

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ **U.S. stocks ended lower** in a choppy session agitated by global trade tensions that helped depress the S&P 500, Dow and Nasdaq by 0.8%, 1.1% and 0.2%, respectively. **B1**

◆ **Advisers to Trump** indicated to allies that Federal Reserve governor Michelle Bowman is the front-runner to serve as the central bank's top cop on banking issues. **A5**

◆ **Nissan promoted its** chief planning officer to CEO, dismissing Makoto Uchida effective April 1 weeks after the automaker scrapped a plan to merge with Honda. **B3**

◆ **VW expects revenue** to rise this year as it continues to cut costs and stoke profitability measures, in what is likely be a challenging 2025. **B3**

◆ **Kohl's shares fell** to their lowest close since 1997 after the company cut its dividend and projected a larger-than-expected decline in sales for fiscal 2025. **B3**

◆ **Unilever's new** chief executive said he intends to speed the sale of underperforming brands in the company's food segment. **B3**

◆ **Leonardo said it plans** to put nearly 40 satellites in orbit by 2028 to offer services for military and civilian purposes, as Europe earmarks more cash for defense. **B4**

◆ **Brookfield raised** about \$1 billion for its first fund for structured equity and minority equity investments in smaller infrastructure businesses. **B6**

◆ **Vail Resorts' quarterly** results exceeded analysts' estimates, with revenue growing about 6% and a key measure of profit increasing by about 12%. **B2**

World-Wide

◆ **The Trump administration** rescinded a threat to double tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum after Ontario backed off imposing a surtax on U.S.-bound electricity. **A1**

◆ **The Trump administration** said it would immediately lift a pause on intelligence sharing and military support to Ukraine following high-level talks with U.S. officials that led Kyiv to agree to a 30-day cease-fire. **A1**

◆ **The House narrowly** approved a Republican proposal to fund the government into the fall as GOP lawmakers remained largely united, overcoming Democratic opposition and setting up a fight in the Senate. **A4**

◆ **The Philippines arrested** former President Rodrigo Duterte on a warrant from the International Criminal Court for alleged crimes against humanity during his bloody war on drugs. **A1**

◆ **The Trump administration** turned from direct talks with Hamas back to Gaza cease-fire negotiations in Qatar after the face-to-face meetings roused concerns in Israel and produced scant results. **A8**

◆ **The Education Department** reduced its workforce by roughly half ahead of Trump's expected executive order seeking to dismantle the federal agency, which was established by Congress in 1979. **A2**

◆ **Greenlanders voted** in a parliamentary election, mindful of their long-held desire for independence from Denmark and deeply concerned about Trump's musings on the future of the territory. **A16**

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Before Ukraine agreed to a 30-day cease-fire, it launched its biggest drone attack yet against Moscow. An investigator examined apartment building damage on Tuesday. **A6**

U.S. to Restore Military Aid After Ukraine Agrees to Truce

By MICHAEL R. GORDON AND ISABEL COLES

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia—The Trump administration said it would immediately lift a pause on intelligence sharing and military support to Ukraine following high-level talks with U.S. officials that led Kyiv to agree to a 30-day cease-fire.

The cease-fire plan, which

is contingent on Russian acceptance, envisions opening negotiations between Kyiv and Moscow on halting the war, according to a U.S.-Ukraine joint statement issued Tuesday. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

"Today we made an offer that the Ukrainians have accepted, which is to enter into a cease-fire and into immediate negotiations to end this con-

flict in a way that's enduring and sustainable and accounts for their interests, their security, their ability to prosper as a nation," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said.

He added: "We will take this offer now to the Russians and we hope that

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◆ **America turns to Kyiv to build better drones.....** **A6**

Philippines Ex-Leader Arrested Over War On Drugs

MANILA—The Philippines on Tuesday arrested former President Rodrigo Duterte on a warrant from the International Criminal Court for al-

By *Gabriele Steinhäuser, Bella Perez-Rubio and Matthew Dalton*

leged crimes against humanity during his war on drugs in which police and state-backed vigilantes waged a violent campaign against those suspected of drug crimes.

Duterte was on a flight bound for The Hague, where the court is based, on Tuesday night, according to an ICC official.

The arrest is set to test the former president's controversial legacy and could chart the future course of the Philippines, a country of 115 million people that has been one of the U.S.'s closest allies in its accelerating standoff with China. It is likely to bring to a head a high-stakes feud between Duterte's successor, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and Sara Duterte, the former president's daughter who is also the country's vice president and a likely contender in the next presidential election.

Marcos Jr.'s office said Duterte, 79 years old, was taken into custody on an ICC warrant provided by the global law-enforcement body Interpol after he arrived back in Manila on a flight from Hong

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INSIDE



BUSINESS & FINANCE Southwest Airlines will start charging for checked luggage, ending beloved perk. **B1**

The Rise and Fall Of 'Napa Valley of Cannabis'

Pueblo, Colo., had high hopes for a legal-marijuana boom, but it is facing fallout from an industry in collapse

By JULIE WERNAU

PUEBLO, Colo.—When Colorado became one of the first states to legalize recreational marijuana, an enthusiastic county commissioner here said he wanted Pueblo to become the "Napa Valley of cannabis."

What this city imagined was that the high plains just east of the Rockies would draw marijuana lovers from around the country. A

big slaughterhouse had closed years earlier, and a steel mill had been shedding workers. A cannabis boom would bring new jobs and tax revenue.

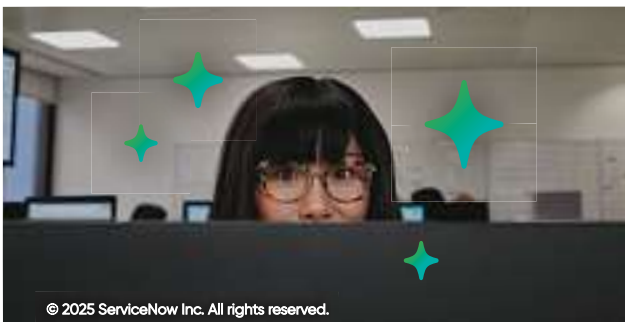
"The streets were going to be paved with gold," recalled Carole Poysti, who raises goats on her small farm. "The elementary schools were going to be the greatest in the country."

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CAN YOUR AI AGENTS DO MORE THAN JUST CHAT?

Ours do. See how in the Business section.



U.S. NEWS

Alleged Chinese Influence Gets Spotlight

New York political aide's unsealed case shows the price of favors for Beijing

By JAMES T. AREDDY

When Federal Bureau of Investigation agents last summer turned up heaps of cash during raids targeting former New York state gubernatorial aide Linda Sun, her husband claimed some of the money was revenue from a wine shop that he planned to deposit into its bank account.

One hitch: The FBI determined \$200,000 in cash had appeared in the wine shop's accounts even before its grand opening. Another: Store sales were predominantly cashless.

In an indictment last year, the Justice Department alleged that Sun and her husband, Chris Hu, got rich as she levered proximity to two New York governors to help China. She was criminally indicted in September for illegally acting as a foreign agent and, along with her husband, was hit with financial charges including money-laundering conspiracies.

Now prosecutors have unsealed details of how they allege Sun orchestrated a "pay-to-play scheme" that generated a stream of funds and gifts as she did favors for China—and how managing the intake was a family affair. The government alleged Sun's links to Chinese officials and their intermediaries had a direct bearing on the success of her husband's lobster-exporting business, which pulled at least \$15.8 million into the U.S.

The couple denied charges of illegal behavior, and their lawyers referred to their past filings while saying they believe strongly in the merits of their defense.

In addition to tracking large inflows from China, FBI agents turned up \$405,000 in "cash of unknown prove-



Linda Sun exiting a federal court in Brooklyn last September. Prosecutors accuse the former state aide of acting as China's agent in the New York governor's office.

nance" at Sun's home, her parents' place and in a safe and deposit boxes, according to the recent filing. The indictment listed expenditures including a \$4 million Long Island home, a \$2.1 million Honolulu condo and jewelry and vehicles, such as a white 2024 Ferrari Roma. And it alleged much of the purchases were made in cash and sometimes in the names of family members or shell companies.

"As a result of Linda Sun's activities on behalf of the [Chinese] government, Chris Hu's businesses made millions of dollars in [China]," the unsealed filing alleges.

The allegations identify Hu's New York City shop, Leivine Wine & Spirits, as a hub of activity. They linked the shop to alleged money laundering and an effort by Sun to influence city permitting on behalf of its landlord, George Xu, an area developer and political benefactor. They suggest that the gala opening at the shop, in the Flushing neighborhood of Queens, was used to butter up local politicians such as Rep. Grace Meng

(D., N.Y.). Xu didn't respond to questions. A spokesman for Meng cited her strong support for her district's small businesses.

The FBI said it uncovered a document showing how Hu tallied cash deposits into business and personal bank accounts, every one of them slightly less than the \$5,000 threshold that require financial institutions to file federal suspicious-activity reports.

It alleged shell companies in the names of other people not publicly identified were used to buy Sun's Range Rover for more than \$140,000 and the couple's 47th-floor Hawaii condo. When a bank inquired about \$1.5 million in deposits to an account in the name of a woman who appears to be Sun's mother, a family representative described her as a sales agent and the wires as "sales commission and bonus," though the woman had declared no income when she applied for U.S. unemployment benefits.

The case against Sun is among the most prominent examples of Justice Department

efforts to prosecute people in the U.S. for helping China build influence. It is also the rare case to draw a direct line between favors for China and moneymaking, suggesting how seemingly innocuous actions to promote Beijing's political views in the U.S. can be extraordinarily valuable to Chinese officials.

Much of what the government alleges Sun did on behalf of Beijing as a gubernatorial liaison to New York's Asian communities might not raise eyebrows. She steered former Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo and his successor, Gov. Kathy Hochul, also a Democrat, toward either meeting Chinese representatives or avoiding action that might ruffle feathers with Beijing, such as accepting invitations to see visiting Taiwanese officials.

For China, a U.S. politician's appearance or statement can have important propaganda value.

"What appears to be a routine diplomatic courtesy to a Western audience becomes powerful evidence of international endorsement when re-

Education Department Cuts Jobs by Nearly Half

By KEN THOMAS

WASHINGTON—The Education Department said Tuesday it was cutting its workforce by roughly half ahead of President Trump's expected executive order seeking to dismantle the federal agency, which was established by Congress in 1979.

The department said it was cutting 1,950 staff positions in total, including 1,315 federal workers through a reduction-in-force process announced Tuesday evening. Senior department officials said nearly 600 employees had accepted deferred resignation offers or voluntary buyouts and an additional 63 probationary workers had been let go.

The officials said that of the department's 4,133 total employees, 2,183 employees will remain at the department after the cuts, resignations and buyouts. The officials said it was eliminating full teams whose operations are deemed redundant or unnecessary, and those employees will receive full pay and benefits for 90 days, and then severance pay based on their years of service.

Federal workers at the agency received an email earlier Tuesday informing them that all department offices in the Washington region would close at 6 p.m. "for security reasons," according to the email viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The officials said the cuts would affect every part of the department, but called it a streamlining of primarily internal-facing jobs, affecting communications employees, office managers, human-resources specialists and information-technology workers.

The "reduction in force" notice had been anticipated to coincide with the Trump executive order, which is expected to call for Education Secretary Linda McMahon to facilitate the closure of the agency, according to people briefed on the plans.

A president cannot unilaterally shut down a federal agency that has been established by Congress. Republicans hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate, but they would need support from Democrats to reach a filibuster-proof 60-vote majority to completely unwind the agency.

Trump and McMahon "know they can't abolish the Department of Education on their own but they understand that if you gut it to its very core and fire all the people who run the programs that help students, families and teachers, you might end up with a similar, ruinous result," said Sen. Patty Murray (D., Wash.).

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U.S. WATCH



STILL MISSING: The restored, empty frame for Rembrandt's painting 'Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee' was reinstalled in the Dutch Room at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on Tuesday, ahead of the 35th anniversary of the March 18, 1990, unsolved theft of 13 works of art from the museum in Boston.

U.S. X Cyberattacker Remains Unknown

U.S. officials haven't determined who was behind an apparent cyberattack on social-media site X that limited access to the platform for thousands of users, according to a Trump administration official familiar with the investigation into the matter.

Monday's outage was described as a cyberattack by the official. The official said the U.S. government hasn't gleaned any specific intelligence about who might have been behind the attack.

The comments came after Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of X and a top adviser to President Donald Trump, claimed in an appearance on the Fox Business Network that the cyberattackers had "IP addresses originating in the Ukraine area" without going into detail on what that might mean. Cybersecurity experts pointed out that this doesn't necessarily mean that the attack originated in Ukraine.

—Associated Press

NEW JERSEY School Bus Turns Over on Parkway

A school bus carrying 31 people overturned on the Garden State Parkway, sending more than a dozen people to hospitals, officials said.

New Jersey State Police said 15 people, including the driver and 14 young people, were treated for injuries from the Monday night crash.

Video from the scene showed a yellow school bus on its side with the rear emergency door open and a large number of emergency responders.

Gov. Phil Murphy said he had been briefed on the crash involving a bus from Lakewood.

Montvale Mayor Mike Ghassali said no deaths were reported, but there was one serious injury—a 14-year-old boy who was pinned under the overturned bus. Ghassali said the bus was headed to New York state. The borough of Montvale borders New York state.

—Associated Press

TEXAS, NEW MEXICO Measles Cases Continue to Rise

Measles outbreaks in West Texas and New Mexico are now up to more than 250 cases, and two unvaccinated people have died from measles-related causes.

Texas state health officials said Tuesday there were 25 new cases of measles since the end of last week, bringing Texas' total to 223. Twenty-nine people in Texas are hospitalized.

New Mexico health officials announced three new cases Tuesday, bringing the state's total to 33. The outbreak has spread from Lea County, which neighbors the West Texas communities at the epicenter of the outbreak, to include one case in Eddy County.

Oklahoma's state health department reported two probable cases of measles Tuesday, saying they are "associated" with the West Texas and New Mexico outbreaks.

—Associated Press

NEW YORK Governor Sanctions Some Prison Guards

More than 2,000 New York prison guards who were fired for illegally walking off the job were barred Tuesday from being hired for other state jobs by Gov. Kathy Hochul as officials took steps to recover from a three-week wildcat strike that strained the corrections system.

Prison officials said Monday evening they were firing correctional officers who refused to return to work after a deal was struck between the state and the guards' union. The deal reduces 24-hour mandatory overtime shifts and temporarily suspends provisions of a law that limits the use of solitary confinement.

By Tuesday, more than 10,000 officers were working at state facilities, down from about 13,500 before the walkout began Feb. 17. More than 6,000 National Guard members mobilized during the strike continue to be deployed at prisons.

—Associated Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. Weather Agency Jobs Will Be Cut

The Trump administration is starting another round of job cuts—this one more than 1,000—at the nation's weather, ocean and fisheries agency, four people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Tuesday began plans to lay off 10% of its current workforce, people inside and outside the agency said, with some of them requesting anonymity due to fear of retribution.

The numbers were presented to NOAA employees and managers were asked to submit names of positions for layoffs to agency headquarters, which will then go to NOAA's parent agency, the Department of Commerce, on Wednesday, the people said.

After this upcoming round of cuts, NOAA will have eliminated about one out of four jobs since President Donald Trump took office in January.

—Associated Press

U.S. NEWS

NTSB Urges Tighter Rules At Airport

By ALISON SIDER
AND ANDREW TANGEL

The National Transportation Safety Board recommended permanent restrictions on helicopters flying near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, while certain runways are in use, after a deadly crash in January.

The safety board issued the recommendations Tuesday along with its preliminary report into the Jan. 29 midair collision between an Army helicopter and an American Airlines regional jet, which took 67 lives.

“We remain concerned about the significant potential for a future midair collision at DCA,” NTSB Chairman Jennifer Homendy said, referring to Reagan airport.

The NTSB, which is investigating the accident, urged the Federal Aviation Administration to disallow helicopter traffic at Reagan along a certain route while Runway 15/33 is in use. That runway was the destination of the American plane when the Army helicopter crashed into it, sending both aircraft into the Potomac River. The NTSB also urged the FAA to find another route for helicopters when that runway is in use.

Under the current route design, a helicopter operating over the eastern shoreline of the Potomac at its maximum altitude would have just 75 feet of vertical separation from an airplane approaching Runway 33, Homendy said. That distance decreases if the helicopter is operating farther from the shoreline.

That situation poses an “intolerable risk to aviation safety” and increases the chance of a midair collision, she said.

The FAA has temporarily imposed restrictions on helicopters near the airport. Senior agency officials want to make restrictions permanent, The Wall Street Journal has reported. Federal officials have said the restrictions on helicopters would be revisited after the NTSB’s report is released.

The NTSB found that aircrafts’ proximity to helicopters triggered at least one collision warning a month at Reagan from 2011 through 2024. In more than half these instances, the helicopter might have been flying higher than allowed, the NTSB’s analysis showed.

“The data we have pulled is from a voluntary safety reporting system that FAA could have used anytime” to identify the trend, Homendy said during Tuesday’s news conference. “That didn’t occur.”

“The data also raises serious questions as to how such a route was allowed to continue when alarm bells were literally going off,” said Sen. Maria Cantwell (D, Wash.)

The FAA and the U.S. Army didn’t immediately comment.

The January crash occurred in an area where helicopters aren’t allowed to fly higher than 200 feet. The last radio altitude reading from the regional jet showed it was at 313 feet, according to the preliminary report. Data from the helicopter’s flight data recorder showed it was at 278 feet at the time of the collision.

The Jan. 29 crash was the deadliest U.S. plane crash in more than two decades.

Accident investigators have been scrutinizing the actions of the pilots, air-traffic controllers, technology and design of the airspace. The NTSB, which investigates the causes of accidents and makes recommendations, is expected to issue a final report with the accident’s probable cause and contributing factors in coming months. Then it would be up to the FAA to determine how best to implement the recommendations.

Airline executives said travelers were unsettled by the crash, which was followed by another accident a few weeks later when a Delta regional jet crash-landed and flipped over in Toronto. While nobody was killed in the Delta crash, the accidents contributed to a general unease about air safety, airlines said.

Houston Mourns a Former Mayor and U.S. Congressman



ASHLEY LANDIS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

PAID RESPECTS: Ashley Turner-Captain looked on as the body of her father, Sylvester Turner—a former Houston mayor who was a Democratic congressman from Texas until his death last week at age 70—lay in state at Houston City Hall on Tuesday.

Johns Hopkins Braces for Cutbacks

University cancels health projects, plans staff layoffs after grants are hit

By LIZ ESSLEY WHYTE
AND NIDHI SUBBARAMAN

The Trump administration has terminated \$800 million in grants to Johns Hopkins University, spurring the nation’s top spender on research and development to plan layoffs and cancel health projects, from breast-feeding support efforts in Baltimore to mosquito-net programs in Mozambique.

The cuts, which are in addition to threatened trims to National Institutes of Health grants, are related to the university’s work with the U.S. Agency for International Development. The school is preparing to shrink its Baltimore-based affiliated nonprofit, JHPIEGO, that since the 1970s has worked closely with the USAID and has already stopped work on a number of international health projects.

The economy in Baltimore city, where the university anchors the innovation sector and is the area’s largest private employer, is likely to see more ripple effects as a result,

according to local groups.

It is a preview of what university administrators across the country expect at their campuses if the Trump administration prevails in court challenges and continues to target institutions of higher education through cuts to federal grants. The administration already canceled \$400 million in grants and contracts to Columbia University last week over the university’s handling of pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

“Johns Hopkins has bet very heavily on a century and a quarter of partnership with the federal government,” said Dr. Theodore Iwashyna, a critical-care physician at Johns Hopkins who is currently overseeing an NIH grant to study how best to send pneumonia patients home so they don’t end up rehospitalized. “If the federal government decides it doesn’t want to know things anymore, that would be bad for Johns Hopkins and devastating for Maryland.”

The White House didn’t respond to requests for comment. Johns Hopkins’s work received scrutiny from Department of Government Efficiency leader Elon Musk on his X platform last month, when he remarked on the closure of a transgender health clinic in India that the



LIZ ALBRO PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Trump administration has terminated \$800 million in grants to Johns Hopkins.

school helped run. “That’s what American tax dollars were funding,” he wrote.

Universities are already challenging some of the Trump administration’s cuts to institutions. In February, 13 schools including Johns Hopkins sued health agencies over a plan to severely cut how NIH support dollars for research, known as “indirect costs,” are awarded. The university stands to lose another \$200 million if the cuts go through, a university administrator estimated in court filings. The NIH cuts are on pause while the legal challenge, from various universities, medical cen-

ters, and multiple state attorneys general, plays out.

Johns Hopkins was founded in 1876 “to foster independent and original research” and now spends more than \$3 billion annually on that effort—more than any other U.S. school, according to data from the National Science Foundation. Scientists at the school invented cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR, confirmed the authenticity of the Dead Sea Scrolls, introduced the rubber glove to surgery and landed the first spacecraft on an asteroid. Twenty-nine people with links to the institution have won Nobel Prizes.

Now the sprawling institution is among big U.S. research centers bracing for wide-ranging changes.

Nearly half of the school’s incoming funds last year were from research done on behalf of the federal government, said Johns Hopkins President Ronald Daniels in a March 4 letter.

“The breadth and depth of this historic relationship means that cuts to federal research will affect research faculty, students, and staff and will ripple through our university,” he wrote.

The nonprofit JHPIEGO worked to improve health in more than 20 countries in Africa, nine countries in Asia

and Ecuador and Guatemala.

A long list of Johns Hopkins’s USAID-funded projects have already been halted, including a nearly complete eight-year effort with half a billion dollars in funding to convince people in more than 50 countries to adopt behaviors such as sleeping under mosquito nets in Mozambique, breast-feeding in Baltimore and using contraception in Nigeria.

Another project halted: An effort to provide chlorine tablets and soapy water and messages about good hygiene to help prevent diarrhea deaths in Bangladesh.

“A lot of what has been broken in the last six to eight weeks is not repairable,” said Dr. Judd Walson, who chairs the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health’s department of international health, which oversaw the Bangladesh hygiene project. “It’s going to look very very different structurally, and it’s going to look very different in terms of our financial model.”

The local impact would reach far and wide: In 2022, Johns Hopkins affiliates accounted for over 93,600 jobs and over \$15 billion in economic output in Maryland, according to the figures in the institution’s latest economic impact report.

Clinic Beams Doctors Out to Patients

By ISABELLE BOUSQUETTE

Last year, some cancer patients in Tennessee and Mississippi got a startling offer: Instead of videoconferencing with oncology specialists located hours away, they could see a hologram doctor, courtesy of the same special effects that have projected the Jonas Brothers and other celebrities at concerts and live events.

The offer came from West Cancer Center & Research Institute, a health system that employs about 61 doctors and serves about 19,240 new patients a year across 12 locations in Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas. The system’s main clinic is in Germantown, Tenn., a suburb of Memphis.

Its doctors typically spend hours on the road each week getting to the satellite clinics to see patients in more-rural locations, while also relying heavily on videoconferencing for check-ins. Now, however, two of those clinics are replacing the video calls with life-size hologram-like displays, part of a cross-industry push to take videoconferencing to the next level.

“You get my body language, my hand motions, there’s expression that is able to be conveyed, which as you can imagine in an oncology visit is very important,” said Dr. Sylvester Richey, chief medical officer and medical oncologist at West Cancer Center.

“You’re not pixelated. There aren’t crazy parts of your body missing,” she said.



WEST CANCER CENTER & RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A couple talks to a doctor, appearing as a hologram, at a West Cancer Center & Research Institute clinic in Corinth, Miss.

“It’s really amazing.” The hologram system has been rolled out at the Corinth, Miss., and Paris, Tenn., clinics.

