask for a credit in tears.” Another resident dealing with brain cancer was forced to strip down her Thanksgiving meal to turkey, mac and cheese and potatoes.

Meanwhile, prices continue to climb. The US Retail Association predicts holiday spending will surpass \$1 trillion for the first time, but the primary driver is not an increase in the quantity of goods purchased, it is the relentless rise in prices. A separate Deloitte survey found that overall spending will decline by 10 percent, with the sharpest drop among the poor. Holiday consumer

confidence is at historic lows, with 57 percent predicting the economy will weaken in the next six months—the highest figure since 1997. CNN is reporting on the “K-shaped” holiday season, in which spending is driven almost entirely by high-income purchasers.

A major factor in the rising prices is the impact of tariffs. These regressive taxes are borne by importers and passed directly onto consumers through higher prices, hitting workers the hardest.

The government’s response to this social reality is simply to cover it up. In September, the US Department of Agriculture suddenly announced it would no longer issue its annual food insecurity report, calling it “subjective, liberal fodder” that does “nothing but fear monger.” The White House is also refusing to release the full October unemployment report, citing the shutdown as a pretext.

This is an expression of the callousness of the ruling class as a whole, not merely the Trump administration. Cutting \$8 billion a month from food stamps throws the fate of tens of millions into turmoil. Meanwhile, the ruling elite is engaged in a massive accumulation of wealth. Ten billionaires increased their wealth by \$700 billion this year. Elon Musk received a new \$1 trillion pay package at Tesla. Larry Ellison became \$100 billion richer in a single day—enough to fund the entire food stamp program for a year.

A US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) study released last December found more than 770,000 people sleeping unhoused on a single night, the highest number ever recorded. This social catastrophe is driven by stagnant wages and ever-increasing rents. At the same time, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos owns about \$700 million in residential properties, including three mansions in the same Florida neighborhood. When he tires of those, he can relax on his \$500 million superyacht.

This wealth comes from value expropriated from the

working class. As Karl Marx explained, “Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.” To the extent that the staggering sums of wealth have any basis in real value and not merely financial swindling, it lies in the ruthless intensification of exploitation imposed on the working class.

The deployment of AI—technology with the potential to dramatically increase the productivity of labor—is being used instead to eliminate whole sections of the workforce. Mass layoffs have reached 1.1 million this year. The past month was the worst October for job cuts in two decades. HP announced 6,000 layoffs this week. Apple is laying off salespeople. Layoffs of 13,000 at Verizon have begun.

While white-collar workers face displacement by AI, tens of thousands of blue-collar workers are also being thrown out of work. UPS, the auto industry and logistics companies are eliminating jobs on a massive scale. Hundreds of thousands of workers cannot afford basic necessities and now also face the threat of losing their jobs during the holidays.

Other dimensions of the crisis include the deliberate undermining of basic safety measures, producing an unending series of deadly industrial disasters. The deaths of postal workers Nick Acker and Russell Scruggs, Jr., the UPS plane crash in Louisville, the explosion at the Tennessee munitions plant—the list goes on.

Alongside this is the promotion of ignorance and backwardness as ideological cover for dismantling the basic infrastructure of modern society. Ralph Abraham, former surgeon general of Louisiana and now appointed deputy head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), previously halted promotion of mass vaccination in the state.

The ruling class is also preparing for war to conquer markets, supply chains and raw materials. There are increasing calls in the press for the US to dramatically expand production of missiles, ships and advanced weaponry for a conflict with China, treated as all but inevitable.

At home, the preparations for dictatorship are advancing rapidly. Trump threatened congressional Democrats with execution for issuing a statement calling on soldiers to refuse illegal orders. While the political establishment hints at military conspiracies inside the White House, it does nothing to warn the population or mobilize opposition. Mass opposition is precisely what it fears

most.

This is being carried out with active assistance of the trade union bureaucracy, significant sections of whom have flocked to Trump in support of his trade war policies. Seeking to scapegoat foreigners for job cuts the union bureaucrats have helped carry out, they falsely claim these measures will save “American” jobs. In fact, they have paved the way for even deeper layoffs and the rising cost of living.

The reality is that society can progress no further while burdened by the capitalist profit system. The critical question is the movement of the working class, guided by an international socialist perspective, to smash the power of the oligarchy and fight for workers’ power. There is a growing resistance in the working class, expressed in the response to the investigations into working conditions by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), in the growing resistance to immigration raids and in other forms of opposition. Workers are seeking an explanation and a program around which to fight.

This opposition requires a political perspective. Inequality is rooted in capitalism and oligarchic rule. The wealth of society must be expropriated from the capitalist class and placed under the democratic control of the working class. Rank-and-file committees and the IWA-RFC provide the means for organizing this struggle completely independently of the two corporate parties.

Thanksgiving is not a moment for gratitude but for protest, for the development of a movement to end oligarchic domination and reorganize society on socialist foundations.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**