

What 2016 will do to your checkbook

A preview of personal finance in the new year

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Wondering how you will fare financially in 2016? Below are what experts think next year will hold for financial matters close to home: Raises, rent, gas, food and health.

Will you get a raise next year?

Maybe. Wage growth has been perhaps the job market's biggest weakness since the recession ended. Pay increases have been both slow and uneven, highly dependent on your field of employment. And for many, it has not been enough to keep pace with the cost of living.

In November, average hourly earnings climbed 2.3 percent from a year earlier, according to the government's most recent report. But that is only about two-thirds the roughly 3.5 percent typically seen in a strong economy.

Many economists are optimistic Americans' pay will start growing faster soon because hiring has been good and layoffs have been low. But that's been the case for a while, and wages haven't taken off yet.

Joseph LaVorgna, chief U.S. economist at Deutsche Bank, is not expecting major gains ahead. He notes that measures that include a broader mix of compensation beyond hourly wages show there's even less growth in pay than it seems.

"I'm not convinced things are going to grow as much as I would like them to," he said.

Will my rent go up?

Yes, most likely. It's been a tough few years for U.S. renters because demand has outpaced supply, causing prices to rise.

Rents increased 4.5 percent in October, 5.3 percent in September and 6.2 percent in August, according to real estate data firm Zillow. The median rental payment nationwide was \$1,382 in October, roughly 30 percent of the median U.S. family income and high enough for the government to consider it financially burdensome. Over the past decade, that number of renters spending over this threshold on rent has jumped from 14.8 million to 21.3 million, or 49 percent of all renters.

There are more rent increases anticipated ahead.

"Rents are expected to rise in virtually all major cities in 2016," said Hessam Nadji, senior executive vice president with commercial real estate services firm Marcus & Millichap.

Some small consolation: While rents will still rise, the pace of rent growth will slow modestly from the exceptional levels set in 2015 as new construction creates more housing competition, Nadji says.

Will gas prices stay low?

Yes, most likely.

Oil prices have plummeted over the last year, a result of high global supplies and weaker demand than expected. U.S. drivers are paying less than \$2 a gallon on average for the first time since the Great Recession. Seasonal factors and volatile oil prices will push prices up and down throughout the year, but overall prices are expected to remain low compared with recent years.

The Energy Department forecasts an average of \$2.37 a gallon next year, which would be the lowest annual average since 2009.

Tom Kloza, head of energy analysis at the Oil Price Information Service, said drivers should expect lower lows and higher highs at the pump in the year ahead, but he doesn't expect the price of a gallon of gasoline to go over \$3 at any time in 2016.

"Nationally we are looking at a year that is very similar to the year we are ending," Kloza said.

What about food?

New year, same dish. Food prices should rise at a rate near the historical

average, according to the USDA's forecasts.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service anticipates the price for food will be up 2 to 3 percent for 2016, same as 2015 and in line with the 20-year historical average of 2.6 percent. That includes food people consume at home and out at restaurants.

Annemarie Kuhns, an economist at the ERS, said that certain food prices were off this year due to unusual events, such as the avian influenza that led to the death of millions of birds and sent

egg prices up roughly 15 percent. Looking ahead, she and fellow economists anticipate these prices may level off in 2016 — assuming cooperation from Mother Nature.

Will my health insurance cost more?

Probably. People buying their own coverage through the exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act should see premiums go up faster in 2016 than in previous years, said Cynthia Cox, associate director of health reform and private insurance at the

Kaiser Family Foundation.

According to Kaiser research, if you do not shop around and let your plan passively renew, the premiums for the lowest silver level plan — the most popular on the exchange — will increase 15 percent on average next year. If you are willing to switch, premium increases are expected to be zero to 1 percent. This is because the exchange is set up to encourage shopping around.

These increases apply only to people who are receiving subsidies to help pay for the insurance. For those who do

not, the increase is expected to be 6 percent.

Cox added that shoppers should also update any personal information — such as changes to your family size or income — which can impact what they pay.

"It's very important to go back online and shop every year," Cox said. "This is still an evolving market — there are new insurers coming in and other insurers leaving. The only way to find (the best price) is to go online or navigate through a broker."

Employer-sponsored plans premiums increased about 4 percent this year.