The setup works like this: Doctors are beamed from a small production studio in the Germantown clinic and appear in life-size boxes in designated exam rooms at the satellite clinics. The boxes are fronted with a flat, clear 4K LCD screen, and a specialized lighting setup inside gives the flat image an appearance of three-dimensionality.

Patients, however, aren’t being projected as holograms to the doctors. In the clinics, they communicate via camera.

“I can see the patient well enough to recognize a rash or a lump or a problem. I can’t feel everything. But oftentimes, that’s all we need,” Richey said.

The hardware and software is provided by Proto Hologram, a Los Angeles-based

startup known for creating holograms at concerts, corporate conferences and other live events. Proto has beamed people ranging from the Jonas Brothers to MrBeast, Paris Hilton and Antonio Neri, chief of Hewlett Packard Enterprise. Richey said the West Cancer Center spent about \$70,000 on the entire setup, which includes Proto’s boxes and software to power the projections.

The technology has been slowly developing ever since the spectral appearance of Tupac Shakur in hologram form on a Coachella stage in 2012.

Broadly, it is still mostly limited to one-off gimmicks rather than use as a daily communication tool, said Tuong Nguyen, a director analyst at Gartner. As a communications medium, he said, it faces a dilemma similar to those facing augmented and virtual reality: While it may be

better than videoconferencing, is it a big enough leap to justify the cost?

Proto thinks so.

“I don’t think you can say we only do one-offs when we have dozens of Fortune 500 companies who are all repeat customers—many using Proto for daily corporate communications, marketing and training,” Doug Barry, Proto co-founder, chief operating officer and chief financial officer, said. “We believe 2D communication/displays are going away.”

The company said it is also working to reduce the cost. The price of the box was recently lowered to \$29,000 from \$65,000, thanks to manufacturing efficiencies. The software that powers the projections is included free for the first year, and after that costs \$5,000 a year.

Proto said it is HIPAA-compliant and expects full certification in April. It is also working with Indigenous Pact, a Native American healthcare service, which has bought several of the units and plans to put them in new clinics, with the first one opening later this year in Northern California.

But according to Todd Bouman, who was appointed CEO of Proto last month, the healthcare market remains secondary to Proto’s core businesses of live events and corporate communications.

In other words, you’re still more likely to encounter a hologram of presenter Howie Mandel than of your general practitioner. At least, for now.

Law Firm Sues Over Trump Retaliation

By ERIN MULVANEY

A law firm punished by President Trump sued his administration on Tuesday, alleging the White House illegally targeted the firm and made it effectively impossible for its clients to obtain the representation of their choice.

Perkins Coie, a 1,200-lawyer firm with close Democratic ties, asked a federal judge in Washington to block Trump’s executive order last week instructing agencies to strip the firm’s security clearances and access to federal buildings, as well as government contracts from companies it represents.

“Perkins Coie cannot allow its clients to be bullied,” it said. “The firm is committed to a resolute defense of the rule of law, without regard to party or ideology.”

A White House spokesman said, “It is absurd that a billion-dollar law firm is suing to retain its access to government perks and handouts.”

Trump has taken an aggressive posture toward law firms, frustrated by the more than 100 legal challenges his administration has faced. He has accused firms of “weaponizing” the justice system and said others would be targeted.

U.S. NEWS

House GOP Passes Bill to Avert Shutdown

Proposal to extend funding goes to the Senate, where a showdown is likely

By OLIVIA BEAVERS
AND KATY STECH FERREK

WASHINGTON—The House narrowly approved a Republican proposal to fund the government into the fall, as GOP lawmakers remained largely united following a last-minute push from the White House, overcoming Democratic opposition and setting up a fight in the Senate.

Funding for the federal government expires this weekend. The GOP proposal would extend funding through Sept. 30 at fiscal 2024 spending levels, but it includes \$13 billion in cuts in nondefense spending and \$6 billion in increased military spending. It allocates additional money for border enforcement and forces Washington, D.C., to cut \$1 billion from its budget.

The measure passed 217-213, with Rep. Thomas

Massie of Kentucky the only Republican to vote against it. Democrats were largely united in opposition, with one Democrat, Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, voting yes.

Passage “allows us to move forward with changing the size and scope of the federal government,” said House Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.).

Republicans said passage of the government-funding measure, known as a continuing resolution, would clear the way for the GOP to move ahead with President Trump’s legislative agenda of tax cuts, spending reductions and border security, which they are hoping to pass later this year.

Democrats painted the proposal as an effort by the Republicans to further yield congressional power over federal spending to Trump and his cost-cutting czar Elon Musk, rather than continue with bipartisan negotiations.

Republicans “pulled the rug out from under us, and said Musk and Trump want to have the control,” said Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee.



Speaker Mike Johnson kept House Republicans largely united.

The matter now heads to the Senate, where Republicans will need Democratic support to advance the bill. Senate Democrats were wrestling over the matter Tuesday. Some saw the funding deadline as their only leverage to push back against GOP efforts to dismantle federal programs, while others were wary of playing hardball and triggering a government shutdown.

The House left town after Tuesday’s vote, effectively giving the Senate the option of approving or blocking the House measure—but not revising it.

House Democrats appealed to their Senate counterparts to stop the bill, which will need Democratic votes to clear the 60-vote threshold for most legislation in the chamber, where Republicans have a 53-47 majority.

Senate Democrats “need to hold strong on this,” said Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D., N.Y.).

“This is not a game. This is extremely serious,” she said, calling the money provided under the bill “an unfettered slush fund” for Trump.

“In the next 24 to 48 hours, the No. 1 job and the measure of success is if we’re able to keep the caucus together,” she said.

Senate Democrats, however, sounded despondent.

“This was the worst day,” said Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D., Conn.) as he came out of a closed-door Senate Democratic lunch at which his colleagues debated what to do. Asked later why the lunch took longer than normal, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) said it was because Democrats enjoyed each others’ company so much. He declined to say how Senate Democrats would vote.

As the administration has moved to cut federal jobs and agencies, Democrats sought to write guardrails protecting

spending into the bill, efforts that were rejected by Republicans. On Monday night, Democrats unveiled their own proposal, a one-month extension that they said would give appropriators time to complete funding bills with detailed guidance—to give Congress more of a say in how federal funding is allocated.

Johnson has struggled in the past to keep his fractious conference united on funding votes, with spending hawks insisting on cuts to federal spending as their price for keeping the government open. As a result, Johnson was regularly forced to rely on Democratic votes to avoid a shutdown. This time, however, Johnson got a boost from Trump—who endorsed the package—and from Vice President JD Vance.

Vance worked to firm up GOP support Tuesday morning by arguing that a lapse in federal spending wouldn’t only stall the administration’s work on border security, but also would cost the party politically, according to people familiar with his remarks.

Fears Rise Of Hard Landing

Continued from Page One

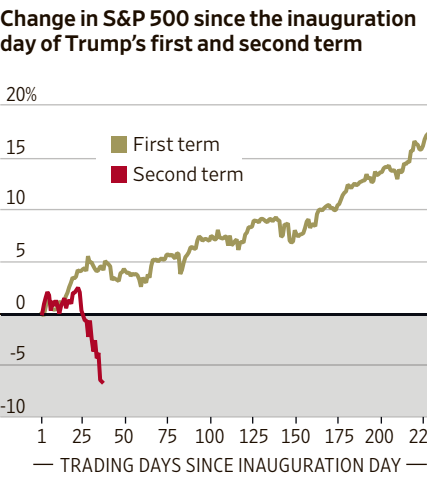
Trump instead doubled down in remarks on Air Force One that evening. “Tariffs are going to be the greatest thing we’ve ever done as a country. It’s going to make our country rich again,” he said.

The comments roiled stock markets. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 2.1% Monday, while the S&P 500 fell 2.7% and the tech-heavy Nasdaq 4%, its largest decline since 2022. All three continued their slides Tuesday, and sit below the levels recorded on Election Day last November.

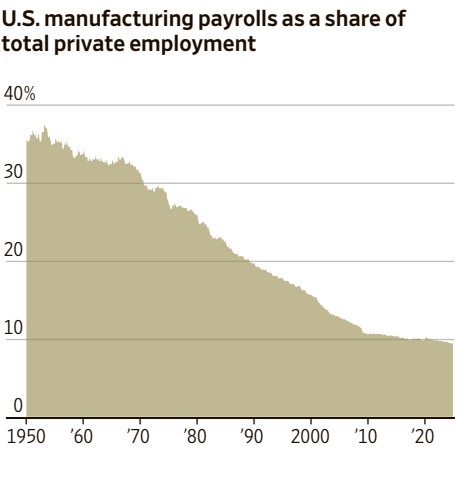
In slashing its first-quarter earnings and revenue guidance after markets closed on Monday, Delta Air Lines said domestic demand had softened. The company saw a “pretty significant shift” in sentiment in February, and “consumer spending started to stall,” said Chief Executive Ed Bastian on CNBC.

Business travel has also softened. “Where there are places where people just aren’t quite sure what’s going to happen, companies are pulling back,” he said.

In recent days, advisers including Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick have warned tariffs could create a one-



Note: The first term shows through the end of 2017. Payrolls for January and February 2025 are preliminary. Sources: FactSet (S&P 500); Labor Department (manufacturing)



Chase said Monday that the risk of a recession had edged up to 40% from 30%, owing to “extreme U.S. policies.” Goldman Sachs, which has consistently anticipated above-consensus growth in recent years, now said it expects weaker growth than the rest of Wall Street. Its economists raised their 12-month recession odds to 20% from 15%.

“We still think this is more of a growth scare than a recession,” said George Mateyo, chief investment officer at Key Private Bank. “This is very much a man-made situation.”

The administration has taken Washington and Wall Street by surprise in recent weeks with a double-barreled blitz to slash the federal workforce and threaten huge tariffs on its largest trading partners. Trump has already imposed large tariff increases on China, hitting a range of goods such as consumer electronics and apparel that received exemptions six years ago.

“The administration seems to be trying to test the boundaries of the economy’s willingness to tolerate rising tariffs. And it doesn’t quite know where those boundaries are,” Strain said. Difficulty forecasting potential changes to prices of imported goods means investment spending could “totally stall out in the first quarter,” he said.

Risks abound. For example, efforts to shrink the federal workforce without a sustained rise in joblessness could rely on the private sector to absorb those workers. But are

private-sector businesses prepared to do so when they don’t know by what magnitude tariffs on goods and materials that they import are set to rise? The Trump administration, in running multiple policy experiments at once, risks upending a fragile “slow-to-hire, slow-to-fire” equilibrium that has defined the postpandemic economy.

Strain said he was worried about the effects on consumer spending from anxious workers—those directly employed by the federal government and millions more whose businesses rely on federal funding or contracts—pulling back on purchases.

To be sure, the U.S. government has managed meaningful fiscal cutbacks in the past. The federal workforce shrank by more than 10% between 1992 and 1998. But a steadily growing economy enabled that to occur without any meaningful disruption.

In November, the share of households that expected their financial situation would improve over the coming year reached a 4½-year high, according to a New York Fed survey of consumers. The same survey, released Monday, showed the largest monthly drop in sentiment last month since 2023.

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Scan this code for a video on why markets are spooked by Trump’s tariffs.



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Canada, U.S. Jostle On Tariffs

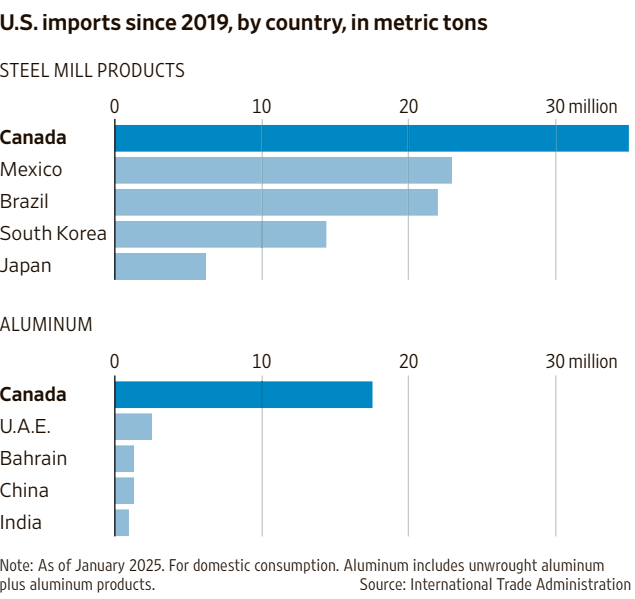
Continued from Page One

toward a renewed U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade pact ahead of Trump’s April 2 deadline to impose reciprocal tariffs on trading partners.

“I’m not out to hurt the American people,” Ford, the leader of Canada’s most-populous province, said in Toronto. “Sometimes you have to play your cards, and this is one of the cards we played, and hopefully we’re going to have a very good constructive conversation.”

Earlier on Tuesday, Trump had vowed to take further steps to target Canada’s economy if Ontario didn’t back down on its 25% electricity surcharge. “If other egregious, long time Tariffs are not likewise dropped by Canada, I will substantially increase, on April 2nd, the Tariffs on Cars coming into the U.S. which will, essentially, permanently shut down the automobile manufacturing business in Canada,” he wrote on Truth Social. “Those cars can easily be made in the USA!”

When Trump took office in January, he almost immediately targeted Canada with tariffs that threatened the economic model that lifted growth in Canada for decades—duty-free access to the U.S. market. Trump’s suggestions about annexing Canada



and turning it into the 51st state have also alarmed Canadian officials, who said they take Trump at his word that he is prepared to crush Canada’s economy and force it to give up its sovereignty.

Canada’s prime minister-designate Mark Carney called Trump’s move to raise tariffs a direct attack on the country’s households and businesses. “My government will keep our tariffs on until the Americans show us respect and make credible, reliable commitments to free and fair trade,” he said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Ford said he would consider cutting off electricity shipped from his province to New York, Michigan and Minnesota, affecting 1.5 million households and businesses, if Trump continued the escalation.

Uncertainty over Trump’s economic policies, including

tariffs, has weighed on U.S. stocks, which fell sharply at the start of the week on growing recession fears. The latest round of U.S.-Canada exchanges triggered fresh losses Tuesday. Stocks regained some ground after reports that Ontario would ax its surcharge.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1.1%, the S&P 500 lost 0.8% and the Nasdaq Composite declined 0.2%. All three indexes notched their worst two-day drop since August.

Trump’s team has said repeatedly that there would be no exceptions or exemptions to the latest global steel and aluminum tariffs that came into effect Wednesday. In internal discussions and conversations with industry and labor groups, the administration appears to be sticking to that line, at least for now, people familiar with the conversations said.

“I’ve seen him do steel and aluminum tariffs before, so I have no reason to not expect that will take place,” Sen. Bill Hagerty (R., Tenn.) said.

Trump imposed 25% tariffs on steel and 10% tariffs on aluminum in 2018. During his first term, and subsequently under the Biden administration, the U.S. negotiated exclusions and duty-free quotas for allied nations—including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Ukraine, the EU, and the U.K.—as well as a litany of individual companies that received exemptions for specific products.

Last month, Trump issued a proclamation increasing the aluminum tariffs from 10% to 25%, effective Wednesday. He directed the Commerce secretary to end all exemptions to the steel and aluminum levies on that date, and prohibited new ones. He also ordered Commerce to widen the scope of steel and aluminum products covered by the tariffs.

Many nations—including Japan, Australia and the European Union members—have lobbied for their exemptions to continue despite the administration’s insistence that none would be granted. Mexico sent a delegation to Washington on Monday for meetings on tariffs.

Automakers and metals companies like Alcoa with footprints in multiple countries have also sought carve-outs or delays from the Trump administration, according to people with knowledge of the requests. But the administration has been steadfast that it won’t allow for any carve-outs this time.

U.S. NEWS

Bowman Is Front-Runner To Be Fed’s Banking Cop

By NICK TIMIRAO

Advisers to President Trump have indicated to allies in recent days that Federal Reserve governor Michelle Bowman is the front-runner to serve as the central bank’s top cop on banking issues, people familiar with the matter said.

Some Republican lawmakers have urged the vice chair for bank supervision be filled promptly after growing irritated by suggestions in public and private from Fed Chair Jerome Powell to leave the position empty.

Trump hasn’t made a decision on whom he will pick for the job but said he would do so “fairly soon” in an interview that aired on Sunday on Fox News. Bowman declined to comment.

Bowman, a Republican, was appointed to her current position by Trump in 2018 to fill a seat designated for a former community banker or community-bank supervisor. Bowman worked for her family’s small-town bank in Kansas before serving as the state’s banking commissioner.

Bowman’s candidacy ap-

pears to have gained steam after some congressional Republicans chafed at the prospect that the position could be left unfilled.

Powell’s comments at a Capitol Hill hearing in February revealed his frustration that the job had become a liability for the central bank by subjecting regulatory policy to a partisan political cycle that created more “volatility” in bank regulation.

Leaving the position open could grant more autonomy on regulatory policy to whomever Trump selects as Fed chair next year, when Powell’s term ends.

Fed governor Michael Barr surrendered the vice chair position in February to avoid what could have been a bruising political and legal battle for the Fed if Trump had followed through on calls from his advisers and GOP lawmakers to strip Barr of his position.

Barr still has a separate term as a Fed governor that runs to early 2032. Barr, an appointee of President Biden, promoted an aggressive regulatory agenda during his tenure, sparking pushback from

the banking industry and at times from his own colleagues inside the Fed. Bowman often opposed his agenda.

The Fed’s near-term regulatory priorities are likely to include revamping the annual “stress tests” used to test banks’ resiliency to economic shocks. The tests have been challenged in a rare lawsuit by the groups representing the country’s biggest banks.

The Fed is also likely to pursue a third attempt at crafting rules concerning capital requirements for big banks after two earlier efforts pursued by Barr failed to secure a consensus among other banking agencies.

A few GOP lawmakers are unhappy that Powell, having at first deferred to Barr on the initial bank-capital proposal, would get to control the agenda for monetary policy and bank regulation now that a Republican is president.

“It is not in America’s best interest to let Jay Powell continue having dual roles,” said Sen. Tim Scott (R., S.C.), who chairs the Senate Banking Committee, on the Fox Business Network last week. “We



President Trump appointed Michelle Bowman to the Fed in his first term.

need a vice chair of supervision that President Trump has complete confidence in to rightsize the regulatory environment.”

Bowman has been viewed as the likeliest pick for the job since Barr announced his decision at the beginning of the year because there aren’t any vacancies on the Fed’s board.

Unless a Fed governor resigns before his or her term ends, a vacancy won’t come up until next January. Selecting a

nominee who isn’t on the Fed board would require waiting until then or persuading Bowman or another governor to take a job elsewhere in the government. Bowman has told associates she doesn’t intend to leave the Fed.

More than two dozen Republican lawmakers last week urged Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to quickly fill the role. While they didn’t endorse Bowman, she is the most logical person for Republicans if

they want to fill the vacancy soon.

Major regulatory changes can’t be pushed unilaterally by the vice chair for supervision; the Fed chair controls the agenda for board meetings, and rulemakings require majority approval from the seven-member board. But the vice chair has considerable power to shape the Fed’s day-to-day supervisory posture and oversees a staff of hundreds of bank examiners.

U.S. Is Forecast to Lose Growth Advantage Over Europe

By PAUL HANNON

The growth gap between the U.S. and the eurozone that has driven a widening divergence in central-bank interest rates may be coming to an end.

The U.S. economy grew much more rapidly than its eurozone counterpart in 2023 and 2024. That was the result of tailwinds for the U.S. in the form of high levels of government spending and a boom in technology investment, and headwinds for the eurozone in the form of a surge in energy costs and a slump in invest-

ment following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Many economists had expected that growth gap to narrow slightly this year, while remaining wide. But the early months of President Trump’s second term have put up fresh obstacles to U.S. growth and generated a fresh impetus for the eurozone.

In a note to clients on Friday, economists at J.P. Morgan raised their forecast for eurozone growth to reflect likely increases in spending on defense and infrastructure led by Germany, and said they may lower

their forecast for the U.S. to reflect higher tariffs on imports and more aggressive steps to cut government spending.

“Recent developments prompt a reassessment of our relative performance view,” they wrote. “U.S. policies appear to be tilting towards a less business-friendly stance. In response to a dramatic pivot in U.S. foreign policy away from Western Europe, the Euro area received a wake-up call.”

J.P. Morgan’s economists said they will make a final call on their U.S. forecast in April. But the outlook for the U.S.

economy does appear weaker than it did at the start of the year, and economists are puzzled by comments from senior members of the administration that seem to suggest a recession could be an acceptable price to pay for a reboot of the economy that leaves it stronger in the long run.

“It is odd to see U.S. policymakers talk as if they want to inflict damage on the economy, or at least do things that risk causing damage,” said Dario Perkins, an economist at TS Lombard.

Other uncertainties include

the impact new tariffs and any slowdown in U.S. demand would have on the eurozone, as well as the timing and scale of the impact of increased defense spending.

One implication of the narrowing growth gap that appears under way is that the European Central Bank’s key interest rate is now unlikely to fall as far below the Federal Reserve’s key rate as appeared likely when 2025 began.

The ECB’s key rate now stands at 2.5%, with the Fed’s range standing at 4.25% to 4.5%. Before the “wake-up

call,” many economists expected to see the ECB’s rate cut to 1.5%, with little change in the Fed rate.

The ECB now seems less likely to go that far, since increased government spending on defense should provide some support for growth and push inflation higher over coming years. The rate gap later this year could be narrowed further if the Fed were to lower its key rate in response to signs of an economic slowdown, but with tariffs likely to push inflation higher in the U.S., it may take its time before doing so.

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WORLD NEWS



A Ukrainian drone attack damaged an apartment building outside Moscow. At right, Ukrainian firefighters work to extinguish a fire after a Russian strike on the outskirts of Odesa.

Ukraine Hits Moscow With Drone Attack

Strikes came hours before Kyiv officials met with U.S. envoys in Saudi Arabia

By GEORGI KANTCHEV AND ISABEL COLES

Ukraine launched its biggest drone attack on Moscow, targeting the Russian capital and other regions, hours before senior U.S. and Ukrainian officials sat down to discuss ways to bring an end to the war.

The general staff of Ukraine's armed forces said drones struck "a number of Russian strategic objects enabling armed aggression," including a Moscow oil refinery.

The Russian Ministry of Defense said it downed more than 300 Ukrainian drones, 91 of which had targeted Moscow.

Another 126 were shot down over the Kursk region, the ministry said, where the Ukrainian army has carved out a small toehold in Russian territory. Moscow regional authorities said the attack killed at least three people and injured 18 more.

Drones also targeted an oil pipeline facility in Russia's Oryol region, which has previously been attacked by Ukraine. Russia said civilian infrastructure including homes were hit. Ukraine said Russian air defenses were responsible for damage to civilian infrastructure.

The attack came as Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other U.S. officials prepared to meet their Ukrainian counterparts in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in the first high-level talks between Washington and Kyiv since a tense Oval Office meeting between President

Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelensky.

After that meeting, Trump accused Zelensky of being unwilling to negotiate a peace deal with Moscow, halted arms deliveries and limited intelligence sharing with Kyiv. Russia has since ramped up drone and missile strikes across Ukraine, killing at least two dozen people in aerial attacks in recent days, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukrainian attacks on Moscow, one of the best-protected areas in Russia, are rare and, some analysts said, aim to demonstrate Ukrainian resilience as well as challenge the perception of invulnerability the Kremlin has sought to instill in its citizens.

A wave of drones attacked Moscow in September, killing one and injuring several people, Russian authorities said.

Ahead of Tuesday's meeting between Ukrainian and U.S. officials, Russia fired a ballistic missile and 126 one-way attack drones overnight on Monday, Ukraine's air force said. The missile and 79 of the drones were intercepted, it said.

