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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOW JONES | News Corp ★★★★★ MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025 ~ VOL. CCLXXXV NO. 44 WSJ.com ★★★★ $5.00

Last week: **DJIA** 43428.02 ▼ 1118.06 2.51% **NASDAQ** 19524.01 ▼ 2.5% **STOXX 600** 553.85 ▲ 0.3% **10-YR. TREASURY** ▲ 15/32, yield 4.419% **OIL** $70.40 ▼ $0.31 **EURO** $1.0461 **YEN** 149.28

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ **The top 10% of** American earners, buoyed by big gains in stocks, real estate and other assets, now account for 49.7% of all U.S. spending, a record in data going back to 1989, according to Moody's Analytics. **A1**

◆ **Travel remained a** popular outlay, with consumers shrugging off higher prices for everything from hotel rooms to vacation dinners out, said Booking Holdings CEO Glenn Fogel. **B4**

◆ **Warren Buffett told** Berkshire Hathaway shareholders in his annual letter that while the company's ownership of stocks declined last year, the value of the operating businesses it owns increased. **B1**

◆ **A Chinese subsidy for** buyers of cheaper smartphones offers Apple the chance to regain some of its competitiveness in that market with the arrival there of its iPhone 16e this week. **B1**

◆ **Fashion brands that** long nodded to art and music in their marketing have lately been flirting with literature, as campaigns by J.Crew, Tiffany and Saint Laurent demonstrate. **B3**

◆ **Retailers expanding** their online offerings better to compete with Amazon have inadvertently made their offerings in stores look paltry by comparison, disappointing some shoppers. **B1**

◆ **R-rated horror film** "The Monkey" made its debut at No. 2, earning $14.2 million and leaving in first place "Captain America: Brave New World," whose box-office take nonetheless plunged in its second weekend. **B2**

World-Wide

◆ **Friedrich Merz won** a clear victory in the German election, giving the conservative leader the tough task of forming a government after the far-right Alternative for Germany finished a strong second. **A1**

◆ **The U.S. and Ukraine** pushed divergent messages over the weekend, with Kyiv pressing for better terms to the mineral-rights deal sought by Trump, while Washington urged Ukraine to swiftly accept the proposal already on the table. **A1**

◆ **A posting and email** by Elon Musk telling federal employees to explain their productivity or risk losing their jobs appeared to prompt the most push back so far by other top administration officials. **A1**

◆ **The health of Pope** Francis worsened over the weekend, raising fears that he might not survive his struggle with pneumonia. **A18**

◆ **Israel said it would** temporarily withhold the release of Palestinian prisoners until Hamas stops staging ceremonies that humiliate hostages released by Hamas. **A8**

◆ **Trump named** conservative commentator and former Secret Service agent Dan Bongino as deputy director of the FBI. **A4**

◆ **The Trump administration's** figure of $55 billion in achieved federal spending cuts is overstated, and the money saved from "woke" trims is a tiny fraction of the total, a Wall Street Journal analysis found. **A2**

◆ **A conservative advocacy** group filed a legal challenge against Chicago Public Schools over an initiative to give extra support to Black students. **A3**

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Funeral for Slain Leader Shows Hezbollah's Grip

THAIER AL-SUDANI/REUTERS

THRONGS: Hundreds of thousands of people gathered for the funeral of slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut on Sunday as the group sought to project its power despite an Israeli offensive that has left it weakened and in disarray. **A8**

Kyiv Presses for Better Deal With U.S. on Mineral Rights

By Matthew Luxmoore and Jane Lytvynenko in Kyiv, Ukraine, and Alan Cullison in Washington

KYIV, Ukraine—The U.S. and Ukraine pushed divergent messages over the weekend, with Kyiv pressing for better terms to the mineral-rights deal sought by President Trump as Washington urged Ukraine to swiftly accept the proposal already on the table.

The dispute over the minerals proposal is part of mounting disagreements between the U.S. and its allies about how best to end the war in Ukraine. The leaders of France and the U.K. were set to head to Washington this week to lobby on behalf of Ukraine, as the Trump administration's position continues to stretch trans-Atlantic tensions to their greatest in years.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the administration should offer a better deal on mineral rights, saying the current U.S. offer demanded ruinous financial contributions from Ukraine, which on Monday marks the three-year anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion.

He called for security guarantees as part of any deal, as well as better financial terms. Zelensky said the demand that Ukraine return $500 billion for military and financial aid provided during the war far outstripped the $100 billion that the U.S. had given. He added that the U.S. side had demanded that Ukraine pay two dollars for every dollar of aid the U.S. provides, a proposal he said was unfair.

"I don't want something that 10 generations of Ukrainians will have to pay back," he said on Sunday.

The Trump administration has demanded preferential access to Ukrainian mineral reserves, which include sought-after titanium, lithium and rare earths, as payback for U.S.

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German Voters Give Merz A Clear Victory

Conservative party's win comes as the far-right AfD ends up a strong second

By Bertrand Benoit

BERLIN—Friedrich Merz won a clear victory in the German election, giving the conservative leader the tough task of forming a government after the far-right Alternative for Germany finished a strong second in Sunday's election.

Despite a historically strong showing by antiestablishment nationalists in a ballot that extended Europe's recent lurch to the right, early estimates indicated that Merz's Christian Democratic Union was on the way to a comfortable victory.

This means Merz this week will start talks on forming a government, at the end of which he is likely to become Germany's next chancellor and a central interlocutor for President Trump in Europe. But the way there could be rocky.

"The world out there is not waiting for us. And it is not waiting for lengthy coalition talks and negotiations," Merz told supporters in Berlin. "We must quickly regain our ability to act so that we can do what's needed at home, regain our voice in Europe, and ensure that the world sees Germany as reliable again."

Initial estimates gave the CDU—the party of former Chancellor Angela Merkel—

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Wealthier Consumers Bolster U.S. Economy

By Rachel Louise Ensign

Many Americans are pinching pennies, exhausted by high prices and stubborn inflation. The well-off are spending with abandon.

The top 10% of earners—households making about $250,000 a year or more—are splurging on everything from vacations to designer handbags, buoyed by big gains in stocks, real estate and other assets.

Those consumers now account for 49.7% of all spending, a record in data going back to 1989, according to an analysis by Moody's Analytics. Three decades ago, they accounted for about 36%.

All this means that economic growth is unusually reliant on rich Americans continuing to shell out. Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, estimated that spending by the top 10% alone accounted for almost one-third of gross domestic product.

Between September 2023 and September 2024, the high earners increased their spending by 12%. Spending by working-class and middle-class households, meanwhile, dropped over the same period.

"The finances of the well-to-do have never been better, their spending never stronger and the economy never more dependent on that group," said

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◆ **Outlook: Federal layoffs tax the job market.......... A2**

INSIDE

JASON GAY

The New York Yankees reverse policy, telling players, 'hirsute yourself.' **A14**

BUSINESS & FINANCE

How the internet made in-store shopping so miserable. **B1**

How Trump Embraced Russia

Recent about-face in U.S. foreign policy has been years in the making

By Yaroslav Trofimov, Josh Dawsey and Alan Cullison

When President Trump met Russia's Vladimir Putin for their first bilateral summit, in the Finnish capital of Helsinki in July 2018, the two men cloistered themselves for hours with no advisers present.

Once they emerged to a packed news conference, Trump tossed a gift from the Russian president—a soccer ball meant for Trump's son Barron—to the front row where America's senior-most officials sat. Trump then stunned his team by saying he believed Putin, and not America's own intelligence services, about whether Russia interfered in the 2016 elections that brought him to power.

At the time, the public outcry in Washington—including by the Republican leadership in Congress and his own aides on Air Force One—forced Trump to change course within 24

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Dignity Dies At This Conference

* * *

Annual gathering turns suits into snack vultures

By Laura Cooper, Jennifer Williams and Jesse Newman

ORLANDO—About 80 people jockeyed for position behind security ropes in a hotel hallway last week. On the other side was a table stacked with snacks: Milka chocolate eggs, Oreo muffins, Tate's cookies and family-sized bags of crackers. Then, at exactly 2:50 p.m., a whistle blew.

The horde swarmed the table, snatching cookies, cakes and chocolate bars. It was every man, woman and child for themselves.

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Agencies Push Back Over Musk Ultimatum

By Brian Schwartz, Lindsay Ellis and Scott Patterson

WASHINGTON—Millions of federal employees headed into their workweek caught between differing factions of the Trump administration, with Elon Musk giving them a Monday night deadline to explain their productivity or risk losing their jobs while some senior officials told workers to ignore the directive.

The effort marked an escalation of the Trump administration's push to scale back the scope of government, with Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, exerting growing pressure on the 2.3 million employees in the federal workforce. DOGE has pressured federal employees to quit, and the administration has fired thousands of newly hired workers, often without providing specific reasons for their dismissal.

Musk over the weekend, in a post on X, said that "all federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week. Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation."

The email, which asked "What did you do last week?" in the subject line, told federal workers to respond by 11:59 p.m. Monday with a list of "5 bullets of what you accomplished last week." The note didn't say that nonresponses would be considered resignations.

Musk's moves have rattled career government employees for weeks, but the Saturday email appeared to prompt the most pushback so far by other top administration officials. Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Kash Patel told

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◆ **Close look shows DOGE claims are overstated..... A2**

U.S. NEWS

THE OUTLOOK | By Justin Lahart

How Federal Layoffs Tax the Job Market

America's biggest employer, the federal government, is laying off workers in droves. Depending on how many, and which, jobs get cut, the blow to the U.S. job market could be merely glancing, or seriously damaging.

As of January, the U.S. government had 2.4 million civilian employees, excluding the postal service. That is a lot of people, though just 1.5% of total nonfarm jobs. So what will it mean for the economy if hundreds of thousands of those jobs go away?

Tallying up cuts announced so far, economists at JPMorgan Chase estimate fewer than 30,000 layoffs. In a labor market that has added an average 237,000 jobs over each of the past three months, that isn't many.

But that number could grow. As a "deferred-resignation" program and hiring freeze reduce the federal workforce, hundreds of thousands more might be cut. That could pose a noticeable economic drag, especially because federal workers tend to earn above-average pay.

Yet figuring out the actual number and location of cuts is a fraught exercise.

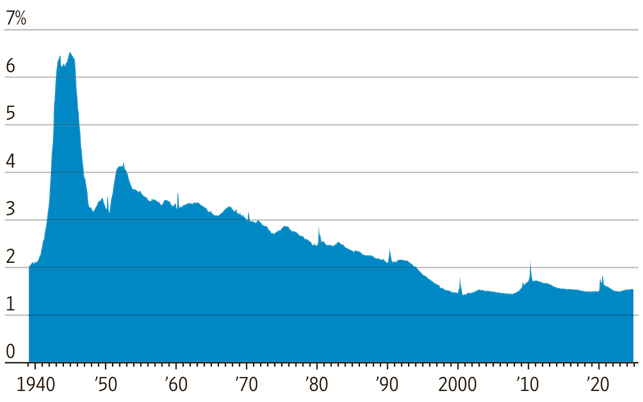
When President Trump took office, he ordered a hiring freeze. Then Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency announced a "deferred resignation" offer to nearly all full-time federal civil servants, saying they don't have to work but would be paid through September. The White House has said that about 75,000 people accepted the offer.

On Feb. 14, the White House began firing workers who are still in their probationary period after getting hired or promoted; this includes, for example, 6,000 at the Internal Revenue Service. More than 200,000 employees have been on the job for a year or less, according to Office of Personnel Management data. The hiring freeze will also have some effect: Just to keep pace with normal attrition, the government needs to hire upwards of 200,000 people a year.

Add up 75,000 resignations, 200,000 fired probationary employees, and 200,000 in attrition, and as an upper limit federal employment might drop by 475,000 jobs, or about 20% of the total.

Whether reality comes anywhere close to that is questionable. Many people who accepted deferred resignation might have planned to retire or leave anyway. There is no official record of how many probationary workers have actually been fired. It is possible the administration will have to slow or reverse cuts because of court orders, pushback by Congress or popular opinion.

Federal civilian jobs, share of all nonfarm jobs



Note: Excludes postal workers. Federal employment rises during the decennial census. Seasonally adjusted.
Source: Labor Department

Some administration priorities, such as border security and accelerating deportations, might also lead it to boost hiring in some areas.

It could take months for the extent of job cuts to show up in data. Layoffs began during the mid-month reference period on which the Labor Department bases its February job figures; any government employee paid for that period will count as employed. A worker who received a four-week severance in February could be counted as employed in March, and one who accepted a deferred resignation could be counted as employed through September.

Even 475,000 jobs would be just 0.3% of the U.S.'s 159 million nonfarm jobs, and 30% of the 1.6 million jobs that economists surveyed by The Wall Street Journal in January expect to be created this year. But the knock-on effects could be large, especially in certain regions.

Government workers who have lost their jobs will likely spend less, especially on discretionary items. Many of those not fired could worry they are next and cut back spending.

Based on the federal share of civilian employment, the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, at around 10%, is the most vulnerable, according to an analysis of 2023 census data by the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute. But the data also show 35 states have at least one county where upwards of 5% of civilian employees work for the federal government.

Amplifying these effects, many federal contractors are also losing work. New York University Prof. Paul Light estimates there were 5.2 million such workers in 2023.

Government workers also provide services on which other employers depend. Cuts at agencies such as the Education Department—which employs only about 4,400—could disrupt the flow of funding to states and other recipients.

"If you cut that workforce by 20% and the other 80% can comfortably do the jobs that need to get done, that's a rounding error," said Johns Hopkins economist Robert Barbera. "If it turns out that you cut the workforce by 20% and it derails the flow of money, that's a whole different story."

Federal workers as a group are more educated and older than the average U.S. worker, have specialized skills, and might not live near suitable job openings, all of which could lead to longer stretches of joblessness. This comes as the hiring rate has fallen below prepandemic levels.

Government job cuts are just one factor hitting the labor market. Tariffs and worries about tariffs are making it harder for businesses to plan, while immigration restrictions and deportations are reducing the supply of workers for some businesses. Uncertainty about research funding has led several universities to freeze hiring.

Americans are nervous: On Friday, the University of Michigan said more than half of the respondents to its February consumer survey expected unemployment to rise in the year ahead, the most since April 2020.

"We keep hearing about all these individual things and they don't seem that bad, but they add up to a lot," said Jesse Rothstein, a UC Berkeley economist who served as Labor Department chief economist in 2010.

Close Look at DOGE's Spending Cuts Shows Savings Claims Are Overstated

The Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency touts cuts of $55 billion in federal spending, often citing canceled diversity and climate contracts. However, a Wall Street Journal

By Caitlin Ostroff, Shane Shifflett and James Benedict

analysis of government contract data showed a much different picture: "Woke" cuts were a tiny fraction of the total, and many claims of savings were overstated.

While DOGE hasn't offered details about all of the stated savings, it has posted a list of more than 1,100 canceled contracts to its website. As of Friday, it said the savings from these contracts amounted to about $7 billion.

The Journal analysis projects the actual savings could be closer to $2.6 billion over the next year if spending levels remained constant—and about 2% of the funds would have gone to contracts related to diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI.

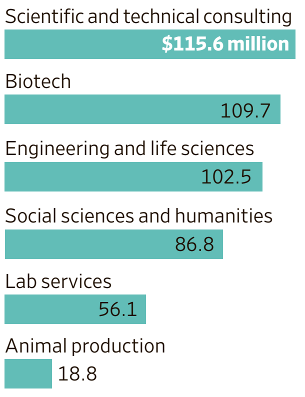
Research-focused agencies were among the top targets for cuts, including the Education Department and the Department of Health and Human Services, where DOGE terminated contracts costing the government more than $900 million last year.

The government terminated more than 60 Health and Human Services contracts including a clinical evaluation of an Alzheimer's and traumatic brain injury drug and a study of smokers with chronic lung disease. DOGE described these as "administrative expenses."

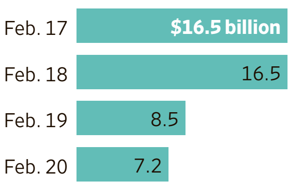
An administration official said many contracts were canceled for waste, fraud and abuse. They added that DOGE's estimations of its savings are conservative and that no funds for Alzheimer's were canceled.

Many of the Education Department's canceled contracts funded research on college costs, student career paths and early childhood development. DOGE said one $1.4 million contract funded "mailing and clerical operations." The contract was used to mail surveys to respondents participating in studies and was nearly complete when canceled, creating no savings for terminating it.

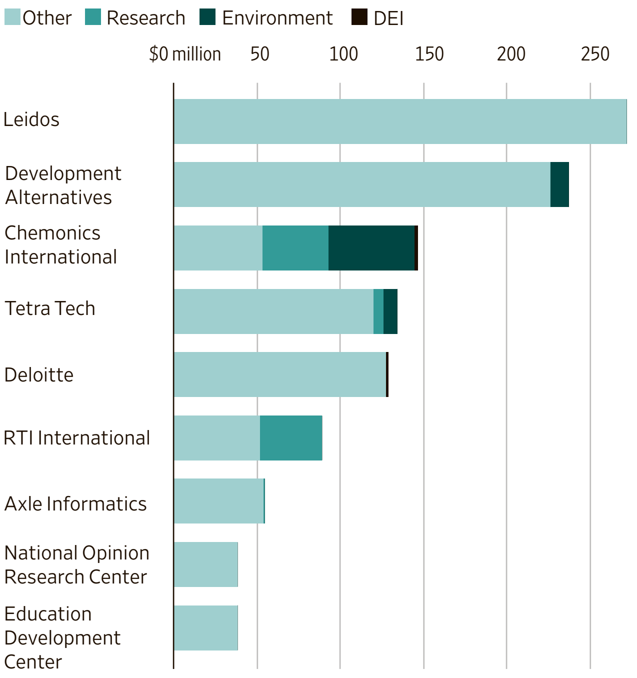
Cancelled contract funding by research type, FY2024



DOGE's shrinking savings



Companies with the most cancelled contracts, FY2024



Sources: WSJ analysis of federal contract data via Deltek (canceled contracts); DOGE.gov (savings)

To assess the impact of the cuts, the Journal analyzed federal spending data from Deltek, a government contracting specialist and data provider. Deltek matched the canceled contracts listed by DOGE to their actual cost in fiscal year 2024. To categorize the contracts, the Journal used information about vendors, industry sectors and keywords like "diversity" and "climate change."

In all, government contracts with more than 500 companies were posted to the DOGE website. **Leidos**, the company whose canceled contracts were worth the most in 2024, had part of its contract to modernize the Social Security Administration's technology canceled. DOGE said this would save about $230 million. "Our work supporting the Social Security Administration, and the millions of Americans it serves, is on contract and ongoing," Leidos said in a statement.

The United States Agency for International Development, which the Trump administration has dismantled, had contracts with more than 130 companies canceled in DOGE's sweep.

Among them, Chemonics International, a D.C.-based firm, had more than a dozen USAID contracts terminated. The company said that it has furloughed or cut hours for more than 15% of its 6,000 employees, affecting workers in 41 states and D.C.

Last Monday, DOGE posted its "wall of receipts" touting transparency, showing 1,127 contracts. But as the Journal and others raised questions about the figures, the tally of savings on DOGE's website dwindled from $16 billion to about $7 billion.

Two contracts also disappeared from the site Thursday because DOGE counted the same $665 million USAID contract three times, the Journal found.

Even as DOGE edited the numbers, the total savings listed on its site remained overstated, experts told the Journal. Agency contract amounts are often akin to credit card limits, said Deniece Peterson, senior director of federal market analysis at Deltek.

"If I have a credit card with a $30,000 limit and I have a $2,000 balance and I cancel the credit card, I'm not saving $28,000," she said. "What I'm seeing in many of these transactions is not savings." But more than 50 of the contracts listed on DOGE's website list virtually all of their maximum as savings, a number rarely hit, according to Nat Malkus, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. "The totals [DOGE] put up as receipts on their website raise basic questions about how well these receipts were prepared and what they actually capture."

More than a quarter of the contracts listed by DOGE were actually already paid, the Journal found, saving no money.

CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

The last name of McDonald's impresario Ray Kroc was misspelled as Croc in an obituary on Saturday for meat-science researcher Roger Mandigo.

Readers can alert The Wall Street Journal to any errors in news articles by emailing **wsjcontact@wsj.com** or by calling 888-410-2667.

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Agencies Push Back At Musk

Continued from Page One

employees to "pause any response."

Some officials across the government including at the State, Justice and Health and Human Services departments sent similar emails to their teams, according to people familiar with the matter and messages viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Musk's plan came together in a matter of hours on Saturday, people familiar with the matter said. Early in the day, President Trump posted on social media that he wanted the Tesla chief executive to "get more aggressive" with his role. In response, Musk and his team at DOGE sent the what-did-you-do-last-week email, the people said.

Musk and DOGE officials then communicated the concept to the Office of Personnel Management, the human-resources arm of the federal government, which sent the email to some two million federal workers Saturday evening. Musk said in his post on X announcing the email that the correspondence was "consistent with [Trump's] instructions."

FBI Director Kash Patel told employees to 'pause any response.'

It remained unclear how OPM or DOGE itself would be able to review potentially millions of detailed emails by federal employees. Dozens of workers have been fired at OPM, and the Trump administration has indicated it plans to cut 70% of the agency's staff. One OPM employee questioned whether the agency is allowed to give work orders to those in other agencies.

The White House said in a recent court filing that the billionaire businessman, who poured roughly a quarter of a billion dollars into the effort to elect Trump, has no decision-making authority and isn't the formal administrator of DOGE.

Trump used his Truth Social platform to post a picture of the character SpongeBob SquarePants with a checklist of grievances people may have. "Cried about Elon and Trump some more," the post reads under the heading: "Got Done Last Week."

Musk defended the effort on X. "The reason this matters is that a significant number of people who are supposed to be working for the government are doing so little work that they are not checking their email at all!" he wrote.

An OPM spokeswoman declined to comment.

The acting head of the Department of Health and Human Services' main legal division told employees in his office, who number around 800, not to respond to the OPM email.

"I have national security concerns," acting general counsel Sean Keveney wrote Sunday in an email viewed by the Journal. He noted that the email was sent to millions of federal workers and that OPM was targeted by China in the past. "I have received no assurances that there are appropriate protections in place to safeguard responses to this email," Keveney wrote.

In a separate email sent to a wider swath of HHS employees, health workers were instructed to reply to Musk's missive. "This is a legitimate email," the unsigned email said.

Rep. Gerald Connolly (D., Va.), ranking member of the House Committee on Oversight, said the conflicting guidance leaves federal workers in a precarious spot.

"Which one do they follow? If they don't do it correctly, whatever that is, are they at risk of losing their jobs inadvertently?" he said in an interview. He said the effort "puts hundreds of thousands of federal employees at risk needlessly and creates more stress and consternation."

State Department employees were told they didn't have to report their activities outside of their chain of command. "The State Department will respond on behalf of the Department," Undersecretary for Management Tibor Nagy wrote in an email. A State Department official said Nagy's pushback was a surprise to some colleagues, "but there's only so much of this you can tolerate."

Separately on Sunday, the Trump administration said it was eliminating 2,000 U.S.-based positions at the Agency for International Development and putting thousands more on administrative leave, a continuation of its plan to shrink the foreign aid agency to a small fraction of its size.

Federal workers across the country said they were baffled by the Musk email request and said it ran counter to their typical adherence to the chain of command. An official at the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention who has served at the agency for three decades said in an email that the OPM directive was unprofessional and "just plain creepy."

Veterans Affairs medical staff scrambled to determine how they should respond to the email with five bullet points, given their singular mission is to provide lifesaving care for patients daily, a person familiar with the matter said.

Black Student Initiative Challenged In Chicago

By Sara Randazzo And Matt Barnum

A conservative advocacy group filed a legal challenge against Chicago Public Schools on Friday over an initiative to give extra support to Black students, calling the program discriminatory under federal civil-rights laws and in violation of recent guidance from the Trump administration.

Schools have come under scrutiny following President Trump's executive actions aimed at limiting race-based initiatives and transgender accommodations. The Education Department recently put out a letter advising schools that "treating students differently on the basis of race to achieve nebulous goals such as diversity, racial balancing, social justice, or equity is illegal."

The moves have bolstered activists looking to challenge equity efforts. They also have caused concern among schools with race and gender-focused initiatives that are watching the administration's next moves closely.

"This administration will be more amenable to taking our complaints seriously," said Erika Sanzi, the director of outreach at Parents Defending Education, the group that filed the Chicago complaint. "There's no question the recent actions they've taken in these first few weeks related to education send a clear signal."

Chicago schools staff have been working for more than a year on a plan to provide additional support for Black students, who routinely perform below those of other racial groups. Launched in the past week, its Black Student Success Plan also furthers district goals to double the number of Black male teachers hired, reduce disciplinary actions against Black students and teach more about Black history and culture.

A Chicago schools spokeswoman said Friday that any civil-rights complaint "will be reviewed and responded to in a timely manner." She pointed to a newsletter sent to families Friday by schools chief Pedro Martinez addressing concerns about how the Trump administration could affect their schools and saying the district celebrates all cultures and communities.

Parents Defending Education, a nonprofit formed in 2021, filed its complaint to the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights. The office, which enforces bans on discrimination in schools, will determine whether to investigate Chicago's program or dismiss the complaint. An Education Department spokeswoman didn't return a request for comment.

Parents Defending Education said that it wasn't representing any Chicago parents but filed the complaint as an interested third party.

Denver Public Schools created a Black Student Success team in fall 2023 and a similar effort focused on Latino students last year to boost graduation rates and student performance.

Denver schools spokesman Bill Good said Friday the district anticipates their programs could become the target of a complaint or investigation under the new administration.

In Chicago, where around a third of students are Black, the new plan is codified in a nearly 50-page document that lays out how the district will break what school officials called an unsatisfying status quo of Black students often being "the ones furthest from opportunity."

Black students in Chicago score lower as a group on reading and math exams than other racial groups in the city, according to state and federal data.

Valerie Leonard, a community advocate in Chicago who helped create the new plan, said she was disheartened to see Friday's legal challenge because she thinks it benefits all of society to improve outcomes for Black children. "We're tired of seeing kids fail," she said.

FROM TOP: KAYLEE GREENLEE BEAL/REUTERS; ERIC GAY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Troops Patrol a Quiet Border in Texas

As crossings keep going down, soldiers are often facing 'a whole lot of nothing'

By Elizabeth Findell

MCALLEN, Texas—Border Patrol agents sit in empty parks. Active-duty soldiers drive through fields along the base of a towering black border wall. Military helicopters roam the skies.

This is the scene lately along the U.S.-Mexico border, where President Trump quickly declared a national emergency upon taking office, rushing thousands of active-duty soldiers here. They arrived to join thousands of Texas National Guard members and state troopers deployed under a state disaster order, plus the thousands of agents permanently working for Border Patrol and other agencies.

What are they all doing? "A whole lot of nothing," one South Texas National Guard soldier said.

Trump, who campaigned on cracking down on immigration, inherited a border where illegal crossings, after peaking at record levels in late 2023, had been steadily dropping for a year. Before he took office, crossings had returned to the levels of the first Trump administration. Since then, they have fallen even lower, with some days officials making a few hundred arrests across the southern border.

The White House and Trump's supporters have attributed the low numbers to his tough border stances, including the deployment of the troops, which they say shows migrants they are ready to hold the line.

Razor and concertina wire is stretched across the banks of the Rio Grande in Eagle Pass, Texas, top, while above, patrol agents worked along the river earlier this month.

"That's probably one of the reasons it's quiet," McAllen Mayor Javier Villalobos, a Republican, said of the law-enforcement levels. "A lot of the people who were coming know they are going to get caught."

In addition to force deployments, Trump has shut down the entire asylum system at the southern border, denying migrants a chance to ask for safety even if they attempt to do so at a legal port of entry.

Meanwhile, some of Trump's detractors—and even some supporters—have called the troop deployment a waste of resources.

Alberto Olivares, a retired Border Patrol agent, said he has been thrilled to see the developments at the border in the past month and he gives the credit to Trump. But, as he spots the soldiers around town and the helicopters from his otherwise-tranquil ranch, he said he doesn't know why they are there.

"Border Patrol can handle it," he said. "I don't know that we need all these resources. Send them back."

In a downtown McAllen migrant shelter run by the Catholic Church, cavernous rooms of linoleum floors and brightly colored maps once held hundreds of people sleeping, eating and recuperating. Last Thursday, the shelter had a single guest: A Honduran mother with a baby in a local intensive-care unit, said Sister Norma Pimentel, the nun who operates the shelter.

Lately, some who were dropped off by law enforcement haven't been recent border-crossers, but people living nearby arrested by immigration agents during ordinary daily activities, Pimentel said.

Pimentel started the shelter out of necessity during a 2014 migration surge. The shelter's population hit its peak in 2019, during the previous Trump administration, when Border Patrol agents were often dropping off a thousand people a day, she said. The numbers at her shelter cratered during the pandemic, then rose during the Biden administration. Now, she doesn't know if the lull in migrants will be permanent.

"Numbers have increased and decreased to single digits—this is something we've seen," she said.

White House spokesman Kush Desai said the Biden administration had deflated border crossing numbers by allowing asylum seekers to legally enter via the CBP One app. "The Trump administration remains committed to a whole-of-government approach to deterring illegal migration," he said.

Efforts by Mexico and Panama over the past year to curtail migrant movements through their countries have been a major factor in the dropping apprehensions, said Dara Lind, a senior fellow at the American Immigration Council. A brief lull in migration when a new administration takes office isn't unusual, as migrants take a wait-and-see approach to determine how new policies are being implemented.

The apprehension numbers are also imprecise: They represent only those migrants caught by law enforcement, not those who successfully evade detection.

Border Patrol Chief Mike Banks, who previously oversaw Texas' border surge effort, this month began deputizing hundreds of Texas National Guard members to perform immigration arrests. The move came after a formal memorandum of understanding with the Trump administration to allow them to do so under the supervision of Border Patrol.

Guard members themselves, who have long been deployed to the border under Texas' $11 billion Operation Lone Star, said they doubted arrests by service members would actually happen. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott in 2022 issued an order that he said would allow Guard members to perform arrests of immigrants, but the units never actually did so.

Military personnel making arrests can create bad optics and raise the possibility of incidents and liability for the units, who aren't trained as law enforcement, said Brendan Steinhauser, a political analyst who has been involved in border deployments. But the optics could also amplify the deterrence element pushed by the Trump administration, which has paid top dollar to use military aircraft for deportations.

"This may act as a deterrent to many immigrants," Steinhauser said. "They may not want to interact with U.S. military forces."

In New York, an Ex-Governor Eyes Mayoral Run

By Ginger Adams Otis

New York City's worst kept secret is out: Andrew Cuomo wants to run for mayor.

Cuomo, 67, has been gauging his mayoral chances for months, according to several people with direct knowledge of the conversations. Longtime allies of New York's former governor have been working to put the pieces of a campaign together around him in the event he jumps into the race, the people said.

The Queens-born Democrat has registered to vote at a Manhattan address, according to public records. In his conversations with potential backers, he is focused on what he thinks is going wrong for the city and how he would fix it. Close associates have been assembling people to independently fundraise for him.

Without even formally campaigning, Cuomo has topped a crowded primary field in at least one poll and can expect the early endorsement of the city's District Council of Carpenters union if he declares. All that is left is for him to make his candidacy official, which could occur toward the end of the month or the beginning of March.

Since Cuomo quit Albany in 2021 under a cloud of allegations of ethics violations and sexual harassment, he has been battling to rewrite the legacy of his four-decade career in public service.

KENT NISHIMURA/GETTY IMAGES

Andrew Cuomo in Washington, D.C., last year.

Now, with New York City's current mayor, Eric Adams, embroiled in a legal battle over corruption charges and hemorrhaging staff, Cuomo may take his shot.

If, or when, Cuomo declares himself, he will join at least seven other Democratic primary candidates all fighting to come out on top in the June 24 ranked-choice voting primary. The general election is in November.

"Nothing about this is going to be easy for Cuomo," one veteran insider said. "And he can't afford a defeat."

Adams hasn't given any indication he will abandon his re-election effort—but how much of his first-term base remains with him is the larger question. He became the first sitting city mayor to be indicted last fall, when he was charged with taking illegal campaign contributions from Turkey. Adams has denied wrongdoing.

The U.S. Justice Department, under new leadership from the Trump administration, moved this month to dismiss the corruption charges, prompting several federal prosecutors to resign in protest. Adams faces pressure to step down amid accusations that it was a *quid pro quo* agreement to help obtain the Democratic mayor's cooperation on immigration enforcement that President Trump has prioritized. Both Adams and the Justice Department deny the deal was improper.

On Friday, a federal judge said he would hold off on dismissing the case against Adams to allow an outside attorney to make a case against granting the bid.

Cuomo and other primary candidates would vie for voters who may have lost faith in the mayor. Political observers say Adams and Cuomo would be competing for the same moderate slice of the electorate.

In recent days, Cuomo's underground political machine has kicked things up a notch, most notably with a glowing endorsement from Carl McCall, New York's first Black comptroller. It was a symbolically important get for Cuomo. His decision to challenge McCall in a 2002 gubernatorial primary caused lingering resentment among Democrats who had hoped to elect New York's first Black governor. Cuomo eventually dropped out and backed McCall, who lost to Republican George Pataki.

Even after his resignation, Cuomo's outreach to various unions that have worked with him or supported him over the years never stopped, according to several people familiar with his calls. But in recent weeks, Cuomo's outreach has gotten more pointed, as he has talked at length about the problems facing New York City and his proposed solutions.

With a wide field of candidates all relying on some degree of union support, getting high-profile backing will matter. But whether those will translate into Cuomo votes on June 24 is the big variable.

Some people have already crowned him the front-runner, said George Arzt, a longtime Democratic political consultant. Along with his own name recognition from years in public service, Cuomo also is buoyed by his late father, Mario Cuomo. The elder Cuomo served three terms as governor and, like his son, nursed ambitions of rising higher.

"I know we're getting ahead of ourselves, but there are many people who think he is going to be our mayor and then run for president in 2028," Arzt said. "Everyone in the world knows he's going to run [for mayor] and he's out there preparing."

Preparations will have to include a counterstrategy for the torrent of criticism that will hit Cuomo the moment he declares. His competitors will resurrect all the ill will and accusations of bullying, ethics violations and allegations of sexual harassment that led to his Albany ouster, along with the harsh criticism of his administration's handling of Covid-19 in long-term-care facilities at the height of the pandemic. Cuomo has denied all wrongdoing and has spent years battling lawsuits from several women who have accused him of sexual harassment.

Medicaid Cuts Snarl GOP Budget Plan

By Olivia Beavers And Liz Essley Whyte

WASHINGTON—When President Trump locked a group of House Republicans into the Cabinet Room at the White House earlier this month with the directive to emerge with a GOP plan that would help fund his top priorities, he also cautioned the roughly dozen lawmakers about making cuts to Medicaid.

Trump made clear he was OK with putting work requirements in place, but he warned against spending cuts that impact the quality of healthcare, recalled Rep. Don Bacon (R., Neb.).

But just after Trump left the room, Bacon said, one budget hawk remarked: "We could get $2.5 trillion if we cut Medicaid." Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the No. 2 House Republican, shot back: "Did you hear what the president just said?"

House Republicans are deeply divided on Medicaid, split between spending hardliners who want big savings and pragmatists who warn against angering voters. The fight threatens to derail their effort to assemble a bill funding border security, energy policy and tax cuts. Republicans currently have a thin 218-to-215 majority, meaning more than one or two defections could sink the package.

If the House votes to adopt the GOP budget framework this week, Senate Republicans would then move to crafting the actual budget bill, using a process that allows Congress to sidestep the Senate's 60-vote filibuster threshold. Skeptical that the House can make progress, the Senate on Friday adopted its own narrower budget plan.

Steve Bannon, a onetime adviser to Trump who now hosts the influential show "War Room," recently warned about the dangers of cutting Medicaid. "A lot of MAGAs on Medicaid," he said. "Just can't take a meat ax to it, although I would love to."

House Freedom Caucus members and other budget hawks successfully pressed for an amendment that directly ties $2 trillion in spending reductions over 10 years to the tax-cut effort. Under that provision, the more the GOP pulls from Medicaid and other programs, the more financial room Republicans have for extending Trump's 2017 tax cuts and new provisions such as ending taxes on tips.

The federal government spends about $600 billion annually on Medicaid. States help fund and manage the program, which provides health insurance for roughly 72 million people, or about 1 in 5 Americans, including children and people with low incomes or disabilities.

Republicans have a long list of options on how they could cut Medicaid. Work requirements would save, by some estimates, $120 billion over 10 years. But the GOP will likely need more trims than that. Some potential changes, such as altering the funding formula to allow the federal government to contribute less to wealthier states, could hurt states such as California and New York, which lean Democratic but also have vulnerable Republican lawmakers.

Republicans are also considering whether to slash the fatter federal subsidies that enabled the expansion of the Affordable Care Act program in 41 states and Washington, D.C. The federal government currently contributes 90% of the costs of care for people who join Medicaid under those wider eligibility rules.

Republicans aren't allowed to touch Social Security in the fast-track legislative process they are using, and Trump has said he opposes reducing Medicare benefits, leaving Medicaid as one of the remaining ways to significantly shrink spending. Within a 24-hour period, Trump stated that Medicaid shouldn't be touched but also posted on X that he backs the House-led package that is likely to rely on cuts to Medicaid to meet its targets.

White House spokesman Kush Desai said the administration is "committed to protecting Medicaid while slashing the waste, fraud, and abuse within the program—reforms that will increase efficiency and improve care for beneficiaries."

Some House Republicans are privately warning party leadership that there are scores of members—including some in safe GOP districts—who oppose deep cuts. Healthcare groups are aggressively lobbying members' offices to defend Medicaid spending.

