



BY THE NUMBERS:

THE PERSISTENT TRADE DEFICIT

BY JEFFREY WINTERS

No policies have succeeded in reducing the gap between imports and exports.

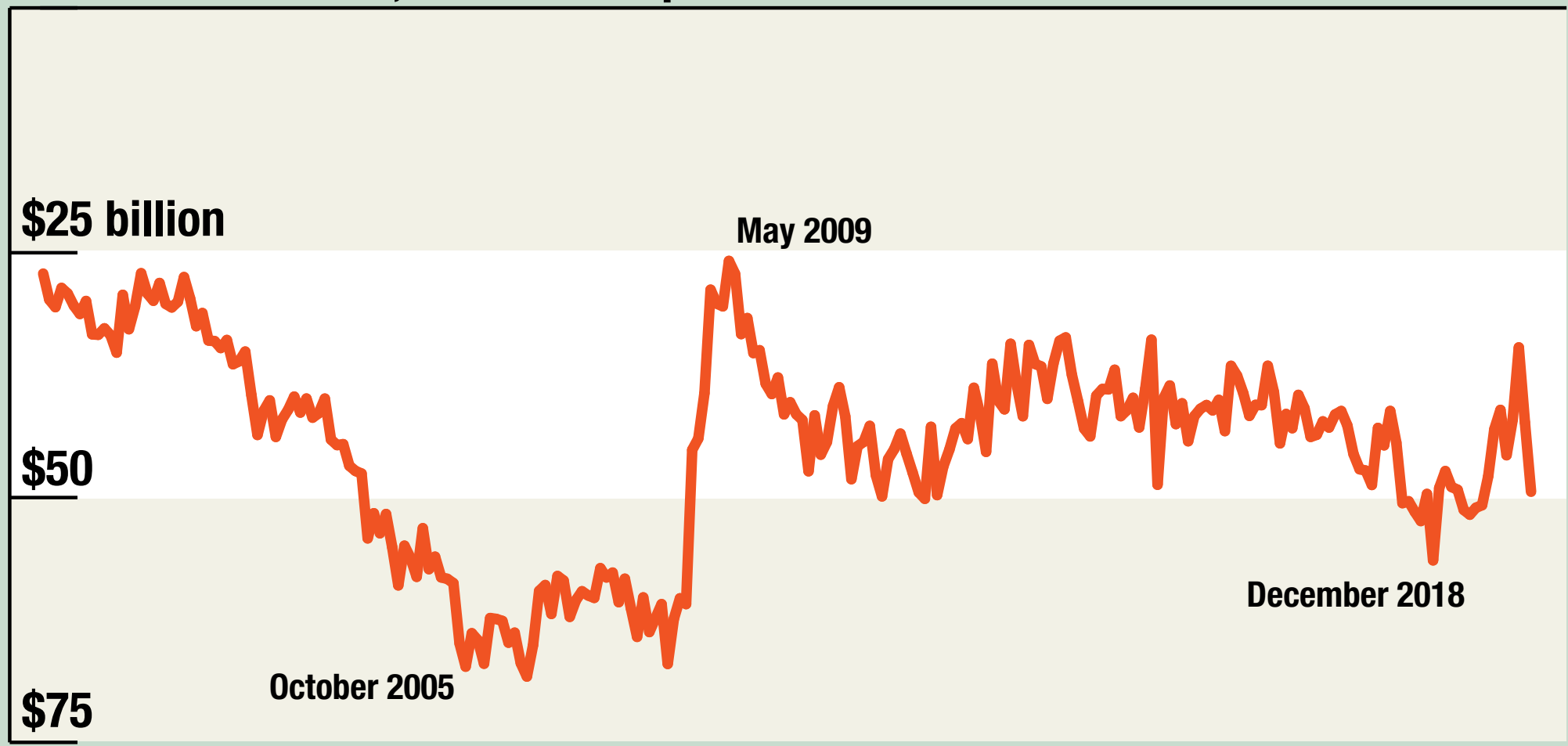
The trade deficit has been a concern among U.S. policymakers for decades. The gap between import and exports of goods and services has risen and fallen without regard to policies in Washington. Even the current administration, which campaigned on reducing the deficit, has scarcely budged it.