Several Moscow airports were closed and flights diverted in response to the attack, officials said.

In the region of Belgorod, power lines were damaged, leaving dozens of homes without electricity, local authorities said.

"The most massive attack of enemy unmanned aerial vehicles on Moscow has been repelled," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin wrote in a post on Telegram.

Andriy Kovalenko, an official at Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, said drones had also reached

Russia's Dyagilevo military airfield, in the city of Ryazan, southeast of Moscow.

Facing relentless aerial attacks, Ukraine has responded by launching drone strikes within Russia, targeting oil refineries, airfields and other targets. It has targeted Moscow several times before.

With supplies of Western long-range weapons limited, Ukraine has been rapidly developing its own drone and missile capabilities.

Ukraine had since the start of the year stabilized much of the 800-mile front line inside Ukraine, stalling Russian advances and counterattacking around the embattled eastern cities of Toretsk and Pokrovsk, which Russia had been on the verge of seizing.

Russia, however, has intensified its offensive in Kursk aimed at regaining territory and depriving Kyiv of a poten-

tial bargaining chip in any negotiations.

Russian and North Korean troops in recent days seized several villages in the region and used overwhelming drone power to largely cut supply routes to the main Ukrainian force in the city of Sudzha.

In one of the deadliest recent aerial attacks, Russian missiles killed 11 people in a town near the front line in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

A second strike hit rescue workers as they arrived on the scene in Dobropillia to attend to the victims of the first missile strike, which damaged residential buildings and a shopping center.

Russia is "not thinking about how to end the war, but how to destroy and capture more while the world allows them to continue," Zelensky said following the strike.

Kyiv Agrees To a Pause In Fighting

Continued from Page One they'll say 'yes,' that they'll say 'yes' to peace. The ball is now in their court."

President Trump reinforced that message at the White House, saying the next step was to secure the support of President Vladimir Putin of Russia for stopping the fighting.

"Now we have to go to Russia and hopefully President Putin will agree to that also and we can get this show on the road," said Trump, a Republican, shortly after the Jeddah talks concluded. "We want to get that war over with."

The Tuesday meeting was the first high-level discussions between U.S. and Ukrainian officials since a combative Oval Office encounter last month in which Trump accused President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine of being unwilling to negotiate a peace settlement with Moscow.

Following that White House session, Trump cut off arms shipments and reduced the flow of intelligence to Kyiv. That move was followed by an accelerated Russian and North Korean campaign to roll back Ukrainian gains in Kursk, a portion of Russian territory seized by Ukrainian forces last year.

Zelensky's top adviser, Andriy Yermak, who led the talks for Ukraine, said in a post on X following the Jeddah talks: "A just peace is key for us. We want a lasting peace." He called the meeting with the U.S. "constructive."

Ukraine had proposed a partial cease-fire that would have halted long-range air and drone strikes and military attacks in the Black Sea. But Kyiv agreed to the U.S. proposal for a comprehensive truce "not only regarding missiles, drones and bombs, not only in the Black Sea, but also along the entire front line," Zelensky said in a video address. He thanked Trump for the "constructive nature of the dialogue."

"We are ready to take such a step," Zelensky said. "The United States of America must convince Russia to do this."

During the 30 days of the



U.S. and Ukrainian officials held talks Tuesday that were hosted by Saudi Arabia in Jeddah.

truce, the U.S. and Ukraine should work toward a framework for security guarantees, he said. A key Ukrainian goal in further negotiations is the release of prisoners as well as Ukrainian civilians being held by Russia.

Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha of Ukraine described the agreement as an attempt to begin the process of ending the war on fair terms, and demonstrate "who is genuinely interested in peace."

Hours before the Jeddah meeting, Ukraine launched the largest drone attack of the war, targeting the Russian capital and other regions. Moscow regional authorities said the strikes led to at least three deaths and injured 18 people.

National security adviser Mike Waltz said Ukraine and Russia had each picked delegations and that the U.S. was moving quickly to try to advance the potential talks.

Russia has recently doubled down on some of its core demands. Last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rejected a British and French proposal to deploy peacekeeping troops in Ukraine to ensure that a future agreement halting the fighting isn't violated by Russia—a European proposal that Trump has welcomed.

The Trump administration and Kyiv have been discussing an agreement for Ukraine to share its mineral wealth with the U.S., but that deal wasn't the main subject of the Saudi Arabia talks. Rubio said that Trump and Zelensky had agreed to finalize the mineral accord soon.

Rubio and Waltz represented the U.S. in the daylong meeting in Jeddah. The Ukrainian side included Yermak, Sybiha, Defense Minister Rustem Umerov and Pavlo Palisa, a Ukrainian military officer who works for the presidential administration.

A number of thorny issues are likely to confront the two sides, as well as the White House, in the event Russia accepts the cease-fire and negotiations begin in earnest.

Ukraine has sought Western security assurances, which Trump has been reluctant to provide, to deter Russia from violating an agreement. Waltz said his talks with the Ukrainians involved detailed discussions "on how this war is going to permanently end, what type of guarantees they're going to have for their long-term security and prosperity."

Waltz didn't provide examples of guarantees that had been discussed, but he said that U.S. officials along with the Ukrainians were "really

looking at what it's going to take to finally end this, the horrific fighting."

A related question is whether the White House is prepared to provide some sort of military support as a "backstop" for British and French peacekeepers in the event they are deployed to Ukraine, as the Europeans have requested.

It remains unclear whether the U.S. administration is prepared to take steps to pressure Russia. Trump has periodically threatened to impose tariffs or use other forms of economic pressure on the Kremlin if it balks at agreeing to a peace deal. But Trump has taken no concrete steps to pressure Moscow since his inauguration.

Before the start of the meeting the Ukrainian and U.S. officials expressed cautious optimism. Yermak said Ukraine wanted to achieve a lasting peace while stressing that some form of security guarantees would ultimately be necessary. Rubio made a thumbs-up gesture during a break in the talks.

The U.S. will have an opportunity in the coming days to engage Western allies who have supported Ukraine. Rubio plans to fly to Canada on Wednesday for a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of Seven nations.

On Thursday, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte is scheduled to visit the White House. Meanwhile, Waltz said he would talk with his Russian counterpart.

America Turns to Kyiv To Build Better Drones

By HEATHER SOMERVILLE

With America's drone technology a disappointment on the battlefield, defense startups have joined forces with Ukrainian manufacturers to build better, war-proven aircraft for the U.S. military.

U.S. startups have spent billions of venture-capital dollars in hopes of developing the small drones the Pentagon says it needs for future conflicts, but many have only produced expensive aircraft that don't fly very well. Ukrainian drone makers, meanwhile, have mastered mass-producing drones and are looking for new customers and capital.

Now, the two sides are coming together, and the unlikely pairing is getting attention from the Defense Department.

Southern California startup CX2 last year struck a deal to put its software and sensors on Ukrainian drones, a matchup that has been approved by a branch of the U.S. military, and might soon arm U.S. forces.

"No U.S. company is keeping up with Ukraine," said CX2 co-founder Nathan Mintz. "They've got the ultimate high-stakes laboratory meant to battle-proof all this stuff."

The Defense Department's interest in Ukrainian drones underscores the challenges that have beset U.S. drone startups and the achievements of the Ukrainians since the Russian invasion. Despite the Pentagon's view that small, autonomous drones are essential and a funding priority, the sentiment hasn't spurred an U.S. drone-industry boom.

The U.S. has the capacity to build up to 100,000 drones a year, according to one Defense Department estimate. Last year, Ukraine built more than two million drones. Some of the Ukraine-built drones the Defense Department wants can fly hundreds of miles with explosives, and have been used in attacks inside Russia.

Ukrainian drone manufacturers are starting to contemplate a future after the war, as the U.S. and Ukraine continue talks about a possible peace process. Any diplomatic plot twists are unlikely to unravel the bond that has developed between U.S. and Ukrainian drone startups, or reverse the

Defense Department's efforts to adopt superior innovation from Ukraine, said defense officials and startup founders.

For Ukrainian startups, growth depends on expanding outside their country, where there are caps on how much profit they can make on sales, and the government can't afford to buy all the drones produced in the country.

To make the drone sector a catalyst for economic growth after the war, the startups want U.S. customers and investors.

Ukrainian drones often sell for one-tenth the price of U.S. options. They have proven on the battlefield that they can work when radio and satellite communication is blocked by electronic jamming.

American startups are slower to build, deliver and update their drones. Many U.S. companies that brought their drones to Ukraine watched them fallout of the sky or fail to complete missions.

The Defense Innovation Unit, or DIU, an arm of the Defense Department that sources new technology for the military, for the first time awarded contracts to two Ukrainian-American partnerships. The companies will test their long-range attack drones this spring in Ukraine, where the drones are manufactured, and then have an opportunity to compete for production contracts with the Pentagon.

The DIU has—also for the first time—chosen a Ukrainian drone maker to add to its list of approved potential suppliers for the U.S. military.

The company, Skyfall, has completed more than 1.5 million missions for Ukraine and builds thousands of drones a day. Skyfall's bomber drones likely will be offered to the U.S. military this year if they pass certain security tests.

There are hurdles to bringing Ukraine's drones to the world, not least among them the country's restrictions on drone exports.

Ukrainian drone makers have organized to lobby Kyiv to end the ban on selling their drones outside the country and are joining their new U.S. partners to find workarounds.

Skyfall is seeking special permission from Kyiv to sell its bomber drones to the U.S.

WORLD NEWS

China Keeps Its Edge On U.S. in Minerals

The West gained access to a leading graphite mine—then things went awry

By JON EMONT

When mining executive Shaun Verner first visited his company’s graphite deposit in Mozambique in 2017, he felt sure he had a winner.

His goal: to challenge China’s dominance over the world’s supply of a critical mineral used in everything from electric vehicles to submarine hulls.

Backed by more than \$100 million of U.S. government financing, Verner and his Australia-based company, **Syrah Resources**, opened the Mozambique mine and built a graphite-processing plant in Louisiana, the first of its type in the U.S. It also signed a sales deal with Tesla, which has historically bought graphite for car batteries from China.

Then things started going off the rails.

China, which provides more than 90% of the world’s battery-grade graphite supply, jacked up its production, flooding the market and driving prices so low that Syrah couldn’t mine profitably. Last May, the Biden administration delayed new rules that would have penalized U.S. users from buying Chinese graphite. In Mozambique, farmers resettled from Syrah’s mine staged protests, shutting mining.

Syrah’s Louisiana plant, now open for a year, has yet to make its first commercial sale. Syrah’s stock has plunged

since the start of 2023.

The company’s challenges help show why, in the David-versus-Goliath battle for the world’s critical minerals, China, the Goliath, keeps winning.

The U.S.’s desperate need for critical minerals—which includes resources such as nickel, lithium and cobalt in addition to graphite—has been underscored by the Trump administration’s aggressive push for greater access in Ukraine and Greenland, rattling allies. In December, Beijing said it would ban certain mineral exports to the U.S. and conduct stricter reviews of graphite sales, in response to U.S. restrictions on semiconductor exports to China.

Yet with its thumb on many of the best resources, China can dictate prices. Washington’s policy flip-flops keep blowing up miners’ plans. And many Western mining companies struggle to navigate higher-risk countries where critical minerals are prevalent, leaving them flat-footed when unrest erupts.

There is considerable debate

in mining circles over whether China is intentionally overproducing to put Western companies out of business. It is also possible Chinese companies are just trying to maximize production and earnings, since they can be profitable at lower prices than Western competitors.

China’s Foreign Ministry didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The share of the world’s refined lithium produced in China or by Chinese owners abroad hit 71% last year, up from 49% in 2017. Over the same span, the country’s control of refined nickel rose to 55% from 38%,

according to Benchmark Mineral Intelligence. Most of the world’s graphite mining takes place in China or in Africa.

Graphite customers “have ultimately made the economically rational, but strategically dangerous decision to essentially go all in on China’s supply,” Verner said.

Syrah, a small Australian firm, broke into the big leagues in 2011 when it purchased a company that owned mineral rights throughout East Africa, including the Balama graphite deposit in northern Mozambique. Verner, who had spent 20 years at BHP, became Syrah’s chief executive in 2017.

A Credit Suisse analyst predicted that Syrah’s mine, dug out of a forested area, was a global standout that could “provide 100% of the world’s current requirements for natural graphite for about 1,000 years.”

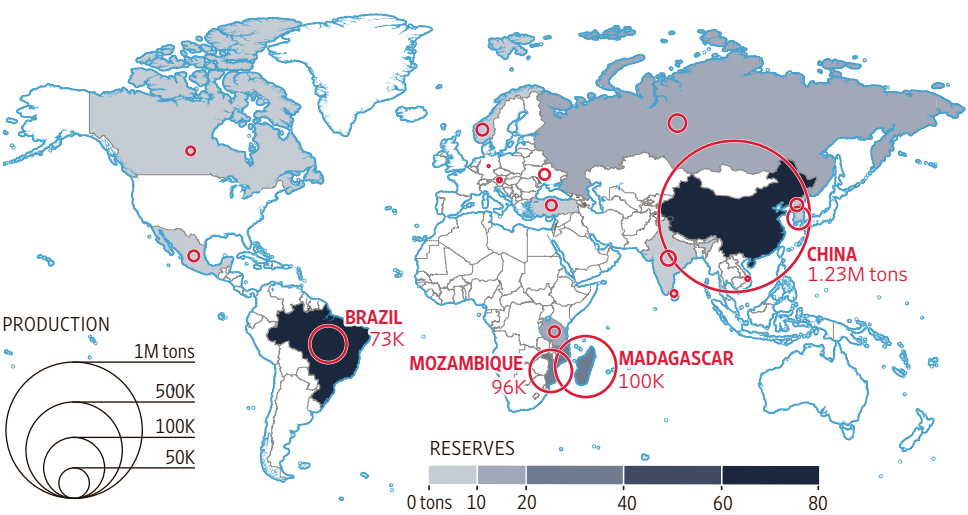
Syrah wanted to do more than just mine. Company leaders also wanted to process the graphite to unlock more profit, though such work is expensive and complicated, with much of the world’s expertise in China.

Undeterred, Syrah licensed processing technology from a Chinese producer and began working out the kinks of “spheroidization,” a complex process that turns graphite into tight balls, which are jam-packed into the anodes of EV batteries to boost energy density and performance.

Syrah’s ambitions dovetailed with the goals of the Biden administration, which wanted to use EV manufacturing to rebuild U.S. industrial strength.

In July 2022, Syrah was awarded a \$102 million Energy Department loan to build up the Louisiana graphite-processing facility, creating nearly 100 high-skilled and operations jobs. That August, Congress established a \$7,500 subsidy for EV purchases to boost demand.

Natural graphite production and reserves, 2024



Source: United States Geological Survey

ROQUE RUIZ/WSJ



Syrah Resources’s graphite plant in Vidalia, La., has yet to make its first commercial sale.

A couple of months later, the Energy Department announced a \$220 million grant to Syrah to quadruple output in Louisiana.

China wasn’t sitting still. State-owned mining giant China Minmetals began pumping out enormous quantities in 2022 from a huge new mine in northeast China. Chinese companies also built new factories to make synthetic graphite, an industrially produced alternative that is also used in EV batteries.

The surge in Chinese graphite production sent spherical graphite prices

plummeting to \$2,400 a metric ton in April 2023 from \$3,650 a year earlier.

In response, Syrah halted mining in Mozambique for four months in 2023. It later restarted, but at reduced levels. Verner said the company wouldn’t produce at a loss.

The company still had one significant thing going for it: A 2022 law signed by then-President Biden that penalized the use of Chinese graphite. But in May 2024, the Biden administration said it would waive the planned penalties for two years. Last October, the U.S. gov-

ernment lent Syrah \$150 million more, this time to support the Mozambique mine. But things weren’t rosy there, either.

In December, Syrah said protests at its mine had put it in default on its loan agreements with the U.S., because of the prolonged interruptions. The company said it spent \$18 million more than it earned in the last three months of 2024.

Despite the challenges, Verner says Syrah’s best days are ahead. He hopes the company will restart mining, though when that will happen remains uncertain.

Philippine Ex-Leader Is Arrested

Continued from Page One

Kong. A copy of the warrant viewed by The Wall Street Journal says the court’s pre-trial chamber found that there were “reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Duterte is individually responsible for the crime against humanity of murder,” reaching back to his time as mayor of the southern city of Davao in the 1990s.

Sara Duterte said her father was “forcibly being taken” to The Hague. “This is not justice—this is oppression and persecution,” she said.

Her sister, Veronica, shared a video on her Instagram account showing a senior police officer telling Duterte’s aides that he would be made to board a chartered flight without mentioning where the plane was going. Earlier in the day, she had posted footage of her father being held at a Manila air base.

The former president’s lawyer said the arrest was illegal. Dozens of pro-Duterte protesters outside the air base demanded Marcos Jr.’s resignation and television footage showed hundreds gathering in Davao.

The Philippine Supreme Court said it had received a petition seeking a restraining order to stop the government from cooperating with the ICC, but didn’t say when it would rule on the matter.

A spokeswoman for the Philippine police declined to comment. Marcos Jr.’s office didn’t respond to requests for additional comment.

The ICC had been secretly working with the Philippine government for months to arrange the arrest of Duterte, an ICC official said, adding that the prosecutor’s office asked for the warrant several weeks ago. Court investigators saw an opportunity when they learned that Duterte would be traveling to Hong Kong over the weekend. It would be easier to arrest him at the airport, away from his stronghold in Davao, the official said.

Court officials scrambled to have the warrant issued under seal on Friday so that it would



Relatives of victims of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s war on drugs attended a mass Tuesday in Manila.

be ready if and when Duterte returned to Manila, the official said. Some at the court were convinced that he would stay in Hong Kong, particularly since rumors of the warrant began to circulate over the weekend.

Human Rights Watch has said more than 12,000 people were killed in antidrug operations during Duterte’s six years in the presidency. Nightly raids targeted anyone even loosely suspected of selling drugs and bodies piled up in cities and neighborhoods across the Philippines.

HRW’s count doesn’t include the toll of Duterte’s 22 years as mayor of Davao, the largest city in the southern Philippines. The ICC warrant says Duterte was the founder and leader of the so-called Davao Death Squad, a group of police officers and hit-men with a mission to kill criminals.

His record as mayor propelled Duterte to the presidency in 2016. “If I make it to the presidential palace I will do just what I did as mayor,” Duterte told his supporters on the eve of that vote. “You drug pushers, holdup men, and do-nothings, you better get out because I’ll kill you.”

Duterte’s policies were popular throughout his presidency and his approval ratings remained above 70% when he left office in 2022, despite detailed testimony from former associates about his alleged role in the killings and vehement international criticism. He has denied ordering specific killings and has said he told police to shoot only in self-defense.

Duterte has also continued to defend the broader war on drugs, most recently this

weekend when he joined his daughter Sara at a rally for Filipino workers in Hong Kong. Duterte pulled the Philippines out of the Rome Statute, the treaty that governs the ICC, shortly after the court’s prosecutors launched a preliminary investigation into the killings.

ICC prosecutors said the court has jurisdiction over any crimes committed between 2011, when the Philippines joined the Rome Statute, and when it left in 2019. A panel of ICC judges ruled in 2023 that prosecutors could pursue their investigation, saying they weren’t satisfied with the country’s own efforts to prosecute alleged perpetrators.

Duterte is one of the most high-profile suspects ever arrested under an ICC warrant. The arrest hands a victory to an institution that has issued a string of warrants over the past three years—including for President Vladimir Putin of Russia and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel—but hasn’t arrested a suspect over that time, sowing widespread doubts about the court’s authority.

Rights groups and families of victims of the war on drugs welcomed Duterte’s arrest.

Jane Lee, whose husband was shot in the back in 2017 by two masked men on a motorcycle, said that while she wants to see the former president behind bars, his arrest falls short of the violence meted out on those targeted during his antidrug campaigns.

“He was just arrested, while our loved ones were killed immediately,” she said in comments shared by a group working with victims’ relatives.



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WORLD NEWS

U.S. Backs Away From Direct Hamas Talks

The Trump administration is turning its attention away from direct talks with Hamas and back to the main Gaza cease-fire negotiations in Qatar, after its discussions with the U.S.-designated terrorist group sparked concerns in Israel and produced little result.

By Summer Said, Michael R. Gordon and Dov Lieber

Secretary of State Marco Rubio defended Trump hostage envoy Adam Boehler’s meeting with Hamas, but said it was a one-off attempt to release some hostages that didn’t work. The administration’s Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to arrive in Doha on Wednesday, where

he will try to revive talks between Israel and Hamas that have stalled now that the first phase of a truce struck in January has expired.

Witkoff, who is doubling as a negotiator in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, had postponed a trip to the Middle East several times. Negotiators said he is needed in the region to push Israel and Hamas through a difficult standoff.

The main negotiations have been moribund at a key turning point—whether to open talks about releasing the remaining hostages held in Gaza in exchange for a permanent end to the fighting, an issue on which Israel and Hamas remain diametrically opposed.

The deal Witkoff helped broker in January returned 33

Israeli hostages, both living and dead, in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. It was designed as a multi-stage deal to defer the most difficult questions until the final phases in hopes of keeping the fighting from resuming.

Hamas continues to press for talks over a permanent end to the fighting, which Israel won’t discuss. The parties, however, have been circling around a possible interim arrangement to free some of the hostages in exchange for extending the cease-fire for perhaps another 60 days, said Arab and Hamas officials.

Meanwhile, Israel has cut off supplies of aid and electricity to Gaza, part of planned escalations to force Hamas to soften its position, while Pres-

ident Trump has threatened a return to war if the hostages aren’t released.

Monday, Witkoff said Hamas had no choice but to disarm and leave the Gaza Strip.

Separately Tuesday, Israel and Lebanon agreed to talks in the wake of a cease-fire last year that ended the most-recent conflict between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The two countries agreed to discuss border disputes, the fate of Lebanese detainees captured by Israel, and the status of five strategic locations that Israel’s military has retained control of inside Lebanon, said Israeli and U.S. officials.

Boehler recently met with Hamas officials and told Israeli television that his goal

was to secure the release of the last U.S. hostage who remains alive in Gaza. But he also suggested Hamas was willing to lay down its arms in exchange for a truce, and said the U.S. has interests that are separate from Israel’s—comments that further frustrated some Israeli officials.

Avi Dichter, agriculture minister and a former head of Israel’s internal-security services, said Boehler had shown a lack of understanding of Hamas’s goals. “Whoever thinks Hamas will part from its weapons doesn’t know Hamas, its ideology or its strategy,” he said in an interview with Kan, Israel’s national broadcaster.

Boehler’s remarks added to confusion surrounding U.S.

policy. Trump has signaled no similar priority to broker a permanent truce. He has allowed Israel to cut off aid and electricity to the enclave with no public pushback. He also repeatedly has said Hamas will face heavy punishment if it doesn’t release all the hostages, and that the decision about whether to end the war rests with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The episode was a rare public example of friction between Israel and the Trump administration. Disagreements with Trump carries risks for Netanyahu’s position in the talks with Hamas, threatens his ties with Israel’s main weapons supplier and could harm his ability to hold together a governing coalition.

FROM PAGE ONE

Cannabis Boom Turns To Bust

Continued from Page One

The day after legal recreational pot arrived in Pueblo in 2014, 50 people were camped out in front of one of the first weed shops, waiting for the doors to open, the local newspaper reported. One customer called it the new Amsterdam. The only two shops then licensed in the county rang up a combined \$1 million in sales the first month, sending \$56,000 in taxes to the county. “We’re going to have to sell more weed,” gushed the county finance director.

A decade later, Pueblo’s dreams have gone up in smoke. A once-thriving industry of retailers, growers and cannabis-oil extractors—there were more than 200 such businesses in the county in 2017—has collapsed. Only 45 remain, state records indicate. County tax revenue related to cannabis plunged from more than \$7.1 million in 2021 to \$4.8 million in 2023.

