CommonSense

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The Forty-Trillionth

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When Grover Cleveland — arguably the United States' last non-"progressive" president — won his second term after a one-term hiccup named Benjamin Harrison, list makers and ordinal number enthusiasts faced a challenge: was Cleveland to be called the union's 22nd president, or the 22nd and 24th president?

The two-term presidents before him had all served their terms consecutively, but we spoke of each four-year term in office as the presidents' respective first and second administrations. Historians and archivists chose the clunky 22nd/24th double listing for Cleveland, which brings us to the current president, formerly the 45th and now the 47th.

One presidency was just not enough for Donald Trump.

But what will he be remembered as? It is possible that his tombstone will have a forty-something on it, but the "th" may very well stand for "trillionth" — for under his watch the public debt of the federal government rolled over on Wednesday, past $40 trillion.

I remember when people held signs up emblazoned with "No Trillion Dollar Debt!" How "forty years ago" is *that*?

There's an old law of liberty: *people out of power demand freedom, people in power demand more power.* Trump sounded more libertarian when running for office, and he seems to conform to a very old corollary of the law: *politicians running for office protest debt, politicians in office add to it.*

FDR is the grand example, yet it is Trump who may come to be identified with it.

"The unprecedented [sic] $40 trillion figure highlights competing administration priorities," declares *The Seattle Times*, "from boosting the defense spending that the U.S. relies on to carry out President Donald Trump's almost-6-month-old Iran war to lowering the cost of gas and groceries."

Isn't this mere Trump-bashing? For while Trump may someday receive the blame, in truth it belongs to both parties and almost all politicians.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

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