Even focusing only on one small part of the equation – the export of goods – shows very little progress. Compared to the same month four years earlier, exports of goods were flat to as much as 4 percent higher at the end of 2018. Over the same period, however, the total U.S. economy grew around 8.5 percent. Only in comparing the last the last six months of 2015 and the second half of 2019 can one see much of a difference. But then the coronavirus pandemic scrambled the world economy, making comparisons even more difficult.



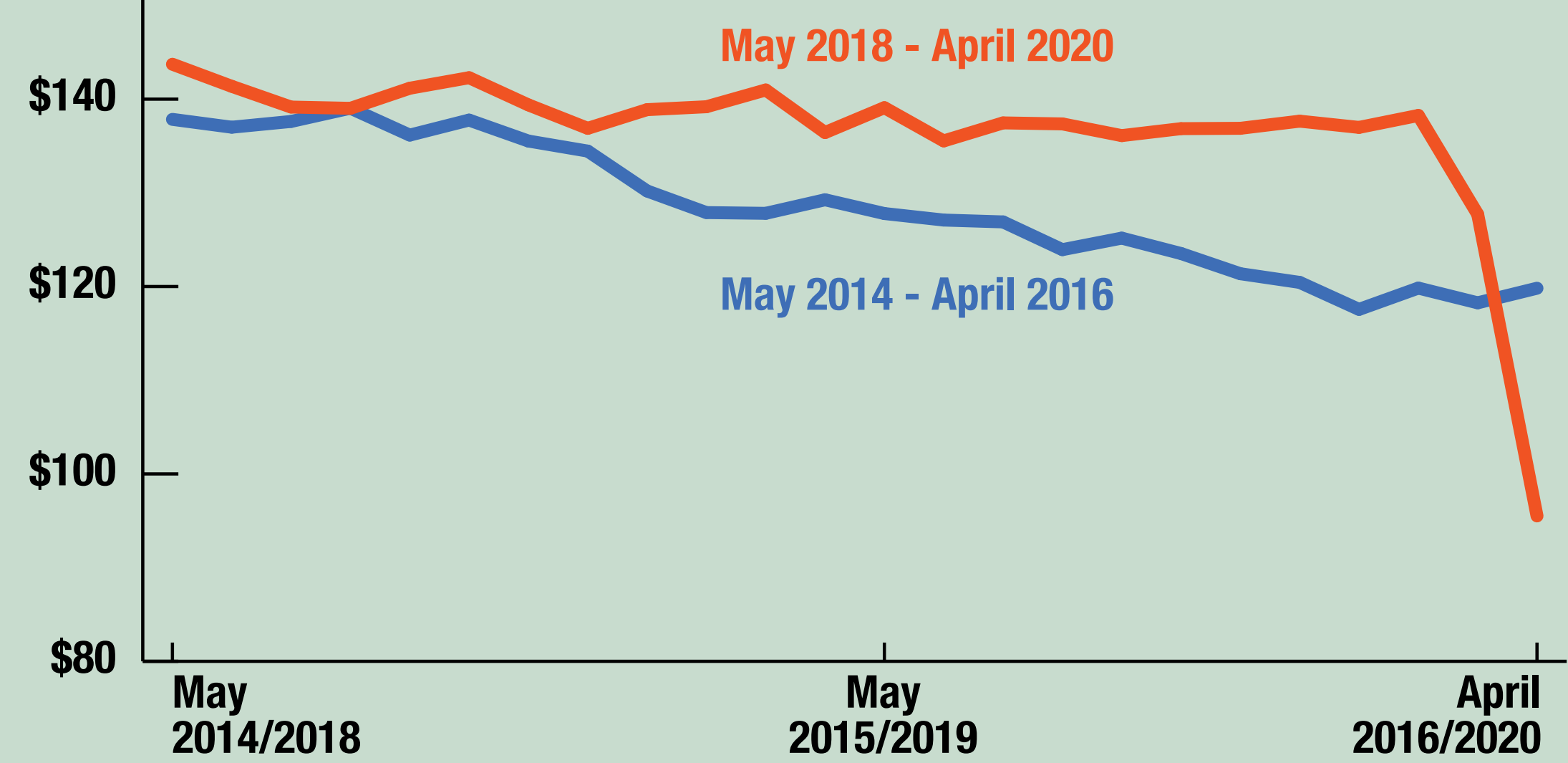
U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRADE DEFICIT, MONTHLY

Goods and services, Jan 2000 - April 2020



U.S. INTERNATIONAL EXPORT OF GOODS, MONTHLY

\$160 billion



Data source: Bureau of Economic Analysis