It isn’t that people have stopped using marijuana, either in Pueblo, where the smell of weed is pervasive, or in the country at large. Daily use by adults 35 to 50, according to one federally funded annual survey, is at a record high nationwide.

In Pueblo and elsewhere, though, market dynamics have crippled the legal-cannabis industry. Even after legalization, illicit growers and sellers thrived in places like Pueblo, and last year they accounted for about 70% of the U.S. market, according to cannabis-market research company Whitney Economics. Those black-market dealers, unlike licensed ones, face neither taxes nor red tape.

And as more states legalize recreational sales, places like Colorado are no longer so unique. There simply haven’t been enough customers to support all the legal shops. Nationwide, only 27% of legal cannabis businesses are profitable, down from 42% in 2022, according to Whitney. The most actively traded fund tracking publicly traded cannabis companies recently hit a record low. Investment has dried up and restructurings are rising.

In Pueblo, sentiments about legal cannabis have swung the other way, fueling a backlash against the county’s embrace of the industry. The landscape is dotted with abandoned marijuana growhouses, their roofs torn off by wind and fabric netting shredded. Real-estate agents said they can’t sell empty buildings outfitted with irrigation systems and grow lights. As businesses close, marijuana entrepreneurs have appealed to the city council for exemptions from city excise taxes.

Pueblo Police Chief Chris Noeller said problems related to black-market sellers, including with cartels and gangs, have gotten worse since legalization. Many cannabis businesses have been abandoned or liquidated, he said, and a lot of the other good jobs in the county disqualify candidates who use marijuana, he said.

“Our community is just frankly getting tired of it,” he said. “I don’t think it’s just here in Pueblo.”



A defunct cannabis business, top, in Pueblo County, Colo. Above: Cannabis for sale at Sticky Icky’s, which opened 2016. The store’s daily sales, which had been about \$20,000 from 2017 through 2021, plummeted to \$2,500 last year.

Mason Tvert, who led the campaign for legalization in Colorado, acknowledged that market saturation and competition from other states had hurt cannabis businesses, but said the industry was maturing, not failing.

Proponents of legalization, he said, never said it would save the economy. “People are upset that this isn’t solving all these problems that it was never intended to solve,” he said.

When the legal sale of recreational marijuana began in Colorado on Jan. 1, 2014, Pueblo had the feel of a budding boomtown. Outsiders flooded into the county looking for cannabis-industry jobs, drawn by its status as one of the least expensive places in the country, said Anne Stattelmann, who directed a homeless-services organization at the time.

Sticky Icky’s began selling cannabis in Pueblo in 2016. Its location, on a popular route from the city to Lake Pueblo, brought a nice business bump in the summer.

When Colorado made recreational marijuana legal, it was still illegal in all seven bordering states. But after recreational marijuana was legalized in Arizona in 2020 and New Mexico in 2021, Colorado’s cannabis businesses started struggling.

Boom to bust

As competition mounted both locally and in neighboring states, the boom times rapidly faded for Sticky Icky’s. Daily sales, which had been about \$20,000 from 2017 through 2021, plummeted to \$2,500 last year. Its staff shrank from 10 to four.

General Manager Daniel Cwik said he has watched competitors in Pueblo shut down or sell to larger chains. “We’ll see who is the last one standing,” he said.

One of Sticky Icky’s owners, Cole Caldwell, recently sold his stake to focus on a marijuana store he and his partners

opened last year in New Mexico. Taxes on marijuana there, he said, are half what they are in Pueblo.

Colorado levies a 15% marijuana sales tax and 15% excise tax on marijuana, and Pueblo County tacks on another 5% excise tax and a 6% sales tax. Cannabis businesses in the city of Pueblo pay an additional 10% excise tax, among the highest in the state.

Higher taxes, Caldwell said, mean higher prices and losing customers to the illicit market. “Every year the state adds more and more rules,” he said.

The Colorado Marijuana Enforcement Division said it is considering proposals that would simplify rules for marijuana businesses.

Kate Brophy started a business growing marijuana in Pueblo County in 2017. She said she sold her product wholesale for between \$1,800 and \$2,300 a pound during the pandemic, but since 2022 the price has dropped to \$230 to \$500 a pound. She said larger growers with stockpiles of marijuana flooded the market in an effort to get out while they could still break even.

Costs for utilities, nutrients, soil and taxes, however, haven’t

declined, she said. “It was costing more to grow a crop than it was worth on the market,” she said.

Once nearby states opened up, she said, the biggest companies left Pueblo. Brophy and her partners closed up shop and are trying to avoid foreclosure after losing a few million dollars, she said.

Their efforts to sell the business and property went nowhere for more than a year, she said. They recently accepted an offer. “My Realtor has over a dozen empty grows they’re trying to move,” she said.

Summer Campbell and David Jones moved to Pueblo from Austin, Texas, in 2015 to grow marijuana. Jones said they leased land and built up a successful brand, “Goddess Gardens.”

About two years ago, with the help of family, the couple bought 35 acres, where they plan to build a solar-powered marijuana farm and extraction company for producing marijuana concentrates. Disputes with a prior landlord and the county over who owned the license, Jones said, cost them time and money.

They are planning to grow 800 plants outdoors and an-

other 1,000 indoors. In the wake of a raft of cannabis-business failures, their local power company has asked for a \$14,000 deposit, which they don’t have.

To make ends meet, Campbell took a job at Lowe’s, and Jones is painting houses. The couple sold their house and started renting.

“We are not making any money,” Jones said.

In the 12 months ended February 2023, the state’s marijuana workforce shrank by 28%, the equivalent of nearly 10,500 full-time jobs, according to Vangst, a cannabis staffing platform, and there was another 16% drop the year after.

Tvert, now spokesman for Colorado Leads, a statewide advocacy group for cannabis businesses, said because Colorado was first, regulators and politicians added unnecessary hurdles in anticipation of problems that never emerged. The group is fighting to roll back some regulations, he said, but has faced pushback from groups who want the opposite.

Many of the county’s ranchers and farmers have opposed cannabis growing operations from the start. Grow houses, they argued, were drawing water for a plant that would never grow naturally in Colorado. Growers without access to the aquifer hired trucks to haul water down unpaved roads.

Farmers tried to get reporters to investigate the marijuana businesses. They packed meetings of the county commissioner and liquor and marijuana licensing board.

In the end, it was the industry’s downturn that pushed off their unwanted neighbors.

Local backlash

At this point, dissatisfaction over the boom that never came to Pueblo has spilled far beyond the weed-industry entrepreneurs now facing financial ruin. Some local officials and residents are blaming the state’s cannabis push for a host of worsening social problems,

including crime, homelessness and chronic cannabis use by some young people.

In November, the city gave notice to some 500 people living outdoors along the railroad tracks and the Arkansas River basin. “Their primary motivation for moving to Colorado was directly for marijuana,” said Pueblo City Police Corporal Ryan Masterson. “They never left.”

Whether there is a connection between homelessness and cannabis legalization in Colorado is subject to debate. A 2018 study of more than 500 homeless inmates in the state found that about one-third of those who moved to Colorado after legalization in 2012 reported legal marijuana as a top reason for coming.

Lee Gladney, owner of Pueblo Bearing Service and a board member of the city’s downtown association, said few of the transplants were fit for work in local businesses—marijuana-related or otherwise. Cannabis use, he said, had made many of them unreliable.

A third-generation business owner, Gladney said he refuses to hire anyone he suspects of using marijuana. “If you operate heavy equipment, you just can’t have it,” he said.

After legalization, many private employers in Colorado dropped marijuana from drug screenings, Quest Diagnostics data show. Nationwide, about 75% of U.S. employers that aren’t federally required to drug test include marijuana in drug screenings, Quest said, down from nearly 100% in 2015.

Although licensed cannabis shops aren’t permitted to sell to anyone under 21 years old, several Pueblo teachers said chronic use had become a bigger problem among students. “They just want to stay home and smoke pot in their basements,” said high-school math teacher Rochelle Maes about heavy users.

Physical therapist assistant Aubree Adams said that is what she feared when legal marijuana came to Pueblo County. She said heavy cannabis use had turned one of her teenage sons violent and suicidal.

Adams, who runs a support group called Every Brain Matters for families affected by marijuana, helped collect some of the more than 5,000 signatures needed to introduce a county ballot measure in 2016 to ban marijuana businesses and sales. The ballot measure failed.

Every day, patients arrive at the emergency department of the UCHealth’s Parkview Medical Center in Pueblo with conditions brought on by cannabis, said Dr. Karen Randall, who works in the ER. Some are psychotic, a more common condition nationwide since legalization has spread.

Jeff Shaw, president and chief executive of Pueblo Economic Development Corp., said when marijuana legalization happened, his group decided not to make it a focus of their efforts to bring in jobs because they never believed it would be a strong and sustainable economic engine.

Both his organization and the county government said they haven’t tracked how many marijuana jobs came and went.

“The business community would say, ‘I wish we could unring that bell,’” Shaw said of legalization. “But we can’t. It just came with so many issues.”



Aubree Adams with a photograph of her son.

By Joe Pinsker

Drivers are finding they wish the smart technology in their cars was just a bit dumber. Automakers have added new tech features in the 2020s that go beyond the touch screens, assisted-driving systems and companion phone apps that have become ubiquitous in new cars. Some vehicles come with infrared night vision, seasonal ambient lighting and interior “fam cams” showing rear passengers. Many drivers say it is too much. The share who had positive feelings about the intuitiveness of their car’s controls fell from 79% in 2015 to 56% in 2024, according to surveys of new-car buyers by Strategic Vision, a market-research firm. The trend was similar for drivers’ perceptions of dashboard displays, screen interfaces and the layout of the instrument panel. Drivers are still happy overall with the technology in cars, said Alexander Edwards, president of Strategic Vision. But they want it to be as easy to use as an iPhone, and most of it isn’t.

In January, Vincent Dufault-Bédard tried and failed to remotely start charging his 2024 Volkswagen ID.4 electric car using its phone app. The 36-year-old engineer in Montreal scurried out into the 15° night in shorts and flip-flops, thinking he would be back indoors quickly.

But the car doors wouldn’t open because their sensor-equipped handles were on the fritz in the cold. He ended up having to shimmy into his car through the trunk.

“Just give me a normal door handle,” said Dufault-Bédard.

In 2024, owners of battery-electric vehicles reported their door handles’ being difficult to use at a rate of 3.1 problems per 100 vehicles, up from 0.2 in 2020, according to J.D. Power.

“We’ve changed door handles from being a problem-free experience to now, they pop out when the owner approaches, and we’re seeing all these problems,” said Kathleen Rizk, a senior director at J.D. Power.

Glitches can be especially annoying for drivers whose cars cost more because of extra technology. Some premium features, such as massaging seats and passenger-side screens, can drive up a car’s price tag. The average transaction price of a new vehicle was \$47,373 in February, according to the car-shopping site Edmunds.

Touch screens are a touchy subject for drivers like Jake Pratte. He sees them as both an annoyance and a potential hazard. Changing settings can require multiple taps and usually doesn’t deliver physical feedback like the twist of a knob or the press of a button.

“You have to sit there and stare at what you’re doing, which means you’re taking your eyes off the



The Latest Car Technology Starts to Drive People Nuts

Door handles used to be simple—now they are another piece of technology that can fail



▲ Vincent Dufault-Bédard would be happier without his car’s voice assistant, wireless phone charger and ambient lighting.

road,” said the 35-year-old project manager in the St. Louis area.

He has a similar distaste for capacitive switches, which look a lot like buttons but take their cues from touching rather than pushing. Both components are “an absolute nightmare for someone with slightly sweaty hands,” he said.

Touch screens grew, both in diameter and prevalence, during the 2010s and are now virtually inescapable. A rule from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration required a backup camera, and therefore a screen, in new vehicles starting in 2018.



▲ Jake Pratte said using the touch screen in his family’s car is ‘an absolute nightmare for someone with slightly sweaty hands.’

Some 28% of new-car buyers favor buttons over touch screens, according to a 2022 survey from Escalent, a consulting firm.

Some automakers are bringing back buttons and knobs in new models. And starting next year, the vehicle-safety ratings of Euro NCAP, a European organization, will consider cars safer if they provide physical components for primary controls such as windshield wipers and hazard lights, rather than burying them in a

touch screen.

Drivers are most enthusiastic about tech features such as wireless phone-charging pads, heated and ventilated seats, rain-sensing wipers and built-in vacuum cleaners, according to a survey last year of new-car shoppers by the market-research firm AutoPacific.

At the bottom of their wish lists are passenger-side screens and augmented reality visible on the windshield.

And according to J.D. Power, drivers are underwhelmed by gesture controls, whereby one can, say, increase the volume by rotating an imaginary knob in the air.

Base-model vehicles tend to retain more of their value at the end of a lease, because pricier tech is less valued in the used market, J.D. Power has found. A dealer could add perhaps \$50 to a monthly lease payment for a feature-heavy car to account for the technology’s depreciation.

Some drivers say that they don’t want to pay for a bunch of technology they would opt out of if they could. But modern features don’t always put a huge strain on vehicle prices, according to Ed Kim,

the chief analyst at AutoPacific.

Capacitive switches are cheaper than physical buttons and knobs, he said, and it can be more cost-effective to install the same large screens in every model instead of putting smaller ones in entry-level vehicles.

Of course, fender benders and cracked windshields can rack up big bills for drivers when cameras and sensors are involved. That pushes insurance premiums up, too.

Last year, roughly a quarter of car repairs involved a sensor recalibration, at an average additional cost of about \$600, according to Mitchell, a technology and information provider for auto insurers.

Other costs of technology add up, even little ones.

Ken Larsen, 59, likes to start his 2024 Toyota Tundra pickup remotely to warm up on cold mornings in Montello, Nev. That function doesn’t reliably work with his key fob, so he begrudgingly starts it through Toyota’s app, which charges a subscription fee.

“My payment’s \$1,000 a month, and now I gotta pay another \$15 a month just to be able to start it remotely,” said Larsen, an equipment operator at a mine.

After owning the truck for a year and a half, Larsen also recently bought a 1985 Chevy Silverado. He can fix it himself.

Cash Balance Plans Turbocharge Saving

By Anne Tergesen

Doctors, lawyers and accountants have 401(k) plans. But many have another retirement-saving weapon.

It is called a cash balance plan, and it lets people save up to about \$36 million on top of a 401(k)—while deferring taxes in much the same way.

It helped Victor and Kate Louise Mangona, both doctors, save a combined \$2.6 million over the past decade, which they won’t pay income tax on until they retire. Victor, 44, figures they could have close to \$10 million by age 65.

The radiation oncologist convinced his practice, Texas Oncology, to start a cash balance plan in 2019, supplementing the 401(k) plan. Cash balance plans aren’t subject to the restrictions on annual 401(k) contributions because they are technically pensions. In some of these plans, older higher-earners can put away as much as \$380,000 a year, though younger and lower-paid people have lower limits.

Introduced by consultants to help large companies move away from traditional pensions, cash balance plans took off in recent years

mainly with smaller businesses.

They help explain how affluent professionals are amassing multi-million-dollar retirement account balances, using the tax breaks the retirement system allows.

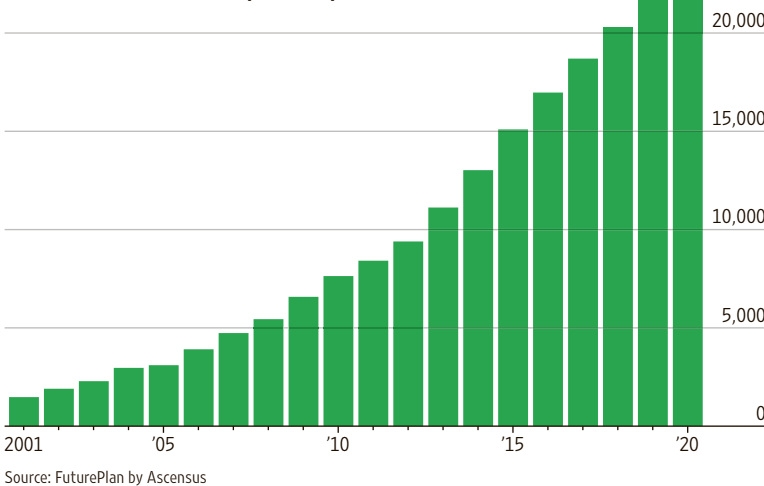
The government forgoes around \$300 billion in tax revenue annually to encourage retirement savings, according to the Treasury Department, one of the biggest breaks on its books. Either contributions or withdrawals are income-tax free, and investment gains are shielded from annual taxation.

There were close to 23,000 employers with cash balance

plans in 2020, the most recent data available, up from 1,477 in 2001, according to FuturePlan by Ascensus, a plan administrator.

They hold more than \$1.2 trillion in assets. Last year, Texas Oncology put \$110,000 of Victor Mangona’s pay into his cash balance account. Considered an employer contribution, it is exempt from payroll taxes and saved him \$2,500 in

Number of cash balance pension plans



Source: FuturePlan by Ascensus

Medicare tax. Victor put \$23,000 into his 401(k) account and Texas Oncology contributed \$46,000.

Critics say cash balance plans exacerbate inequality within the retirement system. Households with income in the top 20% hold more than 70% of the wealth in 401(k)-style plans, according to the Federal Reserve.

They create “a windfall for individuals at the very top of

the income distribution,” said Steven Rosenthal, a former senior fellow at the nonprofit Tax Policy Center.

Cash balance plan consultants say rank-and-file workers benefit, too. To comply with Internal Revenue Service requirements, companies that use them typically make relatively generous contributions to lower-paid employees’ accounts.

People who save the most in cash balance plans are typically business owners paid a share of the profits who want to save more than the 401(k) permits. Many can’t contribute the 15% of income advisers recommend in a 401(k), since that amount is above contribution limits.

Medical and law firms say cash balance plans help attract and retain employees. The offering has spread to real-estate developers, brokers and design firms, said Jerry Cicalese, head of retirement at employee-ben-

efits consulting firm Sentinel Group. He recently spoke about one with a mechanic shop.

Adoption of cash balance plans grew in the 1990s as large firms including International Business Machines converted their traditional pensions, often to reduce the volatility of their pension expenses. Many have since frozen them, shifting new hires into 401(k)s.

In 1996, Congress gave cash balance plans a boost by eliminating a combined limit on the amount someone with both a pension and a 401(k)-type plan at the same employer could save, said Rosenthal.

After a 2006 law removed uncertainty about their legality, adoption at smaller firms surged, said Dan Kravitz, national practice leader for cash balance plans at FuturePlan by Ascensus.

Many business owners with cash balance plans also save up to the \$70,000 annual 401(k) contribution limit. It consists of up to \$23,500 from employees in 2025, plus up to \$46,500 in employer matches and profit-sharing. (Limits are higher for those age 50 and older.)

Many smaller companies with cash balance plans pair them with 401(k)s to pass annual tests the IRS requires to ensure lower-paid employees benefit too. To pass, employers must generally contribute 5% to 7.5% of pay to the accounts of employees who earned below \$155,000 in 2024.

Cash balance plans generally hire investment managers and many employers guarantee an annual return of about 3% to 5%.

People typically roll this money into IRAs.

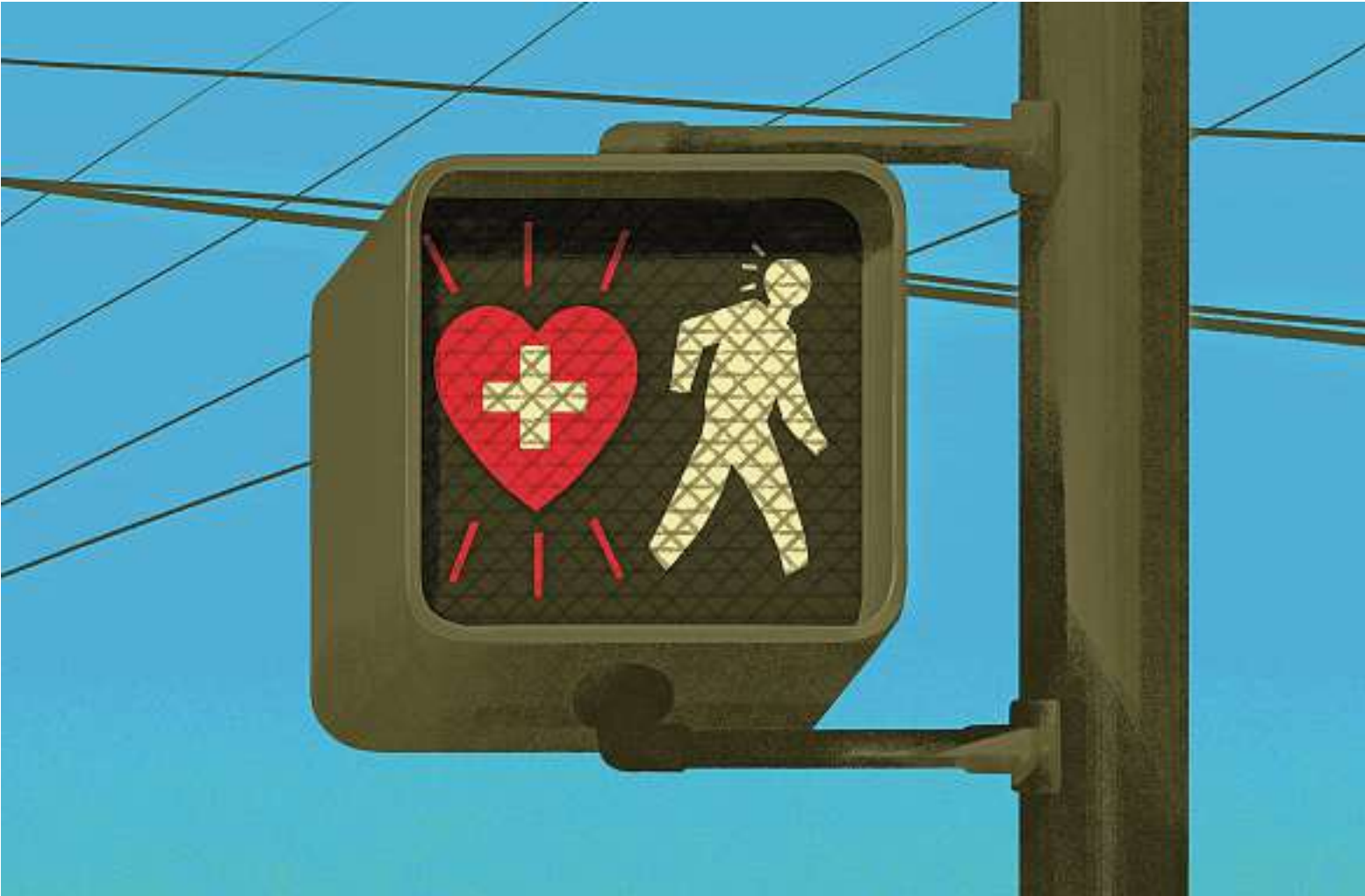


◀ Victor and Kate Louise Mangona, both doctors, saved a combined \$2.6 million over the past decade in retirement accounts including Victor’s cash balance account.

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

The Downside of Retirement: More Time to Fret About Health

A few years ago, we worried about our ailing parents. Now, we talk our own infirmities.



BY STEPHEN KREIDER YODER AND KAREN KREIDER YODER

The first few years in retirement are often the most difficult. But they also can set the stage for how you'll fill the years ahead—both financially and psychologically. Stephen Kreider Yoder, 67, a longtime Wall Street Journal editor, joined his wife, Karen Kreider Yoder, 68, in retirement in late 2022. In this monthly Retirement Rookies column, they chronicle some of the issues they are dealing with early in retirement.

