

## POINT/COUNTERPOINT: Rating President Joe Biden on his first year in office

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For the past month the Illinois Business Journal has gathered reactions to what people have said about President Joe Biden as he begins his second year in office. Here is a sampling of voices from the debate.

**Actress Kate McKinnon:** “Can we all admit it’s a disaster?” While playing conservative host Laura Ingraham on “Saturday Night Live.”

**The Conversation:** “Team Biden arrived at the White House with a 200-page plan to ‘beat’ COVID-19. The delta and omicron variants complicated this picture and dealing with an evolving virus in a nation awash with fake news was always going to be fraught. Nonetheless, 500 million vaccines were administered during Biden’s first year in office leading to 75 percent of U.S. adults receiving at least one dose.” — Clodagh Harrington, associate professor of American Politics, De Montfort University, and Alex Wadwan, associate professor in American Politics and American Foreign Policy, University of Leicester, writing for The Conversation, a nonprofit organization.

**Democratic Party of Illinois Chair Rep. Robin Kelly:** “In just one year, we have gotten millions of vaccines in arms, saved lives, put people back to work, and made infrastructure investments that are critical to America’s future. And we made all of this progress no thanks to obstructionist Republicans in Congress. There’s no question: Illinoisans are better off now than they were a year ago – thank you, President Biden and Illinois Democrats!”

**Congressman Mike Bost, R-Murphysboro:** “Inflation at a 40 year high. Empty store shelves. Skyrocketing energy prices. Unconstitutional man-

dates. A crisis at the border. Weakness on the world stage. Those are the stories that have defined President Biden’s first year in office. Yet on Wednesday, the president said that he thought he was doing ‘pretty good’ and doubled down on the radical policies that have gotten us into these messes in the first place. But the American people disagree.”

**Cecilia Rouse, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers:** “The Administration has not only succeeded in shepherding the economy through the pandemic ups-and-downs to date, but also in laying the foundation for future economic growth. Millions of workers and businesses have avoided the economic scarring so typical of severe recessions. Combined with the passage of a historic infrastructure bill, the groundwork has been laid for longer-term economic investments.

“The work has just begun. Challenges remain: weathering the next phase of the pandemic, curbing inflation, and investing in long-neglected parts of our economy. But, the Administration is poised for the next chapter with its continued focus on protecting and investing in America.”

**Patricia Kim, David M. Rubenstein fellow at the Brookings Institution:** “The Biden administration has made great strides in its first year to unequivocally repudiate the previous administration’s transactional view of alliances and revitalize U.S. partnerships to effectively compete with China across all domains. But there’s still work to be done. Although the Biden administration has notably expanded efforts to provide public goods through multilateral mechanisms like the Quad, its Asia strategy desperately needs a compelling trade component, which Washington needs to remain a relevant and competi-

tive partner in the region. There’s been little progress on establishing a sustainable working relationship with China, though the fault does not lie primarily — let alone solely — with Washington. Although Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping have talked about ensuring competition does not veer into conflict, the challenging and complex tasks of judiciously recalibrating bilateral ties (economic and otherwise), advancing risk reduction and crisis management mechanisms, and cooperating on pressing transnational and regional challenges for the good of the world remain. Visionary leadership and diplomacy to lay the foundations for responsible competition with China at this critical juncture will be essential to stop drifting toward a more divided and conflict-ridden world.” As reported by [foreignpolicy.com](http://foreignpolicy.com).

**Sandro Galea, dean of the Boston University School of Public Health, Robert A. Knox Professor, and author:** “It’s been the best of times from the perspective of having an administration that is making an effort to put in place scientists and administrators who are part of mainstream public health thinking, and who are basing decisions on science and evidence and trying to keep some of more political considerations out of it.

“It’s been the worst of times because it’s been a terrible year. More people died in the United States from COVID in 2021 than 2020, and from a health outcomes point of view, it’s been a year where the country has done quite poorly. But in many respects that’s independent of anything the administration could have done.” As reported by BU Today.