Trump "does not want this to be an issue in two years," said Bacon, a Republican who won re-election in one of the few districts that swung toward Kamala Harris in 2024.

Pennsylvania Rep. Rob Bresnahan, a first-term Republican who unseated a House Democrat, said on X that if a "bill is put in front of me that guts the benefits my neighbors rely on, I will not vote for it."

Rep. David Valadao (R., Calif.) argues that the Trump coalition now includes many Medicaid recipients, pointing to Trump's ability to win over voters who previously backed President Joe Biden.

"My district went from a Biden 13 to a Trump 5," he said, citing the winning margins in 2020 and 2024. Valadao's district has among the highest levels of Medicaid recipients in the nation.

The program is popular. A recent poll by KFF found nearly 80% of respondents—and 65% of Republicans—think the federal government spends about the right amount or not enough on Medicaid.

But budget hawks believe now is their best chance to address deepening federal deficits, which have ballooned the U.S. debt to $34 trillion.

"The problem with Medicaid is it's an open checkbook," said Brett Guthrie (R., Ky.), the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. "We have a $1.8 trillion budget deficit. It can't go on forever."

Guthrie wants a per-capita cap on Medicaid spending, with annual increases tied to inflation. A Congressional Budget Office report found that such a cap would save about $900 billion over a decade.

FROM LEFT: ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES; ANNABELLE GORDON/CNP/ZUMA PRESS

President Trump spoke on Saturday at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference in Maryland, where, above right, some attendees decked out in pro-Trump garb.

MAGA Faithful Urge Trump To Ignore Risks of Midterms

By Aaron Zitner

OXON HILL, Md.—On Capitol Hill, some Republicans worry that President Trump's blitz of government layoffs has cut too deeply. Angry voters are turning up at constituent meetings. Trump's approval rating turned negative in several recent opinion polls, a potentially ominous sign for the 2026 midterms.

The MAGA faithful have a response: Keep pressing ahead, and don't worry about the next election.

At the Conservative Political Action Conference, one of the premier annual gatherings of conservatives, several thousand Trump supporters gave a hero's welcome to Elon Musk, Trump's assigned budget-cutter, as he brandished a chain saw on stage and promised to cut through the federal bureaucracy.

They roared approval when House Speaker Mike Johnson said there was "no appetite" to send more funds to Ukraine. They cheered at the news that Kash Patel, who has said he wants to investigate the president's perceived enemies, had just won Senate confirmation to lead the FBI.

"Fix bayonets, we're charging again," Trump ally Steve Bannon urged the crowd, adding: "You're unstoppable."

Many here said Trump's approach to Washington has fulfilled their wildest ambitions. That would make any midterm losses worth it. But they also believed Trump would have a winning message by 2026, based on their hopes he would cut taxes, reduce illegal immigration and deport immigrants with criminal records who entered the country illegally.

"It's not worth holding on to power with white knuckles and saying, 'Oh, we're scared we might lose the midterms, so let's not do anything,' " said Christopher Kelly, 67, president of a telecommunications services company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

To fix the country's finances, he said, Musk's Department of Government Efficiency needed to make drastic and deep budget cuts.

The president's party has lost House seats in 18 of the past 20 midterm elections, a Brookings Institution tally shows, including a Republican loss of more than 40 seats in 2018 during Trump's first term. The GOP's narrow margin in the House is giving Democrats hope that they can win a majority in two years.

Kelly said he knew that political fortunes can change quickly, citing former President George H.W. Bush's collapse from a near-90% approval rating to his loss in the 1992 election.

"We're riding a wave right now, but we know we have to evangelize to our fellow citizens the richness of what we're doing, and how it's conducive to human flourishing," he said.

> 'A true leader doesn't care about ratings,' one CPAC attendee said.

Dennis Mayo, 75, a horse breeder outside Eureka, Calif., believed that voters would reward the party if Congress extended the tax cuts that Trump signed into law in his first term and that expire this year.

Mayo, who wore a droopy mustache and a cowboy hat with arrowheads in the hat band, said he wasn't worried that Trump and Musk would compromise national security, air-travel safety or other essential functions as they cut the federal workforce. "You have to sweep out the dirt before you find the good stuff and put it back," he said.

Edward Young, 65, of Brick Township, N.J., who said he had attended 109 Trump rallies over nine years, wants Trump to increase his government-overhaul efforts. He was at CPAC with a friend he met last year at the 67th rally, Michael O'Neil. The pair lined up at 4:45 a.m. Saturday to be sure they had good seats for Trump's expected speech later in the day.

"A true leader doesn't care about ratings. Lead from the front," said O'Neil, 54, of Concord, N.H.

Trump, in his remarks at CPAC on Saturday, predicted that voters would support his party in 2026. "I think we're going to do fantastic in the midterms," he said. "In theory, the one that wins the presidency doesn't do well in the midterms, but I think this is going to be a change."

Democrats will be defending the larger number of House seats next year in places where voting preferences are fluid. Some 13 House Democrats represent districts that Trump won in 2024, while only three Republicans hold seats in districts carried by Kamala Harris.

Some 55% of voters approved of Trump's performance in a CNN survey in January. That fell to 46% this month. Trump's rating also flipped from net approval to disapproval in Quinnipiac University surveys.

Bannon provoked controversy by ending his speech Thursday with a raised-arm salute. He later said the gesture was a "wave," but a French right-wing party leader called it "a gesture referring to Nazi ideology" and canceled his planned speech at CPAC.

President Appoints Podcaster As No. 2 At FBI

By Sadie Gurman

WASHINGTON—President Trump announced he had named conservative commentator and former Secret Service agent Dan Bongino as deputy director of the FBI, putting a political appointee, rather than a career agent, in the No. 2 job for the first time in the bureau's 117-year history.

"Great news for Law Enforcement and American Justice!" Trump posted Sunday night on his Truth Social platform, calling Bongino "a man of incredible love and passion for our Country."

Bongino's background is strikingly different from that of his predecessors. He is a former Secret Service agent and New York Police Department officer who has never worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a first for the holder of the deputy role. The post is responsible for overseeing the bureau's day-to-day enforcement operations.

Bongino lost three congressional races—two in Maryland and one in Florida—running as a Republican but has been highly successful as a media personality. A vocal supporter of conservative candidates, Bongino once declared, "my entire life right now is about owning the libs."

Bongino was chosen to replace radio host Rush Limbaugh in the same coveted time slot after the commentator's death in 2021. He has interviewed Trump on his popular podcast, has written several bestselling books and appeared regularly on Fox News.

Trump said Bongino would give up his podcast in order to serve.

The announcement sent shock waves through the FBI, whose new director Kash Patel had offered Republican senators private assurances that he would name a special agent with bureau experience to be his deputy, rather than a political outsider. Patel was sworn in on Friday.

Leaders of the FBI Agents Association, who met with Patel in January, said the new director had agreed that the deputy should be a current special agent to provide operational expertise and experience as well as to boost trust within the workforce, according to a Sunday email to membership that was viewed by The Wall Street Journal. The association is an employee group that represents thousands of agents.

The FBI referred questions to the White House, which didn't respond to requests for comment.

The selection of Bongino is the latest move signaling Trump's desire to bring federal law enforcement more closely under his direct control, striking back at an agency he has long considered his nemesis. Patel's arrival marks a major shift at the bureau, as he plans to move its focus from terrorism and counterintelligence work back toward its historical mission of fighting violent crime.

The bureau had been run in the interim by acting Director Brian Driscoll and his acting deputy, Robert Kissane, who pushed back on some of those efforts, including a demand by Trump appointees at the Justice Department that they assemble a list of thousands of employees involved in investigations of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove called the acting leaders "insubordinate."

WILL OLIVER/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Dan Bongino

Criticism by Trump Leaves Wind-Power Projects in Limbo

Companies shelve offshore plans as administration halts permits and leasing

By Jennifer Hiller

President Trump has America's wind-energy industry at a standstill.

Developers are delaying some projects and writing down the value of investments. Plans are hanging in limbo.

During his campaign, Trump directed fierce criticism to offshore wind projects, which he promised to "end on day one." His first wave of executive orders included a pause for federal permits and leasing for wind projects on land and at sea.

"We aren't going to do the wind thing," Trump told his supporters Jan. 20, twirling a finger in a circle to indicate the rotation of a turbine blade. "Big ugly windmills, they ruin your neighborhood."

Since the election, TotalEnergies has shelved a planned offshore wind energy development for four years. Oil giant Shell took a $1 billion impairment, more than half of which was for an offshore wind project. Orsted, a major offshore wind developer, recorded a $1.7 billion impairment on its U.S. offshore wind business and slashed its capital investment plans through 2030 by a quarter.

While work continues at projects that had already started construction on land or offshore, confusion about what happens next has overtaken the industry. Developers are awaiting clarification on a number of fronts, said Scott Wilmot, senior analyst at Enverus Intelligence Research.

Most land-based wind projects are located on private property, but often require federal permits. That process leaves the administration many chokepoints.

Many developers need an Army Corps of Engineers permit, and they discuss potential projects with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and might require permits from that agency, too. The Bureau of Land Management sometimes grants rights of way for interconnection to the electric grid. The Federal Aviation Administration has to be notified about tower locations because of turbine height and lighting requirements.

Trump's executive order included a review of existing leases and a temporary halt of the Lava Ridge Wind Project in Idaho, the only development mentioned by name and one of a handful of wind projects planned on federal land.

Sen. Jim Risch, a Republican from Idaho, said he pushed for Lava Ridge's halt in a one-on-one discussion with Trump a week before the inauguration. "He gets it," Risch said. "It's not a hard lift because he shares my reticence about windmills."

The controversial project would be located near the site of a World War II internment camp for Japanese-Americans. The Bureau of Land Management had approved a scaled-down version of Lava Ridge in December that would be farther away from the historic site, though it has continued to face fierce local opposition. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum will review the decision and "as appropriate, conduct a new, comprehensive analysis," the executive order said.

Risch said he thinks Burgum will agree with him on Lava Ridge, but can't predict the ultimate outcome of the broader pause on permitting.

"We'll get through this stuff. But remember we're at a point where government has changed," Risch said.

LS Power, the Lava Ridge developer, declined to comment.

Wind accounted for about 10% of large-scale U.S. electricity generation in 2023, according to the Energy Information Administration. Most of that comes from land-based projects.

Beyond permitting confusion, the industry faces potential cuts to tax credits included in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act. Trump has called the IRA a scam.

Between the election and Dec. 31, developers anticipating a possible tax change speeded up work on projects, including ordering equipment or starting work at sites. Those actions can prove that construction had started, which would safeguard access to existing tax credits even if projects are completed later under a different tax regime.

Such work will keep developers busy for months, said David Hindman, head of power, utilities renewables at AlixPartners. But companies also need to start assembling land and permits for the next round of projects.

"All parties—developers, financiers, others—are going to want to have more certainty than we have now," Hindman said.

Ocean-based wind projects faced challenges before the Trump administration. Global supply-chain snags, rising interest rates and inflationary pressures made projects far more expensive to build. Several developers had to renegotiate financing agreements.

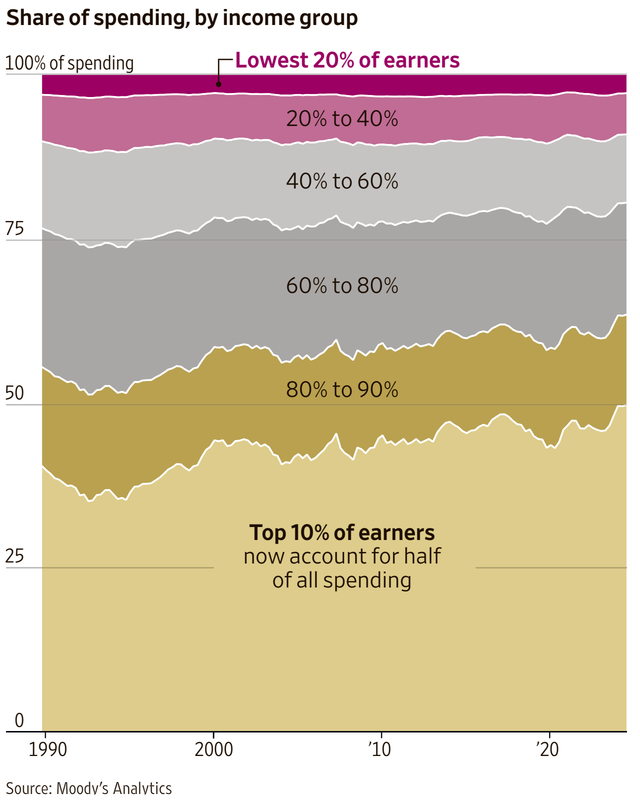
Still, about four gigawatts of offshore wind projects were under construction along the East Coast by the end of the third quarter, according to the American Clean Power Association.

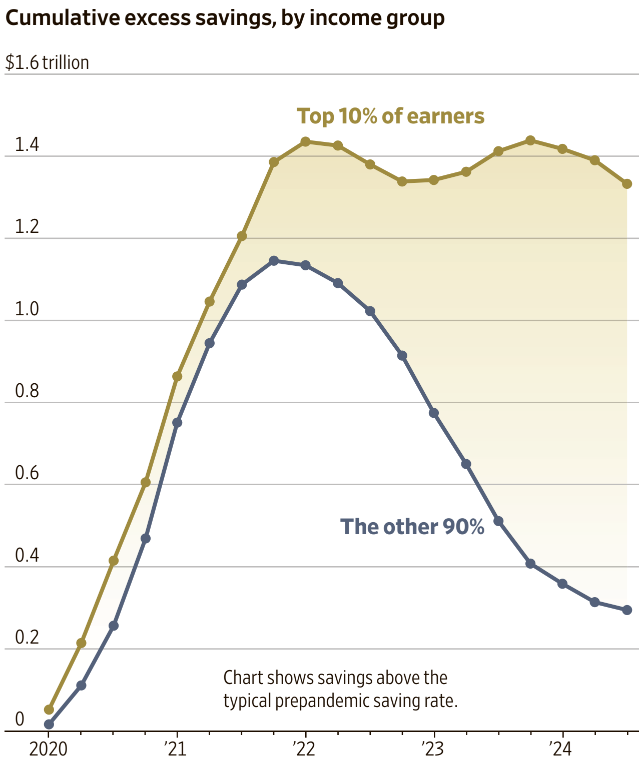
The offshore wind supply chain stretches to states such as Louisiana, which has 38 companies with supply contracts, including shipbuilding and vessel support, according to the Oceantic Network, which tracks the industry.


JULIA NIKHINSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Turbines operating at the Block Island Wind Farm, off the coast of Block Island, R.I., in late 2023.

Wealthiest Bolster Economy





Continued from Page One

Zandi, who oversaw the analysis, which was based on data from the Federal Reserve. The analysis runs through the third quarter of 2024 because that is the most recent data available.

Taken together, well-off people have increased their spending far beyond inflation, while everyone else hasn't. The bottom 80% of earners spent 25% more than they did four years earlier, barely outpacing price increases of 21% over that period. The top 10% spent 58% more.

A stock-market selloff or decline in home values that rattles the confidence of the top 10% and causes them to cut back would have a significant effect on the economy. Consumer sentiment is starting to slide overall, including for the wealthiest third of consumers, thanks in part to tariff threats.

The buying power of the richest Americans, who Zandi said tend to be older and more educated, stems in part from the swelling values of homes and the stock market over the past several years. While rising asset prices are extolled as a sign of a good economy, they also are widening the gap between those who own property and stocks and those who don't.

Vivek Trivedi, 38 years old, saved up during the pandemic, and in 2022 and 2023 he bought three investment properties in the Indianapolis area, where he lives. His own housing costs are stable because he locked in a sub-3% mortgage on his primary home when he refinanced while interest rates were low during the pandemic.

He and his wife, Purva Trivedi, both work in the pharmaceutical industry. They earn more than $350,000 a year combined, about 45% more than before the pandemic. They have two small children and support his parents, who live with them.

"We've made some strategic moves in our own careers and also in investment portfolios," Vivek Trivedi said. "We haven't really had to cut back."

Vivek Trivedi took up road cycling and bought a $3,000 bike. The couple noticed their grocery bill rising but agreed that buying organic products was too important to them to give up. This year, they are budgeting about $10,000 to $15,000 for travel, including a potential trip to their native India.

The rich are going to Paris and loading up on luxury bags and shoes.

During the pandemic, Americans across the spectrum saved at record levels. They spent less because they were stuck at home and received extra money from the government's various stimulus measures. By early 2022, households socked away an extra $2.6 trillion.

Then inflation struck. Most Americans turned to their extra savings to keep up with their rising bills. But the top 10% of earners kept most of what they had saved up.

Affluent people also found themselves with assets, such as stocks, that suddenly were worth far more. The net worth of the top 20% of earners has risen more than $35 trillion, or 45%, since the end of 2019, according to Federal Reserve data. Net worth grew at a similar rate for everyone else, but it translated to a lot less money: an increase of $14 trillion for the bottom 80%.

Tom Shoaf, a 61-year-old test pilot who lives in Alamogordo, N.M., estimates that his net worth is up about 40% since the pandemic. Nearly all of his assets, from a ranch in Wyoming to the stocks he holds in his retirement accounts, are worth much more now.

His wife, Kristi Shoaf, is an occupational therapist. Together they earn about $500,000 a year. They recently started giving an annual gift under the gift-tax limit, which is $19,000, to each of their two adult sons. "I had several relatives die during Covid. I thought 'Why are we waiting?' " he said.

The couple have more than $1 million set aside to buy a new home when they retire in a few years. He bought a plane before the pandemic. A rising net worth "certainly gives you confidence to do more things," he said.

Bank of America found that credit- and debit-card spending by their richest third of customers was growing faster than spending by the lowest-earning third. Certain categories of spending were especially robust. The top 5% of households spent more than 10% more on luxury goods abroad compared with a year earlier.

"They're going to Paris and loading up their suitcases with luxury bags and shoes and clothes," said David Tinsley, senior economist for the Bank of America Institute.

Delta Air Lines Chief Executive Ed Bastian in January said he expected a strong appetite for high-end travel to fuel profit this year. The airline's sales of premium tickets rose 8%. Revenue from sales of main cabin tickets rose 2%.

Royal Caribbean said it had the best five-week booking period in its history in recent months and announced the launch of European river cruises, which are popular with a higher-end set.

"It's an extreme bifurcation" between those companies and others that cater to poorer customers, JPMorgan Chase analyst Matthew Boss said. Big Lots filed for bankruptcy last fall. Kohl's and Family Dollar are closing stores. "They're all battling for fewer dollars," Boss said.

Barbara Pierce, 57, runs a membership group, Women With Capital, focused on impact investing and philanthropy. Pierce and her husband together bring in about $300,000 a year, largely from investment income. The couple and their teenage son went on a three-week safari to Africa in July that cost about $35,000.

"We're spending a lot of money doing things that we really want to be able to do while our son is living at home with us," Pierce said. "We feel like the time is now."

U.S. WATCH

NEW MEXICO

Airman Dead After Shooting at Base

A weekend shooting at a U.S. Air Force base in New Mexico left one airman dead and another wounded, military officials said, adding that it wasn't an act of terrorism or an attack by an outsider.

A statement from Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque said security forces responded to a shooting near one of the entrances to the base at about 2 a.m. Saturday. One airman died at the scene, and the other was taken to a hospital with a gunshot wound to a hand and later discharged, the statement said.

The Air Force released few other details and didn't immediately say whether anyone was in custody.

The names of the airmen who were shot weren't immediately released.

—Associated Press

PENNSYLVANIA

Hospital Still Shut After Shootout

Workers at a Pennsylvania hospital who were injured during a shooting that left the gunman and a police officer dead were reported "medically stable" on Sunday as the hospital remained closed to visitors.

Investigators were still piecing together what happened a day after a man armed with a pistol and carrying zip ties headed straight to the intensive care unit at UPMC Memorial Hospital in York, Pa., and took staff members hostage before he was killed by police in a shootout that also left an officer dead.

A doctor, a nurse, a custodian and two other police officers were shot and wounded in the attack at the central Pennsylvania hospital on Saturday, authorities said. A fourth hospital staffer was injured in a fall.

—Associated Press

Hezbollah Uses Beirut Funeral To Demonstrate It Is Still Alive

At service for slain leader Nasrallah, new chief Qassem vows to keep fighting

BEIRUT—As hundreds of thousands of people gathered for the funeral of slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut on Sunday, its current chief vowed to continue fighting Israel as the group projected its power despite an Israeli offensive that has left it weakened and in disarray.

By *Omar Abdel-Baqui, Adam Chamseddine* and *Saleh al-Batati*

"We will complete this path even if we are all killed," Naim Qassem said. "The resistance has not ended." As he spoke, Israel took the opportunity to taunt its enemy. The ground shook as Israeli jet fighters flew in formation low over the city.

Qassem also railed against the influence of the U.S., which brokered the November cease-fire between Hezbollah and Israel that brought more than a year of fighting to an end.

"We do not accept that America controls our country," he said. "We say to America, you will not achieve in politics what you did not achieve in war."

For Hezbollah, the massive funeral was aimed at showing Lebanon and the world that it can still maintain security control and organize a massive public display of support.

Nasrallah was a charismatic politician and fierce Islamist ideologue who turned the Shia militant group into one of the world's most powerful nonstate armed forces with the backing of Iran. Analysts say Israel's weakening of Hezbollah and the killing of Nasrallah has left the group diminished as a military force that can threaten Israel and as a political force within Lebanese politics.

ADRIENNE SURPRENANT/MYOP FOR WSJ

Mourners at Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's funeral packed a 50,000-seat sports arena.

"When Nasrallah died, it felt like the end of the world," said a funeral-goer from Beirut named Batoul. "He was the one protecting us and standing up for us when no one else was."

The service included a march to the burial site. Hundreds of Hezbollah operatives attended the funeral, including uniformed military staff, though none was seen armed. The Lebanese military provided security around the site.

Beirut was overwhelmed by visitors, many from other countries, among them Iraq and Iran, whose delegation included Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. The Houthis also sent a delegation. Hezbollah's yellow and green flags flew from cars and buildings, and billboards bearing Nasrallah's face paid tribute. Streets away from the funeral were quiet and many shops were closed. Seas of mourners dressed in black cried, chanted and ritually thumped their chests in grief at the memorial service, held in a packed sports arena that seats around 50,000.

Nasrallah was killed when Israel's air force struck a bunker in which he was meeting with Hezbollah senior officials. Other Hezbollah senior officials were killed by Israel during a year of fighting.

While divisive within Lebanon and across the Middle East, Nasrallah was seen by many Shia Lebanese as an advocate for the sect in Lebanon's complex political system, which distributes power among religious groups. Many Lebanese Shia also commended him for standing up to Israel and the U.S. To his supporters, Nasrallah became an almost messianic figure, commanding loyalty of tens of thousands of devout Shia Muslims, and ascending to become the single most important figure in Iran's array of allied militias.

Murtada Mousawi, who came from southern Iraq to attend the Nasrallah funeral, said Nasrallah can't be replaced. "His soul and legacy is enshrined in millions of people," Mousawi said.

To his enemies, he was an antisemitic terrorist who led a movement responsible for hundreds of American and Israeli deaths. When Hezbollah, designated a terrorist group by the U.S., pushed Israel from Lebanon in 2000 after 15 years of occupation, it cast Nasrallah as among the region's most effective and dangerous strategists.

Watch a Video

Scan the code for a video of the funeral of slain Hezbollah leader Nasrallah.

Israel Withholds Releases Over Hostage Parades

BY DOV LIEBER AND SUMMER SAID

TEL AVIV— Israel said it is temporarily withholding the release of any Palestinian prisoners until Hamas stops staging "ceremonies that humiliate our hostages," throwing into question the future of the Gaza cease-fire.

Hundreds of Palestinian prisoners were supposed to be released Saturday from Israeli custody after Hamas handed over six hostages in ceremonies in which the men, some looking thin and weak, were forced to wave on stage before crowds. One of the hostages kissed militants during the event.

Hamas also released a video in which two hostages who weren't released on Saturday watched the ceremony from a nearby car and begged on camera for Israel to seek their immediate release.

"In light of Hamas's repeated violations, including the ceremonies that humiliate our hostages and the cynical exploitation of our hostages for propaganda purposes, it has been decided to delay the release of terrorists that was planned for yesterday until the release of the next hostages has been assured, and without the humiliating ceremonies," the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said early Sunday.

Hamas said Israel's refusal to free the Palestinian prisoners "constitutes a blatant breach of the agreement."

"These ceremonies do not involve any humiliation of the prisoners; rather, they reflect a dignified and humane treatment," the group said in a separate statement on Sunday.

Mediators have told Hamas repeatedly that the parading of hostages was counterproductive to ensuring the cease-fire continues.

Under the terms of a cease-fire deal, Israel was supposed to free 602 Palestinians from its prisons on Saturday, of whom 445 had been captured in the Gaza Strip after Oct. 7, 2023, including 24 minors and one woman.

Families in the West Bank who were waiting outside for hours for their loved ones to come out of prison eventually left empty-handed.

Hamas has forced nearly all hostages it releases to stand on a stage and wave to crowds in front of imagery lionizing the U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

Israel was particularly incensed when, on Thursday, Hamas displayed coffins that it said held the bodies of four Israeli hostages, including a mother and her two young children, before a crowd of militants while handing them over to Israel, in a spectacle that included taunts and anti-Israel slogans.

Anger grew after the country learned that one of the coffins didn't contain the body of the mother, Shiri Bibas, and instead held an unidentified individual. Hamas handed over Bibas's remains to Israel on Friday.

At a ceremony on Sunday, Netanyahu held up a picture of the Bibas children and their mother and told them it was a symbol of "why we are fighting and who we're fighting against."

The Israeli leader said he was ready to take the country back to war against Hamas "at any moment" and that operational fighting plans were already prepared. Israel's military on Sunday said it was increasing "operational readiness" around Gaza, an indication it is preparing to resume hostilities.

Merz Poised To Be Next Chancellor

Continued from Page One

and its CSU sister party in Bavaria just under 28% of the votes, followed by the AfD with about 20%. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party looked to have taken just over 16%, its worst result since the late 19th century.

Voters elected a fragmented Parliament, with at least five parties likely to make it into the house and two others skirting the 5% threshold needed to secure representation. The more parties, the harder for Merz to secure a coherent alliance with a solid majority of seats.

Facing strong economic and geopolitical headwinds, Europe is under pressure to quickly coordinate a response to Trump's tariff threats and his plans to end the war in Ukraine on terms many European capitals fear could be unacceptably generous to Moscow and undermine their own security.

France and Germany have been hamstrung for months, since their governments lost their parliamentary majorities. Merz's election as chancellor would mark a first step toward Europe's rebuilding a more stable leadership.

He faces the task of turning around an economy that has barely grown since before the Covid-19 pandemic and is likely to shrink this year for the third time in a row. He has pledged to cut immigration sharply in a bid to weaken the AfD.

Further ahead, he and his counterparts in France, the U.K., Poland and elsewhere must decide whether and how to redraw the contours of the Western alliance, given an increasingly antagonistic U.S. that is moving closer to Russia.

In a television interview last week, Merz said Germany should start discussing with France and the U.K. how their nuclear deterrents might be extended to cover Germany should the U.S. reduce its security presence on the Continent.

CDU officials said Merz would appoint negotiators to start sounding out potential partners as early as this week, with a view to agreeing on a coalition by early April at the latest, much faster than usual.

MARTIN MEISSNER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Friedrich Merz, whose Christian Democratic Union party won Sunday's election, addressed supporters in Berlin on Sunday.

Merz may also reach an interim arrangement with the departing government allowing it to pass urgent legislation or make crucial foreign-policy decisions while negotiations proceed, the officials said.

The U.S. administration has hinted it wanted the AfD to be a member of any ruling coalition. Elon Musk, who advises Trump, urged German voters to vote for the far-right party. Last week, Vice President JD Vance suggested the U.S. might reduce its military presence in Germany if the country didn't change its speech laws, an AfD position.

Initial results showed the AfD poised to achieve its best outcome in a national election since its creation in 2013, about double its 2021 score.

Pollsters attributed the gains to factors such as the departing government's unpopularity, the economic recession, high levels of immigration, voter fatigue about a costly green transition and violent crimes by refugees and asylum seekers in recent months.

The CDU has benefited from the same trends, and the parties' programs partly overlap—especially on immigration and the economy. However some AfD positions—including its call for Germany to leave the European Union, lift sanctions on Russia and tone down its culture of Holocaust remembrance—are anathema to Merz's conservatives.

"Our hand is extended to implement the will of the people," AfD co-chairwoman Alice Weidel said in a TV interview. "the CDU just needs to take it. Otherwise, a change in policy in Germany won't be possible."

But Merz has said he would under no circumstance form an alliance with the AfD. "I'm not letting an American vice president tell me whom I should be talking to in Germany," he told a TV debate a week ago.

"Friedrich Merz would be loath to work with the AfD," said Sudha David-Wilp, vice president of external affairs at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. "Pressure from the U.S. administration is unlikely to sway him." A successful immigration crackdown could help Merz ward off such pressure, she added.

Merz is likely first to sound out the center-left SPD. Polls showed a CDU-SPD coalition was voters' favored government. Whether such an alliance has enough seats to govern or needs the support of another party will depend on the final results, expected Monday.

Merz has campaigned on deregulation and cuts to business and income taxes, as well as the closure of land borders to most undocumented immigrants. All are measures he might struggle to agree on with the more left-leaning SPD.

Some analysts said a CDU-SPD coalition might not only take a long time to negotiate but could also end up being as fractious and ineffective as Scholz's three-way alliance was by the time it collapsed in November.

The SPD has swung more to the left during the campaign and accused Merz of parroting AfD policies, complicating a potential post-ballot rapprochement.

FROM PAGE ONE

Kyiv Presses U.S. Over Mineral Pact

Continued from Page One
aid to Ukraine during the war.

Acrimony over the U.S. demands sparked a war of words between President Trump and Zelensky last week in which the Ukrainian president said Trump was "living in a disinformation space" and Trump called the Ukrainian president a dictator.

Fearing an outright collapse in relations, aides to both presidents tried to push the two sides together and on Friday said they were close to a deal.

This weekend, the Trump administration went on the offensive to defend the deal.

Speaking on Fox News on Sunday, national-security adviser Mike Waltz called the deal a "reformulation of how the United States provides aid, a partnership with Ukraine economically in their critical minerals" so that the U.S. gets "a return on this massive investment they have made" in Ukraine's defense.

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth told Fox News on Sunday that "Zelensky should come to the table, because this economic partnership is an important thing for the future of his country, and we hope that he will very soon."

Trump has courted Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking with him by phone, dispatching senior officials to meet with Russian counterparts, and killing a United Nations resolution that Ukraine had crafted with European support marking the war's third anniversary.

The White House has said Europe needs to increase spending and military efforts to provide for its own security and to cement any peace deal in Ukraine, as it could no longer depend on the U.S. to do so.

Polish President Andrzej Duda met with Trump on Saturday and lobbied for the U.S. to boost its military presence in Poland and Central Europe as part of a force to deter Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron and U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer are set to visit Washington this week to speak with Trump about U.S. security guarantees for Ukraine and the question of deploying an international peacekeeping force after the war ends.

Amid the high-stakes international diplomacy, Zelensky has frequently found himself the target of Trump's attacks. The U.S. president criticized him for complaints over not being involved in the talks with Russia and over Ukraine's postponement of presidential elections, which according to the country's legislation can't take place during martial law.

On Sunday, he responded to some of Trump's jabs, reiterating that elections weren't possible during war. "How are people at the front going to vote if they can't return home to vote? I don't understand what that would be like."

Asked whether he was ready to step down before an election, if his resignation leads to peace for Ukraine or the country's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Zelensky said he would.

"If it's peace for Ukraine, if I really need to leave my post then I'm ready," he said. "I can exchange it for NATO, if there are such conditions."

Zelensky has long pressed for quick NATO membership, but the Trump administration and some European allies are against it.

Zelensky on Sunday said U.S. aid was given in the form of grants that were negotiated with the Biden administration, and that it was unfair for Trump to now demand the money back. "A grant is not a debt, therefore we don't need to return a debt," he said.

Trump's treasury secretary, Scott Bessent, said there were no military guarantees in the proposed deal, but called such guarantees implicit because the U.S. would be so heavily invested in the Ukrainian economy. "We want to intertwine the U.S. and Ukrainian economies for the benefit of both," he said, adding that "the Russians hate this deal."

Bessent said the verbal assaults between Trump and Zelensky "seem to have put a bit of daylight between us." But he said he is confident that "there is no daylight" and hopeful that a deal will be signed this week.

The sparring with Trump has helped bolster Zelensky's popularity at home, according to pollsters, amid widespread public anger over U.S. demands.

The war, meanwhile, continues apace. Overnight into Sunday, Moscow launched almost 270 explosive drones against Ukraine—the largest Russian drone attack of the war. Russian troops are advancing slowly on the main battlefields in Ukraine's east, but the pace of their gains has dropped in recent weeks amid heavy losses.

Watch a Video
Scan this code for a video on Zelensky's comments Sunday.

Trump's Russia Pivot

Continued from Page One
hours. Soon, new sanctions against Russia went into effect.

Openly embracing Russia was still toxic at the time. After all, Trump's first choice for national security adviser, Mike Flynn, had been forced to resign over discussing sanctions relief with the Russian ambassador before the inauguration, and Russia hawks assumed key positions in the new administration.

Those guardrails—in Congress or inside the administration—barely exist today. "Ukraine is viewed as bad by the base of the party," said Marc Short, a longtime top adviser to former Vice President Mike Pence. "I don't think as much of the Republican Senate cares anymore," Short added, of standing up for Ukraine and countering Putin.

As Trump executed an about-face in American foreign policy in recent days, heaping insults on Ukraine's embattled President Volodymyr Zelensky—including calling him a "dictator"— and repeating Putin's talking points about Europe's deadliest war in seven decades, there was no significant political price to pay, at least so far.

The White House disputed the notion that Trump is soft on Putin. "There's only one American President who Putin did not invade another country under over the past 25 years—and it's Donald J. Trump," said White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt in an email. "President Trump's peace through strength America First diplomacy effectively deterred Russia in his first term, and this war would have never started if he had never left office. Thank God President Trump is back and actively pressing both sides to end this brutal conflict once and for all."

Trump advisers said his approach to the talks—and to Russia—is just realpolitik, noting that the president simply doesn't believe Ukraine can win the war and it needs to end.

These aides characterized Trump's recent derisive comments about Zelensky and falsely blaming Ukraine for starting the war as part personal pique at the Ukrainian leader for criticizing Trump and rejecting Trump's demand to hand over mineral rights worth hundreds of billions of dollars. But a person close to Trump said the comments were also designed to force negotiations. "He has an uncanny ability to smoke people out," that person said.

Meanwhile, Trump has signaled a willingness to take a tough line with Putin, for instance posting on Truth Social in January that the Russian leader needed to end the invasion or face sanctions. "We can do it the easy way or the hard way," he wrote.

Culture wars

As cultural wars raged in the U.S. since Trump's first term, a significant part of the Republican base has come to admire Putin's Russia, seeing in it a defender of traditional Christian values and a bulwark against the "woke mind virus."

In that vision of the world—actively abetted by Moscow's sophisticated propaganda networks—Ukraine, a society nearly as conservative as Russia's, with some of Europe's highest church attendances—is maligned as a puppet of American liberals. Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.), one of the leading opponents of aid to Kyiv, has said that Zelensky's Ukraine "promotes far-left ideology."

TV personality Tucker Carlson in 2021 wondered on air: "Why do I care what is going on in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia? Why shouldn't I root for Russia? Which I am." After visiting Russia and interviewing Putin last year, Carlson said he was "radicalized" by the abundance of goods and low prices he saw in a Moscow grocery store—which happened to be a franchise of a French supermarket chain.

Putin has since implemented a special immigration program for Americans and others fleeing what he described as the persecution of traditional values in the West.

"Do we want that our children be forced since elementary school to embrace perversions that will lead to degradation and dying out?" Putin said as he announced the annexation of four Ukrainian regions in 2022.

The traction of this narrative of Russia as a conservative-values utopia in MAGA circles is similar to the misguided fascination that American and European liberals had for Joseph Stalin's murderous regime in the Soviet Union a century ago, said Russian academic Konstantin Sonin, a professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy.

This view conveniently ignores Russia's reality: a regime that murders political opponents at home, throws in prison citizens for even the mildest criticism, takes American citizens hostage and shows little care for the hundreds of thousands of Russians who have died or were maimed in the three years of war that, despite these losses, failed to subdue Ukraine. Modern Russia is a country with a shrinking population, sky-high rates of abortion and divorce, institutionalized corruption and a massive brain drain.

"Intellectuals in America a century ago imagined and admired a Soviet Union that never existed—a country of equality, of development, of arts and freedom," Sonin said. "Now the American right wing once again imagines a Russia that doesn't exist in the real world, a place that is conservative, upholds family values and liberties."

At the same time, the conservative mood is moving against traditional allies in Western Europe. At a global security forum in Munich earlier this month, Vice President JD Vance accused European leaders of repressing free speech and ignoring the will of voters on issues such as mass migration. He said growing censorship, isolation of populist parties and the erosion of democracy posed a greater threat to Europe than Russia or China.

Pushing boundaries

Trump's shift toward Putin might seem spectacular today. But, in a way, what is happening now is a reflection of Trump's willingness to push the boundaries of presidential power in his second term, rather than a change in his long-held attitude. Ever since that meeting in Helsinki, former aides say, Trump treated Putin with respect bordering on admiration.

"He thinks he and Putin are friends. He has no clue that Putin is exploiting him," said John Bolton, who served as national security adviser in the first term.

A former senior administration official said Trump admired Putin because he was "strong" and had total control over his country. The official said Trump tended to like authoritarian leaders better than others, because they were "tough" and didn't face criticism and strictures from Congress and the courts, according to this person.