Steve
Something felt wrong when I stepped into the crosswalk toward home one afternoon last month. I had waited for the stoplight to turn green, and a driver stopped as I crossed. But he had a puzzled, concerned look.

Then I saw it. My crosswalk light was red, not green. I had been looking at the wrong stoplight—90 degrees to my right—before blithely walking straight into traffic. I mouthed a “sorry” to the driver, heart pounding as I got across.

I had navigated this intersection properly thousands of times before. How could I have misjudged it?

The misstep was the latest lit-

tle episode that makes me worry that my family history of dementia may be sneaking up on me. I have a harder time remembering names or finding the right word. I never needed to-do lists before but now forget what I went into the garage to do. I leave a kitchen burner on, something I didn’t do before.

Some forgetfulness comes naturally with age, I know, but I have genes to consider. My mother succumbed to dementia, as have several other close relatives. Could it be that retiring and leaving the stimulation of the workplace has put me further at risk?

Others my age echo the concern. In a group of retired friends our age, discussions a few years ago often started with our struggles to care for parents with dementia. Now we’re swapping accounts of dementia among contemporaries—friends, cousins, siblings—and confessing our own slips that may presage decline. “It’s our turn now,” says one of them.

Readers have written us with heartbreaking stories of a friend’s or spouse’s falling into dementia early in retirement. “I feel like we have been cheated in our Golden Years,” writes one about her husband’s dementia, “after having worked hard and saved money to do a few things when we retired.”

My doctor gave me a cognitive test that I comfortably passed—one task was to remember the word series “sunrise, banana, chair”—and she assigned me a class on dementia. The presenter talked of watching for early signals of “mild cognitive impairment,” a possible precursor to dementia, including having trouble solving problems, difficulty completing familiar tasks, confusion with time and decreased judgment.

Among his recommendations: Exercise regularly, stay socially active, eat healthfully, get lots of sleep and “keep learning and challenging yourself.”

That sounded like the regimen my older sister described, so I gave her a call. Our family health history “is always in my mind somewhere,” she said. “There are times I do something really bone-headed and I think, oh, is this something new?”

She tries to gauge her mental acuity today—things like forgetfulness—against what she recalls from earlier in life, and she concludes her acuity hasn’t changed alarmingly. Still, she has amped up her exercise routine with an array of cardio activities, weightlifting and self-defense training. She hews to a high-fiber diet low on processed foods, actively finds ways to avoid stress and regularly

attacks word puzzles. “I keep learning things,” she said, keeping up on literature in her professional field of medicine, reading books and brushing up on her Japanese language.

Our mutual worry is that we might go far enough down the path toward dementia that we no longer have the logical capacity to recognize it. We agreed that we should each recruit family members to be watching us and to point out any concerning changes early on.

Even if there were no cure for us—or a chance of delaying dementia—perhaps our families could recognize it early and show grace toward us in our decline.

Meanwhile, Karen promises to notify me gently if I leave the burner on. And I promise to consciously look twice at the stop signal to confirm it’s the right one before stepping off the curb in front of cars.

Karen
There was no alarming health news from my siblings in January when we met for our monthly Zoom call.

But the next day, an older sister texted this shocking news. “Have any of you had a heart evaluation for coronary artery disease? I failed a coronary artery contrast CT this morning—50-75% obstruction in the LAD.”

Yikes! She’s so fit, a retired doctor who hikes coastal trails in England and keeps a healthful diet. She’d had no clue when we met the day before.

The LAD, the left anterior descending artery, provides half of the heart muscle’s blood supply. My heart has been in the back of my mind the past few years as I approach the age my father was when he had an emergency quadruple bypass surgery.

I had been hearing about the LAD artery, nicknamed the “widow maker” for its tendency to contribute to sudden death. Steve had recently read me an account of an active cyclist our age with no heart-disease symptoms who found his LAD artery was over 90% blocked after a CT scan.

An Illinois reader wrote to us about how a sister had a severe artery blockage, which prompted a brother to get tests despite no symptoms. The results—99% blockage of his LAD artery. The reader requested a CT scan, which revealed a 50% blockage. “Share these stories,” he wrote, “They could end up saving someone’s health or life.”

My sister, too, had virtually no symptoms aside from feeling like she should have better exercise tolerance. She would have mentioned the test in our Zoom call, but she had expected the results to be fine.

Her cardiologist and she considered invasive cardiac catheterization and a stent, but settled on the “best practice” recommendation: increase her statin, optimize blood pressure and start baby aspirin. And keep an eye on it.

Her doctor recommended that her siblings monitor and treat hypertension or high cholesterol.

My brother, after a cardiac calcium test last month, learned his results require more tests. Another sister monitors her high cholesterol and blood pressure.

I messaged my doctor, asking if I’m eligible for a more extensive

We worry we might lose the logical capacity to recognize dementia signs.

heart evaluation due to my family history. She ordered blood tests to look more closely at my heart-related indicators. Results showed positive trends over the past few years. If I experience chest pain or shortness of breath with exercise, she will order a treadmill test. The next evaluation will come with my annual checkup this spring.

Out of caution, I consulted the Mayo Clinic’s long list of online recommendations. Get regular exercise. Choose plenty of whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Get adequate sleep. Reduce stress. And eat one or two servings of fish each week.

That sounds a lot like the regimen Steve learned about to stave off dementia. Time to bike out and stock up on our favorite Pacific Mackerel.

PAUL BLOW

Feud Erupts At Museum Of Failure

Continued from Page One
because it took too long to dry.

It is often said that failure is an orphan, but the Museum of Failure has had several fathers.

West, a 51-year-old organizational psychologist, said he conceived the idea about a decade ago when he became fascinated by how fear of failure in the workplace stifled innovation. A museum, West said, was an “exciting and fun way to communicate the ideas of destigmatizing failure and accepting it.”

When it opened in 2017 in a gallery in Sweden, where West was living, the small exhibition of items that he’d procured from eBay and elsewhere was a surprise hit, drawing huge crowds and international attention.

“What do coffee-flavored Coca-Cola, a Donald Trump board game and a 1940s lobotomy tool have in common? They are all considered innovation flops,” CNN reported at the time.

But within two years, West was locked in a legal battle with two business partners over ownership of the museum. When he couldn’t pay the legal fees, he was declared bankrupt in Sweden.

After studying and talking about failure for years, West recalled the personal sting and shame of his

own. He reminded himself of a quote he’d often shared with others from Jon Sinclair: “Failure is a bruise, not a tattoo.”

“I know it’s true,” he said. “But also when it hits me in the face, it hurts.”

The partnership with Biallas began with great promise. Biallas, 65, is known for traveling exhibitions like the life-size reproductions of Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel—an idea he had after visiting the real one in Vatican City.

“They push you in there...there’s 2,000 screaming people, no atmosphere, they push you out after 15 minutes, you can’t take photos,” he said.

Biallas has done other exhibitions on the Smurfs and Hot Wheels. He ran into trouble for one called the “Louvre Fantastique” when the actual Louvre in Paris sued his company for trademark infringement, an issue that Biallas blamed on his attorney.

When Biallas read about the Museum of Failure, he flew to Sweden to make his pitch. West cleaned his old Alfa Romeo and picked him up at the airport. He was impressed by his new friend, who told stories of partying with David Bowie.

They went into business. Biallas’ company got a license to operate a traveling exhibition of the museum outside of Sweden. He would be responsible for finding gallery space,



setting up the shows, advertising and ticket sales. West would provide the collections and make appearances at openings.

Together, they created big shows in major cities like New York, Los Angeles and Shanghai.

But in recent years, the pair squabbled over money. In 2023, West alleged he wasn’t being paid his 20% cut; Biallas’ lawyers fired back that West had agreed to receive his commissions after Biallas’ company recouped its \$240,000 investment from a show in Minneapolis. West said he asked for his collection back.

The feud exploded when West

▲ Nike’s Magneto eyewear is displayed at the Museum of Failure in Los Angeles in December 2017.

said he found out that Biallas was opening a show in San Francisco by reading about it in the news. With its proximity to Silicon Valley, the capital of failing forward, West said it felt like a slap in the face. He posted a message on the museum’s website telling people to stay away.

Biallas says West’s allegations are baseless because he owns the museum trademarks and has the rights

to the collection. He doesn’t need West’s permission to open a show, he said.

Biallas’ lawyers in recent weeks hit West with a barrage of legal papers ordering him to hand over the website. West has since taken down the message on the site.

“I’m going to open this thing without him and I’m going to shut him down,” Biallas vowed.

The opening date has been pushed back to early April because of the conflict.

Biallas said he wasn’t offended by the comparison to the president: “In today’s political world, I would say it’s a compliment.” He, in turn, chided West as a “failed entrepreneur,” though he said that such a failure doesn’t deserve a place in the show.

“Out of respect to everyone, I wouldn’t want to put him in the museum,” said Biallas. “But we do have Donald Trump in there.”

Trump steaks, Trump University and the Trump board game are all featured in the exhibition.

Biallas said he’s drawn his own lessons from the debacle: “I learned to move on,” he said. “All the background circus is going to be dealt with in the courts.”

West said he’s learned that he was too naive from the outset.

“I wouldn’t be as trusting,” he reflected. “I would not clean the Alfa Romeo for him again.”

ROBIN TEECH/AP/GETTY IMAGES

ARTS IN REVIEW

Lady Gaga has been so busy over the past five years, one can be forgiven for forgetting that she hasn't released a solo LP since 2020's "Chromatica." Since then, she has put out a second album of duets with singer Tony Bennett (2021's "Love for Sale") and collaborated on the soundtrack for "Top Gun: Maverick" and two albums connected to the 2024 comic-book movie "Joker: Folie à Deux." She also co-starred in the latter movie, and played the lead role in Ridley Scott's 2021 film "House of Gucci."

The risk, as her multimedia portfolio expands, is that music could become just another tie-in, a way to extend her personal brand until the next project comes along—a path common for so many pop stars who became actors and entrepreneurs. But fans should fear not: "Mayhem" (Streamline/Interscope), the new album by the 38-year-old born Stefani Germanotta, strongly affirms that music is the cornerstone of her artistic identity.

"Chromatica," an ode to dance-club culture that arrived at the early peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, was the victim of bad timing. It was a terrific set that topped the Billboard 200, but it lacked the staying power of Lady Gaga's most notable records and faded from view as she moved on to other projects. "Mayhem" has its share of body-moving numbers, but it's a bigger and broader collection than its predecessor, one that puts the second word of the term "dance-pop" in capital letters. Hooks are prioritized over grooves, and songs have the outsize dramatic sense of 2009's "The Fame Monster."

It's a classic-sounding Gaga record, in other words—rather than experimenting with style and genre, "Mayhem" is a return to her essence. Assisting her on this path is songwriter and producer Andrew Watt. As his recent work with the Rolling Stones and Pearl Jam has shown, he's a specialist who excels at reminding artists of the foundational aesthetic their fans fell in love with. Here, alongside producers Cirkut (Katy Perry, Justin Timberlake) and Gesaffelstein (Kanye West, Charli XCX), he helps steer Lady Gaga from one towering anthem to the next.

The early part of the record is heavy on electro-grind keyboards and choruses filled with chants and grunts, which hark back to Gaga's primal era as a hitmaker. The title of the opening "Disease" borrows a memorable word from her breakthrough hit "Bad Romance," and also has some of the earlier tune's stomp and swagger. "Abracadabra" finds the singer in diva mode, holding forth over a pulsing beat before the chorus detonates and the ping-ponging vowels collide with a sawtooth synth. And "Garden of Eden," which frames a brief, lustful encounter as a temporary state of grace, is dense with one catchy passage after another, as if a best-of-Gaga album has been crammed into a single song.

The album's middle section is a



MUSIC REVIEW | MARK RICHARDSON

Lady Gaga's Peerless Pop Grandeur

The star's new LP is full of irresistible hooks and her signature theatricality

little weirder and more diverse, touching on an array of styles that the singer makes her own. The fourth track, "Perfect Celebrity," is a Queen-like tune powered by a rock backbeat that is one of just a few duds here—it's not particularly memorable musically, and it's hard to stay interested in Lady Gaga talking about fame. But "Killah" rights the ship with a rhythm-guitar flourish borrowed from David Bowie's "Fame"

and a descending melody on the verse that recalls Prince's "Sign o' the Times." The glittery disco-funk tune "Zombieboy" situates the shout-along charm of Gwen Stefani's "Hollaback Girl" with the rhythmic propulsion of Chic, and "How Bad Do U Want Me" has the warm innocence of classic new wave, pointing to Depeche Mode and Blondie.

Gaga has an enormous advantage over other female pop sing-

ers—she doesn't have to try to seem younger than she is. Her theatrical background and penchant for big-hearted gestures mean she's a master of camp and knows how and when to lay on the schmaltz—her musical roots stretch back through Broadway to vaudeville, where reaching the person in the back row is crucial, and cool remove has no place. So while songs like the slinky midtempo tune "Vanish Into You"

The singer and actress, above; her new record is 'Mayhem' (Streamline/Interscope).

might seem over-the-top and even cheesy to fans of more restrained pop derived from, say, the arty end of R&B, Lady Gaga sells the big gestures completely.

"Mayhem" closes with the Bruno Mars duet "Die With a Smile," which won a Grammy and hit No. 1 on the Hot 100. But it feels slightly out of place here, more anonymous than what comes before. If one of the less appealing songs on your album topped the charts and received an important industry award, you're in pretty good shape, and "Mayhem" is a strong Lady Gaga album that easily ranks with her best.

Mr. Richardson is the Journal's rock and pop music critic. Follow him on X @MarkRichardson.

TELEVISION REVIEW | JOHN ANDERSON

A Parent's Nightmare on Netflix

If the police were to burst into your house at 6 a.m., SWAT-style, declaring that they're arresting your 13-year-old son for murder, what's the first thing you would ask? I may be all wrong, but I think it's "Who's dead?" The question doesn't come up until about 40 minutes into "Adolescence" and can be the kind of thing that gnaws at viewers, even while the rest of the show is paralyzing them with both anxiety and wonder.

A minor point, perhaps, in a nightmare scenario. Created by writer Jack Thorne ("His Dark Materials") and the actor Stephen Graham ("Peaky Blinders"), the ambitious four-part presentation qualifies more as a project than a mere dramatic series, each episode consisting of a single camera shot—uninterrupted, uncut, a seeming tribute to drone photography as well as to Hitchcock's "Rope," Alexander Sokurov's "Russian Ark" and the photo-gymnastics of Leonard Retel Helmrich ("Shape of the Moon"). The tech-

nique contributes real-time immediacy to the story being told, as well as a certain astonishment at the methods, choreography and endurance of the cast. It must have been exhausting.

The over-taxed actors include the tremendously effective Owen Cooper, who plays the barely pubescent Jamie Miller, accused in the

stabbing death of a female classmate. As he voices bewilderment and wets his pants, his father, Eddie (Mr. Graham), becomes a portrait of pain and frustration. Mr. Graham is familiar from his roles as rough-edged Brits—men of action—in such projects as "This Is England," and you can feel Eddie swallowing his urge to do something as the police cart away his boy. There's simply nothing he can do. It is as genuine as anything else that happens here, from the home-invasion arrest to the pleas of innocence, the delicately executed legal processes, and the rippling after-effects of a violent crime on a small community—especially



the family of the accused. "Adolescence" is, at the center of its broken heart, an examination of tormented youth. The investigating officers, Bascombe (Ashley Walters) and Frank (Faye Marsay), chat amiably in their squad car before leading the charge into the Miller home; it's apparently a routine operation. Less so is their tenuous foray into the school shared by both perpetrator and victim. A

Christine Tremarco and Stephen Graham in 'Adolescence,' which Mr. Graham created with Jack Thorne.

prison would be more welcoming; teachers, investigators and mental-health experts are dealing with a social-media-saturated generation that's being wrangled rather than educated. And whose views of sex and status are warped beyond measure. Bascombe's clueless ques-

tioning of the students earns him nothing but contempt, until his own bullied son, Adam (Amari Bacchus), translates the social-media coding

that explains Jamie's place in the world. The word "devastating" gets tossed around like confetti these days, but "Adolescence" qualifies as such.

With no cutting back and forth between locations, or times, the series has to tell its tale in four finite sequences. Not the least in a harrowing quartet is the episode devoted to Jamie's interaction with his psychologist, Briony Ariston (Erin Doherty), assigned to assess the mental state of a young boy incarcerated for months with no quick end in

sight. Is outrage at injustice the same as a dangerous view of the world? Tough call. And Briony is no less sympathetic than any adult in "Adolescence," all of whom are reaping the online whirlwind.

Adolescence
Thursday, Netflix

Mr. Anderson is the Journal's TV critic.

SPORTS

By JARED DIAMOND

It has become an annual rite of spring in baseball: Every year, some team has its aspirations shattered because a pitcher shredded his elbow to pieces.

The latest victims are the New York Yankees, who said Monday that ace right-hander Gerrit Cole needs season-ending Tommy John surgery. The news was a devastating blow for the Yankees, who now must try to navigate a path back to the World Series without one of the most irreplaceable players in the sport.

By now, this sort of seismic injury should come as no surprise. Baseball has been ravaged by an epidemic of arm injuries for more than a decade, and there is no sign of the problem slowing down. Ulnar collateral ligament procedures have increased 170% across the major and minor leagues since 2010, according to a December report published by MLB. Cole is just the latest casualty.

The frustrating part is that everybody in the industry knows exactly why this is happening. Pitchers throw harder than ever before, with the speed of the average fast-ball climbing from about 91 MPH to more than 94 MPH over the past 20 years. The total number of pitches recorded at 100 MPH or more has gone from 214 in 2008 to more than 3,300 last season.

The unending pursuit of previously unimaginable velocity—coupled with a growing emphasis on finding new, elbow-bending ways to spin the ball—has effectively made the act of pitching fundamentally incompatible with the biology of the human arm.

“Baseball needs to figure out how to do it better and safer,” Dr. Keith Meister, a leading orthopedic surgeon who operates on MLB players, said, “because there isn’t an endless supply of arms.”

While the diagnosis is obvious, developing a cure has proven elusive. There is a reason why pitchers are pushing the boundaries of how fast a person can throw a baseball, in spite of the danger: because it works. Hitters in 2024 posted a .229 batting average on pitches 96 MPH and above, compared with .252 when the velocity dropped to 92 MPH or lower.

So while fans might remember Whitey Ford or Tom Glavine bamboozling batters with their pin-

Baseball’s Pitching Velocity Problem Shows No Signs of Slowing Down

Yankees ace Gerrit Cole became the latest starting pitcher to suffer a season-ending elbow injury, part of a worrisome trend that is easy to explain but looks almost impossible to fix



The New York Yankees said that ace right-hander Gerrit Cole will need season-ending Tommy John surgery.

point accuracy, the numbers prove that in baseball today, speed kills.

“It’s more rare to find a guy that throws at a lower velocity that can get guys out consistently than by doing it the way they’re doing it right now,” said Dr. Neal ElAttrache, the orthopedic surgeon who

will operate on Cole on Tuesday.

As a result, professional organizations are searching for amateur pitchers who are capable of lighting up the radar gun. That has led to the youth baseball world prioritizing velocity at the expense of almost anything else. At last year’s

Perfect Game National Showcase, the country’s most prestigious gathering of high-school talent, 36 pitchers threw at least 95 MPH, according to MLB’s injury report. In 2015, there were just five.

In other words: Pitchers are getting hurt at an alarming rate

because at every step on the baseball ladder, they are incentivized to throw in a manner that puts their health at risk. To be noticed by pro scouts or college recruiters, velocity is king.

“Kids will post on their Instagram accounts, ‘I got 3 more miles an hour,’” Meister said. “What they don’t show is them walking in my office three months later when they’ve blown out their elbow.”

There are enormous financial—and competitive—motivations to keep top pitchers on the field. Cole is set to earn \$36 million this season, and now he won’t throw a single pitch until sometime in 2026.

The question is whether MLB can somehow convince teams that it is in their interest to rethink what they value in a pitcher. Dramatic rule changes are one option, with some in baseball advocating for a minimum number of innings starters must pitch, limiting how many pitchers can be on a roster or even outlawing pitches over a certain velocity.

Though none of these ideas are close to being enacted, they would force pitchers to focus more on durability than power.

“The solution won’t all be voluntary, trying to influence people’s behavior,” said Glenn Fleisig, the director of biomechanics research at the American Sports Medicine Institute and an adviser to MLB.

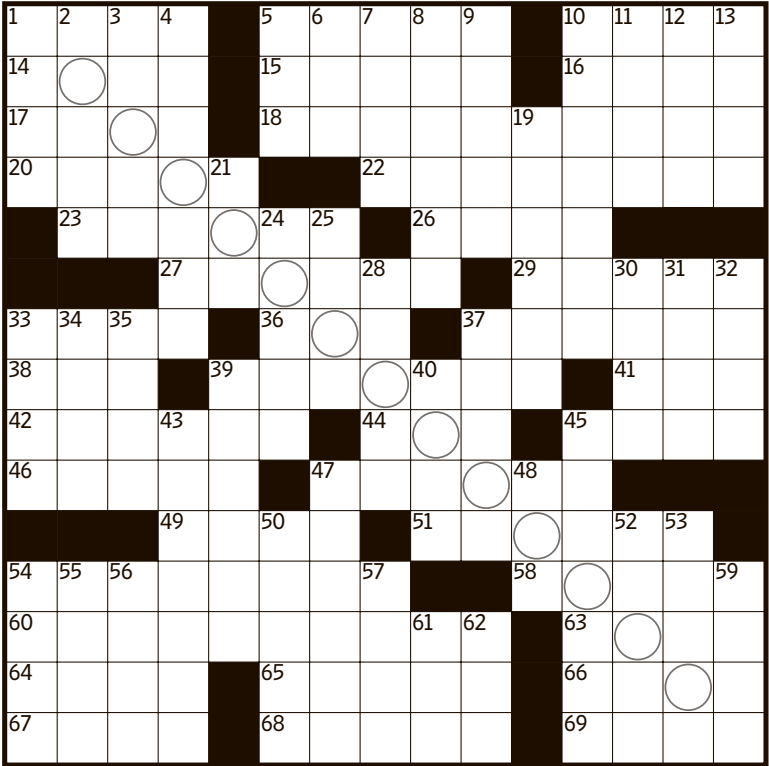
There are potential issues with that approach, and others believe it is impractical—if not impossible—to expect pitchers to throw in a way that makes them less effective on the mound.

“We need to find a way to decrease exposure,” ElAttrache said, “because we’re not going to legislate decreasing performance.”

Whatever the answer, the stakes are high. Because as long as the status quo remains, it’s only a matter of time until the next star pitcher winds up on an operating table.