And while Kaiser does not forecast employer-sponsored plan price changes, it does not anticipate any unusual hikes in health care costs that tend to push up insurance prices. However, employees may end up paying more out of pocket for deductibles, copayments and other expenses they are responsible for, depending on their employer's plan.

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Know your presidential candidates



JEB BUSH

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want immigration reform that gives immigrants in the U.S. illegally a path to legal status.

IF:

NO You think post-Sept. 11 surveillance programs violated civil liberties.

IF:

Son of a president, little brother of a president, and he's a former Florida governor.

Find Bush online

[Website](http://www.Jeb2016.com)

<http://www.Jeb2016.com>

Colorful hashtag [#AllInForJeb](#)

Things to know

Born in Texas as John Ellis Bush, shortened to the nickname Jeb

Met his future wife Columba, a native of Mexico, during a high school exchange program

Worked for father George H.W. Bush's 1980 and 1988 presidential campaigns



MIKE HUCKABEE

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want a president to sign executive orders protecting the religious liberties of people and entities that oppose gay marriage.

IF:

NO You are a fan of Beyonce and Jay Z. Huckabee has criticized their sexualized lyrics.

IF:

He's a former Arkansas governor who made a White House run in 2008.

Find Huckabee online

[Website](http://www.mikehuckabee.com)

<http://www.mikehuckabee.com>

Colorful hashtag [#ImWithHuck](#)

Things to know

Son of a firefighter, born in Hope, Arkansas

Governor of Arkansas 1996-2007; later hosted political talk show on Fox News Channel

Bass guitarist who occasionally plays with classic rock cover band Capitol Offense



JOHN KASICH

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want to protect the social safety net for the poor.

IF:

NO You don't want U.S. ground troops sent to battle Islamic State militants.

IF:

He's a former congressman in his second term as Ohio governor.

Find Kasich online

[Website](http://www.johnk Kasich.com)

<http://www.johnk Kasich.com>

Colorful hashtag [#Kasich4Us](#)

Things to know

At age 26, became the youngest person ever elected to the Ohio Senate

Served 18 years in Congress, working with lawmakers of both parties to balance federal budget

Unsuccessfully ran for president in 2000; elected governor in 2010

Enduring the candidacy race

When the current crop of presidential hopefuls got into — and out of — the race:

NAME	BEGAN RACE	ENDED RACE	DAYS IN RACE*	Democrat	Republican
Ted Cruz	March 23	—	273		
Rand Paul	April 7	—	258		
Hillary Clinton	April 12	—	253		
Marco Rubio	April 13	—	252		
Bernie Sanders	April 30	—	235		
Ben Carson	May 4	—	231		
Carly Fiorina	May 4	—	231		
Mike Huckabee	May 5	—	230		
Rick Santorum	May 27	—	208		
George Pataki	May 28	—	207		
Martin O'Malley	May 30	—	205		
Lindsey Graham	June 1	Dec. 21	203		
Lincoln Chafee	June 3	Oct. 23	152		
Rick Perry	June 4	Sept. 11	109		
Jeb Bush	June 15	—	189		
Donald Trump	June 16	—	188		
Bobby Jindal	June 24	Nov. 17	156		
Chris Christie	June 30	—	174		
Jim Webb	July 2	Oct. 20	120		
Jim Gilmore	July 7	—	167		
Scott Walker	July 13	Sept. 21	80		
John Kasich	July 21	—	153		

*As of Dec. 21.



HILLARY CLINTON

Is she the candidate for you?

YES You prefer a Democrat but with a more aggressive foreign policy than Barack Obama.

IF:

NO You want a candidate not mired in congressional investigations (Benghazi, emails).

IF:

The only candidate who has already lived in the White House, as first lady.

Find Clinton online

[Website](http://www.hillaryclinton.com)

<http://www.hillaryclinton.com>

Colorful hashtag [#Hillary2016](#)

Things to know

Met future husband Bill Clinton while at Yale Law School

After serving as first lady, was elected to U.S. Senate representing New York

Lost Democratic nomination to Barack Obama in 2008; became Obama's secretary of state



RAND PAUL

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You're upset about the National Security Agency snooping into citizens' private communications.

IF:

NO You want to see more aggressive use of U.S. military power in the world.

IF:

Senator, eye doctor and son of three-time presidential candidate Ron Paul.