Aides who sought to brief Trump about Putin's interference in the 2016 election often faced his annoyance, said Bolton, and efforts from top advisers and the intelligence community to convince him to be more skeptical of Putin never worked, former administration officials said.

Trump's interest in Russia goes back decades. In 1987, Trump traveled to the Soviet Union and sensed a chance to do business there in the quickly changing political landscape of Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika. The following year, he tried to meet Gorbachev in New York City during the United Nations General Assembly, said a person with knowledge of the matter.

The meeting never happened, but Trump managed to forge a connection with Moscow on his own, often curating relationships with Russians who had grown rich in the breakup of the Soviet Union. Ten years later he sold a Palm Beach property to a Kremlin-connected oligarch, Dmitry Rybolovlev, the head of potash producer Uralkali, for $95 million.

When Trump was nominated as the Republican Party candidate in the 2016 presidential election, he picked as his campaign manager Paul Manafort, who had served as a lobbyist for Ukraine's ousted pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych. It was the Ukrainian revolution of 2014 against Yanukovych that triggered the first Russian invasion of Ukraine that year, the annexation of Crimea and battles in the Donbas that killed 14,000 people by 2015. The two men have stayed in contact, Trump advisers said.

As the 2016 election results were read inside the Russian lower house of parliament, applause echoed in the chamber and some parliamentarians opened Champagne, said people present at the event.

But hopes were short-lived in Moscow. Following the backlash to the Helsinki talks, Trump authorized additional sanctions on Russia and approved the supply of Javelin missiles and other weapons to Ukraine—military assistance that had been denied by the Obama administration. Moscow concluded that Trump was either unable or unwilling to improve relations, said people close to the Russian foreign ministry.

The landslide election of Zelensky in 2019, on a platform of peace, gave new hopes to Putin that Ukraine would return under Moscow's sway. But after a summit between the two in Paris brokered by President Emmanuel Macron ended in failure, Putin started preparing for war. He excoriated the Ukrainian leader in his conversations with Trump. In one call, Putin mocked Zelensky's past as a comedian, Bolton said. In another, he likened the Ukrainian leader to Hillary Clinton.

With a sophisticated network of profilers and psychological experts on his side, Putin used his phone calls with Trump to maximum effect. "I think one of the interesting dynamics here is that Putin doesn't speak English to him," said a former Trump administration official who was involved in these calls. "Putin will go on these long missives and there's no way for Trump to intervene because he's waiting for the translations."

Trump's early dealings with Zelensky, meanwhile, only buttressed his belief that the Ukrainian political establishment was somehow aligned against him. His first lengthy phone call to Zelensky led to Trump's first impeachment and likely contributed to his defeat in the 2020 election.

When Trump met with Zelensky in Trump Tower last fall, the Ukrainian leader urged Trump not to trust Putin and talked about the country's lucrative minerals, an attendee said.

After returning to office in January, Trump distanced himself from Russia hawks like his former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, while appointing people who have long endorsed the Russian view of the war in Ukraine, such as director of national intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and health secretary Robert Kennedy Jr. The U.S. government has stopped referring to the "unprovoked Russian aggression in Ukraine" and now uses the same term as Moscow and Beijing, "the conflict in Ukraine."

In his major policy statements after the inauguration Trump seemed to agree with Putin's broader worldview—that big powers have the right to spheres of influence in their own neighborhood, including the right to invade or annex their neighbors.

His exhortations for Canada to become the 51st state sounded eerily similar to Russia's rhetoric about Ukraine, as did his reasoning for the need to annex Greenland because of its natural resources, said European analysts and officials.

"Putin sees Trump's language of extraterritorial ambitions as justifying his own claims," said Gabrielius Landsbergis, who served until recently as Lithuania's foreign minister. "They both see a world redivided and borders drawn anew. A scary new imperial reality is being born."

FROM TOP: PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS; CHINGIS KONDAROV/REUTERS

Since returning to office in January, Trump has appointed people who have long endorsed Putin's view of the war in Ukraine.

GUY DELORT/WWD/PENSKE MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES

Mikhail Gorbachev, Donald Trump and Ivana Trump attend an event at the U.S. State Department in 1987.

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PERSONAL JOURNAL.

GETTY IMAGES

Few Are Aware Alcohol Raises The Risk of Certain Cancers

Alcohol directly contributes to roughly 100,000 cancer cases a year in the U.S. and 20,000 deaths

YOUR HEALTH
SUMATHI REDDY

We all know cigarettes cause cancer. The memo on booze hasn't reached everyone. Doctors say many people are surprised to learn alcohol raises the risk of certain cancers, such as liver, colorectal and breast cancer. And cancer patients say they aren't always aware of the increased risk until after they have been diagnosed.

As awareness increases—the former U.S. surgeon general recently called for adding warning labels on alcoholic beverages—more people are rethinking their drinking habits. On social-media sites like Reddit, cancer patients talk about replacing alcohol with cannabis, although this, too, has health issues. Others opt for mocktails or nothing at all.

"I drank my whole 20s. I was at events and happy hours every night," says Lauren Nostro, a 35-year-old creative strategist who lives in Buffalo, N.Y., and used to work in the music industry.

After being diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer at the age of 30, she knew she needed to make some changes. Three years ago, she stopped drinking. Before she was diagnosed with breast cancer she says she was unaware that alcohol was a risk factor.

"When you actually learn about the negative effects of alcohol, especially as it relates to women and cancer, there's no justification for me to want to do it," she says. "It's like, why even?"

Alcohol directly contributes to roughly 100,000 cancer cases a year in the U.S., and 20,000 annual deaths. It increases the risk of seven cancers. For some—like liver, head and neck, and colorectal cancer—the increased risk comes with moderate to heavy drinking. For others—like breast and esophageal cancer—it increases even with light drinking.

Decision factors

Jennifer Hay, an attending psychologist and behavioral scientist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, studies how people make decisions about cancer risk.

About 70% of people in the U.S. don't know that alcohol is a cancer risk factor, according to a 2021 study Hay co-wrote in the journal Preventive Medicine Reports.

"Awareness is really frustratingly low," says Hay. "We really need to make all of those changes in alcohol that we did with tobacco."

The question about cancer recurrence is still being studied, Hay says. There are likely some cancers where people can reduce their risk of recurrence by drinking less and others where it doesn't matter as much. "But there's lots of reasons to drink less for cancer survivors," she notes.

A 2023 study in the journal Cancer found that in women who have already had breast cancer, drinking alcohol wasn't associated with an increased risk of having a recurrence.

It's possible that the women who drank alcohol had healthier diets or exercise—which are known to reduce the risk of breast cancer—but Marilyn Kwan, lead author of the study and a senior research scientist with Kaiser Permanente Northern California, says they controlled for these and other relevant factors.

Kwan says other studies have produced mixed results. So there is no conclusive evidence to make recommendations on drinking alcohol to prevent recurrence of breast cancer.

Cutting down

Still, breast cancer oncologists say they generally emphasize minimizing alcohol consumption to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Dr. Larry Norton, a breast cancer oncologist and medical director of breast cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering, says the data on cancer and alcohol is messy. Because the studies are observational, based on what people report, they can be misleading.

Many people don't recall accurately or tend to minimize how much they say they drink. Plus, the people who say they don't drink any alcohol may have previously been excessive drinkers. Also, people who report drinking alcohol may have other risk factors that would increase their cancer risk.

Norton says he's been giving his patients the same advice for years. There is no need to completely abstain from drinking alcohol; to minimize your risk, limit alcoholic drinks to occasional social interactions and to two to three drinks a week.

Similarly Dr. Cindy Cen, a breast surgeon at Northwell Health Cancer Institute in New Hyde Park, N.Y., advises her patients to limit alcohol to two drinks a week.

Some patients are fine with the advice. Others struggle a little bit more. "But hopefully having the conversation makes them have a second thought," she says. Even pouring a smaller glass of wine can help.

"I really think this is one of the few things that women can do to modify their breast cancer risk," Cen says. "We don't know so much about what causes breast cancer. Alcohol intake is something you have control over."

Weekly limits

Dr. Anne Peled is a breast surgeon at Sutter Health California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco and a breast cancer survivor. The 44-year-old Mill Valley, Calif., resident was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 37.

"I think that highlighting that there are varying degrees of impact based on how much you're drinking, especially for breast cancer, is really important," says Peled.

She recommends limiting alcoholic beverages to a maximum of three to five a week. She stresses to her patients not to feel guilty about occasionally drinking. "I don't want people to feel bad if they want to have a glass of champagne to celebrate with friends."

It's when people are having one or more alcoholic drinks a day that she tells them to dial back. The absolute risk of developing breast cancer over a woman's lifespan is 11.3%—or 11 out of 100 women—for those who drink less than one drink a week compared with 13% for those who have one drink a day. It jumps to 15.3% for those who have two drinks a day.

Peled says she drinks less than before having breast cancer. She didn't used to keep track of how much she drank. Now, she is conscious of it. "If I have a night where I have two drinks out, I think about it the following weekend in a way I just didn't do before I had breast cancer," she says.

Conference Turns Suits Into Vultures

Continued from Page One

The hotel melee is a time-honored tradition that unfolds each year in February, at a consumer-goods conference attended by Wall Street analysts, investors and their families. Attendees come to the event, put on by the Consumer Analyst Group of New York, or Cagny, to hear from executives of food, beverage and cosmetic companies about how business is going. Their side hustle: grabbing as much free stuff as possible.

"Keep your kids at bay, they warned," said Alexander Robarts, who joined the crowds looking for Milka chocolate bars. "There's a stampede element here."

As a seasoned conferencegoer, the New York-based managing director of consumer goods and advisory services knows the drill. To get the good stuff you must prioritize your top picks, position yourself at the table accordingly, and move quickly. Ten minutes after the first whistle, another trills, indicating the free-for-all is over.

Conference attendees decamp with multiple tote bags brimming with processed food, shipping or lugging the loot home in extra suitcases. Robarts, 60, exercises some discretion, only taking what fits in his carry-on.

"I'm hardcore, because I do like chocolate," he said, clutching six Milka offerings. "But I'm not crazy."

Some attendees cringed at the spectacle of well-heeled adults clamoring for free snacks, many of which are widely available in grocery stores. Others saw diabetes waiting to happen. But for most, the conference is a chance to indulge in some of the nation's most nostalgic brands, while gleaning insights into the American consumer and mulling stock ratings.

The conference, which coincides with spring break for many schools, rivals Halloween for the lucky children of equity analysts. This year, they lounged at the hotel pool or visited theme parks at nearby Walt Disney World, carefully timing their returns with the arrival of snacks from Mondelez and Hershey. Still clad in bathing suits, they lunged for Chips Ahoy cookies and Sour Patch Kids, grown men trying to move them out of the way.

"I worry a kid might catch an elbow to the face trying to grab a Twizzler," said Wesley Trowbridge, a 38-year-old research analyst at a financial services firm, from the sidelines.

Mala Fereday, 24, has been attending the conference with her father since she was 10. With years to hone her approach, she knows to arrive at the freebies table early to plot her attack.

"If you don't get a good spot you're screwed," Fereday said. She texted her father:

"Here in the middle by the Reese's."

"Where are u?"

"Need to divide and conquer."

When hotel staff dropped the ropes on Wednesday, Fereday rushed the table, snatching up Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and then scooting over to the Pirate's Booty, Dot's Homestyle Pretzels and SkinnyPop. Fereday was unfazed by the competition as she made for a pile of Jolly Rancher candies. "I'm a New Yorker," she said. "I can push."

Next to her, a man edged out of the crowd, clutching his swag. "You can get killed in there," he muttered.

The candy table is just the tip of the iceberg. Analysts also stockpile everyday groceries, such as Pepto-Bismol tablets, Crest toothpaste, Speed Stick deodorant and Mr. Clean Magic Erasers. At breakfast, cereals—and their furry mascots—await adults and children alike.

LAURA COOPER

A crowd at this year's event descended on a table laden with free snacks.

One mother and son team stuffed bags with Froot Loops and Frosted Flakes. Alanna Daley said it's an annual ritual that her son Michael calls "going shopping," while her husband spends the week listening to presentations from executives of consumer-product giants.

By the end of the week, many stashes have grown so large that conference attendees ship them home via an extra on-site FedEx outpost set up by Cagny for exactly this purpose.

Inside cavernous conference rooms, executives waxed prolific over metrics like "household penetration," and described "white spaces" and "green shoots" in their businesses.

During Coca-Cola's presentation, one man munched on a box of Honey Nut Cheerios. He stopped midway through to photograph two bottles of Frank's RedHot sauce.

As General Mills executives discussed shareholder value and profits, attendees came and went, cereal boxes in hand. Kenvue's attendees left that session early to ensure they'd get one of the company's swag bags filled with Band-Aids, Tylenol and Listerine mouthwash.

Before Hershey executives dove into the intricacies of cocoa inflation, a conference organizer issued a disclaimer about the chocolatier's sweets grab planned for the following day.

"First, please let the children go first. I don't want any adults out there throwing elbows to get their hands on some Reese's, and you all know who you are," he said. "Second of all, I don't care where cocoa is trading, I don't want to see any of these products on eBay after the conference."

Candy fans didn't listen. Adults pushed forward to get Shaq gummies and Almond Joy candy bars. Sour candy strips flew through the air. A cardboard Jolly Rancher Ropes tower sitting atop the table was pulled down for better access.

The e.l.f. Beauty counter was calmer. Male conferencegoers with teen and tween daughters still stopped by for makeup primer and lip oil, however, and listened to spiels about the products.

Cagny is marketing gold for companies, a chance for investors and consumers to try their new products, such as Conagra Brands' dill pickle flavored corn puffs and McCormick's Frank's RedHot Buttercream Frosted Cookie.

Victoria Hart, a portfolio manager at Pinnacle View Capital Management brought along her 18-year-old nephew Cooper to join the fracas this year—and an empty suitcase for their spoils.

The younger Hart said he snagged plenty of goodies, which he plans to share with his video club and marketing teacher back home.

"I got a bunch of stuff off the floor," he said.

Three Ways to Batten Down Executives' Digital Lives

Holes in home Wi-Fi, kids oversharing online and other missteps give hackers a doorway

By Cheryl Winokur Munk

For company executives, proper cybersecurity hygiene is becoming more personal.

With more cyber thieves trolling executives and their families, there's a greater need to outfit personal devices with basic security measures, such as difficult-to-crack passwords and multifactor authentication. Yet the need for vigilance extends to other areas of an executive's cyber life.

A holistic approach is necessary to secure executives in their personal and work lives; otherwise, it's like locking a home's front door and nothing else, said Theresa Payton, founder and chief executive of Fortalice Solutions, a cybersecurity company in Charlotte, N.C., and former White House chief information officer. "There are still several other entry points. You feel good about locking the door, but it's not enough."

Here are three ways executives can help prevent hackers from invading their personal lives.

Protect the family

People tend to speak freely on social media, but executives should be particularly careful. A post about your dog might seem innocuous, but others will know you have a dog and its name, said Meg Anderson, chief information security officer of Principal Financial Group, a Des Moines, Iowa-based financial services company. "You have to really keep on your toes if you're going to have a more open digital style," she said.

Executives' spouses and children are often the weakest link for cyber thieves, so they also need training on safe social-media practices, said A.J. Nash, CEO of Unspoken Security, an intelligence and security consulting firm.

A few years ago, he consulted in an investigation involving a Fortune 500 executive who narrowly avoided having one of his children kidnapped. Cybercriminals were able to determine the family's schedule, including school pickup times and other work- and personal-life patterns, using social media and open-source tools. The company's executive protection team stymied the attempt, but the incident shows how publicly available information can be used for nefarious purposes.

Nash recommends social-media monitoring for family members, but not to micromanage their posts, but to mitigate harm, potentially using keyword searches. If the executive were concerned about a family member sharing too much information about family activities, a list of keywords like "practice," "game," "trip," "travel," "vacation," a school mascot's name or another similar detail could trigger on those topics, Nash said.

Some families also create code words known only to them, Anderson said. This can thwart impersonation attempts aimed at soliciting money or information.

Disguise the digital you

At home, Caleb Sima, former chief security officer of financial firm Robinhood Markets, uses a honeypot device, a decoy designed to attract and detect unauthorized access attempts. This prevented trouble after a phone his mother-in-law had purchased in China began infiltrating his home network. He quickly blocked it from accessing his Wi-Fi and destroyed the phone.

▲ Caleb Sima, former chief security officer at Robinhood.

To guard against SIM swapping and other phone scams, executives should use four phone numbers, Sima said.

One is a number assigned by a phone company that's never shared with anyone.

For a personal and a business number, he recommends using a virtual phone number service, such as Google Fi Wireless, OpenPhone, MySudo or Dialpad, to guard against exploits potentially tied to an executive's real number.

For multifactor authentication purposes, Sima suggested using an app that creates disguised phone numbers, such as Burner from Ad Hoc Labs.

▼ Theresa Payton, founder and CEO of Fortalice Solutions.

▲ Sharing information on social media about activities such as a vacation should be avoided by executives and their families.

Another protective tactic: Create a fake persona for online shopping and other nonessential sites so the executive's name won't be associated with them in case of a breach, he said.

"This is about raising the cost and making it more difficult for the standard attacker," Sima said. "That makes you harder [to attack] than the person next to you."

Companies should also consider employing mobile device management on executives' personal devices to ensure they are properly configured, updated and secured, said Ilia Kolochenko, a partner and cybersecurity practice lead at Platt Law in Washington, D.C.

Executives might balk because they feel their company is being Big Brother-like, but companies need to reiterate the importance of securing personal devices to protect company data.

Executives with Apple devices should consider enabling lockdown mode, which makes them more secure, said Kolochenko, who is also an adjunct professor of cybersecurity practice and cyber law at Capitol Technology University in Laurel, Md. While enabled, some apps and features will function differently, but "most executives will not see any problems," he said.

Call on professionals

Cybersecurity vendors can help executives remove data from data brokers and the dark web. Some vendors focus on executive protection or have services for families, Anderson said.

Nash suggests executives consult with their company's CISO, executive protection team or a reputable vendor to ensure smart devices at home are installed and configured properly, encrypted and that default passwords are changed. He also suggests limiting administrative access to these devices, so there are fewer potential points of entry.

Companies should consider disallowing certain applications, such as TikTok, even on personal devices, Kolochenko said. "The volume of information that our devices can and do collect is immense."

FROM TOP: ISTOCK; CALEB SIMA; ANDY DAVIS FOR WSJ

Step-By-Step Guide to Filling Out New U.K. Travel Form

By Dawn Gilbertson

We've been telling you for weeks now about the extra step needed when traveling to the United Kingdom, and later this year, Europe.

The U.S. implemented a similar system in 2009 to help keep out terrorists. Visitors from the U.K., Europe and other countries must answer a series of questions before they travel, including about any criminal convictions, and pay a fee. Travelers are also fingerprinted on arrival.

The process for the U.K.'s electronic travel authorization (ETA) is tripping up some travelers. A couple of big issues: Scam sites are popping up and travelers with criminal records are getting rejected.

I'll be in London this week, so I applied recently. The process wasn't speedy or foolproof but I had my authorization in a day. My daughter got hers instantly. The fee is about $13. (Beware if you are being charged more than that; you aren't on the government site.)

I started with the U.K. government's YouTube tutorial and it was worth 3:33 minutes of my time.

Then I downloaded the U.K. ETA App from Apple's App Store. It's also available on the Google Play store, or you can apply online. The government recommends using a smartphone because it's the easiest way to take the necessary photos.

Have your passport and a credit card handy and access to your email when you start the process. You can apply for yourself or someone else.

The first question is the one that tripped me up. It asked if your passport has a biometric chip and said you'll know if it has a symbol on the cover. Mine did. More on that in a second.

You scan an image of your passport page with the photo and other details. No problem. And then it asks you to access the chip in your passport. Despite specific instructions to take your phone case off and place the camera midway down the passport cover, I couldn't make it work after multiple attempts.

The app allows you to skip that step and notes that you might face additional screening. (But note that Reddit sleuths have figured out a different way to scanning success: Open the inside back cover and scan the bar code. It worked for me when I tried again in a mock application.)

Then you scan your face to make sure you're "a real person." This is followed by submitting a photo of yourself on a plain light background, also to confirm your identity.

Applicants also have to disclose whether they have a job and what type of job; have had a criminal conviction from any country excluding convictions for activities that are legal in the U.K. (It cites same-sex marriage and trade-union membership as examples.); or have been involved in or suspected of, among other things, war crimes, terrorism, genocide or supporting extremist views.

The process wasn't foolproof but I had my authorization in a day.

Then you pay. The ETA is good for two years (sooner if your passport expires prior to that) and you can visit the U.K. as many times as you want within that period.

◀ The electronic travel authorization to enter the U.K. costs around $13.

We'll see how it works upon arrival.

Uber settings

Traveling abroad and like to use Uber? Check your settings before you leave. The ride-share company is adding a "preferred currency" pricing option on Feb. 27. It's billed as a convenience so you can pay for rides in dollars, but choosing that option will add a 1.5% conversion fee to your fare. You don't need to pay this, especially if your credit card waives foreign transaction fees. So select no preferred currency in the payment settings in the app. I did it ahead of my Europe trip.

App shuts down

Bad news if you use TripCase to track your travel plans. The app is shutting down on April 1. One reader told me he's used it since 2012. He found an offer from Tripsy to transfer bookings over. And TripIt has a lot of fans.

Get more from Dawn Gilbertson's WSJ Travel newsletter at **wsj.com/newsletters.**

NEIL HALL/SHUTTERSTOCK

ARTS IN REVIEW

The Woman Who Shaped a Collection

Belle da Costa Greene, the first director of the Morgan Library & Museum, helped hone the tastes of avid collector J.P. Morgan.

By Karen Wilkin

New York

In 1924, J.P. Morgan Jr., known as Jack, opened his late father's private collection to the public as the Pierpont Morgan Library. Its first director was Belle da Costa Greene (1879-1950). She had been Pierpont's librarian from 1905 until his death in 1913, although the term, Greene's preferred, seems inadequate to her deep knowledge, acute eye, fine negotiating abilities, and—yes—meticulous cataloging skills. Until she retired in 1948, Greene presided over and built, together with both Morgans, the incomparable collection of books, manuscripts and art that became today's Morgan Library & Museum. Now, "Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy," a revelatory exhibition and book, organized by the Morgan's curators Philip S. Palmer and Erica Ciallela, illuminates what Colin B. Bailey, the museum's director, describes in the book's introduction as "the full arc of Belle Greene's remarkable career," informed by new research and current perspectives.

"Remarkable" is the word. Greene's history is the tale of a brilliant woman's self-invention, of challenging the prejudices of the day, and of extraordinary success. Since she destroyed her personal papers and diaries, the account relies on other fascinating, sometimes disturbing documents, including photographs and press coverage, with occasional quotations from the protagonist. We follow the transformation of Belle Marion Greener, born to a distinguished black family in Washington, D.C., into Belle da Costa Greene, the sophisticated, fashionably dressed expert in her field, who "performed whiteness," as Julia S. Charles-Linen puts it in the accompanying book.

Greene's father, Richard T. Greener, the first black graduate of Harvard College, was a lawyer, dean of Howard Law School, diplomat and civil-rights activist. Her mother, described as from an "elite Black family," was a music teacher. Greene's performance of whiteness was an elaborate, group construct. After moving to New York, her parents separated and Belle, her light-skinned mother and siblings dropped the "r" and "passed." Belle and her brother adopted "da Costa" as a middle name, after an invented Portuguese ancestor, to explain their olive skins.

Among the most startling documents is a letter supporting Belle's application to a Massachusetts boarding school, describing her mother as a white graduate of Mount Holyoke (she wasn't) who married "a man with Spanish Cuban & Negro blood," head of his class at Harvard, who was "bad." "While the trace of Negro blood is noticeable Belle has always associated intimately with the best class of white girls." Belle Greener, now "Greene," was admitted and flourished. A summer course in Library Economy at Amherst College was followed by a job at Princeton's library—impossible, absent her "strategic racial performance," at a university that did not admit black students. There she met Pierpont's nephew, Junius, who recognized her abilities and introduced her to his uncle, who had commissioned the McKim, Mead & White building on East 36th Street to house his growing collection. Together with Pierpont and later with his son Jack, Greene turned a rich man's hobby into a monument to scholarship and excellence.

Greene is vividly present in studiously posed, elegant photographs, usually in profile, perhaps inspired by her portrait drawing, looking like a French soubrette in a fur collar and plumed hat, by the society artist Paul César Helleu. Interestingly, the exhibition's photograph of the eminent art historian Bernard Berenson, Greene's friend, colleague and sometime lover, is similarly in profile. Berenson, born a Jew in Lithuania, also "passed"—as an Episcopalian Bostonian, living in Italy. Though only Greene's side of their 40-year correspondence survives—she destroyed his letters to her—the quoted excerpts suggest a deep understanding between them.

The exhibition features a sampling of medieval manuscripts, rare books, prints and writers' autograph manuscripts that Greene acquired as librarian and director, plus some she acquired for herself. The dazzling works bought for the Library range from a French Carolingian Gospel Book (c. 870) with sinewy Evangelist portraits to a Spanish "Commentary on the Apocalypse" (c. 945) and an Ethiopian princess's Gospel (1400-01), both with near-modernist stylized images. A feverishly hand-corrected proof by Honoré de Balzac, an autograph manuscript by Charles Dickens and an impeccable version of Rembrandt's "The Hundred Guilder Print" (c. 1648) testify to Greene's concentration on the rare. Her personal collection included Lavinia Fontana's spectacular "Marriage Portrait of a Bolognese Noblewoman"(c. 1580), a sixth-century Chinese "Head of a Bodhisattva," Islamic calligraphy and contemporary works by Arthur B. Davies and Abraham Walkowitz. Thanking Walkowitz for his drawing, Greene called it "life enhancing," Berenson's phrase for the best Renaissance art he studied.

A section on black librarians who worked in their communities pays tribute to their important contributions noting, somewhat disingenuously, that Greene's position as Morgan's white librarian was different.

The installation ends with tragedy. In 1943, Greene's beloved nephew Bobbie, her ward since not long after his father's death in World War I, was reported as killed in action in Europe. But we learn that Bobbie killed himself, when his fiancée brutally broke off their engagement after discovering his family's origins. Her letter, quoted in the book, is horrifying. And then there's the uncomfortable question of how Greene would have felt about having her carefully constructed identity dissected. We'll never know. But we are still awed by her achievements.

Bernard Berenson holding a photograph of an artwork, above; 'Gospels of Judith of Flanders,' left.

From left: Clarence H. White's 1911 portrait of Belle da Costa Greene; Thomas Gainsborough's 'Lady Walking in a Garden' (c. 1785).

THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM (4)

Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy
Morgan Library & Museum, through May 4

Ms. Wilkin is an independent critic and curator.

MUSIC REVIEW

'Plus One': More Than the Sum of Its Parts

By Barry Mazor

Seven years ago, when "Healing Tide," the debut duo album by Michael and Tanya Trotter, was released, the husband-and-wife artists had already been together some eight years. He was a wounded Iraq War veteran suffering from PTSD, but with a gift for words; she had been a professional gospel and R&B singer for years, having recorded her own first album and performed in the Hollywood movie "Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit" in 1993. It was their story that grabbed much of the attention at first—inevitable, given that he'd first played piano in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, writing dirges for his fallen battle brethren, and his process of healing, as that first joint album stressed, came when he and his wife-to-be linked up.

In the years since, the War and Treaty, as they called themselves to reflect that story, have gained steadily increasing recognition for their powerful live performances and poignant songs, at first mainly for Nashville audiences and within the Americana music niche. They won the Americana Music award for Emerging Artist in 2019, and then Duo/Group of the Year for both 2022 and 2023. They were soon featured on the nationally televised mainstream country awards shows, and became the first black performers to be nominated for Duo of the Year at the CMA and ACM awards. They've opened for the Rolling Stones in football stadiums. With all of that on their résumés, they've built their new, fifth, double album, "Plus One" (Mercury Nashville), on exploring the broad sweep of their music across the country and soul spectrums, and the simplicity—and complications—of passionate love.

The 18-track set was mainly recorded at the celebrated FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Ala., where everyone from Wilson Pickett and Aretha Franklin to Jerry Reed and the Osmonds set down hits. That suggests an element of nostalgia in the project. While there's no doubt that part of the Trotters' appeal is their prominent revival of he said/she said songs and singing not often heard since the form's heyday in soul and country of the 1960s and '70s, they regularly find fresh ways to approach that setup.

> The LP reveals the sweep of the pair's country-meets-soul sound.

In multiple songs, one of the two starts soloing a confession or seemingly individual memory, then the other chimes in from the same page, defying genre expectations. In "Stealing a Kiss," Tanya regrets letting him walk away from the doorstep, kissless on an early date; then he reports the same. By the narrative's end, they're both very ready to proceed. The track has an orchestral string backing and swells dramatically as needed. "Reminisce" is a ballad of a breakup where she says goodbye not just to him, but to his whole family, a notably original angle; then he expresses similar sentiments, recalling the work he did with her father on his Caddy.

In both tracks, that connection, the disclosure of shared experience, arrives unexpectedly, outside the typical construction of such numbers, underscoring the couple's strong attachment—the "Plus One" the album title suggests. The two numbers, like those on the rest of the song line-up, are written by Mr. and Mrs. Trotter. (On several there is a third collaborator celebrated in country-music songwriting: Miranda Lambert, Jonathan Singleton or Kendell Marvel.)

And yes, while the Trotters sing with their by-now-familiar searing but controlled R&B approach, they often bring that vocal style to songs that register as contemporary country—obligatory drinking allusions included. On the dark yet charging and sexy "Drink From Me," their friend the guitar virtuoso Billy Strings adds mind-boggling acoustic guitar runs. It's just one number of three in the set's middle built on unmistakably country narratives and sounds: "Leads Me Home" and "Carried Away" suggest the emotional directions in their titles. The former, pedal-steel-driven, invokes railroads and country roads to get back home, the latter, one of the more sensual numbers, starts quietly and builds till it could carry us all away with it.

The Trotters' far-ranging musical comfort zone is evidenced in everything from the country material to a gospel shout in which they're joined by their daughter Courtney and Michael's mother, Deborah, and a song set home in urban Tennessee contemplating the work that lies behind the skyscrapers—and the character of outstanding folks at home. Sometimes, there's rock-tinged backup by their band, particularly Max Brown's soaring electric guitar, noteworthy on the uplifting "Tunnel Vision."

On just one track, "I Can't Let You Go," there's a lyric rhythm scheme drawn from hip-hop, along with the good-natured boasting sometimes found there. It goes, "John Legend's in our corner this cannot be boring / We the War and Treaty baby so you know we morphing / Into something special."

They've got that right, and the process, as the song suggests, no doubt continues. But "Plus One" reminds us they're something special already—as multiple genres and audiences are noting.

▲ Tanya and Michael Trotter are the War and Treaty, whose new record looks at the power of love.

SOPHIA MATINAZAD

Mr. Mazor reviews country and roots music for the Journal.

SPORTS

JASON GAY

A Hairy Tale in New York

The Yankees loosen their facial hair and grooming policy. Did the old rule hold the team back?

Societies crumble not by the mile, but the millimeter.

Declines are often slow, almost invisible, hidden in the margins. Rules are bent, then broken. Recovery is futile. Once corrosion starts, it does not stop.

I speak, of course, of the New York Yankees loosening their facial hair and grooming policy.

After nearly a half-century of clean-shaven jawlines, meticulous mustaches and zero beards, baseball's most famous franchise is caving to the hairy, moussed-up mob.

"We will be amending our expectations to allow our players and uniformed personnel to have well groomed beards," Yankee scion and managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner announced Friday. "It is the appropriate time."

You all know I like to choose my hyperbole carefully, but: This is how civilization ends.

One day you're letting Aaron Judge grow out his jawline and embrace his inner Kristofferson. Another day you're wearing Crocs to a wedding. You're reading a newspaper sports column on a phone.

Individually, these changes don't seem like much.

But they collect, and sooner than later, we're out in the streets, fighting with sticks, all of us dressed in terrible, overpriced athleisure.

And that howling, table-pounding sound you hear? That's Hal Steinbrenner's bombastic late father, George, sitting in his wood-paneled booth upstairs in the Great Beyond Steakhouse, aghast at this shocking shift.

It was George, of course, who, upon taking the reins of the Yankee franchise, grew frustrated by unruly upper lips and muttonchops–hurlers Sparky Lyle and Catfish Hunter looked like roadies for Jethro Tull–and installed a crisp edict: no hair below the collar, no facial hair besides mustaches.

What if Aaron Judge, above, grew a beard? Buck Showalter, George Steinbrenner and Don Mattingly in 1993.

FROM TOP: TIMMY HUYNH/WSJ; KYODONEWS/ZUMA; LYNNE SLADKY/AP

"I have nothing against long hair per se, but I'm trying to instill a certain sense of order and discipline in the ball club," Steinbrenner told the New York Times's Murray Chass in 1976.

The Yanks were not thrilled, but went along.

"I told George to paint a white line around my head," Lou Pinella said. "I'll go to the barber, and tell him to cut to the white line and the hell with it."

A year later, in 1977, those spruced-up Steinbrenner Yankees would win the World Series, the club's first since 1962.

Correlation is not causation, but this is no time to let silly logic get in the way.

Since then, the Bronx Bombers have won six more rings, moved to a plush new stadium, inducted many more Hall of Famers, held 14,000 tributes to Derek Jeter—and grown not a single beard, as the rest of baseball has turned into a lumberjack spa.

The grooming policy became a stubborn part of Yankee life. Hairy free agents faced a proposition: How much money would New York need to pay you to start shaving like a probational police officer?

Typically, there was a number, and the Steinbrenners hit it. Scruffy acquisitions submitted to the blade. Even Johnny Damon, a Red Sox outfielder who'd tormented the Yankees looking like Johnny of Nazareth, agreed to trim his locks for Gotham.

Alas, today's Yankees are not those Yankees. New York hasn't won a championship in 15 seasons, a drought which delights millions of pinstripe haters across the continent.

More ominously, the Yankees can no longer claim to be baseball's Evil Empire. That Death Star image now belongs to the Los Angeles Dodgers, a gazillionaire's Xanadu whose spending makes the Yankees look like penny-pinchers. The Dodgers have baseball's highest-paid player (Shohei Ohtani), breezed past New York in last fall's World Series, and can ignore every salon in Beverly Hills.

Even worse, the crosstown Mets are rich and good. New York's city rival just swiped away the star Yankee Juan Soto for $765 million.

There's no evidence Soto wanted to look like Frank Serpico, but Hal Steinbrenner worried that the facial hair ban held his team back competitively. On Friday, chatter wasn't hard to find, about free agents who may have played in the Bronx, but opted not to come because they couldn't handle the idea of lathering up every day and having to clean the sink.

Was the only thing standing between the Yankees and World Series title No. 28 a little more latitude for 5 o'clock shadow?

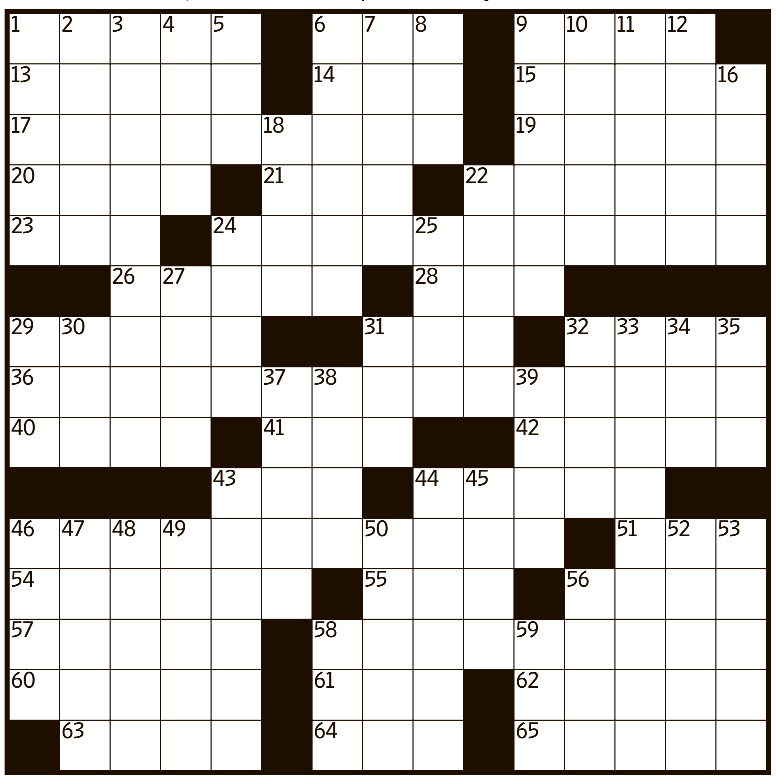
We shall find out.

I know there will be some who hail this shift as keeping up with the times. I know an untamed 'stache or beard does not inhibit an MVP. The Philadelphia Phillies remain competitive, and they look like they live in caves on a forgotten island.

And I'll confess: I don't shave every day. I don't even shave every week. I'd lose it if the Journal gave me a grooming code. My style is more "feral squirrel" than Donnie Mattingly.

But the New York Yankees will now look little more like every other baseball franchise. I'm not saying it won't help. I'm not saying society ends tomorrow. Me and my hairy face will just see you in the streets. Grab a stick.