JONATHAN DREYER/IMAGES/REUTERS

The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shenk

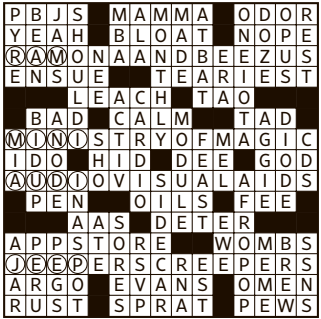


- 25 Surrealist Tanguy
- 28 Sing the praises of
- 30 Falls behind
- 31 Drum-heavy hip-hop genre
- 32 Covered in soot
- 33 Voice on a phone
- 34 Minecraft hauls
- 35 Spanakopita ingredient
- 37 Small part
- 39 Data orderer, at times
- 40 Trounce
- 43 Creator of the circled character
- 45 People step on them to get ahead
- 47 Long-winded person
- 48 Word after black or photo
- 50 Popular Japanese roadster
- 52 Town square?
- 53 Green dinosaur in Mario games
- 54 Solemn bio
- 55 Pixar film set on the Italian coast
- 56 Ivory alternative
- 57 Vindictive Olympian
- 59 Break off
- 61 Adj. modifier
- 62 Deli option

DIPPING FOR HONEY | By Jesse Guzman

- Across**
- 1 Home of Wyeth’s “Christina’s World”
- 5 Tony’s love, in “West Side Story”
- 10 Sketchy offer
- 14 McGregor of “Moulin Rouge!”
- 15 Pitchfork part
- 16 Small Spanish snack
- 17 Gill opening
- 18 Elephantine creatures feared by the circled character
- 20 Medium for some temporary tattoos
- 22 Spongy Nordic cod dish
- 23 Minute
- 26 Book part
- 27 Whimper
- 29 Big mouth?
- 33 Pillow
- 36 Stage name of country singer Sollie Paul Williams
- 37 Trees with spicy resin
- 38 Seething state
- 39 Like the baby boom
- 41 “This is so frustrating!”
- 42 Hang onto
- 44 Unit named for a German physicist
- 45 Guessing game
- 46 Stern with a bow
- 47 Attach googly eyes, e.g.
- 49 Playpen summons
- 51 Pays a quick visit
- 54 Relative of Manx and Gaelic
- 58 Some flights
- 60 Mall workshop, and a hint to filling in this puzzle’s circles
- 63 Shook off
- 64 Volunteer’s offer
- 65 Missing the bell, maybe
- 66 Bouncing sound
- 67 Campfire monologue
- 68 Tequila source
- 69 Caper
- Down**
- 1 Wi-Fi network type
- 2 Big-eyed baby
- 3 Moosehead Lake setting
- 4 Colony’s base
- 5 Radar gun abbr.
- 6 “People — People” (Depeche Mode song)
- 7 Alternative to “Imao”
- 8 With nothing omitted
- 9 Banded stone
- 10 Like the circled character and his friends
- 11 Short undergarment, for short
- 12 Phone fillers
- 13 Item for a surgeon or snorkeler
- 19 Take-charge sort
- 21 Mitt Romney’s wife
- 24 Keep under wraps

Previous Puzzle’s Solution



Rory McIlroy, left, and Scottie Scheffler shake hands during the Genesis Invitational.

PGA Tour Touts Its Strength But LIV Golf Deal Stalls

By ANDREW BEATON AND LOUISE RADNOFSKY

AFTER COSTLY litigation, a tussle over the world’s top golfers and a series of verbal haymakers, the PGA Tour and LIV Golf finally gave fans what they wanted when they said they’d put all the nastiness behind them and join forces.

The problem is that brief glimmer of hope flickered nearly two years ago.

In the time since, the two sides have remained as separate as they were when they were battling each other, and they’re now reckoning with the fallout. The billions poured into LIV by Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund haven’t helped the upstart gain a foothold among audiences. The PGA Tour has been faced with sagging ratings and disgruntled players as it tries to modernize its own business model.

It’s all dragged on long enough that the sides are hoping that a noted golf fanatic named President Trump can fix it—and he says resolving this impasse is more complicated than ending the Russia-Ukraine war.

Now, ahead of the PGA Tour’s flagship event the Players Championship, commissioner Jay Monahan in-

sists that there is progress toward a deal—you just can’t see it yet. He conceded that LIV’s launch in 2022 accelerated change within the Tour. As a result, even as they try to hammer something out, he trumpeted the Tour’s latest television numbers and renewed business partnerships as evidence of how it has emerged from a precarious position to one of strength.

“Bottom line: We’re better for it,” Monahan said. “Disruption has generated momentum, growth and real action.”

None of which answers the biggest question: What’s *really* the deal with the deal?

Monahan projected optimism, going out of his way to credit Trump, who he said “wants to see the game re-unified.”

“The talks are real, they’re substantial, and they’re being driven at the top levels of both organizations,” Monahan said. He added: “When you’re in the midst of complex negotiations... particularly when you may be close to a breakthrough... there may be ebbs and flows.”

It has seemed like more ebbs than flows for golf fans eager to see LIV stars like Bryson DeChambeau and

Brooks Koepka regularly tee it up against PGA Tour stalwarts such as Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy once again. After all, the former enemies first agreed to a framework agreement back in June of 2023.

What once seemed like the biggest holdup, crafting a joint venture between two business rivals that could survive antitrust scrutiny from the Justice Department, appears to be less and less of a problem.

The broad parameters of a plan for Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund to invest over a billion dollars in the PGA Tour are already in front of the U.S. Justice Department. Meanwhile, Trump, who had said he could seal a deal in minutes, has hosted talks between representatives of each side.

The question that remains is when the two sides will unify a fractured game. Monahan said that there’s room to incorporate elements of LIV into the PGA Tour. That could include events across the globe and others that have team elements.

Still, Monahan said he would regret any deal that “compromises the essence” of the PGA Tour.

“We’re doing everything we can to bring the two sides together,” he said.

HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

OPINION

Is Trump Throwing It Away?



BUSINESS WORLD
By Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

The U.S. might have put itself in a better position in this week's Ukraine negotiations. It might have taken advantage of Vladimir Putin's early confusion to bigfoot his failed war—by imposing a no-fly zone or by escrowing Russia's energy revenues until Moscow agreed to a cease-fire.

The U.S. might long ago have announced funding for a multiyear buildup of Ukraine's military to NATO standards rather than doling out one-off, piecemeal aid packages. Washington might have strongly supported Kyiv's efforts to bring the war to Russian soil with long-range strikes.

As Donald Trump might put it, we don't have these cards now in the talks that will begin with Ukraine's provisional acceptance on Tuesday of a U.S. cease-fire proposal.

An ugly deal was always coming, short of Russian forces turning 180 degrees and marching on Moscow to remove the Putin regime (as the Prigozhin mutineers for a time threatened). If Mr. Trump weren't president, somebody else would have to solve two puzzles. Make sure Ukraine isn't dictating the terms of our participation given its domestic politics, which naturally find a deal with Russia hard to swallow.

And make sure, at the same

time, Mr. Putin knows the war would continue and not in the direction of his ultimate victory.

All this was in the cards whoever was elected on Nov. 5, as Mr. Trump might say.

To resolve one debating point, Mr. Trump isn't playing three-dimensional chess. Like any president, he's ad-hocking his way through complex circumstances not of his creation. These include a war in Ukraine, a threatening China, a domestic electorate divided by woke ideology, and a new forcing function: the rapidly rising interest burden on the federal debt.

A few short weeks have seen Mr. Trump, to continue his favorite metaphor, scattering his best card to the winds. The U.S. has been the best-functioning, most innovative economy in the world at a time when its rivals and partners are all struggling for different reasons.

He's throwing it away with his tariff policy.

Canada was about to elect a more Trump-minded government until Mr. Trump revived its Liberals with his trade warfare. Germany just elected its most promising government in a generation, yet Mr. Trump is attacking Europe and NATO's joint prosperity at the very moment Europe is becoming a partner worth having again.

Mr. Trump's program of noisy, chaotic gestures has always raised the question: Is there anything coherent behind it?

Ukraine is becoming the test. Mr. Trump was brave

and impolitic in promising voters he would personally end the war. The U.S.-Ukraine tussle is now out in the open: the basic disjunction in national interest that Team Biden never addressed.

Unseen and unseeable is any Trump-Putin tussle, but the ruble is up, Russian markets are up. Russian interlocutors have been reaching out to

His tariff circus undermines U.S. standing just when it would be most useful.

Western corporations about reinvesting. Mark Galeotti of University College London points out that, in the Russian press, realistic optimism rules, not a fantasy that Mr. Trump is Russia's secret friend.

In allowing such whispers of hope, Mr. Putin takes a domestic risk that smart U.S. leadership might play on.

Here's another piece of evidence to weigh against constant reiterations that Mr. Putin is "winning" and will hold out for unsupportable demands. For more than a year, Russia has scrounged up an average of 1,200 new military recruits a day, 80% of whom have been absorbed to fill losses in the ranks. Russia might have paused its piecemeal attacks and accumulated a large force for breakthrough warfare. Mr. Putin didn't—a sign that, along with Kremlin

budgeting that looks increasingly unsustainable, Mr. Putin may be placing a big bet on Mr. Trump to end the war and doesn't have a Plan B.

This potentially puts cards in U.S. hands and it's disturbing not to have confidence in how the U.S. is playing them.

Mr. Trump briefly paused intelligence sharing with Ukraine but presumably not intelligence collection. The U.S. could easily take control of Ukrainian long-range strike targeting to make sure Mr. Putin is getting the messages we want him to get.

Mr. Trump exposes himself constantly to the press but has yet to answer a specific question: What if Mr. Putin won't agree to terms the U.S. considers it reasonable for Ukraine to accept? The answer has to be: The U.S. will turn back on the arms spigot and increase Russia's risk of financial ruin and battlefield defeat.

Mr. Trump can benefit from a mostly vaporware mineral deal, quieting a MAGA base that has heard him say a million times other nations rip us off. If the U.S. is done letting other countries play us for suckers, this should apply to Russia too.

All this would go over much better if Mr. Trump had the good sense to husband the U.S.'s symbolic value as the world-leading economy, a locomotive pulling other countries along. Instead he's risking this supreme gift in pursuit of what seems a neurotic—i.e., beyond reason or self-interest—obsession with tariffs.

BOOKSHELF | By Crawford Gribben

The Blight Of Empire

Rot

By Padraic X. Scanlan
Basic, 352 pages, \$32

There are few events in Irish history as evocative or politically potent as the Great Famine. The blight that destroyed potato crops in the late 1840s reduced the island's population by almost one-quarter. For nearly two centuries, historians with an Irish-nationalist bent have explained this horror—not without reason—in terms of the indifference and brutality of successive British governments. But reality, as Padraic X. Scanlan shows in "Rot: An Imperial History of the Irish Famine," is much more complex, and much more terrifying, for the economic and environmental factors that caused it are still at work today.

Mr. Scanlan, an associate professor at the University of Toronto, has written widely on the histories of imperialism and slavery. His new book begins by throwing light on Ireland's curious status—though Henry VIII declared it a kingdom in 1542, it was governed as a colony; the 1800 Acts of Union that created the United Kingdom did little to change the arrangement, and the political and economic structures that exacerbated the famine were centuries in the making.

This was especially evident in terms of landholding. As a result of the Cromwellian conquest and the penal laws that followed, Catholics, who by the early 18th century made up around 80% of the population, owned only 5% of Irish land. Across the island, the rural poor supported large families on tiny plots, often of no more than one acre. What made this situation sustainable was the widespread cultivation of a new food source—a tuberous variety of nightshade, originally from South America, which provided vitamins and calories in abundance.

Potatoes were grown everywhere in mid-19th-century Ireland. Those who most depended upon them were known for their stature and strength. In the aftermath of union, Irishmen made ideal military recruits—they were well-represented in the Napoleonic Wars, and by the middle of the century made up almost half the British army. Their celebrated military service contributed to Ireland's elevation within the United Kingdom—and to the introduction of free trade in 1845, which drew Ireland's large-scale production of pork, beef and grain further into English markets.

Goods produced by the rural poor were paid as in-kind rents and sold on; the economy could sustain these food-stuff exports because its laborers ate spuds. By 1845, one-third of the population of the United Kingdom lived in Ireland and nearly all depended upon a single strain of potatoes. The situation was ripe for disaster. It arrived in 1845. Somehow, someone imported a potato bearing the spores of *Phytophthora infestans*. That, Mr. Scanlan explains, was when "a landscape shaped by the demands of the British empire met a pathogen brought to Europe by capitalism's steamships and global trading networks." The blight destroyed potato crops on both sides of the Atlantic, leading to deaths everywhere populations depended on them. But only in Ireland did famine lead to social collapse: one million deaths from starvation and disease, with the loss of another 1½ million emigrants continuing its population decline for the next century.

Mr. Scanlan describes the next years' waves of crop failure and famine and the changing policies of consecutive British governments as they wondered if they could believe the reports from Ireland and how or whether to intervene. For some more ideological members of parliament, Ireland existed in a "civilizational twilight zone, between the noxious darkness of the precapitalist past and the disinfecting

By 1845, one-third of U.K. residents lived in Ireland and nearly all of them relied on a single potato strain—a disaster waiting to happen.

light of the industrial future," so that famine became a test case for Malthusian theory. Such men thought the situation would be worsened by intervention. Charles Trevelyan, a colonial administrator given the job of coordinating government relief efforts, had, Mr. Scanlan says, "a sense of the inevitability and potential *utility* of Irish starvation." He was certain that the famine had been sent by providence to provide a "sharp but effectual remedy" for Irish backwardness.

But humanity prevailed. The British government spent millions of pounds on famine relief. Religious groups, including Catholics and Quakers, provided assistance on the ground. As Ireland's famine became the world's first internationally publicized disaster, charitable giving poured in from Queen Victoria and the Ottoman sultan Abdulmejid I as well as Native Americans and enslaved peoples in the United States. This efflorescence of goodwill was not sustained. As with so many famine-related campaigns, support dried up when it became obvious that the structural problems underlying the disaster were so entrenched as to be almost irremediable.

Almost, but not quite. For, Mr. Scanlan observes, the laissez-faire administrators like Trevelyan were, in their own way, right. The Great Famine really did reshape Ireland, driving down its population, pushing farmers to innovate and encouraging a greater sense of economic responsibility. But structural problems would continue. And the question of land ownership would erupt again, 80 years later, as burning mansions on Anglo-Irish estates lighted up the island's spiral into partition and civil war.

Mr. Scanlan's book is about our collective future as well as the Irish past. It pries the famine's history away from crude and reductionist political interpretations to ask questions about our own era, in which precariously employed laborers produce export crops so finely tuned genetically as to be susceptible to their own version of blight. Has Ireland learned the famine's lessons? The republic's land and property are being bought up by foreign investors, and the economy depends more than could possibly be sensible upon financial contributions from a handful of large American technology companies whose products may now be subject to U.S.-E.U. tariffs.

Mr. Scanlan's haunting and terrible book is undoubtedly a history title of the year. You say "potato"—but after reading "Rot," I'm really not sure how to reply.

Mr. Gribben is a professor of history at Queen's University Belfast.



POLITICS & IDEAS
By William A. Galston

Donald Trump's return. Throughout the campaign, Mr. Trump hammered away at this vulnerability, promising that prices would come down in his second term. "Starting on day one, we will end inflation and make America affordable again," Mr. Trump told attendees at a rally last August in Bozeman, Mont. Although his plan was short on specifics, he gave the electorate every reason to believe he meant it.

But six weeks after Mr. Trump took office, Americans were beginning to wonder whether he was serious about reducing prices. A late February CBS News/YouGov poll found that while 80% of voters believed that he should make inflation a high priority, only 29% thought that he was doing so.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent defended Mr. Trump's economic policies during a speech last week to the Economic Club of New York. "Access to cheap goods is not the essence of the American dream," he said. Rather, the American dream means that "any citizen can achieve prosperity, upward mobility and economic security." Mr. Bessent charged that proponents of multilateral trade deals had lost sight of this and that the deals they struck had worked to the disadvantage of the American people.

Public discontent with inflation and high prices more than anything else weakened support for Kamala Harris and opened the door to

The president's tariffs are designed to correct this, Mr. Bessent continued, by leveling the playing field so that the international trade system rewards "ingenuity, security, rule of law and stability," rather than "wage suppression, currency manipulation, intellectual property theft, nontariff barriers and draconian regulations."

Responding to questions after his speech, the secretary conceded that the tariffs will likely mean a "one-time price adjustment," but he added that "across a continuum, I'm not worried about inflation." Mr. Trump also weighed in during his speech before Congress last week: "There'll be a little disturbance, but we're OK with that."

Others are less OK with it. Economists studying past tariffs have found that their effects endured even after the tariffs were removed. And the Trump tariffs may not be lifted quickly if, as Mr. Bessent suggests, their purpose is to level the playing field, not just to improve the administration's bargaining position on the flow of illegal drugs and immigrants into the U.S. Further, the Federal Reserve Board is concerned about Americans' increased inflation expectations, which could trigger a damaging price spiral.

The American people smell

a rat. In a recent poll by the Economist/YouGov, 68% said that higher tariffs mean higher prices and that consumers will bear a large share of the burden.

They're right. Tariffs are import taxes paid in the importing nation. Canada, Mexico, China and the European Union won't be pouring billions of dollars into U.S. coffers. The Trump administration will be taxing American

He promised lower prices, but his trade policies will have the opposite effect.

importers, who won't be able to absorb fully the increased costs and must shift some of the burden to consumers by increasing prices. Despite his professed business acumen, it has never been clear that Mr. Trump understands this.

It becomes much harder to achieve the American dream if prices rise more quickly than wages. The administration has given Americans no compelling reason to believe that their wage increases will match, let alone beat, the price increases that the America-first tariff plan would guarantee.

To be fair, the administration does have an overarching philosophy behind why it supports tariffs. The pro-tariff argument runs like this: Low-cost imports may benefit U.S. consumers, but they hurt

U.S. producers, who can't compete. These producers reduce production or shut down, eliminating good manufacturing jobs. Even if displaced workers can find new jobs, those jobs tend to be lower-paying, increasing the cost to government of programs such as nutrition assistance and Medicaid. Communities made poorer by the manufacturing sector's collapse tend to experience higher crime and drug use. Low-priced imports generate unintended bad consequences—in economists' lingo, "negative externalities." By raising import prices, tariffs force the system to take these costs into account.

Mr. Trump seems to believe that, after a temporary disruption, his strategy will revitalize U.S. manufacturing and force foreign producers to move their facilities to the U.S., providing good jobs for working Americans. Higher wages, he hopes, will more than make up for higher prices, leaving everyone better off.

But Mr. Trump lacks broad public support as he tries to execute this strategy. While Americans are willing to stick it to China, they oppose higher tariffs on Canada, Mexico and the European Union, and they may not remain patient if prices rise immediately while higher-paying jobs are slow to materialize (assuming they ever do). This is a high-stakes gamble, with Mr. Trump's presidency and the future of America-first economics on the line.

Meat Will Make America Healthy Again

By Nina Teicholz

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. have committed to "make America healthy again." Achieving that goal requires revising the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which are jointly produced by the two departments. They influence everything from school lunches to nursing-home meals but fail to reflect the latest science on protein.

Protein is foundational for childhood growth, brain development and immune function. Yet according to National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey data in 2015-16, nearly 15% of American children 9 to 14 and 30% of teens 15 to 19 didn't meet the government's median minimum protein standard.

As people age, their muscles become less responsive to protein, making it harder to

build muscle mass, avoid osteoporosis and fight illness. But there are no separate protein guidelines for older adults, many of whom don't even clear the current bar. A 2019 study of nearly 12,000 adults age 51 and older found that nearly half of those over 70 weren't meeting recommended daily protein levels.

Federal guidelines favor inferior plant-based protein.

The federal protein category includes not only meat, fish, seafood and eggs but beans, peas, nuts, seeds, soy products and lentils. Most plant-based proteins lack at least one of the nine essential amino acids that comprise a "complete protein." Plant-based sources are also harder to absorb. Four ounces of lean beef provides 24 grams of

protein and 155 calories. It would take six tablespoons of peanut butter—between 500 and 600 calories—to match that protein amount. (Dairy products, most of which are good sources of animal protein, are a separate category in the federal guidelines.)

In 2005 federal recommendations dropped from 6 ounces of animal protein a day to 5.5 ounces of any type of protein. Worse, the guidelines use an inaccurate "ounce equivalent" measure to equate different protein sources. The body can synthesize at least two to four times as much protein from beef, eggs and pork as it can from "ounce equivalent" quantities of kidney beans, nuts or peanut butter.

Ms. Rollins and Mr. Kennedy should reject suggestions from an expert committee that the 2025-30 federal guidelines place an even greater emphasis on plant-based proteins and that they

recommend "reducing intakes of red and processed meats." As the Agriculture Department found in 2010, there is either "no relationship" or a "limited inconsistent" relationship between any protein type and chronic diseases, including obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The National Academy of Medicine should also increase its recommended 0.8 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. Studies find that 1.2 to 1.6 grams is a better range for weight loss, muscle maintenance, recovery from illness and overall well-being, especially for children and older adults.

The Trump administration can ensure that federal dietary guidelines recognize the role of high-quality protein in improving Americans' health.

Ms. Teicholz writes the Substack column "Unsettled Science" and is author of "The Big Fat Surprise."

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

How Do You Like the Trade War Now?

President Trump wanted a trade war with the world, and Americans are getting it, good and hard. Stock prices continued to decline on Tuesday amid the latest Canada-U.S. tariff tit-for-tat. By the end of the day the two sides were talking about a temporary truce, but who knows which side of the tariff bed Mr. Trump will wake up on Wednesday?

North Americans awakened Monday to the news that Ontario premier Doug Ford said he was raising the price of his province's electricity exports to the U.S. by 25% in response to Mr. Trump's on-and-off 25% tariffs on Canada. That's a hit to consumers in the U.S. Midwest and Northeast.

Mr. Trump went ballistic, even by his standards. Canada "must immediately drop their Anti-American Farmer Tariff of 250% to 390% on various U.S. dairy products," Mr. Trump said on Truth Social. He said he'd double his metals tariffs on Canada to 50%. And oh, "the only thing that makes sense is for Canada to become our cherished Fifty First State."

Nice of him to concede, if obliquely, that his trade war with Canada makes no sense. His exhortation that Canada become a U.S. state is a tacit acknowledgment that the two economies are deeply integrated. His splendid little tariff war will harm businesses and consumers on both sides of the border.

The U.S. sources about two-thirds of its primary aluminum and 60% of scrap aluminum imports from Canada. Both are used by secondary U.S. aluminum manufacturers and fabricators, which oppose Mr. Trump's tariffs. They have a hard enough time competing against lower-cost producers in China and Turkey.

Canada makes up a smaller share of U.S. steel consumption (about 6%). But Mr. Trump's tariffs will still raise costs for steel users that depend on Canadian supplies. Hot-rolled coil steel prices are up a third since Mr. Trump took office because U.S. manufacturers like Cleveland-Cliffs and Nucor

have raised prices in anticipation of tariffs.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said over the weekend that the President's tariffs would make some foreign products more expensive but "American products will get cheaper." Huh? Companies that use foreign components will have to raise prices or swallow narrower profit margins. Does Mr. Lutnick understand, well, commerce?

Domestic manufacturers that compete with foreign goods will raise their prices to take advantage of the protectionism to increase their margins. A study in the American Economic Review found that consumers paid \$817,000 for each new manufacturing job created by Mr. Trump's washing machine tariffs in his first term.

And Mr. Trump is only getting started as he prepares to take his trade war global. He promised Tuesday to "substantially increase" tariffs on cars on April 2, which he said would "essentially, permanently shut down the automobile manufacturing business in Canada." So first he whacks U.S. auto makers with tariffs that raise their production costs, then he tries to shield them from foreign competition by whacking American consumers.

Ontario's Mr. Ford at last showed some maturity late Tuesday, saying he'll suspend his 25% tax on electricity pending talks. He and Mr. Lutnick plan to meet Thursday about renewing the USMCA trade agreement, which comes up for review next year. Stocks pared some of their losses after the news.

The trouble with trade wars is that once they begin they can quickly escalate and get out of control. All the more so when politicians are nearing an election campaign, as Canada now is. Or when Mr. Trump behaves as if his manhood is implicated because a foreign nation won't take his nasty border taxes lying down.

We said from the beginning that this North American trade war is the dumbest in history, and we were being kind.

Trump is furious that Canada won't take his tariffs lying down.

Ukraine Bows to Trump's Cease-Fire

Ukraine yielded to U.S. pressure on Tuesday and agreed to the cease-fire terms with Russia that President Trump demanded. In return the U.S. says it has restored its intelligence help to Ukraine, as Russia keeps attacking.