Find Paul online

[Website](http://www.randpaul.com)

<http://www.randpaul.com>

Colorful hashtag [#StandWithRand](#)

Things to know

Provides free eye care clinics for the poor in the U.S. and overseas

Won Senate seat in 2010 tea party wave, his first elected office

Staged 13-hour Senate talkathon to protest U.S. drone policy



MARTIN O'MALLEY

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want to shield people in the U.S. illegally from deportation until immigration laws are reformed.

IF:

NO You want a candidate without a history of raising taxes.

IF:

He's the former Baltimore mayor and Maryland governor who champions data-driven leadership.

Find O'Malley online

[Website](http://www.martinomalley.com)

<http://www.martinomalley.com>

Colorful hashtag [#WeNeedDebate](#)

Things to know

Elected Baltimore mayor at age 36, took a statistics-heavy approach to reducing crime

As governor, signed bill legalizing gay marriage

Longtime frontman for Celtic rock band who sometimes performs at campaign events



TED CRUZ

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want to stop President Barack Obama's health care law at all costs.

IF:

NO You are looking for bipartisan compromise on immigration.

IF:

He's a Republican senator who pushed a federal government shutdown to fight "Obamacare."

Find Cruz online

[Website](http://www.tedcruz.org)

<http://www.tedcruz.org>

Colorful hashtag [#CruzCrew](#)

Things to know

Born in Canada to a Cuban father and American mother

Was a winning debater at Princeton, Harvard Law School

Has argued nine cases before the U.S. Supreme Court



MARCO RUBIO

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You think it's time for a younger generation (Generation X in this case) to lead.

IF:

NO You believe human actions cause global warming.

IF:

He was raised by Cuban immigrant parents who worked as a bartender and maid.

Find Rubio online

[Website](http://www.marcorubio.com)

<http://www.marcorubio.com>

Colorful hashtag [#TeamMarco](#)

Things to know

Elected to Florida House in 2000, rose to speaker

Beat a popular governor to win his U.S. Senate seat

Teamed with Senate Democrats on an immigration overhaul that he later distanced himself from



DONALD TRUMP

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want a president who says what he thinks, even if people take offense.

IF:

NO You want a president with experience in policy and politics.

IF:

Billionaire real estate developer, author and reality TV star with the catchphrase "You're fired!"

Find Trump online

[Website](http://www.donaldjtrump.com)

<http://www.donaldjtrump.com>

Colorful hashtag [#MakeAmericaGreatAgain](#)

Things to know

Son of wealthy builder in the New York City borough of Queens

Considered Reform Party presidential run in 2000; flirted with GOP bid in 2012

Brash star of reality TV shows "The Apprentice" and "Celebrity Apprentice"



CARLY FIORINA

Is she the candidate for you?

YES You agree with her that a woman could best take on Democrat Hillary Clinton.

IF:

NO You want a president who has experience serving in government.

IF:

She's a high-profile former technology executive who has never held public office.

Find Fiorina online

[Website](http://www.carlyforpresident.com)

<http://www.carlyforpresident.com>

Colorful hashtag [#Carly2016](#)

Things to know

Trailblazing female executive at AT&T, Lucent and Hewlett-Packard

HP tenure included merger with Compaq, layoffs of 30,000; was fired by board of directors

Adviser to John McCain's 2008 presidential bid; ran for Senate in California in 2010 and lost



BERNIE SANDERS

Is he the candidate for you?

YES You want a president to tackle income inequality as "the great moral issue of our time."

IF:

NO You want government to get smaller, not bigger.

IF:

He's the independent Vermont senator seeking the Democratic Party presidential nomination

Find Sanders online

[Website](http://www.berniesanders.com)

<http://www.berniesanders.com>

Colorful hashtag [#Bernie2016](#)

Things to know

Student civil rights activist at the University of Chicago in the 1960s

Unseated the Democratic mayor of Burlington, Vermont, by 10 votes in 1981

Elected to U.S. House in 1990; longest-serving independent in Congress

Pataki ends White House bid

BERLIN, N.H. (AP) — Former New York Gov. George Pataki has ended his bid for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, with just over a month to go before the first nominating contests begin.

Pataki made the announcement in an ad that aired on local NBC affiliates in New Hampshire, Iowa and South Carolina Tuesday night.

"While tonight is the end of my journey for the White House as I suspend my campaign for president, I'm confident we can elect the right person, someone who will bring us together and who understands that politicians, including the president, must be the people's servant and not their master," said Pataki, 70.