The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shenk



LOOK AHEAD | By Jackson Matz

Across

1 Prickly plants
6 Dennings of ABC's "Shifting Gears"
9 Word of warning
13 Dole out
14 Musician Yoko
15 Alternative to a text
17 *It might be a setup
19 Brazilian dance
20 Head-scratchers?
21 Heavyweight champ dubbed "The Greatest"
22 Epic poem by Virgil
23 Cry on spotting vermin
24 *Start of the Christmas shopping rush
26 Rhythm's partner
28 Cheerios grain
29 Barcelona's land
31 Play division
32 Iconic style for Diana Ross
36 *Play really badly
40 Comedian Bargatze
41 "The Raven" writer
42 Gumbo vegetables
43 Wedding words
44 Sprinkle with holy water, say
46 *Eagles and hawks, e.g.
51 Mixed bag?
54 Moves stealthily
55 Insurance co. bailed out in 2008
56 Reply "yes" or "no" to an invitation
57 Chocolate source
58 Revelation, or what can be found at the starts of the starred answers
60 Obsessive fans, in modern lingo
61 Worker in a striped shirt
62 Hole ___ (golf feat)
63 Fencing sword
64 Hosp. areas
65 Slender amphibians

Down

1 Ski lift component
2 1980s sitcom "Kate & ___"
3 Enticing website content
4 Word after dial or muscle
5 "___ be an honor!"
6 Mammals that feed on eucalyptus leaves
7 Bit of tomfoolery
8 Sock tip
9 Kalahari or Gobi
10 Muscat native
11 Appointed
12 Bone of the lower leg
16 Lord's wife
18 Broad valley
22 ___ worse than death
24 Either half of a bi-level bed
25 Colorful New York mayor Ed
27 Graph of x=y, e.g.
29 Nine-digit ID
30 School support grp.
31 Noshed
32 "All systems go" signals
33 Annual winter milestone
34 Messenger molecule
35 Regulation followers?: Abbr.
37 Beehives and pompadours
38 "Just like that, it's gone!" sound
39 Baby kangaroo
43 "Reckon so"
44 Alternative to boxers
45 Maker of snappable bricks
46 Secretly includes, in 15-Across
47 Really ticked off
48 Summary
49 Silas of the Continental Congress
50 Check writer
52 Track meet component
53 ___-ski
56 Philosopher Descartes
58 Before, in poetry
59 Wrestling win

Previous Puzzle's Solution

V	O	I	T	■	L	A	D	S	■	S	A	C	K	S
O	R	S	O	■	A	G	U	E	■	A	L	L	A	H
L	E	A	V	E	M	E	B	E	■	M	O	I	R	E
G	O	A	■	S	P	E	A	K	N	O	E	V	I	L
A	S	C	O	T	■	■	I	S	I	S	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	M	E	L	T	■	■	T	A	M	E	S	T
R	I	S	E	E	A	R	L	Y	■	S	A	L	E	M
E	N	O	L	■	P	E	E	V	E	■	D	O	W	N
E	T	H	E	L	■	F	E	E	L	F	A	I	N	T
F	O	O	T	E	R	■	■	S	K	I	M	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	N	A	P	A	■	■	D	E	N	E	B
D	R	A	W	T	H	E	L	I	N	E	■	A	L	E
R	A	D	I	I	■	S	T	E	A	L	H	O	M	E
I	F	I	L	L	■	C	A	R	T	■	O	M	E	N
P	A	N	T	S	■	I	R	I	S	■	T	I	R	E

The contest answer is **MADE IT**. Each theme answer begins with a verb that has an irregular past form: LEAVE/LEFT, SPEAK/SPOKE, RISE/ROSE, FEEL/FELT, DRAW/DREW, STEAL/STOLE. Those past forms are alternative answers for other clues; for example, LEFT could satisfy 43-Across's clue "One of the four directions on a joystick" (DOWN). The others are SPOKE/TIRE, ROSE/IRIS, FELT/MOIRE, DREW/ETHEL, STOLE/ASCOT. In grid order, the first letters of these alternate answers spell the contest answer.

▶ Solve this puzzle online and discuss it at **WSJ.com/Puzzles.**

The Manchester City Dynasty Comes to a Humbling End

By Joshua Robinson

Manchester City's Phil Foden looks dejected as Liverpool players celebrate after a goal by Dominik Szoboszlai.

SHAUN BOTTERILL/GETTY IMAGES

The meltdown at Manchester City, a stunning collapse for the team that defined an entire era of English soccer, has been unfolding in slow motion all season.

It began with key injuries last summer. Then there was the weird run of four consecutive league defeats in the fall. There were hiccups in the Champions League along the way, too. And, of course, there was the highly public frustration of City's manager and resident soccer ideologue, Pep Guardiola.

But when it comes time to close the book on the Manchester City dynasty—the run that saw it win six Premier League titles in seven seasons—this will go down as the week it died. A humbling exit from Europe at the hands of Real Madrid on Wednesday. A comprehensive home loss on Sunday against Liverpool, the club that will likely soon supplant City as champions. And now, the prospect of something Manchester City hasn't worried about in years: a total rebuild.

"We are far away," Guardiola said after Sunday's 2-0 defeat, his first ever at Etihad Stadium against Liverpool. "We will see in the future. What we have done in previous seasons is good but now we are away from them."

City's fall from its unprecedented heights was the crash-landing that no one saw coming.

Since Guardiola's arrival in 2016, the club's Abu Dhabi-backed ownership has armed him with one of the most expensive squads ever assembled in the history of sports.

All told, he guided them to 18 trophies in eight years. And during that time, City never finished lower than second in the league and nor was it eliminated before the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

Both of those streaks are set to end this season.

Plenty of theories have surfaced around what went wrong. They range from the practical, pointing to key absences that knocked the team off kilter, to the more philosophical, arguing that nearly a decade of wild success dulled the sharp edge required to keep winning.

But this month, Guardiola himself began to offer a different explanation. The man who showed the world a new way to play soccer with his Barcelona-inspired passing style began to doubt his own approach. Were the twin pillars of dominating possession and careful build up no longer the way to go?

"It doesn't work like it worked in the past," Guardiola admitted after his first-leg against Real Madrid.

What's clear is that Guardiola's idea of soccer is no longer the only way to win. City leads the league, averaging 61% possession in its games, but sits fourth in the standings directly behind Nottingham Forest, a side that averages 40% of the ball.

"Everyone knows that a part will be here next season for the older players but we have to build for the next step," said Guardiola, who once again looked beleaguered on the sideline. "There is a question of time."

Those are just the on-field problems. Even more alarming for Man City is the judgment they are expecting after an independent commission accused the club of more than 100 breaches of the Premier League's financial rules over the course of 14 years.

The Premier League hasn't said when a verdict will be handed down, but City could face penalties including points deductions or even relegation from the top tier of English soccer.

The club has denied any wrongdoing. And Guardiola has insisted he is in Manchester for the long haul. Last fall, he signed a contract extension that is due to keep him at City until 2027.

In the meantime, he has spent much of the past week defending his body of work, pointing to City's seeming invincibility from 2020 to 2024 and its record points haul in 2017-18.

"No one is going to win 100 points, and four-in-a-row in the Premier League," he said on British television. "It's not going to happen in my lifetime, I'm sorry."

Trump Favors the Bad Neighbors

AMERICAS
By Mary Anastasia O'Grady

President Trump's second term wasn't a month old when administration officials traveled to Latin America to break bread with two of the Western Hemisphere's most notorious police states: Venezuela and El Salvador.

Both visits celebrated "America first," the same logic behind the president's threats to wage a trade war with Canada. But coddling these authoritarian regimes, both of which are hosts to China's Belt and Road Initiative, while picking fights with Ottawa will have negative consequences for U.S. interests in the region.

U.S. officials make nice with dictators while treating Canada as if it were an enemy.

At the Munich Security Conference Vice President JD Vance bemoaned the status of free speech in Europe. Things are far worse in Venezuela and El Salvador.

Venezuela's democratic opposition had been counting on Mr. Trump to impose greater isolation on dictator Nicolás Maduro. But a late January agreement between Caracas and Washington to secure the release of six American hostages gave Mr. Maduro a photo-op with a Trump envoy. The regime used it to advance the perception of normalized relations. Venezuela also won the renewal of Treasury licenses for Chevron and other oil companies to work in the country.

Bringing home American hostages is important for Mr. Trump, as it was for President Biden, who got seven captives out of Venezuela in 2022. But by recognizing Mr. Maduro, the administration has given an assist to one of the world's most dangerous transnational criminal organizations. A sense of abandonment has set in among liberty loving Venezuelans, whose leader, María Corina Machado, has been in hiding (except for a few hours in January) since August to avoid a regime arrest warrant. Mr. Maduro holds more than 1,000 political prisoners.

The endorsement of El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele by Secretary of State Marco Rubio is more puzzling. During a visit to San Salvador, Mr. Rubio heaped praise on Mr. Bukele. A country "once known for violence and for the inability to live openly and freely with one's family and enjoy life," Mr. Rubio said, "has now become one of the most secure in the hemisphere thanks to his leadership."

EL SALVADOR'S PRESIDENCY PRESS OFFICE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Marco Rubio meets Nayib Bukele.

El Salvador's homicide rate has come down. But it has also become one of the least free countries in the region.

In February 2020, less than a year after he took office, Mr. Bukele brought soldiers in battle gear with assault rifles into the Legislative Assembly to intimidate opposition parties when they challenged an executive loan proposal. In May 2021, immediately after his party won control of the legislature, he fired and forcibly removed the Constitutional Court and replaced it with his own handpicked judges.

In 2022 he declared a "state of exception," suspending civil liberties, due process and oversight of budgets and public contracts. Three years later democratic norms remain suspended, the fisc is a black box, and a new law makes media investigations not approved by the state punishable by a fine or jail time. For Bukele political opponents, silence is survival. There have been arrest quotas and police carry out personal vendettas. Most of the detained never learn what they're accused of or the identity of their accusers. Under the law up to 900 people can be convicted in a single trial.

Some 8,000 Bukele prisoners have been released after captivity of as much as a year because they were so obviously innocent that their cases embarrassed the regime. Their stories are gruesome. A 2023 State Department human-rights report on El Salvador found "credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings; enforced disappearance; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention" and "serious problems with the independence of the judiciary." This could be Cuba. Yet Mr. Rubio called Mr. Bukele's offer to house U.S. convicts in his dungeons "extraordinary."

El Salvador is taking back migrants from the U.S. But what kind of a business was Mr. Bukele running in 2023 when El Salvador issued 60,000 tourist visas to Ecuadoreans and 32,000 visas to "tourists" from India? That pipeline served Salvadoran gangs charging more than $15,000 to deliver an itinerant north of the U.S. border.

Mr. Bukele is popular and could use his political capital to build a rule of law. Unfortunately, institutions aren't for him any more than they were for Fidel Castro in 1959.

Meantime, Mr. Trump continues to treat Canada as if it's the greatest threat to U.S. stability since the Soviet Union. And that's fine by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party, which is rising in the polls ahead of an election it appeared certain to lose. As Canadians circle the wagons, the Liberals are the biggest beneficiary of Mr. Trump's juvenile attacks on Canadian sovereignty and trade. A tariff war will harm Canada and he thinks he's funny calling it a state. But under Trump foreign policy, progressives and dictators, from the Arctic to Tierra del Fuego, may get the last laugh.

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The You-Do Economy

INSIDE VIEW
By Andy Kessler

It started slowly. We dial our own phone numbers instead of an operator. We pump our own gasoline (except in New Jersey). With pensions phasing out, most of us plan for our own retirement and trade our own stocks. I call it the You Do Economy.

Technology, which eats people, replacing low-end jobs, has turned this trend into a runaway train. We use self-checkout lines at grocery stores. Airlines prefer if we check in ourselves and either show or print our own boarding passes. Airline kiosks spit out baggage tags that often take a doctorate to figure out how to attach. Hotels want us to check in and out ourselves (though I always forget to print out the bill so I can expense it). Need customer service? Forget it. Read the FAQ. Or go watch a video on YouTube. Else we're on hold for 45 minutes, minimum.

We are almost forced to buy clothes and shoes online. Physical stores don't stock the quantity or variety of Amazon and other sellers. Then, of course, we have to haul ourselves to Whole Foods, Staples or UPS with our returns—lugging with us five boxes of uncomfortable sneakers.

We swipe our own credit card to pay—cash is almost dead. Even worse, restaurants don't bother with menus (remember when Covid spread via paper?). Instead, we scan QR codes and squint at menus on our phones. We're asked to tip at counter-service restaurants.

Is that it? Heck no. People used to rely on editors to fact-check or amend the record. Now on X and most recently Facebook, we get "community notes," which are corrections done by, you guessed it, you and me! Artificial intelligence could do the fact checking, but, no, it hallucinates so bad we're forced to question everything it comes up with.

We have to install our own updates, and we're even subject to buggy beta software, so we have to find all the problems instead of quality-assurance teams doing the job. We install a dozen streaming services instead of the old cable feed. Changing shows means almost acrobatic precision presses on our remote.

We do our own taxes, even though the Internal Revenue Service has virtually all our financial information already. We need to be our own health advocates. All this takes more time, and time is money. It's unpaid work for all of us.

But I hope you don't think I'm complaining. Do I want the old ways to come back? Coddled. Comforted. Decisionless. One size fits all. Led like sheep to slaughter. No. The You Do Economy is the embodiment of pushback against those telling us what to do. We're in charge now.

It's coming fast, furious and personal. Choice. Freedom. Worth it even if it's more work. We're all free-range now. And we're free-market, as the sum of our individual decisions are point progress in the right direction. We're empowered. We're in an increasingly self-governed, self-taught, self-insured and self-driven world.

Self-service may seem inconvenient, but it's a new frontier of individualism.

Feeling nostalgic for easier times? Why? Life felt like a giant homeowner's association—we had to ask permission to do everything. But life is no longer a packaged tour, following a guide holding a red flag. It isn't "The Love Boat" with cruise director Julie McCoy telling us the day's activities. Walled gardens such as America Online were training wheels for the real world. Now it's the Wild West—an American rugged individualism. Embrace it.

You Do means You Power. There's no master plan. No collectivism. You're free to choose. Good and bad. But you own your mistakes.

The You Do Economy may be the ultimate incarnation of small-l liberalism: individual rights, a limited state and a sensible rule of law. More school choice. More states offering voter propositions on ballots. It's messy, but it takes back power from unaccountable representatives. Which is why I'm enjoying even a partial dismantling of the administrative state.

My favorite expression uncovers the real secret to Silicon Valley: "Intelligence moves out to the edge of the network." Decentralized smartphones instead of Big Brother running mainframes. Individualized artificial-intelligence agents instead of government or corporate mandates. User-generated stuff on Instagram and TikTok rather than network TV's lowest common denominator. Buyers and sellers on stock markets drive prices up and down, telling companies when to hire and fire employees.

Like it or not, the "intelligence at the edge" is you and me. We're quickly replacing centralized control. We're unpaid but free. Annoyed? Get over it. Freedom's just another word for nothing to lose by doing it your way. We're unfettered and enfranchised. You do you.

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How the DOJ Can Disrupt Hamas

By Lorenzo Vidino

The Trump administration's establishment of the Joint Task Force October 7, a unit within the Justice Department devoted to investigating Hamas activities in and outside the U.S., is a crucial step. Despite being a U.S.-designated terrorist organization since 1997 and killing scores of Americans, Hamas has long been given a pass by the U.S. government.

In 2008 the U.S. convicted five top officials at the Holy Land Foundation, a Texas-based charity that funneled more than $12 million to Hamas. Federal investigators also spent years uncovering a broader network of U.S.-based Hamas supporters, finding that major parts of the network were organized by Mousa Abu Marzook, a Hamas leader now living in Qatar who is one of the convicted official's family members.

But this prosecutorial success wasn't matched at the political level. Groups like the Council on American-Islamic Relations—whose leadership, according to federal authorities during the trial, was linked to Hamas—painted the trial as an Islamophobic aberration of the War on Terror, chilling the appetite for further investigations. CAIR denies any links to Hamas.

Its new task force will go after supporters in and outside the U.S.

The Joint Task Force October 7 now has the painstaking task of bringing to justice Hamas leaders and all those involved in the Oct. 7, 2023, massacre. Equally complex is the intention to dismantle Hamas activities in the U.S., where supporters have established extensive fundraising and propaganda networks.

Last September, the House Ways and Means Committee accused several U.S.-based organizations of spreading antisemitism and being financially linked to Hamas. The list includes American Muslims for Palestine, which denies any affiliation with Hamas, and Students for Justice in Palestine, a key actor behind the recent anti-Israel protests on college campuses. Authorities in Virginia, where American Muslims for Palestine is based, are also investigating the group for suspected financial support to Hamas. In response, the group stated that it is a "duly registered non-profit" operating "in compliance with the law."

These disputes present daunting legal and political hurdles. While major trials like the one against the Holy Land Foundation are glamorous, investigators should consider less direct options as well. The Canada Revenue Agency, for example, is looking to rescind the tax-exempt status of a Muslim Brotherhood-linked entity by alleging the entity's noncompliance with tax law. If Hamas-linked charities are guilty of financial violations, it's easier to prosecute them for these activities than for support for terrorism, which they are adept at hiding.

Making the Internal Revenue Service an active part of the new joint task force should therefore be a priority. Authorities at the state and local levels can also be useful partners in these efforts.

The Joint Task Force October 7 should focus on improving interagency coordination, hiring more personnel and prosecuting the kinds of crimes most likely to lead to success. These steps are key to tackling a terrorist organization that has wreaked havoc on the Western world.

Mr. Vidino is the director of the Program on Extremism at the George Washington University.

BOOKSHELF | By Edward G. Lengel

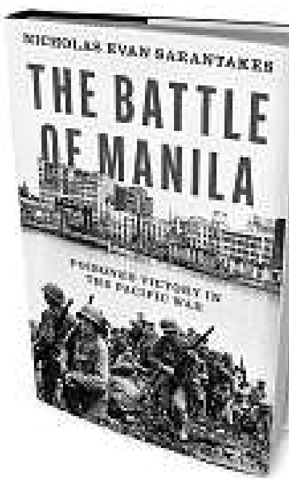
The Costs Of Victory

The Battle of Manila

By Nicholas Evan Sarantakes
Oxford, 504 pages, $29.99

The 19th episode of "The Twilight Zone" aired on Feb. 12, 1960. Its title, "The Purple Testament," quotes Shakespeare's Richard II, who warns darkly of opening "the purple testament of bleeding war." For the show's creator, Rod Serling, who wrote the episode, combat suggested a blend of colors—in his to-camera introduction he describes the men of a World War II infantry platoon in the Philippines: "These are the faces of the young men who fight, as if some omniscient painter had mixed a tube of oils that were at one time earth brown, dust gray, blood red, beard black, and fear—yellow white—and these men were the models. For this is the province of combat, and these are the faces of war."

One of those faces had been Serling's own. He fought in the Philippines as a private first class with the 11th Airborne Division, seeing intense action across the islands of Leyte and Luzon, and in the climactic Battle of Manila. His own memories of those days were devoid of color. Christmas Day 1944—his 20th birthday—was, Serling recalled, "a gray morning carved out of gray clay and shadowed by fog. It was not just a time—it was a mood—the kind of mood that is part of the province of combat and never conveyed vicariously to the human being who has not lived physically with the tension, the violence, the anguish of protracted war."



Gray or bright, in 1960 the memories of the long struggle to liberate the Philippines from Japanese occupation were still fresh. The aftermath of a battle as horrific as the contest for Manila, says Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College, remains potent long after a war ends. "A poisoned outcome," he writes at the beginning of "The Battle of Manila," is even more "disproportionate" than in a classic pyrrhic victory. It is counterproductive "to the interests of the victor. Manila was poisonous." Serling, beset by physical and mental wounds that would plague him to the end of his life, would not have disagreed.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur is the outstanding figure of the battles for the Philippine islands. He also remains—with the possible exception of Gen. George S. Patton—the most divisive American leader of World War II. Since fleeing Corregidor in March 1942 after the initial Japanese invasion, MacArthur had been derisively referred to (behind his back, of course), as Dugout Doug—a command-bunker general. His celebrated assertion that he would triumphantly return had galvanized the press but irritated others who saw it as narcissistic. His critics notwithstanding, MacArthur worked tirelessly to ensure that American forces launched an invasion to liberate the Philippine islands in 1944 rather than bypassing them in the drive toward Japan. Whether that decision worked ultimately to the benefit of the United States, or indeed the Filipino people, are questions that Mr. Sarantakes answers mainly in the negative.

The Philippines campaign 80 years ago, beginning with the American amphibious landings on Leyte on Oct. 20, 1944, and in some areas lasting beyond the war's official end in September 1945, was extremely complex. The Battle of Manila, which lasted from early February until the beginning of March 1945, was straightforward by contrast. U.S. Army forces, in which the 11th Airborne Division figured largely, stormed the city from north and south, fighting against fanatical resistance from Japanese naval and army forces. The simultaneous battles in western Germany notwithstanding, Manila was America's worst experience of urban combat in the 20th century—and perhaps in any war. It was a slugfest in which the Americans held certain tactical advantages but in which their superior firepower counted for little.

MacArthur cared for Manila and its people, but had few options for avoiding the worst aspects of building-by-building urban battle.

There were many players in the drama. MacArthur, determined but using unsophisticated tactics on a complicated battlefield, squared off against equally bullheaded Japanese commanders. Mr. Sarantakes resists the impulse to caricature MacArthur, acknowledging that the battle for Manila does not show the general at his best. MacArthur truly cared for the city and its people, but he had few options for avoiding the worst aspects of a grinding, building-by-building urban battle. The author nevertheless avoids the facile trap of suggesting that MacArthur or American forces should share the blame for the incredible suffering the battle inflicted on the people of Manila. For that, Mr. Sarantakes rightly blames the Japanese defenders, particularly Rear Adm. Sanji Iwabuchi and, to a lesser degree, Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita.

The Japanese atrocities—rape, pillage and indiscriminate massacre—that caused an estimated 100,000 Filipino civilian deaths and left the city a wasteland are chronicled unforgettably in James M. Scott's "Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita, and the Battle of Manila" (2018). Mr. Sarantakes does not shy from describing these horrors, but he takes a broader approach. Writing firmly in the tradition of the so-called social history of warfare exemplified in John Keegan's 1976 "The Face of Battle" (which Mr. Sarantakes cites as an influence), the author uses interviews, letters and memoirs to evoke the experience of battle for combatants and victims alike. This approach contributes strongly to the book's readability as well as to its lucidity and relevance.

After the shooting stopped, Gen. Robert Eichelberger surveyed the scene with awestruck horror. "It is all just graveyard," Eichelberger wrote to his wife. "Manila in effect has ceased to exist." Few Japanese defenders survived; Iwabuchi killed himself and Yamashita was executed for war crimes in 1946. American veterans—including Serling, who shot down an enemy soldier standing on third base during the daylong fighting for Rizal Stadium—emerged with no sense of triumph. This superb history of the Battle of Manila does much to explain why their memories would be poisoned for decades to come.

Mr. Lengel is an independent military historian and author.

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

A Brief History of Broken Russian Promises

Here's why Ukraine wants security guarantees in a cease-fire deal.

Monday marks the third anniversary of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and the Kremlin marked the weekend with the largest drone attack of the war. President Trump says Vladimir Putin wants "peace," but Ukrainians have hard experience about what such a promise means in practice. The anniversary is a good moment to recall the post-Cold War history of Russia's broken promises.

They began with the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 amid the illusion of the "end of history." Ukraine yielded its nuclear weapons in exchange for security guarantees from the U.S., U.K. and Russia. Moscow explicitly promised to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and refrain from economic coercion. So much for that, and here's a trail of Russia's other broken commitments.

• In 2003 Russia began building a dam on the tiny Ukrainian island Tuzla without warning or permission from Kyiv. Ukraine responded to this territorial violation by deploying troops, and the crisis diffused only after Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma struck a compromise with Mr. Putin on terms favorable to Moscow.

• After Tuzla, Ukraine sought to deepen political and economic ties with Western Europe. Moscow resorted to energy extortion to draw Kyiv into its orbit and weaponized its trade ties with Ukraine. In 2013 Moscow blocked Ukrainian exports at the border while offering financing for the Ukrainian government as an inducement for closer ties.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych succumbed to this economic coercion and withdrew from a political association and free-trade agreement with the European Union in November 2013. That prompted mass protests in Ukraine. Mr. Yanukovych abdicated and fled to Russia in February 2014.

• Russia responded in 2014 by sending troops in disguise to seize Crimea and the strategic port of Sevastopol. The same year it armed pro-Russian separatists who launched a war in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region and seized much of two eastern provinces.

• The Kremlin claimed its military wasn't involved in the fighting in eastern Ukraine, but that wasn't true. In one prominent example, nearly 300 Russian military vehicles were spotted in and around the Donetsk provincial city of Ilovaisk in summer 2014.

• Ukrainians seeking to liberate Ilovaisk were surrounded in August 2014 by Russian forces. Mr. Putin personally called for a "humanitarian corridor" so the Ukrainian troops could retreat to safety. But after Ukrainians laid down arms, the Russians ambushed and slaughtered more than 360 retreating soldiers.

• Russia seized the military initiative in eastern Ukraine after Ilovaisk, but Barack Obama refused lethal aid for Ukraine while Washington and Europe pushed Kyiv to negotiate a cease-fire. Ukraine agreed, under U.S. and German pressure, to the Minsk I accord in late 2014 that promised a cease-fire. It didn't hold and in early 2015 Ukraine agreed to Minsk II.

Russia later claimed it wasn't a party to Minsk II, that the deal was only between Ukraine and the Russian separatists in the Donbas. Meanwhile, the Kremlin poured heavy weapons into the Donbas in preparation for what became the 2022 invasion.

• The Russian invasion that began in February 2022 was intended as a lightning strike to decapitate the government in Kyiv and then control the country. President Volodymyr Zelensky refused a U.S. offer to help him flee the country, and Ukraine's forces repelled the siege of Kyiv. Russia then turned to its current strategy of assaulting civilian targets from the air while grinding out gains in the east amid enormous casualties.

Now Mr. Putin says he's open to a peace deal. But the view in Ukraine is summed up by Mykola Bielieskov of the National Institute for Strategic Studies in Kyiv. "Russia observes two kinds of agreements: one that's backed by power, or one that it's in Russia's interests," he says. "Unfortunately, Ukraine" on its own "does not qualify for either of these."

When Ukrainians say they want credible security guarantees from Europe and the U.S., this is why. They know that another "cease-fire," a Minsk III, would merely give Mr. Putin a respite to refinance his war machine after sanctions ease, rearm, and invade again later.

Shutting Up Voters in Washington State

Democrats vote to make it harder to gather initiative signatures.

Some free-market ideas bubbled up in progressive Washington state last year through voter initiatives, and Democrats want to make sure that outrage doesn't happen again. Step 1: Make it harder for voters to be heard.

That's the story in Olympia, where Democrats passed a bill out of the Government, Tribal Relations and Elections Committee on Feb. 18 that would create new obstacles for ballot initiatives. Under the "initiative killer" bill, as opponents call it, signature gatherers would be required to attest that the signatures gathered are valid and that signers weren't paid for their signature, under penalty of "false swearing."

Many signature gatherers are freelancers, so that's a heavy potential legal burden to put on folks who stand on street corners with clipboards. The law would also require the Washington Secretary of State to validate signatures and match signers' listed address to the one on their voter registration card. Democratic Secretary of State Steve Hobbs has said adding obstacles to the initiative process "is not helpful to Washingtonians."

The goal here seems to be make it easier for opponents to kill initiatives in the crib. Anyone who wants to sabotage a petition need only sign a fake name and fake address to taint the petition and get the signature gatherer in legal trouble. A person who has moved recently and reports an address that doesn't match his listed voting address could also have the signature invalidated.

Democrats are miffed because the conservative group Let's Go Washington put seven initiatives into consideration in 2024. Of the seven that collected sufficient signatures, three were approved by the Legislature, including an income-tax ban, police pursuit of criminals, and a parental notification law that included the right to be notified of their childrens' medical records. Three were rejected by the voters and a seventh referendum, to repeal the state's natural-gas ban, was approved.

That's how the initiative process is supposed to work. The initiative right is in the state constitution. The Democratic bill is an attempt to get around this by creating enough inconvenience and legal jeopardy to raise costs and deter citizen participation in challenging the political class. Maybe someone should start a petition to block lawmakers from infringing on rights reserved to voters.

The Race to Save Germany

Voters give the center-right a chance to govern, but the AfD lurks.

Germans voted for change Sunday, and the most important questions now facing their country—and Europe—are whether and how quickly they'll get it.

Exit polls confirm what most analysts expected: The winner is Friedrich Merz, leader of the center-right Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Bavarian sister the CSU. The likely vote share of about 29% marks a four-point improvement on his party's result under a different leader in the last election in 2021. This is partly a vindication of Mr. Merz's efforts to abandon the woolly centrism of former Chancellor Angela Merkel and offer voters real policy contrasts with the left.

The other big winner is the Alternative for Germany (AfD), on track to win about 20%. This doubles the party's vote share from 2021, despite serious concerns about Nazi sympathies among some of its leaders.

It's not hard to see why Germans grow more willing in each election to take a risk on such a party. The country is entering its third year of recession as disastrous energy policies and high-tax, high-regulation welfare statism cripple the economy. Voters also are fed up with Germany's immigration failures. This election centered on the fiscal and social costs of welcoming hundreds of thousands of Middle Eastern migrants, especially amid high-profile crimes and suspected terror attacks.

Only the AfD has called consistently for rethinking green fixations and immigration policies. Mr. Merz staunched defections from his party to the AfD this time with parliamentary maneuvers to show he'd pass serious immigration limits. But his party remains divided on reform of green policies, many of which Ms. Merkel introduced. Time is short to prove he can deliver as Chancellor. The Christian Democrats' vote share is far below what the party won in previous decades. To govern, Mr. Merz will have to form a coalition with at least one of the election's losers.

One partner could be the Social Democrats (SPD) of outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz, although with a 16% vote share (down nearly 10 points from 2021) that party has been repudiated. Less likely, and less desirable, would be a coalition with the Greens, whose 12%-13% vote share is down slightly from 2021. Convincing either party of the left to go along with the economic and immigration reforms voters are demanding could be a challenge.

Such balky coalitions are necessary because no mainstream party is willing to form a coalition with the AfD, though a Christian Democrat-AfD coalition could govern from the right. Despite what you've heard from Elon Musk and JD Vance, the AfD is an anti-American, pro-Russian party. Some 80% of German voters, including the 29% who chose Mr. Merz, don't support the AfD. The pro-American Mr. Merz could use U.S support, not a tariff barrage.

All of this underscores the urgency of Mr. Merz's mandate. His relative success on a platform of economic reform and immigration control proves voters are willing to give mainstream parties another chance. The AfD's surge suggests those chances may not survive another governing failure.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Galston Misreads the Removal-Power Record

William Galston credits "conservative legal scholars" with key "claims" regarding the president's ability to fire executive-branch officials ("'You're Fired'? Not So Fast," Politics & Ideas, Feb. 19). As a conservative legal scholar, I would be pleased to take credit for the genius of our Constitution's structure, which vests the president with the removal power to which Mr. Galston objects. But proper credit lies with the Founders, including those who served in the First Congress.

In 1789 legislators debated requiring the president to obtain Senate consent before removing a new official from office. The eventual statutory text signaled that the chief executive had a constitutional removal power, which Congress didn't purport to limit. As James Madison summarized: "After very long debates," the view that "prevailed" was of "the Executive power being generally vested in the President, and the Executive function of removal not expressly taken away, it remained in the President."

In *Humphrey's Executor v. U.S.* (1935), the Supreme Court charted a mistaken path. The court ruled Congress could limit the president's removal of commissioners of the Federal Trade Commission because they exercised "quasi" legislative and judicial powers. That decision was flawed, most notably because the Constitution doesn't speak of "quasi" powers.

From *Humphrey's Executor* flows the modern conception of "independent" agencies—a mistake the high court has, thankfully, been steadily correcting. Mr. Galston would have the Supreme Court change course, as he contends that the 1790 Sinking Fund Commission constitutes an early "independent agency."

But that commission wasn't independent from the president. A majority of the body could make market purchases, but only if it had obtained the president's "approbation." If he wanted to make purchases that the commission disagreed with? The president could simply exercise his removal power, given that a majority of the commission's five members—the attorney general and the secretaries of state and treasury—served at the chief executive's discretion.

Pace Mr. Galston, the president was in charge, and the concept of "independent" agencies undermines our constitutional structure.

Prof. Chad Squitieri
Columbus School of Law
Washington

It's Time to Rethink Our Telecom Regulations

Your Feb. 10 editorial "Trump, CBS, and 'News Distortion'" highlights the sclerotic nature of U.S. telecommunications law. As you note, it's absurd that flipping the channels on one's television can mean oscillating between regulated and unregulated content. This can often apply to the same substance: Americans could watch this year's Super Bowl on heavily regulated broadcaster Fox or via lightly regulated streamers such as Tubi and Fubo.

Our system for regulating communications is based on outdated distinctions. Traditional phone services face strict regulations, while internet-based apps are largely unregulated, despite serving similar functions. Most Americans now communicate through internet-based services that blur the lines between voice, video and data. Even "traditional" phone companies have modernized their networks to handle these integrated services.

Congress ought therefore to create a unified, flexible framework for all services. Helpfully, we already have one on the books. By moving all communications services under Title I of the Telecommunications Act—the same light-touch regulation that allowed the internet to flourish—we could level the playing field, encourage innovation and codify rules that reflect how we actually communicate. Such a change would still maintain necessary consumer protections while eliminating burdensome and outdated regulations. What's more, it would ensure that our telecommunications infrastructure remains globally competitive into the next century.

Eric Fruits
Intl. Center for Law & Economics
Portland, Ore.

Clearing the Air About Caning in Singapore

As Singapore's ambassador to the U.S., I would like to clarify some misperceptions conveyed in Jon Pelson's Feb. 6 op-ed "Lee Kuan Yew's Cane and Trump's Tariffs" about the way our country carries out caning sentences.

Singapore's laws provide for caning to be carried out with some strict safeguards. The practice is to be performed by trained officers and under supervision. There are no "martial artists" present at any point. Before caning, the prisoner must be certified by a medical officer to be fit to undergo such punishment.

The law also requires a medical officer to be present during the administration of caning. The medical officer may stop the process at any time if he assesses it isn't safe for the caning to continue. Mr. Pelson writes that "prisoners could require hospitalization between lashes to make sure they were healthy enough to continue." The Singapore Prison Service isn't allowed to resume the caning if the medical officer stops it, even after the prisoner has recovered. The case instead has to be referred to the courts to decide whether to remit the remaining sentence or commute it to an imprisonment term.

Amb. Lui Tuck Yew
Washington

My Family Is All the Wiser For Ditching Disney World

Reading "Even Disney Worries About Park Prices" (Page One, Feb. 10) brought back memories of our family's one Disney World vacation 30 years ago. Everywhere we went was an opportunity to spend money, from Disney tchotchkes to paraphernalia. Eating out in the park or at the hotel was expensive for a family of four. We would economize by bringing our groceries and eating in the room. Despite being frugal, my wife and I soon became depressed about how much we had spent on the relatively short trip. We agreed the cost didn't justify the fleeting joy of getting a photo with Mickey Mouse.

While the kids enjoyed the Disney experience, they didn't ask to go back. Instead, we went to museums, on hikes in the nearby mountains or on $5 amusement rides at the local county fairs. We're doubtless wiser for it.

Jason Shaw
Rockport, Mass.

Method to Trump's Madness

Vladimir Putin is an evil human being with many sins to his name. Yet in your Feb. 19 editorial "The Rapid Rehab of Vladimir Putin," you are missing one key motive for the rapid thawing of U.S. relations with the Russian bear. In my view, President Trump's actions can be seen as a first step for weaning Russia off of its reliance on China and Iran. If Mr. Trump can accomplish that—moving Mr. Putin closer to America and away from his Asian neighbor and Middle Eastern ally—that will be a major blow to the Chinese goal of replacing America as the dominant global superpower. It may also weaken the current Iranian-Russian entente.

Fred Ehrman
New York

Pitching a Tent in St. Peter's

While Fr. Raymond J. de Souza is correct that you don't need a visa to enter the Vatican, I doubt the Swiss Guard would be comfortable with people pitching tents or moving into the papal apartments ("The Pope vs. JD Vance on Immigration," Houses of Worship, Feb. 14). If hundreds or thousands of immigrants came to St. Peter's Square and set up shop, how do you think they would be received?

John A. Flamini
Erie, Pa.

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Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"That answer is incorrect. The definition of habeas corpus isn't the body of a deceased attorney."

OPINION

Trump vs. the AP: An American Standoff

By James Taranto

There's often a deeper meaning to Donald Trump's absurdist comedy, and the president's current dustup with the Associated Press is a case in point. On Inauguration Day Mr. Trump impishly announced that the U.S. would change the Gulf of Mexico's name to "Gulf of America." The AP was not amused. "The Gulf of Mexico has carried that name for more than 400 years," it declared in a Jan. 23 "style guidance" dispatch. "The Associated Press will refer to it by its original name while acknowledging the new name Trump has chosen."

Now the White House and the wire service are locked in what Mr. Trump might call an American standoff. The AP has been stripped of its position in the traveling presidential press pool and excluded from covering limited-capacity events. "It is alarming that the Trump administration would punish AP for its independent journalism," executive editor

The president targets the wire service whose stylebook is the wellspring of journalistic groupthink.

Julie Pace said in a statement. "Limiting our access to the Oval Office based on the content of AP's speech not only severely impedes the public's access to independent news, it plainly violates the First Amendment." On Friday the wire service sued three White House officials in federal court.

I side with the AP on the style question, but then I'm reactionary about names. I still say Twitter, Washington Redskins, Burma and Bruce Jenner. I find the White House's actions in this matter amusing, not alarming, and they plainly don't violate the First Amendment.

In 2018, CNN went to court and won a temporary restraining order after the White House revoked correspondent Jim Acosta's press credential. But the judge didn't rule on the network's First Amendment claim, the White House restored Mr. Acosta's credential, and CNN dropped the litigation. The AP's reporters still have their White House credentials, making the wire service's case considerably weaker than CNN's was. The freedom of the press doesn't entail a right to privileged access, and the word "Associated" appears nowhere in the Constitution. The relief the AP seeks—a judicial injunction compelling physical access to the president's chambers—would be a gross encroachment on the constitutional separation of powers.