Ukraine agreed to a 30-day cease-fire if Russia also accepts, which is an offer Kyiv couldn't refuse. Mr. Trump's withdrawal of intelligence and military aid to Ukraine was costing Ukrainian lives on the battlefield. Russia was gaining ground in particular against Ukrainian positions in the Russian region of Kursk. The unfrozen American aid includes \$1 billion in equipment that the Biden Administration had approved but was still in the pipeline.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the U.S. will now present its cease-fire offer to Moscow. "I hope they're going to say yes. And if they do, then I think we made great progress," Mr. Rubio said in Saudi Arabia after the talks with Ukrainian leaders. "If they say no, then we'll unfortunately know what the impediment is to peace here."

If Russia accepts the cease-fire offer, this will not mean peace in our time. Vladimir Putin has made many cease-fire promises, only to tell his troops to take ground when they can and then blame Ukraine. That's what happened in the Minsk accords of the 2010s. Mr. Putin may want a cease-fire as an opportunity for a military respite and to rearm.

A particular test of the cease-fire will be if the fighting stops in the Kursk region. Ukraine took territory inside Russia in part as negotiating leverage to induce Moscow to cede some of the ground it has taken from Ukraine.

The bigger question is how Mr. Trump will persuade Mr. Putin to agree to peace terms that Ukraine can accept. Mr. Trump has been willing to bludgeon Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to accept a cease-fire without security guarantees. Mr. Putin has made no concessions of any kind to date. Everyone welcomes even a temporary end to the killing, but it will resume with a vengeance if Ukraine is unable to defend itself as Mr. Putin waits for his next opportunity to mount another assault.

Trump, Perkins Coie and John Adams

As he campaigned for a second term, Donald Trump often said his retribution against opponents would be "success." But now that he's back in power, it's clear the President's definition of success includes retribution.

That's the only way to read his extraordinary executive orders targeting big Washington law firms for federal punishment and investigation. Mr. Trump's decision to use government power to punish firms for representing clients breaks a cornerstone principle of American justice going back to John Adams and the Founders.

Mr. Trump's first EO against Big Law hit Covington & Burling on Feb. 25. The order suspends the security clearances of firm employees "who assisted former Special Counsel Jack Smith." It also takes steps to bar the firm from government contracts.

That was mild compared to the hammer blow against Perkins Coie on March 6. That order strips security clearances from the firm's employees, bars government contractors from retaining the firm, and even bars its lawyers from government buildings.

The order also accuses Perkins Coie of racial discrimination and calls for a federal investigation of the firm by the Attorney General and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission "in consultation with State Attorneys General." Mr. Trump is targeting the firm with the full enforcement power of the federal government. We can't recall a similar White House order from any President.

On Tuesday Perkins Coie sued the Administration, calling the order an illegal use of executive power that has already harmed the firm and its clients.

Mr. Trump gives away his motive for this EO in Section I. Purpose: "In 2016 while representing failed Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, Perkins Coie hired Fusion GPS, which then manufactured a false 'dossier' designed to steal an election." That was the infamous Steele dossier that some in the press took seriously. The order adds that the firm "has worked with activist do-

nors including George Soros to judicially overturn popular, necessary, and democratically enacted election laws," including voter ID.

Few wrote more often or critically than we did about Fusion GPS and the Steele dossier, and in real time when it was unpopular to do so. Perkins Coie has shown it's a partisan firm, and its former partner Michael

Sussmann was charged but acquitted of a crime related to the phony Russia collusion scandal. Its role in that episode was shameful.

But Mr. Trump's order is now targeting the law firm for representing clients Mr. Trump dislikes. He is trying to defenestrate Perkins Coie to intimidate elite law firms from representing his opponents or plaintiffs who challenge his policies. This violates a bedrock principle of American law, which is that even the worst clients deserve representation.

Mr. Trump's former Labor secretary, the appellate litigator Eugene Scalia, made the point well in a 2019 speech to the Federalist Society: "One of the great traditions of the legal profession is to respect the right to representation of those we disagree with, and even to undertake that representation ourselves."

Mr. Scalia cited John Adams's famous defense of British soldiers charged with the Boston Massacre as "one of our most important stories about the practice of law."

As Mr. Scalia noted, it has typically been conservatives who have had a hard time getting representation from elite firms that fear political retribution from the left. Paul Clement, the premier Supreme Court litigator of our time, famously resigned from King and Spalding after that firm dropped the U.S. House of Representatives as a client in connection with the Defense of Marriage Act.

Some on the right will say that turnabout now is fair play, but it's the opposite. It's one more step toward making the legal system wholly political. Mr. Trump told voters he wouldn't seek political retribution if he won. His attack on law firms violates that promise, and it won't do him or the country any good.

The President breaks a bedrock legal principle by targeting the law firm.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our Foes Would Fill Doran's Mideast Vacuum

Michael Doran might be jumping the gun in claiming that Donald Trump is channeling Ronald Reagan in the Middle East (Letters, March 10). We don't know yet whether the president agrees with Elbridge Colby and JD Vance that U.S.-Israeli interests don't overlap enough to justify U.S. military action against the Islamic Republic's nuclear-weapons program. Mr. Trump may have a red line precisely because others don't have the will or military means. We should revisit this question a year from now.

In replying to my op-ed "Israel Can't Substitute for the U.S. in the Middle East" (March 6), Mr. Doran also makes a dubious analogy when discussing the Middle East between the 1950s and 1970s. The Cold War didn't call for U.S. military intervention in the region—minus President Eisenhower's decision to let the U.S. Army and Marines sunbathe on Lebanese beaches—because Soviet designs never really threatened the Persian Gulf. In 1946-47, however, President Truman did threaten military action to get Stalin out of Iran. It worked: An outmatched U.S.S.R. departed.

Perhaps Ronald Reagan's greatest mistake occurred in the Middle East when it was clear that the Islamic Re-

public was responsible for bombing the U.S. Marines and U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983. Secretary of State George Shultz argued for a reprisal against the Islamic Republic. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger argued against. Reagan went with Weinberger. If he had followed Shultz's counsel, modern history in that region, especially as it has intersected with Islamic terrorism, would be far less nefarious and destructive.

Mr. Doran's depiction of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Turkey—and the potential for Turkish-Israeli cooperation—is also odd. It doesn't match how Mr. Erdoğan and his party see the future, which is more Islamic, anti-Zionist and liberated from Washington's proctoring.

Like many in the Obama administration, American populists may believe that the U.S. should abstain from foreign fights because it's too weak, broke or incompetent. Such declinism, made worse by trying to pass the buck to others, won't, however, make Americans or our allies safer. Mr. Doran's approach will create a vacuum. Our enemies will fill it.

REUEL MARC GERECHT
Foundation for Defense of Democracies
Washington

The Doctor's Office Doesn't Have to Be Dreary

Regarding "Why We No Longer Trust Doctors Like We Used To" (Personal Journal, Feb. 26): We would like to offer a complementary perspective based on data we recently published in the peer-reviewed medical journal, *Advances in Radiation Oncology*.

During the first month of the Israel-Hamas war, as rockets were incessantly dispatched to our hospital, located near Gaza, we wondered whether our patients would present for their daily radiation. Within days, we observed that about 90% arrived for their treatments, indicating that they feared their cancer more than they feared the bombings. Yet we discovered that there was also a positive explanation for sustained attendance: trust in our physicians and staff.

Trust isn't merely a feature of the doctor-patient relationship, it is the defining element of its sanctity. Strengthening this relationship through improved communication, patient-centric practices and systemwide sensitivity could restore and even enhance public confidence in medical systems that people want and need to believe in.

ELI SAPIR, M.D.
Ashdod, Israel
LEORA BRAZG FERRO, M.D.
Seattle

The patient experience is within the patient's control. Generally, patients should reach the best understanding of their conditions and continually bring caregivers up to date on all aspects of their care. Ask offices to send test results to all physicians you see and follow up to ensure this has happened. Take medications as directed

and push back aggressively on prescriptions that are causing you adverse reactions. Find all the information you can, read it and discuss it with your physicians. When your answer to a physician is no, don't relent until you have heard justification for changes in medications, levels of care or agreeing to surgery and other procedures. Learn to gauge the risks you are being asked to take. Patient-directed care is part of the overall quality of care.

DAVID BEAUREGARD
Richmond, Va.

Perhaps some people have had poor experiences with doctor visits. At age 94, I can't say the same. My internist has become a friend. He listens, prescribes if necessary and takes time to chat. We talk about our families, our dogs and his gigs as a musician. When my husband, also his patient, died 10 years ago, the internist sent me a hand-written letter of condolence. His wife, who is in practice with him, is equally friendly. She was on call Christmas weekend when I came down with Covid, and she made several calls to ensure I received the right medicine.

My ophthalmologist has prayed for me and offered to pick me up for church. My cardiologist showed me pictures of his new home during a visit to solve a heart problem. Hearing aids are fixed while my audiologist and I share family stories. Each of these doctors has a large practice. They nevertheless take time to know their patients.

KAREN K. SPAULDING
Williamsburg, Va.

My Compliments to a Fine Chicago Columnist

Bob Greene's op-ed "The Night I Left Gene Hackman Alone" (March 3) reminded me of a similar experience. In April 2005, I was having dinner with colleagues at a steakhouse in Chicago. When we were getting up to leave, I noticed Mr. Greene sitting alone at a round table that was covered with sections of several newspapers that he was reading while eating.

As someone who had grown up enjoying Mr. Greene's Chicago Tribune columns about Michael Jordan, his youth in Ohio in the 1960s and many other subjects of the day, I thought

briefly about stopping over to say hello and to thank him. I ultimately decided not to intrude.

Unlike Mr. Greene's run-in with the "Hoosiers" star, I have regretted not stopping to say something. As he wrote about Hackman, Mr. Greene has "enriched the lives of people he would never meet" with his writing, and it has been a pleasure to read him again in the Journal in recent years.

BILL ESSIG
Winnetka, Ill.

The Third Certainty in Life

In his otherwise excellent piece, Karl Rove is too generous in one instance ("Trump's Deft Victory Dance," op-ed, March 6). He writes: "If tariffs drive up prices . . ." The proper word, I'm afraid, is "when."

TONY LIMA
Hayward, Calif.

Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"I'm just saying that gnawing at your paw throughout negotiations doesn't exactly exude confidence."

TOM PARONIS
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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OPINION

When U.S. Pauses Aid, Ukraine Runs for Cover

By Jillian Kay Melchior

The U.S. lifted its pause on military and intelligence support to Ukraine Tuesday afternoon as the two countries crafted a 30-day cease-fire proposal with Russia. President Trump claimed last week that Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky “doesn’t want there to be Peace as long as he has America’s backing,” and the U.S. will credit its tough tactics for getting Kyiv on board. Moscow has yet to agree to the cease-fire, and “if they say no, then we’ll unfortunately know what the impediment is to peace here,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday.

Residents of Kharkiv have no more than two minutes to find shelter when the air-raid siren sounds.

Vladimir Putin has a long history of violating cease-fires and other commitments in Ukraine, and Kyiv alone hasn’t been able to get Moscow to commit to peace. On Thursday, before the U.S.-Ukraine meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Mr. Zelensky had proposed a truce on attacks on energy and civilian infrastructure. The Ukrainian president also said he’d be willing to halt military operations in the Black Sea if the Russians would do the same. Mr. Putin’s response: One of the biggest aerial attacks of

the war, involving nearly 70 missiles and 200 drones that struck energy facilities across Ukraine and damaged residential buildings. That doesn’t suggest Russian eagerness to seek peace.

Even if the Russians restrain themselves for 30 days, Moscow will likely use the cease-fire to rearm. The Trump administration would be wise to prepare for that possibility by using the time to strengthen Ukraine’s air defenses. A month isn’t long enough to ensure full deterrence through denial, but it would be a strong signal to Mr. Putin that the U.S. is serious about enforcing a peace.

Since the war began, Ukraine has lacked sufficient air defenses to protect its vast territory. European countries have tried to fill the gap by providing surface-to-air missile systems and launchers, with more on their way soon, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies. But Ukraine relies heavily on American Patriot missiles to intercept Russian ballistic missiles. U.S. intelligence provides early warning of Russian aerial attacks that ensures the air raid sirens sound in time for civilians to get to safety.

Kharkiv, Ukraine’s most populous city, is less than 20 miles south of the Russian border. It’s so close that when Russian forces across the border in Belgorod launch a ballistic missile, Kharkiv residents have only a minute or two to seek shelter. Last year some died because they didn’t have time to reach safety, said Mariia Luchaninova, a Kharkiv resident who volunteers with the nongovernmental organization Help Ukraine Today.



Volodymyr Lohinov at a fire station in Kharkiv.

In the spring of 2024, Ukrainian air defenses ran low on interceptors as the U.S. dithered over whether to continue providing military aid. The Russians seized the opportunity and pummeled Kharkiv with missiles, glide bombs and drones—77 strikes on the city in May alone. But between June 2024 and February 2025 the number of Russian aerial attacks plummeted to an average of 25 a month.

The reversal was the direct result of Ukraine’s being able to defend itself. Congress approved additional aid for Ukraine. F-16s arrived for air-defense missions. Ukraine’s Kursk offensive diverted Russian resources. The Biden administration lifted some restrictions on strikes within Russian territory, which allowed the Ukrainians to strike targets like weapons-

storage facilities. Instead of trying to knock down the arrow, Ukraine was able to take out the archer.

Conversely, when air defense falters, Ukrainian civilians pay the price. Ask Volodymyr Lohinov, a 30-year-old Kharkiv firefighter. His father, Vladyslav, also a first responder, died in a Russian drone attack last April, as Ukraine’s air defenses ran low. Sharing “the same challenges brought us closer together,” Mr. Lohinov says. “This work was a plus to the treasury of our common interests,” though during the war, he says, they both “realized that every trip is a risk, and that the outcome could be fatal.”

Before the war, Ukraine’s first responders worried about gas installations or flammable liquids during a rescue operation. Now they also have

to think about unexploded ordnance and rocket-fired antipersonnel land mines. Ukraine’s firefighters wear body armor in addition to their normal heavy gear. Russia has been known to engage in “double tap” attacks: waiting for rescuers to arrive and then following up with a second strike.

On the night Vladyslav Lohinov was killed, the Russians used Iranian drones to strike a civilian neighborhood in Kharkiv. Father and son ended up responding to different addresses as the drones kept coming. The young Mr. Lohinov says he decided to call to check on his father: “He always answered, even if he was busy. We had this agreement. No matter what was going on, that was our rule.” That night, he didn’t pick up. “Of course my first thought was that there was a hit.”

The son went to the site where his father had responded. “I saw the bodies of two dead colleagues,” he says in an interview. “I tried to go further, but my superiors stopped me.” His father was killed in a double-tap strike, he learned. Mr. Lohinov dropped to his knees and wept, his grief captured on a viral video.

The firefighting service gave Mr. Lohinov a week’s bereavement leave. He returned to work after three days. “I think my father would have continued as well,” he says. The work saves lives, and “that’s probably why I keep working.”

Ms. Melchior is a London-based member of the Journal’s editorial board.

Long Past the Pandemic, Kids Skip School in New York



UPWARD MOBILITY
By Jason L. Riley

Former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who resigned four years ago after multiple women accused him of sexual misconduct, is now running for New York City mayor as the answer to problems he helped to create.

Mr. Cuomo signed bail-reform legislation that made it more difficult for prosecutors and judges to keep violent repeat offenders off the streets. He blessed sanctuary policies that made New York a magnet for pretend asylum seekers and multiplied the homeless population. He banned fracking, which led to higher energy costs.

Perhaps voters will consider the sorry alternatives in this year’s election—including scandal-plagued incumbent Mayor Eric Adams, who is sucking up to President Trump for help—and decide to give Mr. Cuomo a shot at redemption. Unfortunately, the people who suffered the most lasting damage on his watch are either no longer with us or too young to cast a ballot.

Mr. Cuomo was the architect of the state’s Covid response, and one of his worst decisions was ordering nursing homes to accept Covid patients from hospitals, which helped spread the virus among the elderly. But it was New York City that bore the brunt of his overzealous lockdown edicts. In deference to teachers’ unions, he and then-Mayor Bill de Blasio kept New York City schools closed longer than in other parts of the state. Schoolchildren are still suffering the consequences, and many may never recover.

According to a new study from the Manhattan Institute, more kids in New York City public schools are attending class less often. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10% or more school days in a given academic year, climbed from 25% before the pandemic to 34.8% last year, which is well above the national average. Broken down by grade level, the chronically absent rate for the 2023-24 school year was 40.7% for kindergarten, 35.4% for first grade, and 32.4% for second grade.

These figures are especially alarming because educators have long known that the ability to read by

third grade—when a child goes from learning to read to reading to learn—is a reliable predictor of future success in everything from high-school graduation to avoiding the criminal-justice system.

Since the pandemic, parental attitudes toward school attendance have changed for the worse. “Many NYC educators can attest that parents have become more lenient

The city’s rate of chronic absenteeism shot up from 25% of students before Covid to 34.8% last year.

about their kids skipping school if they say they are sick,” writes Danyela Souza Egorov, the study’s author. “In general, many parents have come to believe, as one educator put it, that ‘missing school in non-testing grades is not a big deal.’” As concerning, she adds, is a recent decision by New York state to accommodate this trend by minimizing the importance of school atten-

dance. Under a new plan adopted by the state, chronic absenteeism has been eliminated “as a measure of school quality, which means that this will not be one of the measures by which the state evaluates the performance of school districts.”

What’s happening in New York City is consequential because it’s home to what is by far the nation’s largest school system. The rise in chronic absenteeism stemming from the pandemic, however, isn’t limited to Gotham, and neither are the social and economic consequences. Absenteeism leads to learning losses, which aren’t spread evenly across demographic groups. Children who were already behind pre-Covid have fallen further behind, and those same kids are the ones mostly likely to be regularly missing school.

These young people are future workers. Their productivity, and thus the nation’s, will depend on the skills they learn in school and bring with them into the labor force. People with fewer skills are less productive, and less productive countries are poorer.

In an academic paper published last year, Stanford’s Eric Hanushek

and Bradley Strauss tally the economic costs of pandemic learning losses. “Based on the available research on the lifetime earnings associated with more skills, the average student in school during the pandemic will lose 5-6% of lifetime earnings,” the authors write. “Because a lower-skilled workforce leads to lower economic growth, the nation will lose some \$31 trillion (in present value terms) during the twenty-first century.” To put that figure in context, they note that it dwarfs “the total economic losses from either the slowdown of the economy during the pandemic or the recessionary losses in 2008.”

The most effective way to address the problem in the short run would be to re-emphasize the importance of school attendance, identify and reward the most effective teachers in the system, and steer the most vulnerable students in their direction. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association will resist such changes to preserve their control over the status quo, but teachers unions and the politicians they control are why we’re in this mess.

The Last Thing America Needs Is a Sovereign Wealth Fund

By Dimitri Burshtein

If reports are correct that former Morgan Stanley technology banker Michael Grimes is set to lead President Trump’s planned U.S. sovereign wealth fund, or SWF, the administration has chosen a highly credentialed and qualified candidate. But that doesn’t make an SWF a good idea. On the contrary, such a fund would pose significant economic risks to American taxpayers and voters and would give future presidents—Democratic and Republican—unprecedented control over the U.S. economy and federal budget.

America is about as far from the prototypical SWF nation as a country can be. Most countries with SWFs are smaller nations with substantial fiscal reserves such as Norway, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. has the world’s largest economy with large annual federal deficits and a national debt approaching \$40 trillion—about \$100,000 a person.

It’s always difficult to fund an SWF and generate consistent re-

turns, but all the more so for a nation burdened by such large budgetary issues. An SWF will be effectively debt-financed so long as the U.S. is running large deficits. All money is fungible. Even if Washington ostensibly funds an SWF with revenue from taxes or tariffs, it comes at the cost of more debt because the U.S. government doesn’t have a budget surplus to invest. This would make an SWF the economic equivalent of a leveraged hedge fund. To generate positive returns for Americans, it would have to achieve sustained risk-adjusted returns exceeding the government’s borrowing rate. That would be exceptionally difficult, especially over the medium and long term.

An American SWF would distort markets and invite political interference. Governments have a poor record of picking economic winners, as seen in failed investments like Solyndra and Fisker Automotive. Government investment funds also tend to drift beyond their original mandates due to misaligned incentives. A prime example is Australia’s Future Fund.

Established in 2006 to finance the country’s unfunded public pension liabilities by 2020, the Future Fund has yet to allocate a single dollar for this purpose and is unlikely to do so any time soon. The fund either reinvests its returns or spends it on remarkable administrative costs. The fund’s staff includes four people who in fiscal 2023-24 made more than a million Australian dollars a year. Meanwhile, government pension liabilities continue to burden taxpayers, costing billions annually while Australia’s government debt keeps rising.

Although the Future Fund’s returns have generally exceeded borrowing costs, they have lagged behind private counterparts; more so when accounting for the fact that being government-owned exempts the Future Fund from taxes other funds have to pay. Australian taxpayers would have been better off with lower taxes and the freedom to invest or consume as they saw fit.

The flawed justification for keeping the Future Fund even as debt continues to accrue is the mistaken belief that it generates “free money.”

Proponents argue that as long as returns exceed borrowing costs, the fund should continue indefinitely. By that logic, the U.S. government could simply borrow trillions, invest the money, and eliminate taxation altogether. But money is never free and past performance is no guarantee of future performance. If returns are insufficient, taxpayers will be significantly worse off.

If you think BlackRock’s ESG is bad, why invent a mightier tool for political interference in markets?

The greatest danger of an SWF is political interference and cronyism. The Future Fund is Australia’s third-largest investment fund when measured in total assets. This affects asset prices and distorts markets. An American SWF would be even more distortive, potentially becoming the world’s largest institutional investor. This would give the federal govern-

ment enormous leverage over domestic and global markets, enabling it to manipulate markets, businesses and investments.

Politicians have already attempted this in Australia. The Labor government recently attempted to alter the Future Fund’s investment mandate to ensure that it “must” have regard for government priorities. Such changes would affect investment decisions and influence the corporate governance and strategic direction of private companies in which the fund has invested.

If BlackRock’s ESG focus is controversial, imagine the potential for politicians to use an American SWF as a political tool. Even if this now appeals to some Republicans, they should picture what it would mean under a Democratic administration. The rapid fluctuations in mandates alone would cause dangerous market instability and uncertainty. Every four years could bring new demands, leaving investors and businesses with limited ability to make medium- or long-term plans.

A president who can leverage the government’s balance sheet strategically to influence private businesses would circumvent congressional authority and further expand executive power. And it would undermine the constitutional separation of powers by weakening Congress’s exclusive control over federal spending.

In Federalist No. 69, Alexander Hamilton stressed that the president shouldn’t have unilateral control over commerce or the economy. Establishing a U.S. sovereign wealth fund would represent a dramatic shift from this principle, granting the president a previously unimagined authority more akin to that of a monarch—an outcome America’s Founding Fathers never intended.

Mr. Burshtein is a principal at Eminence Advisory, an Australian consulting firm.

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Notable & Quotable: Slotkin

Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D., Mich.) on “The View,” March 11:

Slotkin: Representing a state where people voted for Trump and voted for me, I have a responsibility to represent my entire state. But I don’t think there’s anyone who feels like what’s going on right now is normal—even if you voted for Trump, right? I think there is a feeling in the country, and I often say this, you know, we’re about to turn 250 years old, right? We’re still pretty young for a country. These are, like, like, our angry teenage years, right? We are going through this push and pull where

we’re happy, we’re sad, we want this, we want that. And what do you do when you have a teenager who’s threatening themselves and others? You just try to get ‘em through this period alive so that their brain can fully form and you can come back to kind of what the country—

Joy Behar: Are you talking about Trump?