**Quinnipiac University Poll:** “As President Biden marks his first year in the Oval Office, 50 percent of Americans say the job he is doing is about what they

expected, 39 percent say he’s doing a worse job than expected, and 7 percent say he’s doing a better job than expected.

“A plurality, 49 percent, say Biden is doing more to divide the country while 42 percent say he’s doing more to unite the country.

“Roughly 4 in 10 Americans (41 percent) think Biden is too liberal, 38 percent say he’s about right, 9 percent say he’s too conservative, and 12 percent did not offer an opinion.

“A majority of Americans, 54 percent, think the nation’s economy is getting worse, 30 percent say it’s staying about the same, and 15 percent say it’s getting better.

“As for the current state of the economy, 28 percent say it’s either excellent (2 percent) or good (26 percent), while 70 percent say it’s not so good (35 percent) or poor (35 percent).” — Poll taken in mid-January.

**Matthew A. Winkler of Bloomberg:** The U.S. is “outperforming the world by the biggest margin in the 21st century ... and with good reason: America’s economy improved more in Joe Biden’s first 12 months than any president during the past 50 years.” Quote widely cited in people’s letters to editor in support of Biden in recent weeks.

**Kay C. James, former president of the Heritage Foundation:** “Americans can debate whether there was good reason to leave Afghanistan after 20 years, but what can’t be debated are the disastrous consequences of President Joe Biden’s precipitous pullout. He let the entire nation of Afghanistan fall to a terrorist regime dedicated to bringing down the West, and in doing so, he has opened the door for a more dangerous future for America and our allies.”

## Shoppers may get break in food price inflation later in 2022

By DANIEL GRANT  
FarmWeek

Shoppers and diners might see some relief from food price inflation in 2022 after absorbing steep price increases the past year.

But prices for many items likely won’t go down any time soon.

USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) predicts the consumer price index (CPI) for all food could increase 2 percent to 3 percent in 2022, down from the 2021 forecast of 3-4 percent.

The CPI for all food increased another half percentage point from October to November and climbed 6.1 percent higher than November 2020, which marked the highest food price inflation since 2008.

“No food categories have decreased in price in 2021 compared with 2020,” ERS noted in its December food price outlook. “The level of food price inflation varies depending on whether the food was purchased for consumption away from home or at home.”

Food-at-home prices rose 3.1 percent from January through November 2021 while food-away-from-home prices jumped 4.2 percent during the same 11-month period.

Those who eat at home can expect food prices to increase another 1.5-2.5 percent in 2022, closer to historical averages, while food prices away from home are expected to increase 3-4 percent.

“The beef and veal category



Poultry prices followed a similar trajectory as beef and pork, reaching a record broiler composite retail price for the fifth consecutive month in November, according to a CME Group Daily Livestock Report. (Illinois Farm Bureau file photo)

has had the largest relative price increase (in 2021),” ERS noted.

Beef and veal prices rose 8.7 percent through November 2021 while pork prices climbed at a similar clip. ERS projects price inflation in both meat categories could ease to 2 to 3 percent in 2022.

“Ground chuck and ground beef fell from record prices in October, but still remain elevated,” authors of the CME Group’s Daily Livestock Report noted. “Retail pork prices continued to climb in

November, reaching a new record price for the eighth consecutive month.”

Poultry prices followed a similar trajectory as beef and pork, reaching a record broiler composite retail price for the fifth consecutive month in November, according to the Daily Livestock Report.

ERS projects other food categories with some of the largest price increases in 2021 could see a lower rate of inflation in 2022.

Price increases for fresh fruits are pro-

jected to decline from a range of 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent in 2021 to 1-2 percent in 2022, while price inflation for fats and oils could ease from a range of 4-5 percent to 1.5-2.5 percent during the same time.

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