MARTIN KOZLOWSKI

Most news organizations (including the Journal) have responded to "Gulf of America" in the same way: by noting but declining to adopt Mr. Trump's name change. Why did the White House single out the AP? Axios's Marc Caputo reported on Feb. 17 that it was "to protest what aides see as years of liberal word choices that the wire service's influential stylebook spread across mainstream media." In emails to the AP on Feb. 18, chief of staff Susie Wiles confirmed that, according to the wire service's lawsuit.

Contra Ms. Pace, the White House's objection isn't to the AP's "independent journalism" but to its homogenizing effect on news coverage. As she notes in her statement, AP reporting reaches "billions of people around the world" when what she calls its "factual, nonpartisan journalism" is republished by member newspapers, broadcasters and websites. The AP has an even wider reach through its stylebook, which most of its members incorporate as their own. This would hardly matter if the stylebook stuck to matters of style, like whether to hyphenate "email" or when and how to abbreviate months and states. But there's a lot of substance, including ideological substance.

The AP Stylebook is the wellspring of journalistic groupthink. Since it went online in 2002, the flood of conformity has intensified. Decrees and dogmas propagate far more rapidly than they did when the stylebook was a spiral-bound volume with new editions published years apart.

One of the most prominent examples looks deceptively like a question of pure style: A few years ago, the AP began capitalizing "black" when used as a racial designation. This was a telling change because in contrast with the Gulf of Mexico, the AP didn't stick with tradition. Nor did it bow to a change in common usage, but to activist demands. "Words, like Black lives, matter," David Lanham of the National Association of Black Journalists wrote in an open letter to the AP on June 16, 2020. "It's Black, with a capital B."

The wire service complied three days later, its timing rich with symbolism—at the height of a nationwide frenzy over race and on June 19, now the federal holiday of Juneteenth. With some exceptions, liberals (including most news organizations) fell into line with the AP, while conservatives didn't. The Supreme Court, for instance, has split, with the three Democratic appointees and Justice Neil Gorsuch opting for "Black." The "nonpartisan" AP attempted to position itself at the vanguard of history and succeeded in stranding itself on one side of America's ideological gulf.

Mr. Caputo reports that White House aides' "grievances" against the AP extend to immigration (the stylebook bans "alien," "illegal immigrant," "chain migration" and "anchor babies"), political violence (it discourages "riot" and "terrorism"), and overseas geography (it transliterates Ukraine's capital as Kyiv, not Kiev). But the stylebook descends from bias into delusion with its "Transgender Coverage Topical Guide."

This is a 2,948-word ideological manifesto, although it doesn't identify as a manifesto: "Do not use the term transgenderism, which frames transgender identity as an ideology," the guide instructs. It is filled with bizarre assertions and jargon, which reporters are mandated to accept as if they supersede the facts of life.

According to the guide, a child isn't "born a boy or girl"; rather, sex is "usually assigned at birth by parents or attendants and can turn out to be inaccurate." "Examples of gender identities include . . . nonbinary; bigender; agender; gender-fluid; genderqueer; and combinations of identities, such as nonbinary woman." "Deadnaming a transgender person"—that is, accurately reporting such a person's given name—"even posthumously in obituaries or other coverage, is often considered disrespectful to the deceased, their survivors and any transgender people." If I worked for the AP, I would have to petition management for a dispensation to mention Bruce Jenner.

All this is cloaked in appeals to authority: "Experts from organizations including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Association say gender is a spectrum." Reporters are instructed to squelch any challenge to the accepted authorities: "Don't quote people speaking about biology or athletic regulations unless they have the proper background." Ketanji Brown Jackson was following the AP Stylebook when she declined to define the word "woman" on the grounds that "I'm not a biologist."

These editorial diktats have real-world effects. Sports teams, locker rooms, public rest rooms and prisons are segregated by sex primarily to protect the privacy and safety of women. Many women object when "transgender women"—men who conceive of themselves as being female—intrude into these areas. Good luck if they want fair treatment from the local newspaper, which is almost certainly an AP member. The AP's policy—its "style"—is that those men *are* women, and the women who object to their presence in intimate spaces should stifle themselves.

In another Inauguration Day action, Mr. Trump signed an executive order titled "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government." It declared: "It is the policy of the United States to recognize two sexes, male and female. These sexes are not changeable and are grounded in fundamental and incontrovertible reality."

That has been the case at least since sexual dimorphism emerged in trilobites, some 540 million years ago. If the AP is willing to deny the primordial truth about sex on the say-so of some authority figure, the Gulf of Mexico is a strange hill for it to die on. But I hope it does—or at least I hope both sides stand their ground after the AP loses in court and the result is a diminution of its influence on American journalism.

White House deputy chief of staff Taylor Budowich promised in a Feb. 14 tweet that the space the AP used to occupy "will now be opened up to the many thousands of reporters who have been barred from covering these intimate areas." The temptation will be to favor partisans who reliably take the administration's side. But maybe there will be room for some who are genuinely curious, skeptical, creative and beholden only to the truth.

Mr. Taranto is the Journal's editorial features editor.

Biden's Mortgage 'Relief' Fuels Higher Housing Prices

LIFE SCIENCE
By Allysia Finley

Why do housing prices keep climbing despite higher interest rates? The federal government has allowed borrowers to take out bigger mortgages than they can afford. To prevent foreclosures, it's bailing them out when they miss payments. Behold another subprime housing bubble.

The problems began when the Obama administration eased underwriting standards by enabling more home buyers whose debt payments exceed 43% of income to qualify for government-backed loans. Such borrowers are risky because they might not be able to make payments if their income drops or expenses rise.

It has created another subprime housing bubble and put taxpayers at risk. Trump should end it.

As home prices climbed, the Federal Housing Administration insured more loans to financially stretched borrowers with as little 3.5% down. No skin off lenders' backs if borrowers later defaulted, since the mortgages were backed by the government.

In 2007, 35% of new FHA borrowers had debt-to-income ratios above 43%. By 2020, 54% did. As housing prices and inflation surged, borrowers became more stretched. The FHA kept insuring mortgages to borrowers who were increasingly leveraged. About 64% of FHA borrowers last year exceeded the 43% threshold.

The FHA loan portfolio is far riskier than it was before the 2008 housing crisis. The American Enterprise Institute's Ed Pinto and Tobias Peter estimate that 79% of FHA first-time borrowers have a month or less in financial reserves—not enough to make mortgage payments if their household expenses rise, as most have owing to inflation.

No surprise, many are missing payments, especially recent borrowers. About 7.05% of FHA mortgages issued last year went seriously delinquent—90 or more days past when a payment is due—within 12 months. That's more than at the 2008 peak of the subprime bubble (7.02%).

Under the guise of Covid relief, the Biden administration masked the growing troubles in the housing market by paying off borrowers and mortgage servicers to prevent foreclosures. Of the 52,531 FHA loans last year that went seriously delinquent within their first year, only nine resulted in foreclosure.

The FHA instituted a program that pays mortgage servicers to make borrowers' missed payments for them. Missed payments are added to the loan's principal, but without interest. The FHA also pays servicers to cut monthly payments for delinquent borrowers by 25% for three years, with the payment reductions also added to the principal without interest.

Consider a borrower who misses five $4,000 monthly mortgage payments. The servicer will add the $20,000 in missed payments to the mortgage and reduce monthly payments by $1,000 for three years—adding another $36,000 to their mortgage. So the borrower is $56,000 deeper in debt, though with no additional interest. If he misses payments again, the servicer rinses and repeats, getting paid $1,750 every time it lathers up. The FHA also lets servicers charge borrowers legal fees—typically several thousand dollars—that are added to the mortgage principal.

The FHA made 556,841 "incentive payments" to servicers over the past year to prevent foreclosures—nearly as many as the new mortgages it insured. Government-backed mortgage relief has become a cash cow for servicers, some of which originated the risky loans they are paid not to foreclose. Moral hazard, anyone?

One result is that many FHA borrowers owe more than their original mortgage and more than their homes are worth. They are essentially trapped in their homes even if they want to sell and move.

Another result is that home prices keep increasing because borrowers who don't pay their mortgages—and never should have qualified for loans—can't get foreclosed on or be forced to sell their homes. Getting foreclosed on these days is like flunking out of college—it takes effort. You have to reject repeated offers for mortgage relief.

Government-sponsored enterprises Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac instituted similar "home retention" programs for delinquent borrowers with the Biden administration's blessing. The cost of their mortgage relief gets socialized in higher rates charged to home buyers whose mortgages they guarantee.

Taxpayers are on the hook if the FHA insurance fund—financed by premiums on mortgages it backs—goes broke paying off borrowers and servicers to prevent foreclosures. The FHA annual report to Congress doesn't disclose the cost of such payments, and the agency didn't furnish them on my request. Perhaps the Department of Government Efficiency could dig into its financial books.

The Biden administration built a house of cards that could collapse if Trump officials dare to end the mortgage giveaways, as they should. Foreclosures would inevitably increase, which could cause home prices to fall sharply in lower-income neighborhoods with more FHA mortgages. More borrowers would then fall underwater, ballooning taxpayer losses, though homes might also become more affordable for people who don't already own them.

But what a mess. And who will get blamed? Not the folks who inflated the bubble.

FBI Reforms for Kash Patel

By Thomas J. Baker

President Trump and Kash Patel have made clear that they want to reform the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but it won't be easy. Mr. Patel, the bureau's sole political appointee, will need help getting a grip on an agency that has become far too large, centralized, top-heavy and political.

The bureau's problems began under Director Robert Mueller, who after 9/11 set out to change the FBI's culture from a law-enforcement agency to an "intelligence driven" organization. Over the years he and his successors, James Comey and Christopher Wray, added layers to headquarters management. The burgeoning divisions and directorates, each led by an assistant director, were later grouped into six branches, each headed by an executive assistant director—putting more distance between the director and field agents. Last month's firing of six senior officials is a step in the right direction.

In 2012 the FBI established an Office of Diversity and Inclusion, eventually headed by an assistant director. As DEI took hold, standards—in recruitment, training and promotion—slipped. The bureau abolished the office in December.

Another regrettable post-9/11 development was the addition of "intelligence analyst" as a new employee category, based on a position at the Central Intelligence Agency. Veteran FBI managers questioned whether the CIA's freewheeling model suited a police agency. Under Mr. Mueller, hundreds of intelligence analysts were hired, initially to help special agents with investigations. Under Mr. Comey and Mr. Wray, intelligence analysts saw their status, numbers and independence increase. Their actions can affect people's liberty, as when analysts in the Richmond, Va., field office proposed that traditionalist Catholics were potential violent domestic extremists. Intelligence analysts need to study the Constitution, as FBI special agents always have.

With the Constitution as its cornerstone, the agency can become smaller, more efficient and less political.

Mr. Patel should scrap "integrated program management," one of several practices from corporate culture imposed on the FBI. The practice isn't compatible with the bureau's mission, and it led to abuses in dealing with the perception of threats from fellow citizens. Under integrated program management, FBI employees and managers must check boxes about their work in a quota system to advance professionally. This has inflated the number of "violent domestic extremist" cases. In the Jan. 6 investigation, for example, the Washington Field Office was the office of origin. Each field office opened separate cases on people in its territory, fueling the false impression of widespread domestic extremism.

The first step in changing an organization's culture is recognizing the problem. Mr. Wray declined to do so, claiming that those responsible for the FBI's failings no longer work there. He is mistaken—it isn't a few bad apples.

The FBI's North Star must be the Constitution. Mr. Patel should lead the bureau away from an intelligence organization and back to a law-enforcement culture. An internal advisory panel, including former FBI agents, should help him reorient, overhaul and shrink the bureau.

Cutting back on executive positions at the FBI's Washington headquarters is a good start. Permanently eliminating the executive assistant director position would let each division head report directly to the director, as would the agent in charge of each field office. Next, abolish the Intelligence Directorate. Parcel out the Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Shift the Terrorist Screening Center to the National Counter Terrorism Center.

Mass purges won't fix the FBI. In response to the unease stirred by such rumors, the acting deputy attorney general pledged that only those employees "who acted with corrupt or partisan intent" should worry. In his confirmation testimony, Mr. Patel promised that there will be "no political retribution" and that "no one will be terminated for case assignment." That's the right approach.

Cultural changes are much harder to achieve than organizational changes. The new director should drop the slogan "an intelligence-driven" organization and adopt "an organization guided by the Constitution." The FBI can become a guarantor of the Bill of Rights, not a threat to it.

Mr. Baker is a retired FBI special agent and legal attaché and author of "The Fall of the FBI: How a Once Great Agency Became a Threat to Democracy."

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WORLD NEWS

Ailing Pope Remains In Critical Condition

BY MARCUS WALKER

The health of Pope Francis, in the hospital for over a week with pneumonia, worsened over the weekend, raising fears that he might not survive his struggle with pneumonia.

Pope Francis had what the Vatican called "a prolonged asthmatic respiratory crisis" on Saturday morning, requiring oxygen therapy. He also received blood transfusions for a low platelet count.

The pope continued to receive oxygen therapy through nasal prongs on Sunday, the Vatican said. He remains in a critical condition, but didn't have a repeat of Saturday's breathing crisis, the statement said.

"The Holy Father's condition continues to be critical," the Vatican said. "The Pope is not out of danger."

The pope's worsening condition was a setback for hopes that he might recover from his fight with bronchitis and pneumonia in recent weeks. The 88-year-old pontiff has a mix of viral, bacterial and fungal infections in his respiratory system, his doctors have said.

On Friday, they told reporters that the pope's condition had improved over the past few days, leading them to say that he was not in immediate danger of death—but that complications were possible and that his prognosis could change from day to day. Saturday's respiratory crisis illustrated that uncertainty.

The pope, who had part of his right lung removed as a young man, has become increasingly prone to respiratory infections with age, especially in winter. He was hospitalized in 2023 with an acute lung infection, which he later said was pneumonia.

As well as hospital visits for pulmonary infections, the pope in recent years has needed surgery to remove a part of his colon and to treat an abdominal hernia. Knee and back pain have forced him to use a wheelchair.

WORLD WATCH

ITALY

U.S.-India Flight Diverted to Rome

An American Airlines flight from New York to New Delhi landed in Rome on Sunday afternoon after it was diverted due to a security concern that later proved to be "noncredible," the airline said, without providing more detail.

American Airlines said Flight 292 "was inspected by law enforcement" and cleared to depart, but would stay in Rome overnight because of crew rest requirements.

Passenger Neeraj Chopra described the mood on the plane as calm after the pilot's initial announcement of the diversion, but said he began to stress when the captain later said fighter jets would be escorting their plane.

The airport continued to operate normally, a spokesman with Rome's airport said.

—Associated Press

GERMANY

Stabbing Suspect Aimed 'to Kill Jews'

German authorities said a Syrian suspect intended "to kill Jews" when he stabbed a Spanish tourist in Berlin's Holocaust Memorial, the latest in a string of attacks by refugees and asylum seekers that increased in frequency ahead of Sunday's crucial election.

The suspect, a 19-year-old refugee, was detained shortly after Friday night's attack, the Berlin police and general prosecutor said.

"A plan had matured in him over several weeks to kill Jews, which determined his choice of a place to strike," they said, based on the suspect's statements after arrest.

The 30-year-old victim suffered life-threatening wounds to the throat but was out of danger Saturday after emergency surgery, authorities said.

—Bertrand Benoit

Jewish Diaspora Hopeful for Syria

Fewer than 10 Jews currently estimated to be living in the battered country

BY OMAR ABDEL-BAQUI

DAMASCUS, Syria—Dust filled the air as Rabbi Yosef Hamra opened a long-sealed closet containing holy scrolls untouched since he last held Jewish services in the centuries-old synagogue three decades ago.

His family had left Syria along with many other Jews in the 1990s. But here he was with his son, Henry Hamra, who lifted the heavy gold-laced scrolls high above his head as warm sunlight beamed through the stained glass windows of the al-Faranj Synagogue in Damascus's Old City.

"We have returned," said Henry Hamra, who last saw the city when he was a teenager. "After all these years, we have finally returned."

The father and son were part of a group of Syrian and American Jews who arrived in Damascus this month, escorted by armed forces of the new government led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the U.S.-designated terrorist group whose rebel coalition toppled the despotic Assad dynasty in December.

The delegation toured Damascus's historic Jewish neighborhood and religious sites, and met with community members and officials from Syria's new government. They visited relatives' former homes, graves and religious schools. Some of the kippa-wearing American Jews posed for photos holding the rifle of a masked, black-clad member of the government's new security forces.

As the group walked through parts of Damascus, they bumped into old neighbors.

"I remember his face! I can't believe it's really him," one woman said when the elder Hamra passed by her as he walked through his old neighborhood.

"Welcome back. This is your home," another man in the neighborhood said as he embraced the 77-year-old.

Fewer than 10 Jews are currently estimated to be living in Syria—not enough to meet the quorum needed for public prayer under religious rules. Tens of thousands of Jews left in waves during the 20th century, especially in the years around the creation of Israel in 1948 and subsequent wars between the two countries, a period when the community experienced violence in Aleppo and Damascus.

Hafez al-Assad, the Syrian president from 1971 to 2000, restricted Jewish emigration from the country and kept Syria's remaining Jews under close watch. He lifted the restrictions in 1992, and a few thousand more left, many for the U.S., leading to the near-extinction of Jewish presence in Syria.

Jews have had a presence in Syria for millennia. At times it was a haven. Jews flocked to Syria after being displaced when the Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in the 11th century. Another influx came after the Spanish expulsion of Jews in the 1400s, while many left Syria during later spasms of sectarian tension.

Now the new rulers in Damascus have promised tolerance for Syria's many religious and ethnic groups, a shift that could reverberate through the region.

Western governments are closely watching for progress on that commitment. Officials from the Syrian Foreign Ministry didn't respond to requests for comment.

"We were like siblings—not just neighbors—with other Syrian religious groups living here," said Rabbi Yosef Hamra. "We can do it again."

The Hamras left Syria as the surveillance and regional tensions became too difficult to bear. "We couldn't grow, and we couldn't be ourselves," said Henry Hamra, 46.

They settled among the thousands-strong Syrian Jewish community in New York that preserved many of their traditions.

Now, the Hamras hope Jews can re-establish themselves in Syria. Members of the Jewish delegation—organized by the Syrian Emergency Task Force, a U.S.-based advocate for democracy in the country—said the visit could be followed by others and, in due time, the re-establishment of Jewish centers and the return of Syrian Jews who could help with reconstruction efforts as Syria looks to pick up the pieces of its shattered economy.

The Jewish delegation, which included a former U.S. ambassador, rode in a convoy with officials from the Syrian Foreign Ministry and the armed forces. When American Jews in the convoy asked the armed forces what they thought of Jewish people, one soldier said, "We are all brothers."

Asher Lopatin, a Michigan-based rabbi who was part of the delegation, said the government officials the delegation met with were receptive to the concerns of the Jewish community, including protecting Jews and their holy sites, suggesting positive potential for U.S.-Syria relations.

"These are people I think will welcome America and American influence. What an opportunity—it's a group that doesn't like Russia, it doesn't like Hezbollah," Lopatin said. "Why not take sanctions off, and if there is a problem in six months, put them back on? We have to act fast."

Punishing Western sanctions imposed on Syria during the Assad era, as well as others on HTS stemming from the group's terrorist designation, remain in place, though the group has sworn off its previous extremist ideology.

Haytham Dabbas, a 57-year-old who isn't Jewish, helped maintain Jewish sites and kept the diaspora up to date about happenings. "This has been an important duty—it's part of the history and heritage of Syria and its people," he said.

Rabbi Asher Lopatin in the Freng synagogue, in Damascus, Syria. Below, Rabbi Yosef Hamra revisits Damascus's historic Jewish neighborhood. He left Syria in the 1990s.

ADRIENNE SURPRENANT/MYOP FOR WSJ (2)

Street vendors sell everything from holy oil to prayer beads as they mingle with pilgrims.

SUMIT DAYAL FOR WSJ (3)

India Hosted More Pilgrims Than Population of U.S.

BY SHAN LI

India's Maha Kumbh pilgrimage is drawing to a close after hosting more people than the population of the U.S. over six weeks.

The festival is centered on ritual bathing that pilgrims believe will wash away sins and deliver salvation. It rotates among four locations where, according to Hindu belief, a drop of the nectar of immortality fell from a pitcher as gods tussled over the potion. The Maha Kumbh takes place every 12 years, with smaller editions occurring in between.

As India has promoted religious tourism, the pilgrimage has swelled. Initial estimates suggested that more than 400 million people would visit, but in recent days, officials, who billed it as the largest gathering on Earth, say the number of pilgrims is likely to be around half a billion by the time it ends on Feb. 26. Officials have been using train and airport arrivals, cellphone tower traffic and video footage to reach their estimates.

Even when the festival welcomed just tens of millions of pilgrims, getting lost here was a popular plot device in Indian movies—for example, one brother lost at the fair grows up to be a gangster, while another is the cop assigned to go after him.

Despite the advent of smartphones and GPS, getting separated remains a frequent occurrence as visitors make their way around a temporary tent city that spans an area larger than 7,500 football fields.

At 10 lost-and-found centers scattered through the grounds, volunteer sleuths work round the clock to reunite family members.

In one case, Anupam Yadav, a financial auditor by profession who was running one of the centers, was able to help an elderly woman who was unable to recall her relatives' names, her hometown or any phone numbers.

He dug in her purse and found a business card for a jeweler, who turned out to live in her village. After persistent pestering, the jeweler went around the village and tracked down her relatives. They, in turn, found her family at the festival.

Asha Devi, 52 years old, lost sight of her husband after a horde of people swallowed her when she exited a restroom before dawn. She remained at a lost-and-found center for over a day, alternating between crying and sleeping on a cardboard bed from Amazon.

"I didn't have a phone, and I didn't have a husband," she said. "All I could do was wait."

At 10 a.m. the next day, her husband, Vimal Kanth Jha, hurried in. The couple had a tearful reunion and called their panicked daughter in Mumbai to relay the good news.

"I walked from one end of the Kumbh to the other," said 57-year-old Jha. "I was so worried, and my legs don't work now."

The festival, which started on Jan. 13, is believed to be at least two millennia old.

Though the pilgrimage area is vast, many visitors head for a spot deemed particularly divine for a ritual bath—the sangam. This is the spot where two holy rivers, the Ganges and the Yamuna meet. A third river, the mythical Saraswati, is also believed to join them here.

Crowd-safety experts say that a festival such as Kumbh, which isn't ticketed and has no maximum capacity, is particularly prone to crowd crush events, especially around more auspicious days.

One took place on Jan. 29, the holiest day for bathing, leaving 30 people dead according to official figures. A separate incident at the train station in New Delhi's capital, where pilgrims were setting out for the pilgrimage, killed 18 people.

Urban planners have studied the megacity for lessons for other pop-up settlements. Preparations included the installation of 175,000 tents, 150,000 toilets, 30 floating bridges and nearly 70,000 streetlights for the duration of the festival.

It will all be dismantled once the festival ends this week.

After ritual bathing, holy men dry themselves and smear river sand over their bodies.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Last Week: S&P 6013.13 ▼1.66% S&P FIN ▼2.00% S&P IT ▼1.82% DJ TRANS ▼3.45% WSJ $ IDX ▼0.33% 2-YR. TREAS. yield 4.192% NIKKEI 38776.94 ▼0.95% See more at WSJ.com/Markets

Buffett Defends Growing Cash Pile

Legendary investor says his firm prefers to own businesses despite dry powder

By Karen Langley

Warren Buffett says **Berkshire Hathaway** still prefers owning businesses.

Berkshire's chairman and chief executive told shareholders in his annual letter on Saturday that while the company's ownership of stocks declined last year, the value of the operating businesses it owns increased. Berkshire runs a range of subsidiaries in such industries as rail, utilities and insurance.

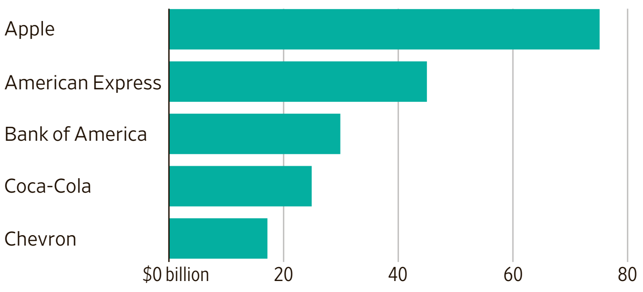
A recent buildup in the Omaha, Neb., conglomerate's mountain of cash and Treasury bills has drawn attention among investors. Berkshire ended 2024 with $321.4 billion in cash and Treasury bills after accounting for a payable it recorded for buying the short-term government debt. That marked a record and a 3.6% increase from three months earlier.

"Despite what some commentators currently view as an extraordinary cash position at Berkshire, the great majority of your money remains in equities," Buffett wrote. "That preference won't change."

Buffett said Berkshire's ownership of "marketable equities" declined last year. But the famed stock picker offered assurance that the company hasn't changed its investment approach.

"Berkshire shareholders can rest assured that we will forever deploy a substantial majority of their money in equities—mostly American equities although many of these will have international operations of significance," he wrote. "Berkshire will never prefer ownership of cash-equivalent assets over the ownership of good businesses, whether controlled or only partially owned."

Berkshire Hathaway's biggest U.S. stock positions



Note: Position values as of Dec. 31

Sources: Form 13F (share counts); FactSet (prices)

Buffett and his deputies are searching for investment opportunities while stocks trade at records, with the S&P 500 clinching another high in recent days.

An exception to Berkshire's focus on U.S. investments, Buffett wrote, is its growing investment in Japan. In July 2019, Berkshire began buying shares of five Japanese trading companies: **Itochu**, **Marubeni**, **Mitsubishi**, **Mitsui** and **Sumitomo**.

A year ago, Buffett wrote that Berkshire owned about 9% of each of the five companies and it told each company it wouldn't increase its stake beyond 9.9%.

But Berkshire received the companies' blessings to buy some more, Buffett wrote in his new letter. He praised the companies for their use of capital, their management and their attitude toward shareholders.

"As we approached this limit, the five companies agreed to moderately relax the ceiling," he said. "Over time, you will likely see Berkshire's ownership of all five increase somewhat."

At the end of 2024, the market value of Berkshire's Japan holdings had reached $23.5 billion, Buffett wrote.

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Newest iPhone Takes On Chinese Rivals

By Stu Woo

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—**Apple** pulled off a rare feat in China two years ago. The iPhone became the country's bestselling smartphone, surpassing a host of domestic rivals.

But that reign is over—a casualty, in part, of the escalating U.S.-China technology Cold War.

Apple has fallen from first to third in the country, dethroned by two Chinese companies, Vivo and **Huawei**, that offered similar features at lower costs as China's economy slumped.

Now Apple has a new offering in the world's biggest smartphone market. Deliveries of its iPhone 16e, a cheaper version of its flagship device, will begin in China this week at a starting price of about $600. That makes it eligible for a national stimulus program that gives consumers a subsidy for purchasing smartphones under $800.

The new device gives Apple a chance to get more competitive in China, but its challenges there go beyond the economy.

While Apple's newest offering is aimed at thriftier consumers, its Chinese rivals are becoming more sophisticated. On Tuesday in Kuala Lumpur, Huawei announced an international version of its double-folding Mate XT smartphone. The $3,700 device can transform into a 10-inch tablet, with two creases that are noticeable but not overly pronounced.

There is also a less-visible force at play: The Chinese government is giving local companies a helping hand.

Chinese smartphone makers have already released popular artificial-intelligence features, but China hasn't yet approved AI for iPhones. And Beijing has more directly supported Huawei in particular.

Apple was an unlikely smartphone champion in China. It trailed Chinese brands for years, before getting an assist from Washington.

Around five years ago, the U.S. government imposed sanctions that made it hard for Huawei to buy components essential to making competitive phones. Washington was concerned Huawei would use its smartphone revenue to

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Stores Suffer as Online Retail Rules the Roost

By Suzanne Kapner

E-commerce didn't kill bricks-and-mortar stores, but it made them worse. Much worse.

Physical stores today are understaffed and full of inconveniences such as locked shelves and self-checkout lines. Now, add one more gripe to the list: not enough stuff.

If you have ever trekked to a store only to be told the item you are looking for is out of stock but can be ordered online, you aren't alone. The practice is so common that retailers have a name for it.

"We called it SOS—Save Our Sale," said Jerry Storch, a former chief executive of Toys "R" Us and Saks Fifth Avenue parent **HBC**.

Lucia Gulbransen, a stylist in Westport, Conn., has another name for it: "Retail gymnastics."

"It's really time-consuming," said Gulbransen, 58 years old.

YUKI IWAMURA/BLOOMBERG NEWS

The internet has siphoned resources away from bricks-and-mortar stores, often resulting in understaffing and understocking.

The consulting firm AlixPartners studied 30 retailers and found on average only 9% of their online women's clothing assortment was available in physical stores. For department stores, the percentage was 7%, and at mass merchants it was 2%. Specialty retailers fared better, with one-third of their online goods available in stores.

The internet ushered in a new era of shopping nirvana, in which consumers could order whatever they wanted from the comfort of their couch. It also has siphoned money and merchandise away from bricks-and-mortar stores, turning buzzy emporiums into dilapidated mausoleums. Retailers have vastly expanded the breadth of products they sell online to better compete with **Amazon.com**, making the offerings in their physical stores feel paltry by comparison.

Retail CEOs like to say they want customers to shop however they want—either online, in stores or a combination of the two. The reality is that they make more money when customers buy from physical stores because packing and shipping expenses eat into online profits.

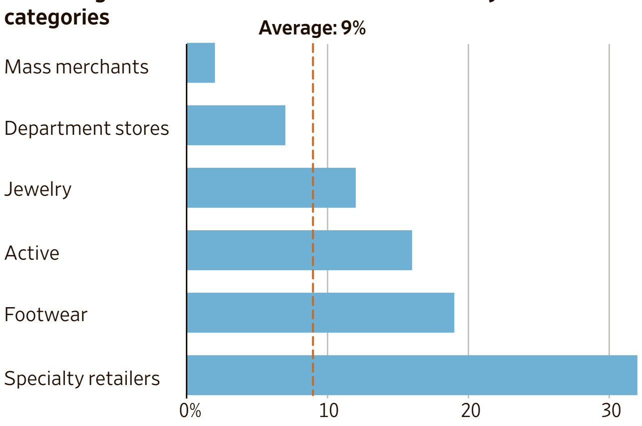
There are, of course, standouts that have managed to keep shopping fun. Luxury brands such as Hermès dazzle shoppers with their flagship stores. **Nordstrom** is still known for superior service. And customers love hunting through the racks at T.J. Maxx looking for a deal.

But when it comes to the stockroom, even the best stores can't keep up with the internet.

The gulf has widened further as chains have opened smaller stores. Retailers can hold far more inventory at central distribution centers that fulfill online orders than at any one store. Plus, figuring out how many size smalls of a navy-blue sweater should go to store A versus store B is a lot

Please turn to page B2

Percentage of online assortment found in store by selected categories



Note: Analysis of online women's clothing options available for purchase instore vs. online for 30 retailers.

Source: AlixPartners

Addiction Led Banker To Insider Trading

By Alexander Saeedy

John Fenemia ran an insider-trading ring that netted him and his friends millions of dollars before they went to prison.

It all started with long hours as an investment banker and a crippling addiction to Adderall.

Fenemia was a 28-year-old investment banker working for **Wells Fargo** when he tipped off his friends about confidential deals that the bank was working on. His friends would buy shares of companies that were in line to be acquired, reap the profits when the deals were announced and then kick back some of the gains to Fenemia.

In two years, Fenemia and his friends made more than $11 million trading off of confidential information, prosecutors said. He spent about three years in prison.

He says he came up with the scheme while he was abusing Adderall, which he started taking to deal with his long hours at Wells Fargo. The Wall Street Journal reported in December on the widespread use of ADHD medications on Wall Street and the psychological changes it

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INSIDE

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Fashion brands are hitting the books to acquire a literary cachet. **B3**

HEARD ON THE STREET
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Africa's Richest Man Tackles Oil and Corruption in Nigeria

By Alexandra Wexler

LAGOS, Nigeria—Africa's richest person, industrial titan Aliko Dangote, has a lofty goal: He wants to become Nigeria's John D. Rockefeller, using his wealth to transform his homeland.

His latest megaproject has put him "through hell," but it also has brought him closer to his goal.

Dangote's repeated bets on the rise of Africa's middle class helped him amass a fortune from cement, sugar, salt and other commodities, resulting in a net worth of $28 billion, nearly double that of the second-richest African. His pièce de résistance is the Dangote Petroleum Refinery, a sprawling industrial complex on the outskirts of Lagos that takes up an area half the size of Manhattan.

Dangote, 67 years old, expects the $20 billion refinery, which is nearly 10 years overdue and more than double the envisaged cost, to reach full capacity of 650,000 barrels of oil a day by next month.

The refinery is by far the largest in Africa and one of the largest in the world, with the ability to provide about 150% of the fuel consumed by Nigeria's more than 220 million people. However, it won't end decades of costly fuel imports because the nation Dangote says he is trying to build won't sell him enough of the one thing it has lots of: crude oil.

"The mafia in oil and gas is worse than the mafia in drugs," Dangote said during a rare interview with The Wall Street Journal in the back seat of an armored black Lexus SUV, weaving through Lagos with a police escort. The motorcade cuts the travel time between his home and the refinery nearly in half on the megacity's potholed and congested roads.

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Stores Suffer in Online Age

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harder than having all the inventory in one place.

Nearly three-quarters of consumers prefer shopping in physical stores, but only 9% are satisfied with the store experience.

Chief among their complaints is a lack of product variety and availability in stores, according to a 2024 survey of 20,000 people in 26 countries by the IBM Institute for Business Value.

Alanis Castro, a senior at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa., was on the hunt for a pair of **Abercrombie & Fitch** jeans. Yet every time she visited a store, they were out of her size.

The salesperson offered to have them shipped to her, but she wanted to try them on first to avoid paying a $7 return shipping fee if they didn't fit. She also wanted the instant gratification of walking out of a store with her purchase in hand.

"If I wanted to order it online, I would have done that from home," the 21-year-old said.

Abercrombie offers such a wide selection of jeans, from size 23 to 37 in short, long and curvy styles, that it is difficult for stores to carry the entire assortment, a spokeswoman for the retailer said.

Stock levels ballooned during the Covid-19 pandemic because of supply-chain snarls. In a course correction, retailers over the past few years reduced their inventory. Some now acknowledge that they cut their assortment too close to the bone.

"We thought, 'We can do more with a lot less,' and that didn't work out for us," Tom Kingsbury, **Kohl's** then-chief executive, said after the company scaled back popular private-label brands and petite clothing sizes. Kohl's is reversing those moves.

CFOTO/DDP/ZUMA PRESS

Hermès is among the minority of brands that have managed to keep real-world shopping at bricks-and-mortar stores fun as online retail takes over.

"Retailers have pivoted too hard to e-commerce and neglected the in-store experience, and that has got to swing back," said Don Hendricks, chief executive of department-store chain **Belk**.

Belk now holds all of its inventory at its roughly 290 stores, after closing its online fulfillment center in 2022. The move is part of a strategy by Hendricks to improve the in-store experience by ensuring that more customers find what they are looking for when they visit a store.

For now, some retailers are sending shoppers on a wild-goose chase.

Abby Carlos, a 27-year-old media strategist, was on the hunt for a pair of Zara pants that she had seen on TikTok. She visited three Zara stores near her home in Garfield, N.J., but none had the beige color in her size. Ditto for a black maxi dress.

A Zara spokeswoman said shoppers can check in-store availability online and ask salespeople to ship most items to a store.

Carlos chose a different option: She left empty-handed.

'The Monkey' Opens at No. 2

NEON/EVERETT COLLECTION

The R-rated horror film earned $14.2 million.

Estimated Box-Office Figures, Through Sunday

	Film	Distributor	Sales, In Millions: Weekend*	Cumulative	% Change
1.	**Captain America: Brave New World**	Disney	$28.2	$141.2	-68
2.	**The Monkey**	Neon Rated	$14.2	$14.2	—
3.	**Paddington in Peru**	Sony	$6.5	$25.2	-49
4.	**Dog Man**	Universal	$5.9	$78.8	-40
5.	**Ne Zha 2**	CMC Films	$3.1	$14.8	-60

*Friday, Saturday and Sunday in North American theaters

Source: Comscore

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These indexes cite notable references to most parent companies and businesspeople in today's edition. Articles on regional page inserts aren't cited in these indexes.

INDEX TO PEOPLE

Fashion Brands Turn to Literary Cachet

Books have become popular accessory in marketing to project a brainier image

By Katie Deighton

Fashion brands that long made bedfellows with art and music have lately been flirting with a nerdier muse: literature.

J.Crew this month hosted a ticketed "literary salon" with the trans-Atlantic book club Buffy's and introduced a preppy collaboration with the New Yorker. Tiffany & Co. erected billboards filled with quotes on love from writers including Diane Ackerman and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. And a recent ad campaign for Saint Laurent starred Chloë Sevigny, Charlotte Gainsbourg...and Marcel Proust.

The strategy has even spawned a book, "Ten Protagonists," a 54-page collection of short stories written by Ottessa Moshfegh and commissioned by Prada as part of its spring/summer 2025 marketing campaign. Moshfegh, author of novels including "My Year of Rest and Relaxation" and "Eileen," took inspiration for the book's characters from photos of actor Carey Mulligan wearing Prada's latest designs, according to the Italian fashion house.

"Stories of women, invented by a woman, literature here is a tool, to add depth and meaning, to enrich experience," Prada said in a news release.

But unlike most books, Prada's offer was designed to be owned and read by a select few, presented only to guests at events in New York, Tokyo, Milan, Paris and London. In fact, the elevation of paper, ink and intellect among fashion advertisers in general is partly an attempt to project luxury, marketing experts say.

