Economic view | July 1, 2026

From the desk of Chief Economist Beth Ann Bovino

Happy Birthday, America! A ‘grand experiment’ in resilience

As the United States nears its 250th birthday, there are many things I’m proud of. The ingenuity of the American people led to innovations like the automobile and the airplane – transformations that still move people and goods around the world every day The U.S. also led in transporting ideas across cyberspace, and today it appears to have a front-row seat in the AI initiative as well.

That ingenuity and independence is also, I believe, at the heart of the ‘grand experiment’ at the birth of this nation. The “American experiment” was a bold bet made 250 years ago that regular citizens – not kings, dukes or aristocracy – could govern themselves.

Of course, there are still plenty of economic challenges this ‘new’ country faces today: the post-pandemic jump in prices, together with a tariff war and the war with Iran, has weakened household purchasing power and is on the minds of many Americans as they enter this summer’s vacation season.

“Last week, my team lowered the risk of recession to 25% from 30% – another small reason to celebrate the country’s resilience 250 years in.”

-

Beth Ann Bovino, chief economist, U.S. Bank

But, even now, the U.S. has managed to meet many challenges and evolve, albeit slowly, into a nation that is more democratic and more representative of its citizens. The 15th Amendment in 1870 prevented states from denying the right to vote on grounds of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” and the 19th Amendment guaranteed women the right to vote. Still, decades passed before discriminatory laws such as the poll tax or literacy tests were abolished.

I was reminded of the U.S.’s slow process toward democracy when I recently met an older woman at the Harvard Club in Manhattan. She reflected on how she “had to enter the club using the back door, because women weren’t allowed to use the front door.” The ‘back door’ entrance, called the “Ladies Annex,” disappeared only after the club allowed women to be admitted as full members 53 years ago (the proposal failed in 1972). Progress, yes – but apparently not always through the front door.

And yet, the U.S. has a stubborn habit of absorbing shocks, arguing loudly about them then muddling through better than expected. U.S. ingenuity has learned to confront shocks, with the U.S. economic expansion quick to recover today. Last week, my team lowered the risk of recession to 25% from 30% – another small reason to celebrate the country’s resilience 250 years in. Which brings us back to the quote that still captures the ‘grand experiment’ best: "Americans will always do the right thing, once they have exhausted all other possibilities."

Disclosures