"It's about demonstrating intelligence, demonstrating discernment and demonstrating the value of time, because to have your own time is one of the greatest luxuries in the world," said James Denman, a brand consultant specializing in luxury and fashion. "Reading—not being always online, not always being connected, not having the phone constantly next to you—has come to imply that you are just operating at a different level."

Brands also are using books to keep up with elusive younger consumers.

Physical book sales in the U.S. have generally trended downward since a pandemic-era surge, according to market-research firm Circana. Last year marked the first year of growth for the physical book market since 2021, with unit sales increasing just 1%, Circana said.

But Gen Z readers are loud about their love of books, with social-media literary subcultures #BookTok and #Bookstagram comprising tens of millions of posts and influencing the merchandising strategies of booksellers, who were once thought to be a dying breed. Millennial celebrities including singer Dua Lipa and actor Dakota Johnson also have founded book clubs that reach fans through channels such as Instagram, email and YouTube.

"You always want to find relevance," said Trey Laird, a creative director who works with the fashion brand DKNY. "I try not to over intellectualize it, but this movement is growing—in this age that we live in, where everything's like a second of content, instantly consumed—to find things that last and things that have integrity and a true idea and story and craft to them."

DKNY's most-recent fall campaign starred 23-year-old Kaia Gerber, the model, actor and co-founder of Library Science, an online book club followed by 78,000 Instagram users that last year also partnered with fashion label Dôen. DKNY's ads featured Gerber clutching books in front of the Manhattan skyline and posing on the floor of the trendy bookstore McNally Jackson.

The wider campaign included quotes from books set in New York City, including "Bright Lights, Big City" by Jay McInerney and "Just Kids" by Patti Smith. The fashion line also erected "mini libraries"—cubby holes similar to newspaper-vending machines painted taxicab yellow where people can take and leave free books in London, Milan and New York.

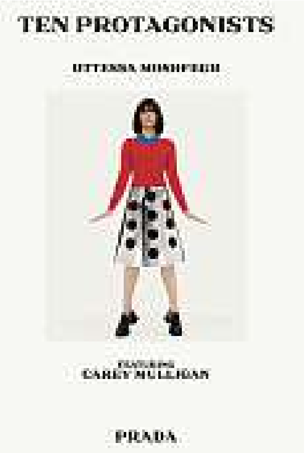
Some brands have spent years building literature into their core identities. Yves Saint Laurent himself was inspired by Proust his entire career, long before last year's ad campaign hit YouTube. Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel was known to have rubbed shoulders with Jean Cocteau and Colette. Her eventual creative successor at Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld, founded the bookshop and library 7L in Paris, which was acquired by the brand in 2021, two years after his death. The fashion house since then has held events dubbed "literary rendezvous" at the space.

Women's workwear label M.M.LaFleur has for most of its 12-year history run interviews with authors and book excerpts in its magazine, The M Dash. In 2020, it began hosting virtual book clubs that eventually morphed into in-store female author events.

Conversation at these meetups gravitates more toward the working lives of the invited writers and the nitty-gritty of their process than the literature they create. The idea isn't to put the authors on a pedestal, but to hold them up as both relatable and inspirational working women, said Maria Costa, M.M.LaFleur's director of brand and integrated marketing.

"When we think of our customer, she's intelligent, but not snooty—it's not her entire personality that she is bookish," Costa said. "I think she's probably a bit too busy for that."

Above, M.M.LaFleur hosts an event with writer Julie Satow. Below left, Ottessa Moshfegh's 'Ten Protagonists' was commissioned by Prada. Below right, a recent DKNY campaign stars model and online book club co-founder Kaia Gerber.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: M.M.LAFLEUR; DKNY; PRADA

Tycoon Tackles Oil In Nigeria

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"If now I am able to do something like these...men that made America: Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Rockefeller...that's the kind of thing that I am dreaming of doing, not only in Nigeria. In Africa," he said.

For the world's 67th-richest man, Dangote lives a remarkably simple life. He resides in the home he built for himself in Lagos in 1990, a custom two-story structure with curved walls, situated on an inconspicuous street behind a silver-and-black gate. There is a large convex fish tank built into the dining-room wall. Boxes and boxes of Turkish sweets crowd the round glass coffee table in the living room, which is surrounded by leather chairs and couches.

A practicing Muslim, Dangote wakes up early to pray. He loves to work out at his home gym, lifting weights in the morning. He watches business news on television and reads books about entrepreneurship, to learn from others' mistakes.

"What keeps me happy is working hard," he said, sporting a navy blue tunic embroidered with the Dangote Group logo, thick black glasses and navy blue Skechers sneakers. "It's not only about making money. It's about leaving a legacy by creating jobs and wealth for other people."

He has endowed his Dangote Foundation, which works to tackle poverty through health, education and economic empowerment, with $1.25 billion and plans to expand it more after the remaining $4 billion in debt from building the refinery is paid down. Part of his legacy, he hopes, will be cheaper fuel for ordinary Nigerians.

Aliko Dangote, Africa's richest man, has spent $20 billion to make his refinery, right, a reality in Nigeria.

ALEXANDRA WEXLER/WSJ (2)

The logic for the refinery was compelling: Nigeria exports almost all of its crude, which is refined abroad and imported back into the country. The lack of local refining capacity has come at a huge cost to the government, which has spent billions of dollars subsidizing fuel for Nigerian consumers and companies, rather than on desperately-needed infrastructure or job creation. The refinery also represents a shift away from centuries of Africa exporting its most precious resources—including gold, diamonds and people—rather than putting them to work at home.

But Nigeria's state oil company, NNPC, has said it can deliver just 300,000 barrels of oil a day—less than half of what Dangote needs to feed his massive refinery. NNPC often supplies even less than that amount, Dangote executives say, despite the country's output of about 1.7 million barrels a day.

The government has forward-sold much of its near-term crude production, and the country gets more than 90% of its foreign exchange from selling oil.

The NNPC didn't return requests for comment.

As the refinery began to produce jet fuel and diesel at the beginning of 2024, Nigerian financial-crimes investigators raided the Dangote Group's headquarters in Lagos, and a few months later, a local regulator accused its founder of seeking an illegal fuel monopoly. He denied the allegations. Dangote also navigated a messy spat over unissued payments from the state oil company that led him to reduce NNPC's stake in the refinery.

"The business case for the refinery makes sense: Nigeria produces crude oil. Dangote wants to end Nigeria's dependence on imported products," said Clementine Wallop, sub-Saharan Africa director at Horizon Engage, a political risk advisory firm. "But this row has shone a light on how complex that seemingly logical proposition can be when you're looking at changing the way business has been done for decades."

Analysts and economists say the refinery has been a squandered opportunity to show the world that Nigeria is open for business. Dangote markets whatever he produces from the oil that the NNPC sells him in the country's local naira currency, which has plummeted more than 70% since Nigerian President Bola Tinubu let it free float in June 2023. The rest of his crude, which he buys in U.S. dollars, he refines and exports abroad.

A spokesman for the Nigerian government didn't return requests for comment.

While petrol prices have edged lower since the refinery began producing gasoline in September, analysts say the exporting of much of Dangote's gasoline has hindered a steeper decline in prices on the local market.

"Corruption is deeply woven into Nigeria's oil sector," said Jervin Naidoo, a political analyst at Oxford Economics Africa. The country ranks 145th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Dangote is "trying to do things a different way, and the government doesn't like that."

Dangote decided to build his own refinery after a failed attempt in 2007 to purchase two of the government's own dilapidated refineries. For more than a decade, the project has been his audacious North Star.

It took 18 months to prepare the land for the monster project. Then the land had to be raised nearly 5 feet to protect it from a rising ocean, which required the equivalent of 6.5 million truckloads of sand, dredged from offshore so as to not disturb local fish populations.

He purchased 320 cranes, built a private seaport and poured 75 miles of concrete road inside the refinery. He laid enough electrical cabling to encircle the earth twice.

The refinery finally began producing diesel and jet fuel early last year, and gasoline in September.

Dangote also faces competition from the Nigerian government, which has spent more than $25 billion refurbishing its own refineries, which began to trickle out fuel at the end of last year.

"I am happy that they have started, because at least I will not be called a monopolist, which is very unfair," Dangote said. Over the past two decades, the government has issued dozens of licenses for refineries.

"I did not stop [other] refineries from being built. I went through hell to build my own," Dangote said.

Now that it is up and running, the refinery is expected to quintuple revenue at Dangote Group to $30 billion this year, Dangote said. Still, he isn't sure he would do it again.

"Building a refinery?" he said. "I would think twice."

QILAI SHEN/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Mate XT smartphones being sold at a Huawei Technologies stores in Shanghai.

iPhone Takes On Rivals

Continued from page B1

bolster other businesses, such as cellular-network infrastructure and computer chips.

As a result, Huawei—which had briefly risen to be a global smartphone leader—saw sales plummet in its home market, China. That downturn benefited Apple, which in 2023 led the Chinese market with a 17.4% share, according to International Data.

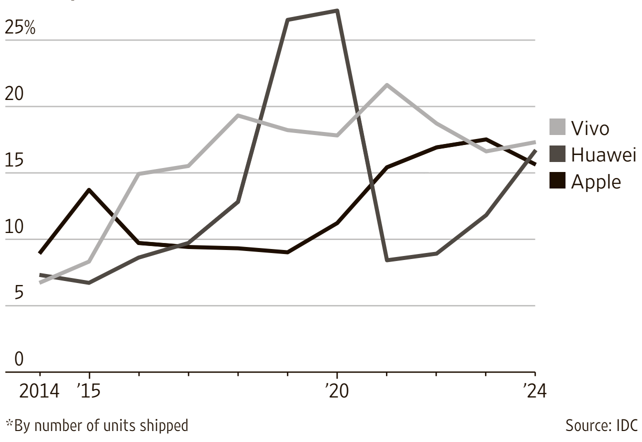
But last year, Apple slipped to 15.5%, falling behind Vivo's 17.2% and Huawei's 16.6%.

One reason is China's economic slowdown has people considering cheaper options, said IDC analyst Will Wong. He said the average selling price of smartphones from Vivo, Huawei and Apple last year was respectively $298, $658 and $1,007.

While Chinese smartphone makers have already released AI features, such as image-editing tools or instantaneous language translation, Chinese regulators haven't yet allowed Apple to do the same with its AI features, called Apple Intelligence.

In China, AI models need government approval before companies can offer them for public use. Apple's global partner, **OpenAI**, doesn't operate in China. Instead, Apple is working with Chinese tech giants **Alibaba** and **Baidu** with the aim of having its AI features approved later this year, people familiar with the matter said.

Smartphone market share in China for Apple and its current two top rivals*



*By number of units shipped

Source: IDC

Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook said in a January earnings call that markets where Apple Intelligence was available on the iPhone 16 had a stronger year-over-year performance versus places where those services weren't available.

China has propped up Huawei amid the U.S. sanctions, funneling billions of dollars to it in the form of preferential buying contracts and subsidies from organizations connected with the Chinese government or its ruling Communist Party.

Those deals have helped Huawei overcome its handicaps. It developed its own phone operating system after U.S. sanctions made it hard for Huawei to keep using Google's Android. And though export controls mean Huawei smartphones must run on less-advanced chips, which would normally result in slower performance and worse battery life, Huawei found a workaround.

"They've been able to, through design ingenuity, overcome the export controls," said G. Dan Hutcheson, vice chairman of TechInsights, a research firm. It studied Huawei's new double-folding phone by disassembling it. Hutcheson said Huawei compensated for the chip handicap with software that squeezed the most out of the hardware.

Combined with improving its supply-chain snags to produce more midrange phones, IDC analyst Wong said, Huawei sold 50% more smartphones last year compared with 2023, while Apple fell 5%.

"Innovation is how Huawei gained market share in China," said Alex Huang, chief marketing officer of Huawei's consumer business. "Even if we have some difficulties because of the U.S. sanctions, every year in the consumer business group, we keep on investing in research and development."

Booking Holdings Sees Travel Strength

By Connor Hart

Consumers keep spending on travel, shrugging off higher prices for everything from hotel rooms to dinners out to indulge in vacations, according to **Booking Holdings** Chief Executive Glenn Fogel.

The head of the travel-booking company said strong demand in recent months isn't likely to let up. "We had a period of high inflation very recently, yet people continued to travel an awful lot," he said on Friday. "Now perhaps, people are getting used to that price level, and it's no longer a sticker shock."

The outlook comes despite signs of waning consumer confidence at the start of President Trump's second term and expectations that inflation will rise again.

Booking, of Norwalk, Conn., reported better-than-expected fourth-quarter earnings on Thursday. Other travel companies including **Expedia** and **Airbnb** posted better-than-expected results in their latest quarter.

One factor helping stretch budgets is a stronger dollar. U.S. travelers are showing strong demand for international trips, Fogel said, with data showing several cities in Europe and Japan as popular vacation spots. U.S. domestic travel to "the usual suspects"—cities including New York, Las Vegas and Orlando, Fla.—also continues to be strong, he added.

The Booking.com and Kayak parent expects international travel demand from the U.S. to remain strong in 2025, with search data predicting an increase in visits to cities including Tromso, Norway, and Tignes, France.

Travelers are looking for more value amid rising costs, Fogel said, citing the company's connected trip transactions, which grew 45% year over year in the recent quarter. Connected trips, such as a flight plus a hotel stay, offer travelers more value, through lower prices or other benefits, such as an upgraded room, Fogel said.

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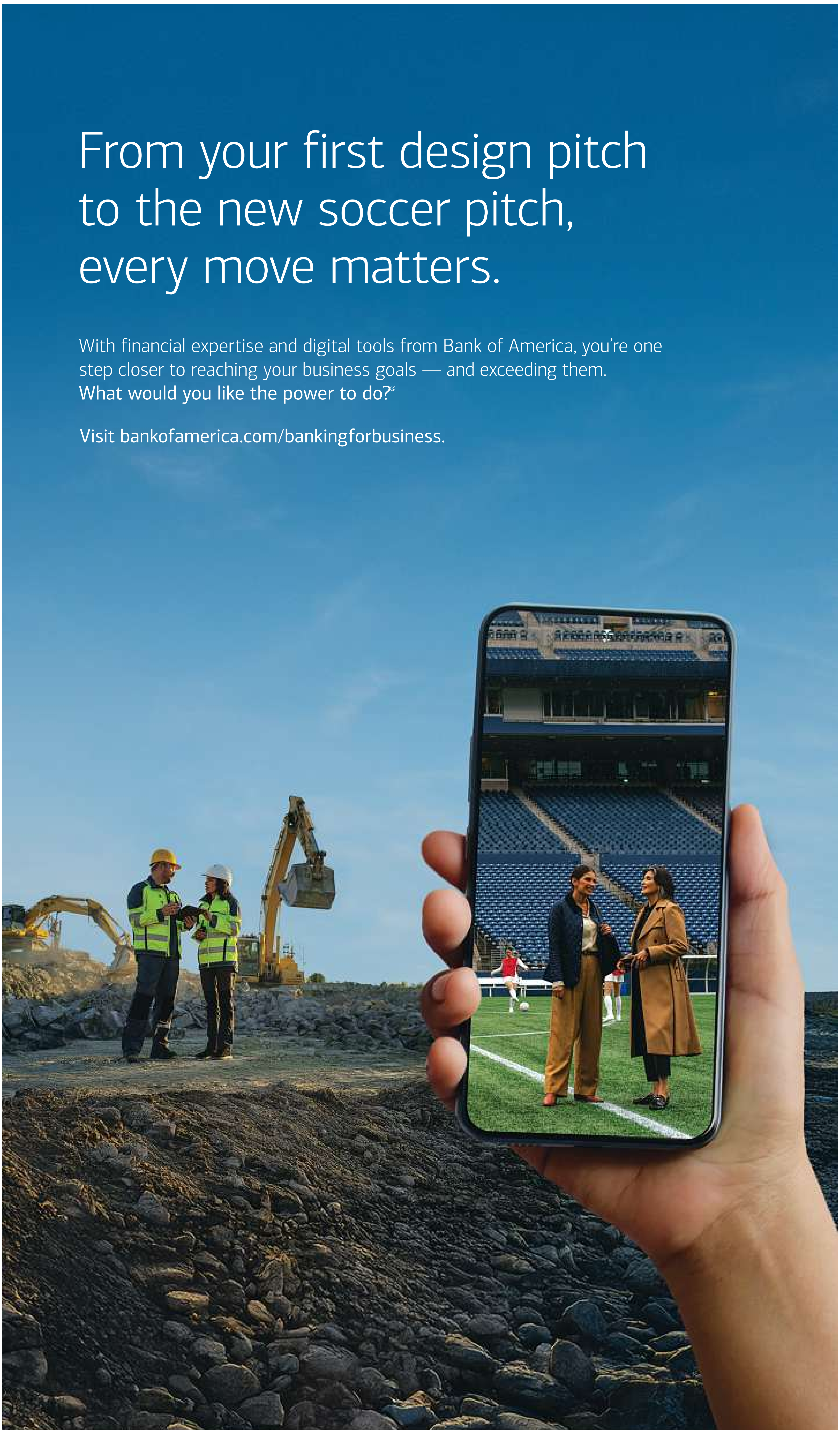

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MARKETS DIGEST

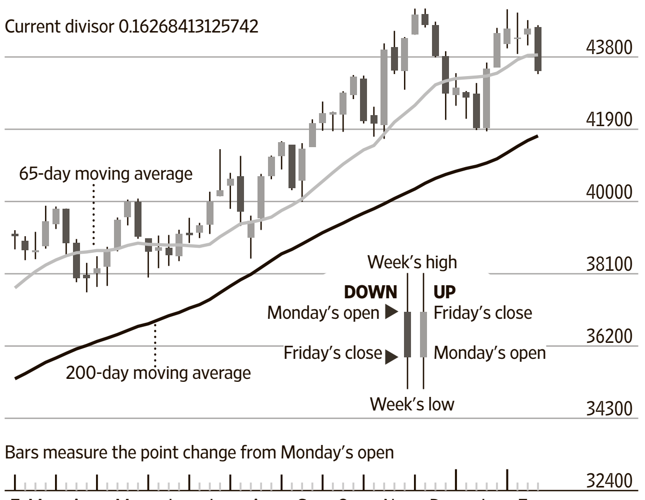
Dow Jones Industrial Average

43428.02 ▼1118.06, or 2.51% last week

High, low, open and close for each of the past 52 weeks

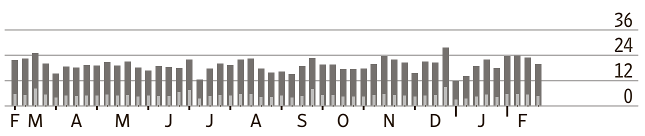
	Last	Year ago
Trailing P/E ratio	26.10	27.06
P/E estimate *	20.42	18.62
Dividend yield	1.87	1.88
All-time high	45014.04, 12/04/24	

Current divisor 0.16268413125742



Bars measure the point change from Monday's open

NYSE weekly volume, in billions of shares



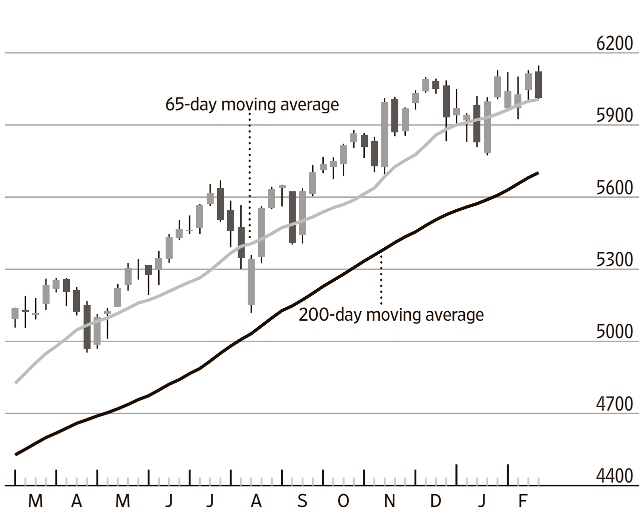
*Weekly P/E data based on as-reported earnings from Birinyi Associates Inc.; †Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

S&P 500 Index

6013.13 ▼101.50, or 1.66% last week

High, low, open and close for each of the past 52 weeks

	Last	Year ago
Trailing P/E ratio *	25.82	22.85
P/E estimate *	22.57	21.25
Dividend yield *	1.25	1.49
All-time high	6144.15, 02/19/25	



Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

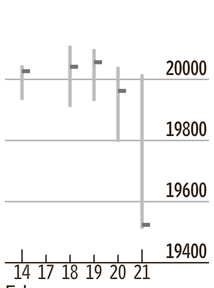
	Latest Week High	Low	Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week Low	Close (●)	High	% chg	% chg YTD	3-yr. ann.
Dow Jones											
Industrial Average	44636.19	43349.33	43428.02	-1118.06	-2.51	37735.11		45014.04	11.0	2.1	8.4
Transportation Avg	16806.49	15853.31	16034.36	-572.17	-3.45	14781.56		17754.38	0.7	0.9	2.3
Utility Average	1025.98	1005.20	1022.73	16.45	1.63	832.73		1079.88	20.5	4.1	3.8
Total Stock Market	61079.41	59501.29	59554.77	-1235.59	-2.03	49376.46		61024.05	17.6	2.0	10.5
Barron's 400	1313.02	1255.23	1257.30	-48.28	-3.70	1092.05		1356.99	13.7	0.4	7.8
Nasdaq Stock Market											
Nasdaq Composite	20110.12	19510.91	19524.01	-502.77	-2.51	15282.01		20173.89	22.0	1.1	13.0
Nasdaq-100	22222.61	21597.16	21614.08	-500.61	-2.26	17037.65		22175.6	20.5	2.9	15.6
S&P											
500 Index	6147.43	6008.56	6013.13	-101.50	-1.66	4967.23		6144.15	18.2	2.2	11.4
MidCap 400	3226.17	3092.82	3101.90	-96.71	-3.02	2825.94		3390.26	8.5	-0.6	5.6
SmallCap 600	1437.85	1375.61	1378.64	-51.20	-3.58	1241.62		1544.66	6.4	-2.1	2.0
Other Indexes											
Russell 2000	2294.59	2194.11	2195.35	-84.63	-3.71	1942.96		2442.03	8.9	-1.6	3.0
NYSE Composite	20240.59	19847.62	19881.53	-248.95	-1.24	17388.09		20272.04	12.9	4.1	6.6
Value Line	628.50	609.85	610.94	-13.48	-2.16	568.94		656.04	3.5	-0.002	-0.8
NYSE Arca Biotech	6223.77	6081.83	6156.76	67.30	1.11	4861.76		6318.63	18.8	7.2	7.6
NYSE Arca Pharma	1012.38	964.83	1006.39	41.56	4.31	912.71		1140.17	-1.7	7.7	8.9
KBW Bank	140.34	133.73	134.07	-4.84	-3.49	95.03		140.59	39.8	5.2	-0.8
PHLX§ Gold/Silver	166.71	158.42	158.57	-2.61	-1.62	102.94		175.74	48.6	15.6	3.7
PHLX§ Oil Service	74.73	70.57	70.74	-2.400	-3.28	68.88		95.25	-12.3	-2.6	1.9
PHLX§ Semiconductor	5366.32	5120.03	5136.59	-24.35	-0.47	4306.87		5904.54	11.3	3.1	14.9
Cboe Volatility	19.03	14.74	18.21	3.44	23.29	11.86		38.57	32.4	5.0	-13.1

§Nasdaq PHLX

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

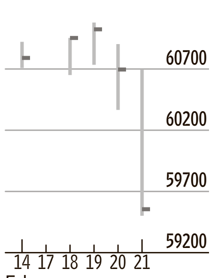
Nasdaq Composite

▼ 502.77, or -2.51% last week



DJ US TSM

▼ 1235.59, or -2.03% last week



International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Latest Week Close	% chg	52-Week Range Low	Close	High	YTD % chg
World	**MSCI ACWI**	874.54	-1.10	743.28		887.72	3.9
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	349.41	0.33	313.52		357.36	7.2
	MSCI World	3843.08	-1.43	3255.62		3910.71	3.6
	MSCI Emerging Markets	1147.30	1.96	1004.17		1187.97	6.7
Americas	**MSCI AC Americas**	2265.60	-1.82	1877.61		2316.90	2.4
Canada	**S&P/TSX Comp**	25147.03	-1.32	21243.77		25808.25	1.7
Latin Amer.	**MSCI EM Latin America**	2073.93	-2.17	1842.59		2585.40	11.9
Brazil	**Bovespa**	127128.06	-0.85	118532.68		137343.96	5.7
Chile	**S&P IPSA**	3921.49	-0.65	3306.43		3947.32	8.5
Mexico	**S&P/BMV IPC**	53738.75	-0.63	48837.72		58092.44	8.5
EMEA	**STOXX Europe 600**	553.85	0.26	487.05		557.17	9.1
	STOXX Europe 50	4734.68	0.71	4234.93		4740.79	9.9
Eurozone	**Euro STOXX**	558.30	-0.35	472.81		564.70	10.5
	Euro STOXX 50	5474.85	-0.34	4571.60		5533.84	11.8
Austria	**ATX**	4048.87	-0.86	3348.13		4146.21	10.5
Belgium	**Bel-20**	4405.39	0.20	3661.42		4432.88	3.3
France	**CAC 40**	8154.51	-0.29	7130.04		8239.99	10.5
Germany	**DAX**	22287.56	-1.00	17339.00		22844.50	11.9
Greece	**Athex Composite**	1618.16	0.86	1341.23		1625.40	10.1
Israel	**Tel Aviv**	2514.57	0.61	1884.16		2552.30	5.0
Italy	**FTSE MIB**	38421.05	1.17	31107		38554	12.4
Netherlands	**AEX**	937.58	-0.95	847.46		948.54	6.7
Norway	**Oslo Bors All-Share**	1720.21	0.85	1456.91		1741.01	4.6
Portugal	**PSI 20**	6710.65	0.85	6055.53		6971.10	5.2
South Africa	**FTSE/JSE All-Share**	88913.81	0.22	71868.07		89061.67	5.7
Spain	**IBEX 35**	12952.00	-0.03	10001.3		13143.9	11.7
Sweden	**OMX Stockholm**	1039.05	-0.67	916.99		1057.57	8.8
Switzerland	**Swiss Market**	12948.60	0.85	11196.67		12949.06	11.6
U.K.	**FTSE 100**	8659.37	-0.84	7624.98		8807.44	6.0
Asia-Pacific	**MSCI AC Asia Pacific**	190.60	1.36	166.07		197.3	4.9
Australia	**S&P/ASX 200**	8296.20	-3.03	7567.3		8555.8	1.7
China	**Shanghai Composite**	3379.11	0.97	2704.09		3489.78	0.8
Hong Kong	**Hang Seng**	23477.92	3.79	16162.64		23477.92	17.0
India	**BSE Sensex**	75311.06	-0.83	72012.05		85836.12	-3.6
Japan	**NIKKEI 225**	38776.94	-0.95	31458.42		42224.02	-2.8
Malaysia	**FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI**	1591.03	-0.04	1530.60		1678.80	-3.1
Singapore	**Straits Times**	3929.94	1.35	3107.10		3934.04	3.8
South Korea	**KOSPI**	2654.58	2.45	2360.58		2891.35	10.6
Taiwan	**TAIEX**	23730.25	2.49	18854.41		24390.03	3.0

Source: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Commodities and Currencies

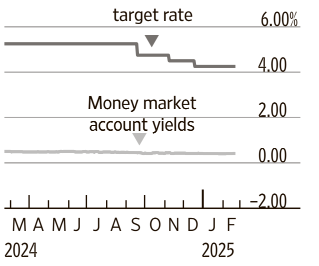
	Last Week Close	Net chg	% Chg	YTD % chg
DJ Commodity	1084.13	7.15	0.66	6.04
FTSE/CC CRB Index	311.22	-0.86	-0.28	4.88
Crude oil, $ per barrel	70.40	-0.31	-0.44	-1.84
Natural gas, $/MMBtu	4.234	0.509	13.66	16.54
Gold, $ per troy oz.	2937.60	54.00	1.87	11.73
U.S. Dollar Index	106.66	-0.05	-0.05	-1.68
WSJ Dollar Index	100.79	-0.33	-0.33	-1.91
Euro, per dollar	0.9560	0.003	0.31	-1.00
Yen, per dollar	149.28	-3.02	-1.98	-5.04
U.K. pound, in dollars	1.26	0.0046	0.37	0.95

	52-Week Low	Close (●)	High	% Chg
DJ Commodity	936.51		1095.84	15.76
FTSE/CC CRB Index	265.48		316.63	14.91
Crude oil, $ per barrel	65.75		86.91	-7.96
Natural gas, $/MMBtu	1.575		4.280	164.13
Gold, $ per troy oz.	2028.50		2940.00	44.10
U.S. Dollar Index	100.38		109.96	2.62
WSJ Dollar Index	95.31		103.61	2.36
Euro, per dollar	0.8934		0.9760	3.46
Yen, per dollar	140.61		161.70	-0.82
U.K. pound, in dollars	1.22		1.34	-0.32

Consumer Rates and Returns to Investor

U.S. consumer rates

A consumer rate against its benchmark over the past year



Selected rates

Money Market/Savings Accts

Bankrate.com avg†:	0.42%
Bask Bank	4.35%
Dallas, TX	877-839-2265
Rising Bank	4.40%
Lemay, MO	888-222-9484
MyBankingDirect	4.45%
Westbury, NY	516-683-4100
BrioDirect	4.55%
Montebello, NY	877-369-2746
Quontic Bank	4.75%
New York, NY	800-908-6600

Interest rate	Yield/Rate (%) Last (●)	Week ago	52-Week Range (%) Low	High	3-yr chg (pct pts)
Federal-funds rate target	4.25-4.50	4.25-4.50	4.25	5.50	4.25
Prime rate*	7.50	7.50	7.50	8.50	4.25
SOFR	4.33	4.33	4.27	5.40	4.28
Money market, annual yield	0.42	0.41	0.40	0.51	0.35
Five-year CD, annual yield	2.85	2.86	2.80	2.89	2.42
30-year mortgage, fixed†	7.17	7.22	6.69	7.72	2.97
15-year mortgage, fixed†	6.59	6.57	6.02	7.11	3.17
Jumbo mortgages, $806,500-plus†	7.19	7.24	6.78	7.79	2.98
Five-year adj mortgage (ARM)†	6.30	6.33	5.88	6.78	3.37
New-car loan, 48-month	7.45	7.31	7.18	7.94	3.94

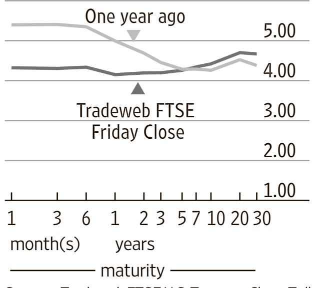
Bankrate.com rates based on survey of over 4,800 online banks. *Base rate posted by 70% of the nation's largest banks.† Excludes closing costs.

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data; Bankrate.com

Benchmark Yields and Rates

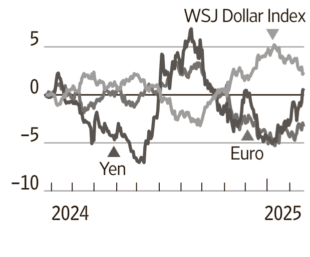
Treasury yield curve

Yield to maturity of current bills, notes and bonds



Forex Race

Yen, euro vs. dollar; dollar vs. major U.S. trading partners



Sources: Tradeweb FTSE U.S. Treasury Close; Tullett Prebon; Dow Jones Market Data

Corporate Borrowing Rates and Yields

Bond total return index	Yield (%) Last	Wk ago	Spread +/- Treasurys, in basis pts, 52-wk Range Last	Low	High	Total Return 52-wk	3-yr
U.S. Treasury, Bloomberg	4.360	4.410				4.15	-1.44
U.S. Treasury Long, Bloomberg	4.720	4.750				2.32	-9.16
Aggregate, Bloomberg	4.770	4.830	31	30	43	5.02	-0.70
Fixed-Rate MBS, Bloomberg	5.060	5.120	32	32	56	5.80	-0.62
High Yield 100, ICE BofA	6.604	6.457	221	191	319	8.82	5.05
Muni Master, ICE BofA	3.387	3.435	2	-6	6	2.18	0.90
EMBI Global, J.P. Morgan	7.411	7.399	292	270	379	8.75	1.38

Sources: J.P. Morgan; S&P Dow Jones Indices; Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices; ICE BofA

New to the Market

Public Offerings of Stock

IPOs in the U.S. Market

None expected this week

Lockup Expirations

Below, companies whose officers and other insiders will become eligible to sell shares in their newly public companies for the first time. Such sales can move the stock's price.

Lockup expiration	Issue date		Symbol	Offer price($)	Offer amt ($ mil.)	Through Friday (%)	Lockup provision
Feb. 23	Aug. 28, '24	Autozi Internet Technology	AZI	4.00	10.0	-84.3	180 days
Feb. 24	Aug. 28, '24	Safe Pro Group	SPAI	5.00	5.1	-19.6	180 days
Feb. 25	Nov. 27, '24	Venu Holding	VENU	10.00	13.8	-1.4	90 days

Sources: LSEG Data and Analytics; Dow Jones Market Data

IPO Scorecard

Performance of IPOs, most-recent listed first

Company SYMBOL IPO date/Offer price	Friday's close ($)	% Chg From Offer price	1st-day close
Wellgistics Health **WGRX** Feb. 21/$4.50	3.81	-15.3	...
Anbio Biotechnology **NNNN** Feb. 19/$5.00	5.77	15.4	...
Northpointe Bancshares **NPB** Feb. 14/$14.50	14.48	-0.1	-0.1
Aardvark Thera **AARD** Feb. 13/$16.00	13.74	-14.1	-4.0
Artius II Acquisiton **AACBU** Feb. 13/$10.00	10.02	0.2	0.2
Karman Hldgs **KRMN** Feb. 13/$22.00	29.33	33.3	-2.4
Maywood Acquisition **MAYAU** Feb. 13/$10.00	10.04	0.4	0.1
SailPoint **SAIL** Feb. 13/$23.00	23.56	2.4	7.1
TEN Hldgs **XHLD** Feb. 13/$6.00	1.45	-75.8	-78.7
Aureus Greenway Hldgs **AGH** Feb. 12/$4.00	5.39	34.8	38.9
Archimedes SPAC Ptnrs II **ATIIU** Feb. 11/$10.00	10.03	0.3	-0.1
Sionna Thera **SION** Feb. 7/$18.00	19.76	9.8	-21.0
Titan America **TTAM** Feb. 7/$16.00	15.69	-1.9	-6.0
EPWK Hldgs **EPWK** Feb. 6/$4.10	4.64	13.2	12.9
FBS Global **FBGL** Feb. 6/$4.50	1.02	-77.3	-70.4
Huachen AI Parking Management **HCAI** Feb. 5/$4.00	3.95	-1.3	2.9
K&F Growth Acquisition II **KFIIU** Feb. 5/$10.00	10.02	0.2	0.1
Plutus Financial Grp **PLUT** Feb. 5/$4.00	4.00	...	...
Infinity Natural Resources **INR** Jan. 31/$20.00	19.68	-1.6	-6.6
Maze Thera **MAZE** Jan. 31/$16.00	12.09	-24.4	-24.2

Sources: Dow Jones Market Data; FactSet

Public and Private Borrowing

Treasurys

Monday, February 24

Auction of 13 and 26 week bills;
announced on February 20; settles on February 27

Tuesday, February 25

Auction of 6 week bill;
announced on February 20; settles on February 27

Auction of 2 year note;
announced on February 20; settles on February 28

Auction of 5 year note;
announced on February 20; settles on February 28

Wednesday, February 26

Auction of 7 year note;
announced on February 20; settles on February 28

Auction of 17 week bill;
announced on February 25; settles on March 4

Thursday, February 27

Auction of 4 and 8 week bills;
announced on February 25; settles on March 4

A Week in the Life of the DJIA

A look at how the Dow Jones Industrial Average component stocks did in the past week and how much each moved the index. The DJIA lost 1,118.06 points, or 2.51%, on the week. A $1 change in the price of any DJIA stock = 6.15-point change in the average. To date, a $1,000 investment on Dec. 31 in each current DJIA stock component would have returned $31,028, or a gain of 3.43%, on the $30,000 investment, including reinvested dividends.

The Week's Action Pct chg (%)	Stock price change	Point chg in average*	Company	Symbol	Close	$1,000 Invested (year-end '24)
7.82	6.49	39.89	**Merck & Co**	MRK	$89.50	$900
4.74	3.46	21.27	**NIKE**	NKE	76.50	1,011
4.53	9.19	56.49	**Honeywell**	HON	211.94	938
4.51	7.34	45.12	**Procter & Gamble**	PG	170.23	1,022
4.32	1.77	10.88	**Verizon**	VZ	42.76	1,088
4.07	11.85	72.84	**Amgen**	AMGN	303.01	1,172
3.94	6.15	37.80	**Johnson & Johnson**	JNJ	162.30	1,131
3.60	2.48	15.24	**Coca-Cola**	KO	71.35	1,146
1.02	1.58	9.71	**Chevron**	CVX	156.92	1,095
0.73	1.73	10.63	**Travelers**	TRV	240.03	996
0.39	0.95	5.84	**Apple**	AAPL	245.55	982
0.08	0.20	1.23	**IBM**	IBM	261.48	1,197
-0.05	-0.22	-1.35	**Microsoft**	MSFT	408.21	970
-1.21	-3.74	-22.99	**McDonald's**	MCD	304.81	1,051
-1.37	-0.89	-5.47	**Cisco**	CSCO	63.98	1,088
-1.49	-5.28	-32.46	**Visa**	V	348.53	1,105
-1.56	-1.72	-10.57	**Walt Disney**	DIS	108.66	976
-2.45	-3.64	-22.37	**3M**	MMM	144.98	1,129
-3.18	-4.42	-27.17	**NVIDIA**	NVDA	134.43	1,001
-3.44	-12.29	-75.55	**Sherwin-Williams**	SHW	344.57	1,014
-3.76	-13.28	-81.63	**Caterpillar**	CAT	340.04	941
-3.94	-7.27	-44.69	**Boeing**	BA	177.15	1,001
-4.47	-12.35	-75.91	**JPMorgan Chase**	JPM	264.24	1,108
-5.03	-15.64	-96.14	**American Express**	AXP	295.40	998
-5.13	-16.74	-102.90	**Salesforce**	CRM	309.80	927
-5.29	-34.95	-214.83	**Goldman Sachs**	GS	625.60	1,093
-5.29	-12.10	-74.38	**Amazon.com**	AMZN	216.58	987
-5.91	-24.20	-148.75	**Home Depot**	HD	385.30	991
-8.90	-9.26	-56.92	**Walmart**	WMT	94.78	1,049
-10.91	-57.09	-350.93	**UnitedHealth Group**	UNH	466.42	922

*Based on Composite price. DJIA is calculated on primary-market price.
Source: Dow Jones Market Data; FactSet.

Currencies

U.S.-dollar foreign-exchange rates in late New York trading

Country/currency	Fri in US$	Fri per US$	US$ vs, YTD chg (%)
Americas			
Argentina peso	.0009	1058.4003	2.7
Brazil real	.1744	5.7336	-7.3
Canada dollar	.7029	1.4227	-1.1
Chile peso	.001061	942.73	-5.2
Colombia peso	.000245	4088.50	-7.2
Ecuador US dollar	1	1	unch
Mexico peso	.0490	20.4234	-1.9
Uruguay peso	.02318	43.1350	-1.3
Asia-Pacific			
Australia dollar	.6358	1.5728	-2.7
China yuan	.1379	7.2510	-0.6
Hong Kong dollar	.1287	7.7698	0.01
India rupee	.01154	86.649	1.3
Indonesia rupiah	.0000613	16302	0.2
Japan yen	.006699	149.28	-5.0
Kazakhstan tenge	.001977	505.92	-3.6
Macau pataca	.1249	8.0080	0.05
Malaysia ringgit	.2263	4.4185	-1.2
New Zealand dollar	.5740	1.7422	-2.5
Pakistan rupee	.00358	279.450	0.4
Philippines peso	.0173	57.882	-0.4
Singapore dollar	.7483	1.3364	-2.1
South Korea won	.0006960	1436.84	-2.8
Sri Lanka rupee	.0033808	295.79	0.9
Taiwan dollar	.03050	32.787	-0.1
Thailand baht	.02980	33.560	-2.2
Vietnam dong	.00003918	25525	0.2
Europe			
Czech Rep. koruna	.04172	23.967	-1.6
Denmark krone	.1403	7.1295	-1.0
Euro area euro	1.0461	.9560	-1.0
Hungary forint	.002595	385.38	-3.0
Iceland krona	.007181	139.26	0.2
Norway krone	.0897	11.1447	-2.1
Poland zloty	.2513	3.9786	-3.7
Sweden krona	.0939	10.6515	-3.8
Switzerland franc	1.1140	.8977	-1.1
Turkey lira	.0275	36.4291	3.0
Ukraine hryvnia	.0240	41.6500	-1.0
UK pound	1.2633	.7916	-0.9
Middle East/Africa			
Bahrain dinar	2.6535	.3769	-0.1
Egypt pound	.0198	50.5808	-0.5
Israel shekel	.2804	3.5666	-2.0
Kuwait dinar	3.2405	.3086	0.1
Oman sul rial	2.5974	.3850	...
Qatar rial	.2747	3.640	-0.1
Saudi Arabia riyal	.2666	3.7503	-0.2
South Africa rand	.0545	18.3598	-2.7

	Close	Net Chg	% Chg	YTD % Chg
WSJ Dollar Index	100.79	0.21	0.21	-1.91

Sources: Tullett Prebon, Dow Jones Market Data

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Buffett Defends Cash Pile

Continued from page B1

Buffett also wrote about Berkshire's practice of not paying dividends, other than on one occasion in 1967. He said the decisions to reinvest Berkshire's money over the years, rather than paying some of it out, have had big results. Berkshire's market value passed $1 trillion last year.

"In a very minor way, Berkshire shareholders have participated in the American miracle by foregoing dividends, thereby electing to reinvest rather than consume," he wrote. "Originally, this reinvestment was tiny, almost meaningless, but over time, it mushroomed, reflecting the mixture of a sustained culture of savings, combined with the magic of long-term compounding."

One more way Berkshire isn't spending its cash is on stock buybacks. The company reported it repurchased no shares in the final three months of 2024, a second consecutive quarter without buybacks. The lack of buybacks suggests Buffett doesn't think Berkshire's stock is cheap.

Berkshire also released its results for 2024, reporting a profit of $89 billion, down from $96.2 billion in 2023. The company's operating earnings, which exclude some investment results, rose to $47.4 billion.

$47.4B
Berkshire Hathaway's operating earnings for 2024

Buffett encourages shareholders to pay attention to operating earnings. Berkshire's net income includes unrealized gains and losses from its stock investments, causing the bottom-line earnings figure to fluctuate when markets are volatile.

Its stock has risen to start the year, with both Class A and Class B shares up about 5.6%, compared with the S&P 500's 2.2% gain. Both Berkshire share classes closed at records in recent days.

DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Home Depot is expected to post per-share profit of $3.04.

THE TICKER | MARKET EVENTS COMING THIS WEEK

Monday

Earnings expected (Estimate/Year Ago)

Diamondback Energy	3.35/4.74
ONEOK	1.51/1.18
Public Storage	2.57/2.21
Realty Income	0.37/0.30
SBA Communications	2.07/1.01
Zoom Communications	1.30/1.42

Tuesday

Consumer Confidence

Jan., previous	104.1
Feb., expected	102.4

Earnings expected (Estimate/Year Ago)

American Tower	1.74/0.18
Home Depot	3.04/2.82
Intuit	2.57/2.63
Keurig Dr Pepper	0.57/0.55
Sempra	1.60/1.13
Workday	1.78/1.57

Wednesday

Short-selling reports
Ratio, days of trading volume of current position, at Jan 31

NYSE	3.6
Nasdaq	2.0

EIA status report
Previous change in stocks in millions of barrels

Crude-oil stocks	up 4.6
Gasoline stocks	down 0.2
Distillates	down 2.1

Mort. bankers indexes

Purch., previous	down 6.0%
Refinan., prev.	down 7.0%

New-home sales

Dec., previous	698,000
Jan., expected	674,000

Earnings expected (Estimate/Year Ago)

Lowe's Cos	1.84/1.77
Nvidia	0.85/0.52
Salesforce	2.61/2.29
Snowflake	0.18/0.35
Synopsys	2.79/3.56
TJX	1.16/1.22

Thursday

Durable-goods orders

Dec., previous	down 2.2%
Jan., expected	up 1.9%

GDP Deflator

4th qtr. adv. est.	up 2.2%
4th qtr. sec. est.	up 2.2%

Gross domestic product:
Percentage change, annual rate

4th qtr. adv. est.	up 2.3%
4th qtr. sec. est.	up 2.3%

Freddie Mac mortgage survey
Previous weekly averages

30-year fixed	6.85%
15-year fixed	6.04%

Initial jobless claims

Previous	219,000
Expected	225,000

EIA report: natural-gas
Previous change in stocks in billions of cubic feet

down 196

Earnings expected (Estimate/Year Ago)

Autodesk	2.14/2.09
Dell Technologies	2.52/2.20
EOG Resources	2.58/3.07
HP	0.74/0.81
Liberty Media	0.38/0.25
Vistra	2.10/(0.60)

Friday

Personal spending

Dec., previous	up 0.7%
Jan., expected	up 0.2%

Personal income

Dec., previous	up 0.4%
Jan., expected	up 0.5%

Chicago PMI

Jan., previous	39.5
Feb., expected	41.1

Earnings expected (Estimate/Year Ago)

Alpha Metallurgical Resources	(0.16)/13.23
Apellis Pharmaceuticals	(0.37)/(0.73)

* FactSet Estimates earnings-per-share estimates don't include extraordinary items (Losses in parentheses) ◆ Adjusted for stock split

Note: Forecasts are from Dow Jones weekly survey of economists

Reid Hoffman Says AI Isn't an 'Arms Race,' But America Needs to Win

NIKKI RITCHER FOR WSJ

Venture capitalist Reid Hoffman argues that the current state of artificial intelligence is similar to the automobile at the start of the 20th century. Scan this code for the latest in WSJ's 'Bold Names' podcast series.

CLOSED-END FUNDS

Listed are the 300 largest closed-end funds as measured by assets. Closed-end funds sell a limited number of shares and invest the proceeds in securities. Unlike open-end funds, closed-ends generally do not buy their shares back from investors who wish to cash in their holdings. Instead, fund shares trade on a stock exchange. **NA** signifies that the information is not available or not applicable. **NS** signifies funds not in existence for the entire period. 12 month yield is computed by dividing income dividends paid (during the previous 12 months for periods ending at month-end or during the previous 52 weeks for periods ending at any time other than month-end) by the latest month-end market price adjusted for capital gains distributions. Depending on the fund category, either 12-month yield or total return is listed.

Source: LSEG

Friday, February 21, 2025

Fund (SYM)	NAV	Close	Prem /Disc	52 wk Ttl Ret
General Equity Funds				
Adams Diversified Eq Inc **ADX**	22.81	20.47	-10.3	23.4
BlackRock En Lg Cap Cr **CII**	21.85	20.69	-5.3	13.1
Central Secs **CET**	56.57	47.25	-16.5	31.9
CohenStrsCEOppFd **FOF**	12.27	12.51	+2.0	23.1
EVTxAdvDivIncm **EVT**	26.21	23.94	-8.7	15.1
GabelliDiv&IncTr **GDV**	28.62	24.97	-12.8	18.3
Gabelli Equity Tr **GAB**	5.46	5.55	+1.6	15.2
GeneralAmer **GAM**	59.77	51.95	-13.1	25.6
JHancockTaxAdvDiv **HTD**	25.22	23.47	-6.9	32.6
Liberty All-Star Equity **USA**	6.97	7.01	+0.6	15.7
Liberty All-Star Growth **ASG**	5.80	5.38	-7.2	8.6
Royce Micro-Cap Tr **RMT**	10.79	9.54	-11.6	12.3
Royce Value Trust **RVT**	16.72	15.71	-6.0	17.9
Source Capital **SOR**	44.61	42.45	-4.8	17.4
Special Opportunities **SPE**	16.99	15.48	-8.9	36.3
Sprott Focus Trust **FUND**	8.55	7.56	-11.6	4.8
SRH Total Return **STEW**	21.35	16.66	-22.0	17.4
Tri-Continental **TY**	36.46	32.59	-10.6	22.3
Specialized Equity Funds				
abrdn Glb Prem Prop **AWP**	3.88	3.99	+2.8	21.2
abrdn Global Infra Inc **ASGI**	19.46	17.99	-7.6	18.9
Adams Natural Resources **PEO**	25.01	22.63	-9.5	17.1
ASA Gold & Prec Met Ltd **ASA**	28.17	25.08	-11.0	81.0
BlackRock Energy & Res **BGR**	14.12	13.66	-3.3	18.8
BlackRock Eq Enh Div **BDJ**	9.32	8.83	-5.3	19.9
BlackRock Enh Glbl Div **BOE**	12.40	11.36	-8.4	19.5
BlackRock Enh Intl Div **BGY**	6.16	5.59	-9.3	12.3
BlackRock ESG Cap All T **ECAT**	17.42	16.55	-5.0	16.8
BlackRock Hlth Sci Term **BMEZ**	16.44	15.84	-3.6	9.5
BlackRock Hlth Sciences **BME**	42.91	40.23	-6.2	1.6
BlackRock Res & Comm **BCX**	10.00	9.18	-8.2	17.6
BlackRock Sci&Tech Term **BSTZ**	23.01	21.02	-8.6	25.3
BlackRock Sci&Tech Trust **BST**	39.71	38.03	-4.2	12.8
BlackRock Utl Inf & Pwr **BUI**	22.94	23.11	+0.7	18.7
CLEARBRIDGE ENGY MDS OPP **EMO**	54.48	48.96	-10.1	41.4
ChnStrInfr **UTF**	24.15	24.66	+2.1	22.7
Cohen&SteersQualInc **RQI**	13.07	12.90	-1.3	18.9
CohenStrs Real Est and I **RLTY**	16.20	15.72	-3.0	22.4
Cohen&Steers TotRet **RFI**	11.75	12.13	+3.2	12.6
CohenStrsREITPrefInc **RNP**	21.35	21.82	+2.2	15.8
Columbia Sel Prm Tech Gr **STK**	31.94	32.44	+1.6	17.0
DNP Select Income **DNP**	9.21	9.45	+2.7	16.8
Duff&Ph Uti&Infra Inc Fd **DPG**	13.25	12.00	-9.4	43.0
EtnVncEqtyInc **EOI**	20.30	20.83	+2.6	27.7
EtnVncEqtyIncoII **EOS**	23.22	23.88	+2.8	29.5
EVRskMnDvsEqInc **ETJ**	9.73	9.12	-6.3	19.6
ETnVncTxMgdBuyWrtInc **ETB**	15.71	14.69	-6.5	19.9
EtnVncTxMgdBuyWrtOpp **ETV**	15.02	14.41	-4.1	21.7
EvTxMnDvsEqInc **ETY**	15.23	15.36	+0.9	28.6
EtnVncTxMgdGlbB **ETW**	9.46	8.62	-8.9	18.5
EVTxMnGblDvEqInc **EXG**	9.27	8.41	-9.3	16.1
First Tr Enhanced Eq **FFA**	21.76	20.73	-4.7	18.3
Gabelli Healthcare **GRX**	11.31	10.11	-10.6	7.0
Gab Utility **GUT**	3.16	5.37	+69.9	21.0
GAMCOGlGold&NatRes **GGN**	4.21	4.15	-1.4	21.4
J Han Finl Opptys **BTO**	35.64	36.17	+1.5	38.1
Neuberger Brmn Engry I&I **NML**	10.05	9.11	-9.4	41.8
Neuberger Nxt Gen Conn **NBXG**	15.37	13.43	-12.6	25.6
NubrgrRlEstSec **NRO**	3.62	3.35	-7.5	12.6
Nuv Dow 30 Dyn Overwrite **DIAX**	17.11	15.26	-10.8	12.6
NuvCorEqAlpha **JCE**	15.90	15.96	+0.4	25.4
Nuveen Nasdaq 100 Dyn Ov **QQQX**	29.62	26.89	-9.2	21.0
Nuv Real Est **JRS**	9.14	8.60	-5.9	22.5
NuvS&P500DynOvFd **SPXX**	18.83	18.27	-3.0	26.7
NuvSP500BuyIncFd **BXMX**	15.52	14.09	-9.2	14.0
NXG Cushing Mdstrm Enrgy **SRV**	44.09	45.85	+4.0	43.2
NXG NextGen Infras Inc **NXG**	46.63	47.57	+2.0	59.1
ReavesUtilityIncome **UTG**	33.63	33.77	+0.4	39.9
Tortoise Enrgy Infra Crp **TYG**	49.33	44.99	-8.8	67.5
Ecofin S&S Impact Term **TEAF**	13.80	12.07	-12.5	16.3
VDivInt&PremStr **NFJ**	14.21	12.75	-10.3	14.1
V Art Int&Tech Opps **AIO**	22.90	24.59	+7.4	40.4
Income & Preferred Stock Funds				
Dividend and Income **BXSY**	20.25	12.82	-36.7	11.5
CalamosStratTot **CSQ**	18.29	17.98	-1.7	21.4
CohenStrsLtdDurPref&Inc **LDP**	22.01	20.87	-5.2	15.7
CohenStrsSelPref&Income **PSF**	21.66	20.31	-6.2	12.7
CohenStrsTaxAvPreSecs&I **PTA**	20.88	19.79	-5.2	12.4
FirstTrIntDurPref&Inc **FPF**	19.35	18.78	-2.9	18.0
JHanPrefInc **HPI**	16.29	17.26	+6.0	16.2
JHPrefIncII **HPF**	16.14	17.02	+5.5	14.3
HnckJPfdInco III **HPS**	14.52	15.38	+5.9	11.9
J Han Prm **PDT**	13.75	12.93	-6.0	23.5
LMP CapInco **SCD**	17.69	17.12	-3.2	30.0
Nuveen Pref & Inc Opp **JPC**	8.01	8.00	-0.1	23.4
Nuveen Pref Sec & Inc Op **JPI**	19.98	20.02	+0.2	15.7
Nuveen Var Rate P&I **NPFD**	20.07	19.10	-4.8	21.3
TCW Strat Income **TSI**	5.12	4.87	-4.9	12.8
Convertible Sec's. Funds				
AdvntCnvrtbl&IncFd **AVK**	12.41	12.08	-2.7	14.4
CalamosConvHi **CHY**	10.58	11.06	+4.5	3.1
CalmosConvOp **CHI**	10.00	11.06	+10.6	12.0
HiIncBd **PCF**	7.15	6.78	-5.2	16.3
V Conv & Inc **NCV**	15.30	13.93	-9.0	20.4
V Conv & Inc II **NCZ**	13.67	12.57	-8.0	24.5
V Div Inc & Conv **ACV**	22.59	22.00	-2.6	6.5
V Eqty & Conv Inc **NIE**	26.10	24.64	-5.6	22.0
World Equity Funds				
abrdn Emg Mkts Eq Inc **AEF**	6.19	5.50	-11.1	16.6
abrdn Glbl Dyn Div **AGD**	11.10	10.28	-7.4	20.7
abrdn Tot Dyn Div **AOD**	9.60	8.70	-9.4	19.9
Allspring Gl Div Oppty **EOD**	5.85	5.21	-10.9	26.0
BlackRock Cap Alloc Term **BCAT**	16.21	15.36	-5.2	18.1
Calamos GloDynInc **CHW**	7.79	6.97	-10.5	22.7
EV TxAdvGlbDivInc **ETG**	20.76	18.97	-8.6	14.9
EtnVncTxAdvOpp **ETO**	28.12	26.00	-7.5	14.2
Highland Global Alloc **HGLB**	12.60	8.08	-35.9	16.0
India Fund **IFN**	15.97	15.25	-4.5	-14.9
Japan Smaller Cap **JOF**	9.57	7.96	-16.8	7.8
LazardGlbTotRetInc **LGI**	18.24	16.90	-7.3	17.9
Mexico **MXF**	18.19	14.43	-20.7	-16.6
MS ChinaShrFd **CAF**	15.54	12.92	-16.9	1.6
MS India **IIF**	27.21	23.47	-13.7	21.8
Nuveen Multi-Asset Inc **NMAI**	13.73	12.60	-8.2	17.5
Nuveen Rl Asst Inc & Gro **JRI**	13.20	12.80	-3.0	25.2
NYLI CBRE Glbl Inf Meg T **MEGI**	14.01	12.65	-9.7	11.1
Templeton Dragon **TDF**	11.68	9.71	-16.9	24.5
Templeton Em Mkt **EMF**	15.56	13.31	-14.5	18.7

Fund (SYM)	NAV	Close	Prem /Disc	12 Mo Yld
U.S. Mortgage Bond Funds				
BlckRk Income **BKT**	11.80	11.69	-0.9	9.1
Investment Grade Bond Funds				
Angel Oak FS Inc Trm **FINS**	14.06	13.40	-4.7	9.8
BlRck Core Bond **BHK**	10.38	10.46	+0.8	8.4
BR Credit Alloc Inc **BTZ**	11.29	10.74	-4.9	9.3
InvescoBond **VBF**	16.29	15.52	-4.7	5.3
J Han Income **JHS**	12.13	11.24	-7.3	4.8
MFS Intmdt **MIN**	2.77	2.68	-3.2	0.0
Loan Participation Funds				
BR Debt Strategy **DSU**	10.52	10.70	+1.7	11.0
BR F/R Inc Str **FRA**	12.73	12.96	+1.8	11.3
BlackRock Floatng Rt Inc **BGT**	12.42	12.69	+2.2	11.3
Blackstone Lng-Sh Cr Inc **BGX**	13.20	12.82	-2.9	9.5
BS SFR 2027 T **BSL**	14.65	14.18	-3.2	9.2
BS St Cr 2027 Tm **BGB**	12.77	12.45	-2.5	9.0
EtnVncFltRteInc **EFT**	13.08	13.14	+0.5	9.98
EV SenFlRtTr **EFR**	12.79	12.93	+1.1	10.1
FT/Sr Fltg Rte Inc 2 **FCT**	10.73	10.38	-3.3	11.1
Highland Oppty & Income **HFRO**	12.01	5.58	-53.5	8.0
InvDYCrOpp:AX **VTA**	10.92	NA	NA	NA
InvSnrIncTr **VVR**	3.87	4.13	+6.7	12.5
Nuveen Credit Strat Inc **JQC**	5.82	5.53	-5.0	11.5
NuvFloatRateIncFd **JFR**	8.95	8.49	-5.1	11.8
High Yield Bond Funds				
abrdn Inc Credit Str **ACP**	6.36	6.14	-3.5	18.9
AllianceBernGlHiIncm **AWF**	11.41	11.01	-3.5	7.3
Allspring Income Oppty **EAD**	7.41	7.03	-5.1	8.8
Barings Glb SD HY Bd **BGH**	16.01	16.01	0.0	9.5
BR Corporate HY **HYT**	9.69	9.81	+1.2	9.4
BlackRock Ltd Dur Inc **BLW**	14.02	14.24	+1.6	9.2
BNY Mellon Hi Yield Str **DHF**	2.76	2.61	-5.4	7.9
Brookfield Real Asst Inc **RA**	14.70	13.42	-8.7	7.8
CrSuisHighYld **DHY**	2.21	2.16	-2.3	8.6
CSAM Income Fd **CIK**	2.98	2.94	-1.3	9.0
DoubleLine Inc Sol **DSL**	12.56	12.70	+1.1	10.3
DoubleLine Yld Opps **DLY**	16.08	16.18	+0.6	9.0
First Trust HY Opp:2027 **FTHY**	15.20	14.56	-4.2	10.4
Franklin Univ **FT**	8.29	7.58	-8.6	6.7
KKR Income Opportunities **KIO**	13.10	12.64	-3.5	11.5
NeubHgYldStrt **NHS**	7.70	7.79	+1.2	14.1
New Amer Hi Inc **HYB**	8.36	8.20	-1.9	5.8
Nuveen Global High Inc **JGH**	13.88	13.36	-3.7	9.3
PGIM Global High Yield **GHY**	13.27	13.25	-0.2	9.7
PGIM High Yield Bond **ISD**	14.08	14.19	+0.8	9.1
PGIM Sh Dur Hi Yld Opp **SDHY**	17.72	16.59	-6.4	7.8
PioneerHiIncm **PHT**	8.33	7.88	-5.4	8.3
WstAstHIF II **HIX**	4.45	4.39	-1.3	13.7
Western Asset Hi Inc Opp **HIO**	4.10	4.01	-2.2	10.7
Western Asset Hi Yld D O **HYI**	12.15	12.05	-0.8	9.4
Other Domestic Taxable Bond Funds				
Allspring Multi-Sector **ERC**	9.89	9.37	-5.3	8.6
Ares Dynamic Crdt Alloc **ARDC**	14.90	15.30	+2.7	9.2
BlackRock Mlt-Sctr Inc **BIT**	14.47	14.60	+0.9	10.0
BlackRock Tax Muni Bd **BBN**	17.34	16.60	-4.3	6.7
DoubleLine:Oppor Crdt Fd **DBL**	15.40	15.70	+1.9	8.3
EVLmtDurIncm **EVV**	10.49	10.22	-2.6	9.2
Franklin Ltd Dur Income **FTF**	6.90	6.65	-3.6	11.1
FS Credit Opportunities **FSCO**	NA	NA	NA	10.6
J Han Investors **JHI**	14.89	14.13	-5.1	7.7
MFS Charter **MCR**	6.75	6.40	-5.2	0.0
NuvCorePlusImpact **NPCT**	11.73	10.85	-7.5	12.2
Nuveen Taxable Muni Inc **NBB**	16.35	15.85	-3.1	6.7
PIMCO Corp & Inc Oppty **PTY**	11.74	14.74	+25.6	9.6
PIMCO Corp & Inc Strat **PCN**	11.88	13.75	+15.7	9.9
PIMCOHiInco **PHK**	4.70	4.90	+4.3	11.6
PIMCO IncmStrFd **PFL**	8.08	8.49	+5.1	11.5
PIMCO IncmStrFd II **PFN**	7.19	7.55	+5.0	11.4
Putnam Mas Int **PIM**	3.44	3.33	-3.2	7.9
Putnam Prem Inc **PPT**	3.80	3.63	-4.5	8.6
Western Asset Dvsfd Inc **WDI**	15.22	15.07	-1.0	11.7
Western Asset Inf-Lk Inc **WIA**	9.11	8.21	-9.9	7.3
Western Asset Inf-Lk O&I **WIW**	9.70	8.71	-10.2	8.4
World Income Funds				
abrdn AP IncFd **FAX**	16.84	15.71	-6.7	12.7
MS EmMktDomDebt **EDD**	5.23	4.83	-7.6	10.8
PIMCO Access Income **PAXS**	15.38	16.17	+5.1	11.1
PIMCO Dynamic Inc Strat **PDX**	27.25	25.05	-8.1	5.3
PIMCO Dynamic Income **PDI**	17.13	19.56	+14.2	13.6
PIMCO Dynamic Inc Opp **PDO**	13.12	13.87	+5.7	11.0
PIMCO Stratg Inc **RCS**	4.53	6.33	+39.7	9.3
Templtn Glbl Inc **SABA**	10.00	9.19	-8.1	NE
Templeton Em Inc **TEI**	5.84	5.43	-7.0	10.4
WstAstEmergDebt **EMD**	10.72	9.85	-8.1	10.3
National Muni Bond Funds				
AllBerNatlMunInc **AFB**	12.46	11.21	-10.0	3.8
BlackRock 2037 Muni Trg **BMN**	25.87	25.45	-1.6	4.4
BlckRk Inv Q Mun **BKN**	12.64	11.68	-7.6	5.9
BlackRock Muni 2030 Tgt **BTT**	24.08	21.45	-10.9	2.6
BlackRock Muni **BFK**	11.15	10.19	-8.7	5.8
BlackRock Muni II **BLE**	11.78	10.75	-8.7	5.9
BlckRk Muni Inc Qly **BYM**	12.29	11.25	-8.5	5.7
BR MuniAssets Fd **MUA**	11.66	11.17	-4.2	6.0
BR MH Qly 2 **MUE**	11.32	10.35	-8.6	5.4
BR MuniHoldngs **MHD**	13.21	12.11	-8.3	5.4
BR MuniVest Fd **MVF**	7.82	7.30	-6.6	5.3
BR MuniVest 2 **MVT**	12.04	10.90	-9.5	5.7
BR MuniYield Fd **MYD**	11.77	10.77	-8.5	5.9
BR MuniYield Qlty **MQY**	12.79	11.90	-7.0	5.8
BR MuniYld Qlty2 **MQT**	11.29	10.36	-8.2	5.8
BR MuniYld Qly 3 **MYI**	12.19	11.20	-8.1	5.9
BNY Mellon Muni Bd Infra **DMB**	12.02	10.78	-10.3	3.4
BNY Mellon Muni Income **DMF**	7.62	7.14	-6.3	2.9
BNY Mellon Str Muni Bond **DSM**	6.69	6.00	-10.3	3.7
BNY Mellon Strat Muni **LEO**	7.02	6.28	-10.5	3.7
DWS Muni Inc **KTF**	9.88	9.68	-2.1	7.0
EVMuniBd **EIM**	11.12	10.24	-7.9	5.7
EVMuniIncm **EVN**	11.17	10.72	-4.0	5.7
EVNatMuniOpp **EOT**	18.41	17.08	-7.2	4.7
InvAdvMuIncTrII **VKI**	9.51	8.96	-5.8	6.6
Invesco MuniOp **OIA**	6.38	6.11	-4.2	5.6
InvescoMuOppTr **VMO**	10.62	9.83	-7.4	6.6
InvescoMuTr **VKQ**	10.65	9.96	-6.5	6.6
InvescoQual Inc **IQI**	10.71	10.05	-6.2	6.7
InvTrInvGrMu **VGM**	10.97	10.20	-7.0	6.6
InvescoValMunInc **IIM**	13.09	12.40	-5.3	6.7
NeubrgrBrm **NBH**	11.82	10.75	-9.1	5.4
Nuveen AMT-Fr Mu Val **NUW**	15.13	13.93	-7.9	3.8
Nuveen AMT-Fr Qlty Mun I **NEA**	12.20	11.53	-5.5	6.8
Nuveen AMT-Fr Mu CI **NVG**	13.44	12.73	-5.3	6.7
Nuveen Dyn Muni Opp **NDMO**	10.98	10.49	-4.5	7.1
Nuveen Mu Crdt Opps **NMCO**	11.76	11.11	-5.5	6.7
Nuv Muni Credit Income **NZF**	13.31	12.64	-5.0	6.8
NuvMuniHiIncOpp **NMZ**	11.11	11.12	+0.1	6.3
Nuveen Muni Val **NUV**	9.28	8.88	-4.3	4.1
Nuveen Quality Muni Inc **NAD**	12.66	11.88	-6.2	6.8
Nuveen Sel TF **NXP**	14.46	14.70	+1.7	4.0
NYLI MacKay DT Muni Opp **MMD**	16.63	15.65	-5.9	4.6
PIMCO MuniInc **PMF**	9.18	9.13	-0.5	5.5
PIMCOMuniIncII **PML**	8.54	8.55	+0.1	5.6
Pimco Muni III **PMX**	7.88	7.46	-5.3	5.3
PioneerHiIncAdv **MAV**	9.14	8.64	-5.5	4.5
PionrMuniHiIncOppty **MIO**	12.81	12.07	-5.8	4.9
PioneerMunHiIcm **MHI**	9.98	9.39	-5.9	4.3
Putnam Mgd Inc **PMM**	6.83	6.35	-7.0	4.5
Putnam Muni Opp **PMO**	11.48	10.70	-6.8	3.9
RiverNorth Flx Mu Inc II **RFMZ**	15.35	14.24	-7.2	7.4
RiverNorth Mgd Dur Mun I **RMM**	16.24	15.15	-6.7	7.3
Western Asset Mgd Muni **MMU**	11.35	10.47	-7.8	6.1
Single State Muni Bond				
BlackRock CA Mun **BFZ**	12.51	11.34	-9.4	5.9
BR MH CA Qly Fd Inc **MUC**	12.20	11.01	-9.8	5.5
BR MH NJ Qly **MUJ**	12.79	11.56	-9.6	5.4
BR MH NY Qly **MHN**	11.68	10.50	-10.1	5.3
BR MuniYld MI Qly **MIY**	12.74	11.61	-8.9	5.0
BR MuniYld NY Qly **MYN**	11.30	10.17	-10.0	5.5
BR MuniYld PA Qly **MPA**	12.76	11.62	-8.9	6.0
BlackRock NY Mun **BNY**	11.61	10.51	-9.5	5.2
EVCAMuniBd **EVM**	10.13	9.36	-7.6	5.1
Eaton Vance NY Muni Bd **ENX**	10.46	9.69	-7.4	5.0
InvCaValMuIncTr **VCV**	10.95	11.04	+0.8	6.0
InvPAValMuIncTr **VPV**	11.47	10.54	-8.1	6.4
InvTrInvGrNYMu **VTN**	11.59	10.65	-8.1	6.7
Nuveen CA AMT-F Qual MI **NKX**	12.72	12.70	-0.2	6.3
Nuveen CA Val **NCA**	9.29	8.64	-7.0	4.0
NuveenCAQtyMuInc **NAC**	12.23	11.44	-6.5	6.8
NuvNJ Qual Muni Inc **NXJ**	13.16	12.20	-7.3	6.6
Nuveen NY AMT/Fr Qual MI **NRK**	11.54	10.63	-7.9	6.9
Nuveen NY Val **NNY**	8.95	8.29	-7.4	4.2
Nuveen NY Qual Muni Inc **NAN**	12.01	11.73	-2.3	6.6
Nuveen PA Qual Muni Inc **NQP**	12.84	11.65	-9.3	6.8
Nuveen VA Qlty Mun Inc **NPV**	12.11	12.38	+2.2	5.9
PIMCO CA **PCQ**	10.32	9.34	-9.5	4.7
PIMCOCAMuniII **PCK**	6.59	5.92	-10.2	4.5
Pimco CA Muni III **PZC**	7.61	6.86	-9.9	5.2

Fund (SYM)	NAV	Close	Prem /Disc	52 wk Ttl Ret
General Equity Funds				
Alternative Strategies:I	15.12	NA	NA	5.8
First Trust Hdg Strat;A	11.26	NA	NA	8.9
First Trust Hdg Str;I	11.32	NA	NA	9.7
Specialized Equity Funds				
Accordant ODCE Index;A	9.30	NA	NA	-0.6
Accordant ODCE Index;I	9.33	NA	NA	-0.3
Accordant ODCE Index;Y	9.33	NA	NA	-0.3
Apollo Diversified RE:A	25.26	NA	NA	5.8
Apollo Diversified RE:C	23.52	NA	NA	4.9
Apollo Diversified RE:I	25.87	NA	NA	6.0
ARK Venture	30.85	NA	NA	12.5
ArrowMark Financial Corp **BANX**	NA	20.99	NA	NA
Bluerock Total Inc+ RE:A	26.15	NA	NA	-3.7
Bluerock Total Inc+ RE:C	24.14	NA	NA	-4.4
Bluerock Total Inc+ RE:I	26.94	NA	NA	-3.4
Bluerock Total Inc+ RE:L	25.65	NA	NA	-3.9
Bluerock Total Inc+ RE:M	24.34	NA	NA	-4.1
CASCADE PRIVATE CAP;I	17.23	NA	NA	NA
CBRE GlbRlEst **IGR**	5.08	5.22	+2.8	3.1
CIM RA&C A	22.54	NA	NA	2.9
CIM RA&C C	21.75	NA	NA	2.1
CIM RA&C I	22.80	NA	NA	3.1
CIM RA&C L	22.26	NA	NA	2.6
Clarion Partners REI D	11.65	NA	NA	4.4
Clarion Partners REI I	11.66	NA	NA	4.8
Clarion Partners REI S	11.64	NA	NA	3.8
Clarion Partners REI T	11.64	NA	NA	3.8
Connetic Venture CA;I	10.21	NA	NA	NS
First Tr Real Assets;A	9.13	NA	NA	NS
First Tr Real Assets;I	9.13	NA	NA	2.5
Forum RE Income;Founders	9.72	NA	NA	11.8
Forum RE Income;I	9.72	NA	NA	11.7
Forum RE Income;K	9.70	NA	NA	NS
GS Real Est Div Inc:A	8.06	NA	NA	0.9
GS Real Est Div Inc:C	8.05	NA	NA	0.1
GS Real Est Div Inc:I	8.53	NA	NA	1.2
GS Real Est Div Inc:L	8.07	NA	NA	0.8
GS Real Est Div Inc:P	8.54	NA	NA	1.2
GS Real Est Div Inc:W	8.23	NA	NA	1.0
HMLTN LN PRIV INFRA;I	NA	NA	NA	NS
HMLTN LN PRIV INFRA;R	NA	NA	NA	NS
HMLTN LN PRIV INFRA;Y	NA	NA	NA	NS
JACKSON REAL ASSETS;I	10.54	NA	NA	NS
MEKETA INFRSTRCTR;I	26.64	NA	NA	6.7
MEKETA INFRSTRCTR;III	26.64	NA	NA	6.8
NexPointRlEstStrat;A	15.90	NA	NA	1.9
NexPointRlEstStrat;C	16.12	NA	NA	1.1
NexPointRlEstStrat;Z	16.13	NA	NA	2.1
PENDER REAL ESTATE CR;A	10.07	NA	NA	NS
PENDER REAL ESTATE CR;I1	10.08	NA	NA	8.2
PENDER REAL ESTATE CR;I2	10.08	NA	NA	8.4
PIMCO FLEXIBLE REI;F	10.50	NA	NA	NS
PIMCO Flexible REI;Inst	10.50	NA	NA	8.3
Principal Real Asst A	25.70	NA	NA	4.6
Principal Real Asst Ins	25.85	NA	NA	4.9
Principal Real Asst Y	26.16	NA	NA	5.1
Redwood Rl Est;I	25.20	NA	NA	8.1
The Private Shares;A	42.20	NA	NA	7.6
The Private Shares;I	43.00	NA	NA	7.9
The Private Shares;L	41.43	NA	NA	7.3
Thirdline Real EstateI	10.01	NA	NA	5.9
USQ Core Real Estate:I	22.20	NA	NA	-2.5
USQ Core Real Estate:L	22.28	NA	NA	-2.5
Versus Cap RE:I	24.47	NA	NA	1.5
Versus Capital Real Asst	28.00	NA	NA	4.5
Wildermuth:I	3.31	NA	NA	-59.6
WILSHIRE PRIV ASST;INST	12.45	NA	NA	NA
Income & Preferred Stock Funds				
ALPHA ALT ASST;A	6.35	NA	NA	5.9
Alpha Alternative Assets	6.42	NA	NA	6.3
Calamos L/S Eqty and DI **CPZ**	16.94	15.27	-9.9	6.7
Denali Strctr Rtrn Strat	10.99	NA	NA	NS
First Trust Alt Opps;A	26.68	NA	NA	9.4
First Trust Alt Opps;A	27.12	NA	NA	10.2
Flat Rock Opportunity	18.80	NA	NA	13.8
Lord Abbett Corp Opps:A	9.37	NA	NA	10.8
Lord Abbett Corp Opps:I	9.37	NA	NA	11.7
ONEASCENT CAP OPPTYS	10.28	NA	NA	NS
Variant Altrntv Inc:Inst	27.17	NA	NA	4.6
Variant Impact;Instl	27.76	NA	NA	6.8
Versus Capital Infra Inc	10.01	NA	NA	NS
Convertible Sec's. Funds				
Calmos Dyn Conv and Inc **CCD**	19.07	24.04	+26.1	12.6
World Equity Funds				
BEACON POINTE MLT-ALT;I	10.39	NA	NA	NS
CalamosGlbTotRet **CGO**	11.87	11.52	-2.9	17.9
Cantor Fitzgerald SI:A	12.46	NA	NA	23.8
Cantor Fitzgerald SI:C	12.26	NA	NA	22.8
Cantor Fitzgerald SI:I	12.50	NA	NA	24.1
CANTOR FITZGERALD INFR;S	12.61	NA	NA	NS
Sweater Cashmere	22.04	NA	NA	4.8
Primark Priv Eq Inv:I	14.24	NA	NA	12.0
Thornburg Inc Bldr Opps **TBLD**	19.25	17.44	-9.4	14.0
VirtusTotalRetFd **ZTR**	6.62	5.85	-11.6	17.4

Fund (SYM)	NAV	Close	Prem /Disc	12 Mo Yld
U.S. Mortgage Bond Funds				
Arca US Treasury	1.00	NA	NA	1.1
CATALYST STRAT INC OPPS	10.16	NA	NA	NS
Ellington Inc Opp:A	8.95	NA	NA	14.5
Ellington Inc Opp:M	8.81	NA	NA	15.0
Loan Participation Funds				
1WS Credit Income;A2	19.06	NA	NA	8.4
1WS Credit Income;Inst	19.59	NA	NA	8.2
Apollo Diversified Cd:A	22.20	NA	NA	8.6
Apollo Diversified Cd:C	22.20	NA	NA	7.8
Apollo Diversified Cd:F	22.20	NA	NA	10.5
Apollo Diversified Cd:I	22.20	NA	NA	8.8
Apollo Diversified Cd:L	22.19	NA	NA	8.3
Apollo Diversified Cd:M	22.20	NA	NA	8.2
Axonic Alternative I;A	20.21	NA	NA	8.9
Axonic Alternative I Ins	20.37	NA	NA	8.9
Bluerock HI Inst Crd:A	23.40	NA	NA	12.1
Bluerock HI Inst Crd:C	23.40	NA	NA	12.0
Bluerock HI Inst Crd:F	23.39	NA	NA	12.2
Bluerock HI Inst Crd:I	23.41	NA	NA	12.1
BNYM Alcntr Glb MS Cr Fd	89.80	NA	NA	NA
CliffwaterClFd;I	10.79	NA	NA	11.1
CliffwaterElFd;I	10.98	NA	NA	11.1
CNR Strategic Credit	7.01	NA	NA	23.4
Floating-Rate Opps;A	10.23	NA	NA	9.7
Floating-Rate Opps;I	10.22	NA	NA	9.99
Floating-Rate Opps;U	10.23	NA	NA	9.2
Equalize Community Dev	9.38	NA	NA	3.4
FedProj&TrFinanceTendr	10.12	NA	NA	6.7
Flat Rock Core Income	20.48	NA	NA	10.0
Flat Rock Enhanced Inc	21.65	NA	NA	11.5
InvDYCrOpp:A	10.92	NA	NA	11.0
InvDYCrOpp:R6	10.93	NA	NA	11.4
InvDYCrOpp:Y	10.93	NA	NA	11.3
Invesco Sr Loan A	5.70	NA	NA	9.2
Invesco Sr Loan C	5.71	NA	NA	8.4
Invesco Sr Loan IB	5.70	NA	NA	9.4
Invesco Sr Loan IC	5.70	NA	NA	9.3
Invesco Sr Loan Y	5.70	NA	NA	9.4
Lord Abbett FR Hi Inc:A	10.03	NA	NA	10.1
Lord Abbett FR Hi Inc:I	10.03	NA	NA	10.6
Monachil Credit Income:I	10.03	NA	NA	10.2
Nomura Alt Inc;I	9.91	NA	NA	9.7
Nuveen Enh CLO Inc:A1	20.15	NA	NA	NS
Nuveen Enh CLO Inc:A2	20.15	NA	NA	NS
Nuveen Enh CLO Inc:I	20.16	NA	NA	NS
Octagon XAI CLO Inc;A	25.78	NA	NA	NS
Octagon XAI CLO Inc;I	25.81	NA	NA	NS
OFS Credit Company **OCCI**	NA	7.05	NA	NA
PC PCAAM AI;I	10.15	NA	NA	NS
PRINCIPAL PRVT CR I;A	10.32	NA	NA	NS
PRINCIPAL PRVT CR I;INS	10.34	NA	NA	NS
PRINCIPAL PRVT CR I;Y	10.35	NA	NA	NS
SEI Alternative Income:F	10.38	NA	NA	7.1
SEI Alternative Income:Y	10.38	NA	NA	7.3
Voya Enhanced Sec Inc:A	10.13	NA	NA	NS
Voya Enhanced Sec Inc:C	10.13	NA	NA	NS
Voya Enhanced Sec Inc:I	10.13	NA	NA	NS
Yieldstreet Alt Inc	NA	NA	NA	7.0
High Yield Bond Funds				
AB CarVal Credit Opp;Adv	9.84	NA	NA	NS
AB CarVal Credit Opp;A	9.84	NA	NA	NS
AB CarVal Credit Opp;C	9.84	NA	NA	NS
AB CarVal Credit Opp;U	9.84	NA	NA	NS
Opprtnstc Crdt Intrvl;I	11.62	NA	NA	9.0
PIMCO Flexible Cr I;A-1	7.14	NA	NA	8.9
PIMCO Flexible Cr I;A-2	7.14	NA	NA	8.9
PIMCO Flexible Cr I;A-3	7.14	NA	NA	8.7
PIMCO Flexible Cr I;A-4	7.14	NA	NA	8.7
PIMCO Flexible Cr I;Inst	7.14	NA	NA	9.4
Polen Credit Opps;Inst	9.74	NA	NA	9.5
Other Domestic Taxable Bond Funds				
AFA Private Credit;Fndr	9.30	NA	NA	11.0
AFA Private Credit;Inst	9.31	NA	NA	11.0
Alternative Credit Inc:A	9.28	NA	NA	9.2
Alternative Credit Inc:C	9.40	NA	NA	8.2
Alternative Credit Inc:I	9.29	NA	NA	9.5
Alternative Credit Inc:L	9.29	NA	NA	8.9
Alternative Credit Inc:W	9.28	NA	NA	9.2
AMG Pantheon Crdt Soln;I	10.73	NA	NA	NS
AMG Pantheon Crdt Soln;M	10.74	NA	NA	NS
AMG Pantheon Crdt Soln;S	10.83	NA	NA	NS
Angel Oak Str Crdt:FI	21.19	NA	NA	8.8
Angel Oak Str Crdt:Inst	21.17	NA	NA	8.8
BR Credit Strat;A	8.47	NA	NA	8.7
BR Credit Strat;Inst	8.45	NA	NA	9.4
BR Credit Strat;J	8.46	NA	NA	NS
BR Credit Strat;U	8.46	NA	NA	8.7
BR Credit Strat;W	8.48	NA	NA	8.7
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt;A	25.07	NA	NA	8.8
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt;C	24.91	NA	NA	8.1
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt;I	25.33	NA	NA	9.1
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt;L	25.16	NA	NA	8.6
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt;U	25.21	NA	NA	8.3
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt:U2	25.18	NA	NA	8.3
CION Ares Dvsfd Crdt;W	25.35	NA	NA	8.6
CNR Select Strategies	15.52	NA	NA	0.0
Diamond Hill Sec Cr;I	10.33	NA	NA	NS
Diamond Hill Sec Cr;R	10.33	NA	NA	NS
First Eagle Crdt Opps A	22.91	NA	NA	10.3
First Eagle Crdt Opps A2	22.88	NA	NA	9.8
First Eagle Crdt Opps I	22.77	NA	NA	10.6
First Trust Private Cr;A	10.22	NA	NA	10.6
First Trust Private Cr;I	10.26	NA	NA	10.3
Franklin BSP Pvt Cr:A	10.71	NA	NA	8.5
Franklin BSP Pvt Cr:Adv	10.73	NA	NA	8.9
FS Credit Income;A	12.31	NA	NA	8.2
FS Credit Income;I	12.35	NA	NA	8.4
FS Credit Income;T	12.34	NA	NA	7.9
FS Credit Income;U	12.29	NA	NA	7.7
FS Credit Income;U-2	12.40	NA	NA	7.6
J HANCOCK CQS ASSETBS;A	20.17	NA	NA	NS
J HANCOCK CQS ASSETBS;I	20.17	NA	NA	NS
J HANCOCK CQS ASSETBS;U	20.16	NA	NA	NS
KKR CREDIT OPPTY;D	22.20	NA	NA	9.3
KKR CREDIT OPPTY;I	23.91	NA	NA	9.5
KKR CREDIT OPPTY;T	23.69	NA	NA	8.7
KKR CREDIT OPPTY;U	22.80	NA	NA	8.7
MA SPECIALTY CREDIT IN;S	25.08	NA	NA	NS
NIAGARA INCOME OPPORTNTS	10.15	NA	NA	9.8
Palmer Square Opp Inc	18.07	NA	NA	8.5
World Income Funds				
BlueBay Destra Itl E:A	22.70	NA	NA	10.3
BlueBay Destra Itl E:I	22.73	NA	NA	10.5
BlueBay Destra Itl E:L	22.67	NA	NA	10.0
BlueBay Destra Itl E:T	22.55	NA	NA	9.9
BOOSTER INCOME OPPTYS	10.05	NA	NA	NS
Calamos-Aksia ACI:A	10.64	NA	NA	7.8
Calamos-Aksia ACI:C	10.62	NA	NA	7.1
Calamos-Aksia ACI:I	10.64	NA	NA	8.0
Calamos-Aksia ACI:M	10.64	NA	NA	7.3
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:A	8.52	NA	NA	9.5
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:I	8.55	NA	NA	9.9
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:L	8.51	NA	NA	9.3
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:M	8.55	NA	NA	9.2
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:N	8.51	NA	NA	10.0
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:U	8.56	NA	NA	9.2
Carlyle Tact Pvt Cred:Y	8.52	NA	NA	9.4
Fid MS Cr;A	NA	NA	NA	6.3
Fid MS Cr;C	NA	NA	NA	5.6
Fid MS Cr;I	NA	NA	NA	6.6
Fid MS Cr;L	NA	NA	NA	6.1
Jackson Credit Opps:I	10.34	NA	NA	8.3
Lord Abbett Cred Opps Fd	8.98	NA	NA	8.8
Lord Abbett Cred Opps Fd	8.98	NA	NA	9.5
Lord Abbett Crd Op:U	8.98	NA	NA	8.8
Oaktree Dvsfd Income;D	9.29	NA	NA	8.3
PIMCO Flexible EM I;Inst	8.60	NA	NA	8.4
National Muni Bond Funds				
Ecofin Tax-Exempt Prv Cr	7.80	NA	NA	10.2
Lind Cap Pt Mun Cred Inc	8.86	NA	NA	5.3
Lord Abbett Muni Opps:A	10.23	NA	NA	NS
Lord Abbett Muni Opps:I	10.23	NA	NA	NS
Nuveen En HY Muni Bd:A1	7.82	NA	NA	4.9
Nuveen En HY Muni Bd:A2	7.83	NA	NA	5.2
Nuveen En HY Muni Bd:I	7.82	NA	NA	5.7
NYLI MacKay Mu IO;A1	10.15	NA	NA	NS
NYLI MacKay Mu IO;A2	10.15	NA	NA	NS
NYLI MacKay Mu IO;A3	10.15	NA	NA	NS
NYLI MacKay Mu IO;I	10.15	NA	NA	NS
PIMCO Flex Mun Inc;A-3	10.33	NA	NA	3.5
PIMCO Flex Mun Inc:A1	10.33	NA	NA	3.8
PIMCO Flex Mun Inc;A2	10.33	NA	NA	3.8
PIMCO Flex Mun Inc;Inst	10.33	NA	NA	4.3
ROCKEFELLER MUNI OPPS;I	20.18	NA	NA	NS
Single State Muni Bond				
PIMCO CA FMI;A-1	10.22	NA	NA	2.7
PIMCO CA FMI;Inst	10.22	NA	NA	3.3

Insider-Trading Spotlight

Trading by 'insiders' of a corporation, such as a company's CEO, vice president or director, potentially conveys new information about the prospects of a company. Insiders are required to report large trades to the SEC within two business days. Here's a look at the biggest individual trades by insiders, based on data received by LSEG Data and Analytics on February 21, and year-to-date stock performance of the company

KEY: B: beneficial owner of more than 10% of a security class **CB:** chairman **CEO:** chief executive officer **CFO:** chief financial officer **CO:** chief operating officer **D:** director **DO:** director and beneficial owner **GC:** general counsel **H:** officer, director and beneficial owner **I:** indirect transaction filed through a trust, insider spouse, minor child or other **O:** officer **OD:** officer and director **P:** president **UT:** unknown **VP:** vice president Excludes pure options transactions

Biggest weekly individual trades

Based on reports filed with regulators this past week

Date(s)	Company	Symbol	Insider	Title	No. of shrs in trans (000s)	Price range ($) in transaction	$ Value (000s)	Close ($)	Ytd (%)
Buyers									
Feb. 14	**J.B. Hunt Transport Services**	**JBHT**	J. Robo	D	59	166.57-169.48	**9,999**	167.71	-1.7
Feb. 12-14	**CompoSecure**	**CMPO**	J. Cote	DOI	647	15.01-15.83	**9,986**	16.11	5.1
Feb. 12-14			T. Knott	DOI	647	15.01-15.83	**9,986**		
Feb. 13-14	**Millrose Properties**	**MRP**	D. Richman	CEO	265*	22.09-23.00	**6,002**	23.80	n.a.
Feb. 14	**Ivanhoe Electric**	**IE**	R. Friedland	ODI	817	6.25	**5,104**	6.37	-15.6
Feb. 13-14	**AppFolio**	**APPF**	A. Wolf	DI	14	214.29-216.05	**2,903**	211.66	-14.2
Feb. 12	**Amentum Holdings**	**AMTM**	S. Demetriou	OD	100	20.81	**2,081**	20.00	-4.9
Feb. 18	**Wynn Resorts**	**WYNN**	P. Satre	DI	22	92.18	**2,046**	90.76	5.3
Feb. 14-18	**MBX Biosciences**	**MBX**	C. Gordon	DOI	191	9.85-10.84	**2,021**	10.88	-41.0
Feb. 18	**CVS Health**	**CVS**	M. Mahoney	DI	30	66.70	**2,001**	63.48	41.4
Feb. 18	**Bruker**	**BRKR**	F. Laukien	CEO	20	50.75-51.23	**1,018**	50.82	-13.3
Feb. 12	**Oracle**	**ORCL**	C. Moorman	DI	6	172.35	**948**	167.81	0.7
Feb. 13	**American International Group**	**AIG**	J. Rice	DI	10	77.00	**770**	76.65	5.3
Feb. 12-13	**Golden Matrix Group**	**GMGI**	A. Milovanovic	B	300	1.85	**555**	2.15	8.6
Feb. 14-18			A. Milovanovic	B	200	1.85-1.86	**371**		
Feb. 13	**Pfizer**	**PFE**	R. Blaylock	D	19	25.65	**499**	26.30	-0.9
Feb. 13-14	**NGL Energy Partners**	**NGL**	H. Krimbill	CEO	100*	4.32-4.80	**463**	4.77	-4.4
Feb. 18	**Hanesbrands**	**HBI**	R. Moran	D	75	6.01-6.02	**450**	6.14	-24.6
Sellers									
Feb. 13	**Zurn Elkay Water Solutions**	**ZWS**	A. Jalazo	FOI	8,913	33.60	**299,460**	34.88	-6.5
Feb. 13			A. Katz	FOI	8,913	33.60	**299,460**		
Feb. 20	**JPMorgan Chase & Co.**	**JPM**	J. Dimon	CEOI	866	269.84	**233,777**	264.24	10.2
Feb. 11-12	**Doximity**	**DOCS**	J. Tangney	CEO	1004*	74.86-78.86	**75,694**	72.37	35.5
Feb. 13-14	**MACOM Technology Solutions Holdings**	**MTSI**	J. Ocampo	DOI	361	123.05-124.04	**44,508**	120.65	-7.1
Feb. 18-19			J. Ocampo	DOI	337	124.08-124.13	**41,816**		
Feb. 12	**Charles Schwab**	**SCHW**	W. Bettinger	CB	465	81.87-82.66	**38,058**	80.44	8.7
Feb. 14	**Airbnb**	**ABNB**	B. Chesky	CEO	231	160.39-163.41	**37,190**	146.07	11.2
Feb. 14			N. Blecharczyk	H	183	158.00	**28,926**		
Feb. 12			B. Chesky	CEO	190	140.50-141.09	**26,739**		
Feb. 13	**Robinhood Markets**	**HOOD**	B. Bhatt	DI	522	62.00-62.87	**32,740**	51.60	38.5
Feb. 12-13	**DoorDash**	**DASH**	A. Fang	DI	150	196.42-205.55	**30,072**	199.94	19.2
Feb. 14-18			A. Fang	DI	100	205.60-214.02	**21,167**		
Feb. 13-14	**Johnson Controls International**	**JCI**	G. Oliver	CEO	326	88.35-89.55	**28,950**	85.28	8.0
Feb. 12	**TransDigm Group**	**TDG**	K. Stein	CEOI	20	1335.71-1366.11	**27,082**	1290.13	1.8
Feb. 12-14	**Tempus AI**	**TEM**	E. Lefkofsky	CEO	244	70.02-87.37	**18,981**	68.09	101.7
Feb. 12-14	**Pitney Bowes**	**PBI**	K. Wolf	DI	1,605	9.66-10.66	**15,853**	10.32	42.5
Feb. 14	**Meta Platforms**	**META**	M. Zuckerberg	CEOI	20	726.68-740.71	**14,446**	683.55	16.7

* Half the transactions were indirect ** Two day transaction
p - Pink Sheets

Insider Buying and selling by sector

Based on actual transaction dates in reports received this past week

Sector	Buying	Selling	Sector	Buying	Selling
Basic Industries	6,608,767	18,653,192	**Finance**	7,800,218	216,486,761
Capital Goods	1,733,936	54,441,451	**Health care**	6,068,941	111,935,759
Consumer durables	100,195	15,216,549	**Public Utilities**	588	16,777,403
Consumer non-durables	449,899	37,479,026	**Technology**	6,322,296	317,702,699
Consumer services	22,624,202	128,617,105	**Transportation**	9,999,474	9,584,975
Energy	562,373	5,931,781			

Sources: LSEG Data and Analytics; Dow Jones Market Data

Borrowing Benchmarks | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Money Rates

February 21, 2025

Key annual interest rates paid to borrow or lend money in U.S. and international markets. Rates below are a guide to general levels but don't always represent actual transactions.

Inflation

	Jan. Index level	Chg From (%) Dec. '24	Jan. '24
U.S. consumer price index			
All items	**317.671**	0.65	3.0
Core	**323.842**	0.57	3.3

International rates

	Latest	Week ago	52-Week High	Low
Prime rates				
U.S.	**7.50**	7.50	8.50	7.50
Canada	**5.20**	5.20	7.20	5.20
Japan	**1.625**	1.625	1.625	1.475
Policy Rates				
Euro zone	**2.90**	2.90	4.50	2.90
Switzerland	**1.00**	1.00	2.25	1.00
Britain	**4.50**	4.50	5.25	4.50
Australia	**4.10**	4.35	4.35	4.10
Overnight repurchase				
U.S.	**4.37**	4.38	5.45	4.00

U.S. government rates

	Latest	Week ago	52-Week High	Low
Discount	**4.50**	4.50	5.50	4.50
Federal funds				
Effective rate	**4.3400**	n.a.	5.3400	4.3300
High	**4.4700**	n.a.	5.6500	4.4700
Low	**4.3200**	n.a.	5.3300	4.3000
Bid	**4.3200**	n.a.	5.3300	4.3200
Offer	**4.3500**	n.a.	5.3600	4.3300
Treasury bill auction				
4 weeks	**4.245**	4.250	5.285	4.230
13 weeks	**4.225**	4.225	5.255	4.195
26 weeks	**4.220**	4.185	5.170	4.110

Other short-term rates

	Latest	Week ago	52-Week high	low
Call money	**6.25**	6.25	7.25	6.25
Commercial paper (AA financial)				
90 days	**4.33**	n.a.	5.37	4.26
Secured Overnight Financing Rate	**4.33**	4.33	5.40	4.27

	Latest	Value Traded	52-Week High	Low
DTCC GCF Repo Index				
Treasury	**4.380**	31.300	5.471	4.286
MBS	**4.384**	48.608	5.526	4.294

Weekly survey

	Latest	Week ago	Year ago
Freddie Mac			
30-year fixed	**6.85**	6.87	6.90
15-year fixed	**6.04**	6.09	6.29

Notes on data:

U.S. prime rate is the base rate on corporate loans posted by at least 70% of the 10 largest U.S. banks, and is effective December 19, 2024. **Other prime rates** aren't directly comparable; lending practices vary widely by location; **Discount rate** is effective December 19, 2024. **Secured Overnight Financing Rate** is as of February 20, 2025. **DTCC GCF Repo Index** is Depository Trust & Clearing Corp.'s weighted average for overnight trades in applicable CUSIPs. Value traded is in billions of U.S. dollars. **Federal-funds rates** are Tullett Prebon rates as of 5:30 p.m. ET.

Sources: Federal Reserve; Bureau of Labor Statistics; DTCC; FactSet; Tullett Prebon Information, Ltd.

Cash Prices | wsj.com/market-data/commodities

Friday, February 21, 2025

These prices reflect buying and selling of a variety of actual or "physical" commodities in the marketplace—separate from the futures price on an exchange, which reflects what the commodity might be worth in future months.

	Friday
Energy	
Coal,C.Aplc.,12500Btu,1.2SO2-r,w	**76.500**
Coal,PwdrRvrBsn,8800Btu,0.8SO2-r,w	**14.200**
Metals	
Gold, per troy oz	
Engelhard industrial	**2932.00**
Handy & Harman base	**2934.15**
Handy & Harman fabricated	**3256.91**
LBMA Gold Price AM	***2953.05**
LBMA Gold Price PM	***2932.05**
Krugerrand,wholesale-e	**3057.57**
Maple Leaf-e	**3086.97**
American Eagle-e	**3086.97**
Mexican peso-e	**3552.72**
Austria crown-e	**2884.76**
Austria phil-e	**3086.97**
Silver, troy oz.	
Engelhard industrial	**32.9800**
Handy & Harman base	**32.6650**
Handy & Harman fabricated	**40.8310**
LBMA spot price	***£26.2200**
(U.S.$ equivalent)	***33.0600**
Coins,wholesale $1,000 face-a	**25062**
Other metals	
LBMA Platinum Price PM	***976.0**
LBMA Palladium Price PM	***985.0**
Platinum,Engelhard industrial	**980.0**
Palladium,Engelhard industrial	**990.0**
Aluminum, LME, $ per metric ton	***2720.0**
Copper,Comex spot	**4.5600**
Iron Ore, 62% Fe CFR China-s	***109.5**
Steel, HRC USA, FOB Midwest Mill-s	***850.0**
Battery/EV metals	
BMI Lithium Carbonate, EXW China, =99.5%-v,w	**10475**
BMI Lithium Hydroxide, EXW China, =56.5% -v,w	**9550**
BMI Cobalt sulphate, EXW China, >20.5% -v,w	**3562**
BMI Nickel Sulphate, EXW China, >22%-v,k	**3563**
BMI Flake Graphite, FOB China, -100 Mesh, 94-95% -v,m	**435**
Fibers and Textiles	
Burlap,10-oz,40-inch NY yd-n,w	**0.8800**
Cotton,1 1/16 std lw-mdMphs-u	**0.6534**
Cotlook 'A' Index-t	***78.30**
Hides,hvy native steers piece fob-u	**n.a.**
Wool,64s,staple,Terr del-u,w	**n.a.**
Grains and Feeds	
Bran,wheat middlings, KC-u,w	**100**
Corn,No. 2 yellow,Cent IL-bp,u	**4.6500**
Corn gluten feed,Midwest-u,w	**126.2**
Corn gluten meal,Midwest-u,w	**439.1**
Cottonseed meal-u,w	**n.a.**
Hominy feed,Cent IL-u,w	**116**
Meat-bonemeal,50% pro Mnpls-u,w	**275**
Oats,No.2 milling,Mnpls-u	**4.0925**
Rice, Long Grain Milled, No. 2 AR-u,w	**n.a.**
Sorghum,(Milo) No.2 Gulf-u	**n.a.**
SoybeanMeal,Cent IL,rail,ton48%-u,w	**301.80**
Soybeans,No.1 yllw IL-bp,u	**10.0700**
Wheat,Spring14%-pro Mnpls-u	**8.0175**
Wheat,No.2 soft red,St.Louis-u	**5.9750**
Wheat - Hard - KC (USDA) $ per bu-u	**6.2925**
Wheat,No.1soft white,Portld,OR-u	**6.3750**
Food	
Beef,carcass equiv. index	
choice 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u	**300.50**
select 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u	**288.77**
Broilers, National comp wtd. avg.-u,w	**1.2555**
Butter,AA Chicago-d	**2.4150**
Cheddar cheese,bbl,Chicago-d	**180.00**
Cheddar cheese,blk,Chicago-d	**190.00**
Milk,Nonfat dry,Chicago lb.-d	**124.00**
Coffee,Brazilian,Comp-y	**3.9478**
Coffee,Colombian, NY-y	**4.0444**
Eggs,large white,Chicago-u,w	**8.2950**
Flour,hard winter KC-p	**16.90**
Hams,17-20 lbs,Mid-US fob-u	**n.a.**
Hogs,Iowa-So. Minnesota-u	**87.22**
Pork bellies,12-14 lb MidUS-u	**1.8042**
Pork loins,13-19 lb MidUS-u	**0.9592**
Steers,Tex.-Okla. Choice-u	**199.00**
Steers,feeder,Okla. City-u,w	**306.75**
Fats and Oils	
Degummed corn oil, crude wtd. avg.-u,w	**n.a.**
Grease,choice white,Chicago-h	**0.5100**
Lard,Chicago-u	**n.a.**
Soybean oil,crude;Centl IL-u,w	**0.4556**
Tallow,bleach;Chicago-h	**0.5400**
Tallow,edible,Chicago-u	**n.a.**

KEY TO CODES: A=ask; B=bid; BP=country elevator bids to producers; C=corrected; D=CME; E=Manfra,Tordella & Brookes; H=American Commodities Brokerage Co; K=bi-weekly; M=monthly; N=nominal; n.a.=not quoted or not available; P=Sosland Publishing; R=SNL Energy; S=Platts-TSI; T=Cotlook Limited; U=USDA; V=Benchmark Mineral Intelligence; W=weekly; Y=International Coffee Organization; Z=not quoted. *Data as of 2/20

Source: Dow Jones Market Data

Drug Led To Insider Trading

Continued from page B1

causes in abusers.

"I got an Adderall prescription to be able to work long hours and stay focused," the now-43-year-old Femenia said. "But it changed the person that I was while I was on it. This is a no-joke drug. It's medical-grade meth."

Since getting out of prison in 2018, Femenia has built a life in the suburbs with his wife and two children and launched a real-estate lending business.

But Femenia says his crimes will always be a Google search away. Instead of burying the past, he wants to warn others about how prescription-drug abuse can upend lives and destroy careers.

"I blame myself for what happened," he said. "I was the one who willingly took Adderall. But I honestly don't think I would have gotten into trouble and made those choices if I didn't take it."

JOE CARROTTA FOR WSJ

John Femenia served about three years in prison for insider trading. He says he developed the scheme while abusing Adderall.

PowerPoint jockey

Femenia grew up on New York's Long Island and was a good child by his own account. He was an Eagle Scout who enrolled in the Merchant Marine Academy. After graduation, he served in the Navy reserves and spent years working on ships and boats in the Pacific Ocean. While working in the engine room of an oil tanker, he grew interested in finance and decided to go to business school.

At Columbia Business School, Femenia set his sights on Wall Street. His classmates warned him about the long hours in investment banking and talked about using Adderall (an amphetamine) to stay focused and work hard.

Femenia started working as an investment banker in 2009 at Wells Fargo, first in North Carolina and then in New York City. The hours were immediately difficult for him. He says he was a "PowerPoint jockey" doing the grunt work of an investment banker from 9 a.m. until midnight, at least six days a week.

Even though he didn't think he had attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, Femenia soon got an Adderall prescription through a doctor who didn't ask too many questions.

"I got psyched out after seeing people work these 18-hour days and all-nighters and I thought, 'I can't do this without help,'" he said.

About a year later, he found another doctor who wrote him a second prescription. He was taking around 80 milligrams a day—twice the maximum daily dosage.

He knew he was addicted and tried to quit several times, but the withdrawal symptoms were so strong that he couldn't get out of bed and get to work. He kept on taking the pills.

The Adderall made him frenetic, aggressive and willing to take new risks—a common occurrence when it comes to drug abuse.

"Once someone has an addiction, the part of their brain that helps them make good decisions literally gets turned off," said Samuel Glazer, a psychiatrist in Manhattan who has counseled several Wall Street bankers about substance abuse.

> **Femenia began using Adderall, popular on Wall Street, to work long hours.**

Insider-trading ring

One night in 2010, while working late and high on Adderall, Femenia looked through some of the bank's internal folders on a shared computer drive. He saw that project folders that were changed over the weekend were likely to be tied to live deals.

"My mind on Adderall would go off on these tangents and come up with elaborate schemes, and that's really how it all began," Femenia said.

At the time, Femenia was on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars on a childhood friend's mortgage he had co-signed because the friend was struggling to pay.

Femenia told his friend to buy the shares of a company that he thought had a good chance of eventually being acquired. He enlisted another friend from college to buy the stock, too. Femenia's friends netted north of $500,000 in profit from trading on the deal, according to court records.

Shell company

The scheme went on for about two years, and Femenia's childhood friend used a shell company with a corporate bank account to buy and sell stock. Femenia says he didn't know the full scale of the ring and received hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks.

The biggest score was in 2012, when Femenia found out about Chicago Bridge & Iron's $3 billion purchase of Shaw Group. Around 10 people connected to Femenia bought Shaw stock and call options in the weeks before the deal, according to court records. The day the deal was announced in July, the Shaw Group's stock doubled. All in, the ring netted $7 million in profit, court records show.

After the announcement, Femenia's childhood friend and the friend's girlfriend wired more than $1 million to a precious-metals dealer in Manhattan to buy 550 gold bars. They flew to Las Vegas the next day and laundered more than $100,000 through a casino.

But the FBI was on their trail. Agents showed up on Femenia's doorstep and told him they knew he was sharing confidential information and asked him to help their investigation. Femenia first slammed the door on them. Then he started cooperating.

Femenia was arrested in December 2012 and later pleaded guilty to five charges of fraud and money laundering in 2013. He reported for a five-year sentence at a federal penitentiary in 2015. Eight other co-conspirators did jail time, too.

Getting clean

When he checked in for his first day in jail, he brought a bottle of Adderall with him, but correctional staff told him he couldn't keep the drugs. He said he spent two weeks in jail withdrawing from the drug, and it took over a year to stop craving it. Eventually, he shaved off 20 months through drug rehab and standard good behavior.

He said he still finds it hard to talk about his past with his friends and family because he was determined to start a new life for himself and his wife after prison.

"Every single day I reflect on what I did," Femenia said. "I still get angry with myself. But I figured out how to make money again, and I figured out how to do it against really bad odds. And I'm happy about that."

He said his message to people who are taking Adderall only to try to thrive on Wall Street is to stop before it is too late.

"Taking this stuff on a consistent basis will alter your personality and decision-making," he said. "Do whatever you need to do to get off it. It doesn't matter if you need to take a couple of weeks off. Do whatever you need to do."

HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

Nippon-U.S. Steel Deal Still Has a Chance

As unlikely as it might seem, a victory by the Japanese company can't be ruled out

No matter how dead **Nippon Steel**'s bid to buy **U.S. Steel** might look, don't rule out a victory by the Japanese suitor just yet.

President Trump opposes the deal. But he also changed his mind about TikTok, cryptocurrencies, Elon Musk and the timing of tariffs. He still could change his mind about this proposed sale, however faint that possibility might seem at the moment.

He could even declare, after further review, that approving the sale is "common sense," as he likes to say.

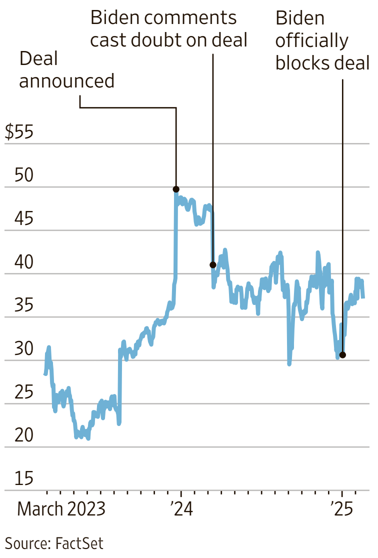
There could be great upside for U.S. Steel shares, now around $37, if he does. Nippon Steel's offer is valued at $55 a share, or $14.1 billion. Another U.S. steelmaker, **Cleveland-Cliffs**, indicated it could make a play if Nippon Steel walks away and pays its $565 million breakup fee.

The prospect of another suitor provides some downside protection for U.S. Steel's stock price, even if Cleveland-Cliffs isn't likely to come close to matching the price Nippon Steel offered.

Trump said U.S. Steel shouldn't be owned by a foreign company. That is in line with President Joe Biden's order last month blocking the deal just before he left office. U.S. Steel and Nippon Steel are asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit to overturn that decision. They claim the government violated their due-process rights by making a predetermined decision on political grounds and then citing a nonsense reason after the fact. Justice Department attorneys in a court filing last week said the government wants Biden's order to remain in effect.

Even if the lawsuit is a long shot on the merits, it puts the Trump administration in the potentially awkward spot of having to defend Biden's reasoning in court. That might be all the more awkward because Biden's rationale indeed strained credulity.

U.S. Steel share price



Rail cars pass through a U.S. Steel facility in Pennsylvania.

Biden's opposition on the campaign trail last year was a direct appeal for votes in Pennsylvania. "I told our steelworkers I have their backs, and I meant it," he said in March, before he withdrew his candidacy for re-election.

In his Jan. 3 executive order blocking the deal, he said he believed Nippon Steel "might take action that threatens to impair the national security of the United States."

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., which reviewed the proposed transaction, didn't reach a consensus on national-security concerns or recommend blocking the sale when it referred the matter to Biden for a decision. Two weeks after Biden's order, the U.S. approved the sale to Japan of more air-to-surface missiles.

There is a rather simple way forward, if the president were so inclined: He could withdraw Biden's decision on the grounds that the prior administration's process was deeply flawed and then direct Cfius to start the review process over from scratch. That would buy time for the parties to come up with a deal that addresses Trump's priorities, whether they are grounded in protectionism or other concerns.

It is possible that there would be only minimal political cost to Trump from reversing Biden's decision. He could position himself as siding with union workers rather than union bosses. Steelworkers aren't a monolith any more than auto workers, who supported Trump in droves last election.

United Steelworkers, which represents U.S. Steel employees in collective-bargaining agreements, opposes the sale. Yet plenty of workers have turned up for rallies to support it, concerned its failure would mean lost jobs because the company will close or move plants. Some local union officials joined an amicus brief—arguing for the deal—filed with the court.

All of this is backdrop for Trump's cryptic comment at a Feb. 7 news conference with Japan's prime minister, where he said Nippon Steel had "agreed to invest heavily in U.S. Steel, as opposed to own it, and that sounds very exciting." U.S. Steel shares dropped on the remark, which investors saw as a hard no to a sale. Really, though, it is difficult to know what he was thinking, and no details have emerged since. It could have been an opening stance, a softening of his position or a throwaway line.

U.S. Steel and its workers would benefit more from a sale to Nippon Steel than from having it as a minority investor or joint-venture partner. U.S. Steel needs capital to modernize its aging mills. Nippon Steel would have greater incentive to invest capital in a company it owns than in one it doesn't control. And it isn't going to pay a control premium, like it is offering now, for a minority or JV stake.

Some finality would be welcome, because the battle for U.S. Steel has become chaotic. In addition to the lawsuit against the government, U.S. Steel is suing Cleveland-Cliffs, alleging it conspired with steelworker union leaders to sabotage its Nippon Steel deal. (Cleveland-Cliffs denies the claims.) U.S. Steel also faces a proxy fight by an activist investor with ties to Cleveland-Cliffs. A Cleveland-Cliffs takeover bid could face challenges, too, because the combined companies' U.S. market concentration might trigger antitrust concerns.

U.S. Steel's importance lies largely in domestic politics and symbolism. It is the third-largest U.S.-based steel producer and the 24th largest in the world. Ultimately it is a small company in an industry awash in overcapacity globally. Nippon Steel is the world's fourth-largest steelmaker. As part of the deal, it committed to invest $2.7 billion in U.S. Steel's plants, with most going to its oldest steel mills near Pittsburgh and in Gary, Ind.

For U.S. Steel and its workers, the Nippon deal offers clarity and fresh capital. For Trump, it would be an expedient solution to a thorny problem that he could blame on his predecessor. He could still revive it.

—Jonathan Weil