Slotkin: No, I’m talking about our country. We’re a pendulum swinging. We’re a pendulum swinging. And so for me, I don’t think there is an American who feels like this is normal.

WORLD NEWS



NUDEGE NAZARS FOR WSJ (2)



Hector Ferrer, right, made it to Mexico City from Venezuela before being forced to turn back. Migrants, left, head for a boat in Capurganá, Colombia.

Migrants Go South Amid U.S. Bans

As Trump’s policy begins to bite, more people head back to places they had fled

By JUAN FORERO

CAPURGANÁ, Colombia—At 69 years of age, Hector Ferrer was on another journey, making his way across the waters separating Panama and Colombia with a clutch of other migrants. This time he was going south. Months before, the Venezuelan street vendor had trudged through a rainforest and endured bone-rattling bus rides for 3,300 miles until reaching Mexico City. It was supposed to be his final stopover before arriving at his final objective, a new life in the U.S. But with the southwestern U.S. border nearly sealed, Ferrer was now jostling for space on a ferry with other Venezuelans on a forced journey home—a reverse migration driven by the Trump administration’s crack-down on illegal immigration. “I’m not used to the sea, so—well, those waves make me a little uneasy,” said a weary

Ferrer, whose white beard contrasted sharply with his sun-burned skin. He and his son had just completed three boat trips south, totaling some 11 hours skirting the rugged Panamanian and Colombian coasts. Having reached northern Colombia—solid ground at last—they still had days of bus travel ahead. “But you just put yourself in God’s hands and keep moving forward. What else can you do?” Ferrer said. New U.S. policies that make it nearly impossible for migrants to apply for asylum upon reaching the U.S. southern border are having a ripple effect. From northern Mexico to five countries in Central America to Colombia, migrants are headed back, with the narrow Panamanian isthmus—for years overwhelmed by the northbound flow—now starting to see more and more people who have abandoned plans of reaching the U.S. “We’re not talking about thousands of people,” said Giovanni Rizzo, director in Colombia of the Norwegian Refugee Council, a humanitarian group assisting migrants in this region. “It’s the start. It’s the

first time we’re seeing this kind of flow, but you already see a dynamic that’s similar to when people started to go north.” The shifting pattern can be seen in Panamanian government figures tracking migrants who pass through the 70 miles of jungle path of the Darién Gap, a remote swath separating Colombia from Panama, to get to the U.S. In 2023, a record 520,000 migrants forged through en route to the U.S., nearly 1,500 a day. Ahead of President Trump’s inauguration, 4,849 migrants crossed in December, an 80% decline from December 2023. In January, 72 people made the daily passage. Last month, just 14 a day trekked through, a 99% drop from the same month last year. Now the Panamanian government of President José Raúl Mulino is having to re-think its approach to the issue as it has come under growing pressure from Trump on other matters, including his threat to take back the Panama Canal. Panama has said it wouldn’t renew a 2017 infrastructure funding agreement with Beijing after Trump com-

plained about China’s growing influence in the country. It has also accepted three flights with 299 migrants from countries as varied as Pakistan, Iran and India deported by the U.S. The government’s objective is to deport them to their home countries with U.S. funding. As of this week, 177 had left, the government said. “We expect it to have an impact on deterrence,” Carlos Ruiz-Hernández, Panama’s vice foreign minister, said of the policy. “It’s a way to say, ‘We’re here, and this is what we believe in.’” Far more are expected to head south of their own volition. Ruiz-Hernández said officials fear that as many as 5,000 a day could soon enter Panama to try to get to South America, straining government services and alarming human-rights advocates, who worry about the conditions they face in their home countries. Colombian migration officials here in Capurganá, just a few miles by sea from Panama, say 200 or more migrants a day are getting onto power-boats in Panama to make it to this tourist village and then on

to Necoclí, a bigger town with bus services to the rest of Colombia and beyond. The main beneficiary of the migration in the area is the Gulf Clan, a cocaine-trafficking militia that Colombian police say takes a cut from what migrants pay for transportation, food and other services. Ferrer, the former vendor, said things had been grim in Venezuela, with his pension worth only a couple of dollars a month. “I was like in a hole, trapped,” he said. “I didn’t feel anything. I didn’t have hope. No illusions, nothing. There was no horizon.” After reaching Colombia for Mexico, from where he and his son had hoped to apply for asylum in the U.S., their plan was now to head for Peru, where there is a large Venezuelan exile community and where Ferrer has a daughter. On a recent day, Ferrer said he had finally reached his destination, Lima. “I’m here, my objective,” he said, explaining that he had forgotten exactly how many days he had been traveling. “In all this odyssey, if you can call it that, you even lose the notion of time.”

Greenland Election Gets Extra Attention

By SUNE ENGEL RASMUSSEN

Elections in Greenland usually get little attention, but President Trump’s bid to control the island has thrust voting there into the limelight. Greenlanders, who number about 57,000, voted Tuesday, caught between long-held desires for independence from Denmark and deep concern over Trump’s remarks about owning the self-governing territory. Polling shows most Greenlanders oppose joining the U.S., an ambition Trump reiterated on Sunday. “We will continue to KEEP YOU SAFE, as we have since World War II. We are ready to INVEST BILLIONS OF DOLLARS to create new jobs and MAKE YOU RICH,” Trump wrote on Truth Social. Incumbent Prime Minister Múte B. Eggede retorted that Trump has treated Greenland disrespectfully since taking office in January. Six parties took part in Tuesday’s balloting for the 31-member Parliament, the Inatsisartut. The results could accelerate the island’s path to independence if they draw support toward those who want to cut ties with Copenhagen as soon as possible. All major parties want independence, though they are divided on when, how and at what cost. Political leaders have also all rejected Trump’s recent overtures, but say they are open to stronger commercial ties with the U.S. The independence movement has gained pace in recent years, but Trump’s comments have shown Greenlanders the risks of life outside the Danish commonwealth, analysts say. “Trump’s statements have been counterproductive, and have led many in Greenland to pull in their horns,” said Rasmus Leander Nielsen, a political scientist at the University of Greenland in the capital, Nuuk. The big unknown of the vote is Naleraq, whose leader has said he wants independence within three years and a bilateral security agreement with the U.S. The party in recent weeks got a boost when two prominent politicians joined its ranks: One of Greenland’s two members of the Danish Parliament, and her fiancé, who attended Trump’s inauguration. Greenland, a former Danish colony, was officially integrated into the kingdom as an autonomous province in 1953. In 1979 and 2009, the island gained further autonomy, and today controls most of its internal affairs. The U.S. maintains a base under a 1951 agreement with Copenhagen. Some 84% of Greenlanders want independence, according to a survey this year commissioned by Danish newspaper Berlingske and Greenlandic newspaper Sermitsiaq. But 45% said they wanted secession only if it didn’t diminish living standards, while 55% said Denmark should continue to be responsible for supporting the island after independence. Only 6% favored becoming part of the U.S. Still, many Greenlanders are more focused on domestic affairs such as education, healthcare and inflation.

Romania Faces Backlash Over Candidate Ban

By MAX COLCHESTER AND LIANA FERMEȘANU

BUCHAREST—On a recent day, nationalist politician Calin Georgescu made his way through a crush of people to enter a district court in Romania’s capital to argue that he should be free to run in coming presidential elections. Some in the crowd booed, some chanted “Georgescu Presedinte,” and others just tried to touch the man, who carries near-mythical appeal to his supporters. The reaction reflected the polarizing influence of a politician whose meteoric rise has sparked Romania’s deepest political crisis in decades and become an unlikely symbol that has united Romanian nationalists, senior Trump administration officials and the Kremlin. The 62-year-old former soil scientist came out of nowhere to win the first round of presidential elections in November. The result was overturned by Romanian authorities who alleged that Russia had orchestrated his TikTok campaign which, among other things, criticized the North Atlantic



A Georgescu supporter protested in Bucharest on Sunday.

Treaty Organization and Western support for Ukraine. Now, Romania’s election authorities have barred Georgescu from being a candidate in a vote rerun in May, saying he doesn’t uphold the country’s constitutional values. On Tuesday, the country’s constitutional court rejected his appeal, so the man leading in some polls won’t be allowed to run. The Romanian government believes Georgescu has broken election laws by not disclosing the financial boost that Mos-

cow is suspected of giving his TikTok campaign and is a danger to its democracy. Critics say the government is unfairly disqualifying someone they don’t want to win. The controversy has put the Eastern European country, a normally staunch U.S. ally, on the wrong side of the new U.S. administration. Russia’s foreign-intelligence service also criticized the ban. Georgescu, who has repeatedly denied links to the Kremlin, wrote that “Romania is un-

der tyranny!” The decision to bar him sparked protests in Bucharest outside the electoral commission on Sunday. The aborted election and its aftermath shows how quickly geopolitical alliances are shifting amid the Trump administration’s diplomatic pivot toward Russia. In the space of one month—before Romania’s November election—Georgescu went from polling under 5% of the vote to garnering a 23% share. In a few weeks, his top campaign hashtags amassed a total of 1.4 billion views on TikTok, an astonishing increase for a politician in a country of 19 million, according to analysis by the Atlantic Council, a think tank. Georgescu was initially considered by Bucharest’s political class as a crankish outsider. A former Romanian environment ministry adviser with expertise in sustainable waste management, he has claimed that nanochips enter the body through soft drinks, praised Romania’s 1930s fascist politicians and said Covid was faked. During his political campaign, he cast himself as a mystic strongman sent by God to

save Romania, arguing that the country’s wealth and pride had been drained by incompetent politicians pushed around by internationalist organizations. Romanian authorities initially rubber-stamped his victory. Shortly before a runoff round was due to get under way weeks later between Georgescu and another candidate, the constitutional court annulled the contest. Romania’s intelligence service said in declassified documents that there was a coordinated campaign to amplify Georgescu’s public profile two weeks before the vote, which was likely run by a state actor. This was accompanied by 85,000 cyberattacks on government infrastructure. Romanian authorities said this had the hallmarks of a Russian interference campaign. Remus Stefureac, the head of local polling company INSCOP, said that despite Georgescu’s first-round success, he would be unlikely to win a runoff given that only about a third of Romanian voters support right-wing parties and many hold negative views of Russia.

PAKISTAN
Insurgents Hijack Passenger Train
Separatist militants hijacked a train carrying around 400 people, according to security officials and the Baloch Liberation Army, which claimed responsibility. Security forces dispatched to the area were exchanging fire with the attackers, who were using women and children as human shields, said officials. The separatist group said it had released women and children but was holding 100 security personnel from different units, whom it threatened to kill. Officials said about 100 passengers had been freed, while the rest remained under the militants’ control. Separatist groups in Balochistan say Pakistan, and now China, are exploiting the area’s natural resources and that locals haven’t benefited. —Waqar Gillani

MIDEAST
China, Iran, Russia Hold Naval Drills
China, Iran and Russia conducted joint naval drills Tuesday near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of all crude oil traded worldwide passes, offering a show of force in a region still uneasy over Tehran’s rapidly expanding nuclear program. This is the fifth year the three countries have taken part in the drills, this year called Maritime Security Belt 2025. Russia said it sent two corvettes and a tanker. China said it sent a guided-missile destroyer and a supply ship. Neither China nor Russia actively patrols the wider Middle East, instead broadly ceding it to Western nations largely led by the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet. However, both China and Russia have deep interests in Iran. —Associated Press

HUNGARY
Government Limits Grocers’ Margins
Hungary’s government will restrain the profit margin for grocers on a number of basic foods, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said Tuesday, a response to growing inflation. Orbán said commercial grocers must limit their markup to no more than 10% of wholesale price on 30 different food items. He didn’t specify which foods would be included. Data released Tuesday by Hungary’s statistical office showed an annual inflation rate of 5.6% for February, while food prices were up 7.1%—an “unpleasant inflation surprise,” Erste Bank analyst Orsolya Nyeste wrote. Hungary has frequently led the EU in inflation in recent years, spurring interventions that included price caps. —Associated Press

WORLD WATCH



PROTESTS: Demonstrators and police clashed over a new fishing law in Valparaíso, Chile.

BUSINESS & FINANCE

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Stocks Fall After Volatile Session

By OWEN TUCKER-SMITH
AND ED BALLARD

Global trade tensions fueled a wild day on Wall Street, with major indexes finishing a choppy session lower even after signs of a thaw in talks between the U.S. and Canada.

President Trump's move to ratchet up tariffs on aluminum and steel from Canada triggered a new round of losses early in the session, sending all three major indexes lower. Stocks regained some ground after reports that Ontario would ax a surcharge on electricity delivered to the U.S. and Trump said

he would "probably" cut back the increased tariffs.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1.1%, or around 478 points, to 41433.48. The S&P 500 lost 0.8%, while the Nasdaq Composite ticked down 0.2%. All three indexes notched their worst two-day drop since August. The moves came after fears that tariffs and government-spending cuts will fuel a recession sparked a selloff on Monday, with sliding technology shares driving the Nasdaq to its biggest one-day fall since 2022.

Katie Stockton, founder and managing partner at Fairlead Strategies, said she sees the po-

tential for a relief rally, but the months ahead remain uncer-

tain. "This is more than just a brief pullback that we're going through," she said.

The S&P 500 is down 5.3% year to date. Wall Street hoped that tax cuts and regulatory rollbacks could spur another year of stock-market gains, but uncertainty around trade policy and around U.S.

tech companies' competitiveness in artificial intelligence left the U.S. shares trailing global stocks in recent weeks.

There was one sign of economic health: New Labor Department data showed the U.S. had 7.74 million job openings in January, up from 7.51 million in December and slightly above consensus expectations for 7.6 million openings. Jeffrey Roach,

chief economist for LPL Financial, wrote that a steady labor market "should provide salve for investors" worried about the administration's warnings re-making trade will result in short-term pain.

Big tech stocks started to recover some of their losses throughout the day, gaining after the Trump administration said it would resume military support to Ukraine. **Broadcom** climbed 3.1%, while other tech stocks like **Intel** fell.

Airline stocks were volatile after **Delta**, **American**, **Jet-Blue** and **Southwest** cut their

5.3%
The decline
in the S&P 500
since the beginning
of 2025

Please turn to page B11

BlackRock Becomes Shipping Power Player

By JACK PITCHER
AND COSTAS PARIS

World leaders rolled their eyes when President Trump kicked off his second term by threatening to take back the Panama Canal. Yet within weeks, a massive sale put the waterway's biggest ports and dozens of others in American hands—reshaping the global shipping business.

BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, last week said it was leading a consortium that would pay \$22.8 billion to buy more than 40 ports around the world, including crucial berths on either end of the Panama Canal, from Hong Kong-based **CK Hutchison**, controlled by one of Asia's richest men.

The deal came together in just a month, according to people directly involved, an unusually quick time frame for a deal of this scale. Trump's Panama Canal rhetoric was a catalyst that kick-started broader talks, the people said.

The whirlwind turn of events delivered a win for the White House, but people close to the deal say the prized logistics infrastructure, which spans from Latin America to Europe and Asia, is an even bigger win for BlackRock and its chief executive, Larry Fink, who has been targeted by conservative critics in recent years for climate-focused investing and diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

Fink has earned goodwill with many Republicans. (Trump hailed the deal in his speech to Congress last week as the beginning of America's effort to take back the waterway.) But don't ask Fink about politics—he said he is squarely focused on returns.

Fink told investors Monday at an energy conference in Houston that BlackRock won't control the canal, and the Panama ports account for only 4% of the deal's value.

"Unfortunately, the far left and the far right didn't mention that we bought 44 ports," he said. "They mentioned we bought two."

BlackRock and its partners would operate about 100 ports around the world after the deal closes.

"The world economies, over a long cycle, are going to be fine," Fink said, even in the face of tariffs. If the global economy can grow at 2% or 3%, ports will stay active, he

Please turn to page B2

McDonald's Revamps To Speed Menu Shift

By HEATHER HADDON

McDonald's wants more fast in its fast-food R&D.

The burger giant is shaking up its operations and development ranks as it seeks to get new menu items and technology to restaurants more quickly. Recent efforts to develop new sandwiches, including a yearslong process to upgrade McDonald's signature burgers, have taken too long, said Chief Executive Chris Kempczinski.

"It's just going to allow us to be faster," Kempczinski said.

McDonald's is seeking to regain momentum in a tough environment for fast-food chains. Consumers are downbeat, and some have come to see fast food as too expensive. Numerous restaurant chains have outlined weak financial expectations for this year, citing anxious consumers and geopolitical uncertainties.

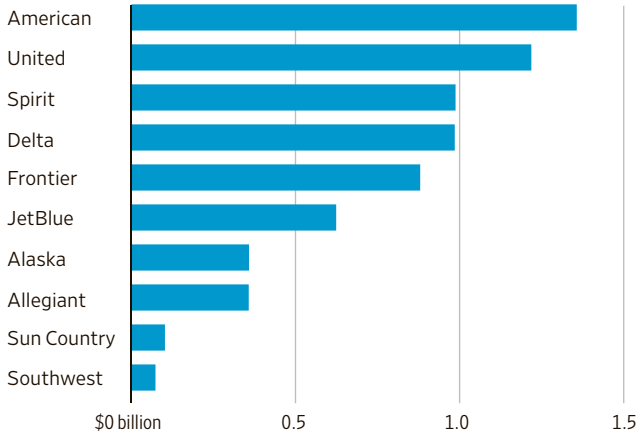
McDonald's global same-store sales held steady in 2024 after several years of growth. Overall U.S. restaurant traffic fell 2.8% in 2024 and is projected to decline this year, according to market-research firm Black Box Intelligence.

Kempczinski, who has led the world's biggest fast-food chain by sales since 2019, said McDonald's strategic plans emphasize greater nimbleness, but that the company needs to deploy new products and technology to restaurants faster and improve coordination with stores.

Under the new structure, Jill McDonald will become the chain's first chief restaurant experience officer on May 1. McDonald currently heads the

Please turn to page B2

Checked-bag fee revenue for select U.S. airlines in 2023



*JetBlue charges an additional \$5-\$10 if traveling on 'peak' days
Note: Passengers with frequent-flyer status, an airline credit card or a ticket in a premium cabin are often exempt from baggage fees.
Sources: Bureau of Transportation Statistics (revenue); the airlines (fees)

Domestic checked-bag fees

AIRLINE	DID YOU PREPAY?	FIRST BAG	SECOND BAG
Delta		35	45
American	Yes	35	45
	No	40	45
United	Yes	35	45
	No	40	50
JetBlue*	Yes	35	50
	No	45	60
Southwest		\$0 fee for bookings until May 28	

Southwest: No More Free Bags

Airline will start charging for checked luggage, sell basic-economy tickets

By ALISON SIDER
AND DAWN GILBERTSON

Southwest Airlines plans to start charging for checked bags, a seismic shift that will boost revenue but potentially give its fiercely loyal passengers a reason to shop around. "Bags fly free" was a policy so sacrosanct that Southwest trademarked the phrase and devoted a section of a book celebrating its 50th anniversary to it.

For bookings made on or after May 28, only customers with the airline's top loyalty status and those buying its priciest tickets will be allowed to check two bags free. Travelers with the airline's next level of status or a Southwest credit card are allowed one free checked bag.

Others should prepare to pay. Southwest didn't say how much travelers will pay to check bags.

The checked-bag fees were among several changes that the nation's largest carrier of



'Bags fly free' has been the budget carrier's signature policy. That ends with May 28 bookings.

domestic passengers announced Tuesday. Southwest is adding a bare-bones fare similar to its rivals' basic economy tickets, with restrictions galore, including no advance seat assignment.

And flight credits will now have an expiration date. The airline eliminated expiration dates during the pandemic and

has frequently touted the policy.

"I'm not trying to spin it as a very big positive for everybody, but we did try to protect our engaged customers here," Chief Operating Officer Andrew Watterson said.

Shares of Southwest surged more than 8% on Tuesday, on a day when several airlines

tempered their financial outlooks for the first three months of the year.

Checked-bag charges and basic-economy tickets have been standard at other airlines for years, but Southwest re-

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◆ **Heard on Street: Southwest turns investor-friendly... B12**

INSIDE



BUSINESS NEWS

Despite challenges, Volkswagen expects that its 2025 revenue will rise. **B3**



PROPERTY REPORT

Builders work around tariffs, stockpiling lumber and swapping out materials. **B6**

Beyond the Manosphere: A New Wave Of Popular Political Podcasts Ascends

By ANNE STEELE

A small, left-leaning media outlet resurfaced a clip last summer of Vice President JD Vance saying the country was run by "a bunch of childless cat ladies," which became a rallying cry for some voters. Now that company's flagship podcast is among the most popular in America.

With provocative episode

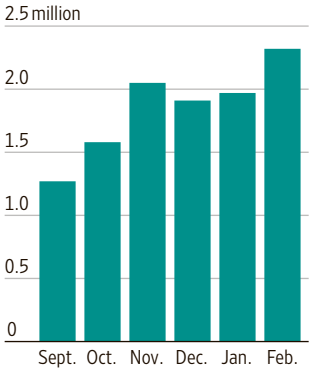
titles such as "Trump SCREAMS at Zelenskyy in Oval Office Meltdown" and "GOP Makes FATAL BLUNDER as Voters TURN AGAINST THEM," the MeidasTouch Podcast has been ascendant since President Trump's inauguration. By some measures, the show has bested the top-ranked podcast, hosted by Joe Rogan, over the past month.

Audiences across the politi-

cal spectrum are gravitating toward outspoken podcast personalities—many of them the face of new, independent media companies—who often host political figures eager to talk in a casual format to a receptive audience. This wave of podcasts is replacing cable and legacy news outlets as go-to sources for the day's news, political or otherwise.

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'Candace' podcast average listenership per episode



Note: Average per-episode impressions across platforms
Source: the 'Candace' podcast

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Panama International Terminal (green cranes) and Balboa Terminal (blue cranes), located at the entrance of the Panama Canal.

BlackRock Expands In Shipping

Continued from page B1 added. “The need for global trade is only going to be larger and stronger, not weaker.”

A whirlwind of calls

In the days before finalizing the deal, Fink held calls with Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and national security adviser Michael Waltz, ultimately garnering the administration's blessing, according to people close to the deal.

BlackRock and its competing bidders coveted the large chunk of strategic ports that they believe will produce steady and stable returns for decades. The optical win from working with Trump was icing on the cake.

Behind the scenes, Hutchison executives had grown uneasy that a hostile Trump administration could make life hard on their sprawling global conglomerate, according to people familiar with the company. Rubio met with Panama's president in February, informing him that Trump had determined the Chinese Communist Party had “unacceptable” influence over the canal and “immediate changes” were necessary.

Hutchison executives had weighed selling these and dozens more ports before, but the timing wasn't right. With Trump applying pressure—and Hutchison shares trading at a

substantial discount to the company's underlying assets—that changed.

Fast deals are characteristic of Li Ka-shing, the 96-year-old billionaire founder of Hutchison.

People directly involved in the deal said Hutchison executives' first thought was to go to court and fend off pressure to sell their ports, a business unit that Li was especially proud of. But executives were surprised by Trump's decision to revoke special trade privileges for Hong Kong, and Panama authorities had just announced an audit of Hutchison's contract. Li decided that it wasn't time to pick a fight with Trump, said a person familiar with his thinking.

Hutchison tapped former Citigroup Chief Executive Michael Corbat, who has advised the company since his 2021 retirement, to broker a sale, said people familiar with the matter.

His connections run deep. Corbat has a longstanding relationship with the Li family from his banking days, and he has been a guest on one of Fink's famous fly-fishing trips to Alaska.

More than half a dozen billionaires, some of the richest families in Asia and Europe, and White House officials were quickly caught up in a whirlwind of calls as firms rallied to bid on Hutchison's ports. The episode highlights the Trump administration's unorthodox style and the immense appeal of global infrastructure investment at a time the world is

McDonald's Shuffles Executives

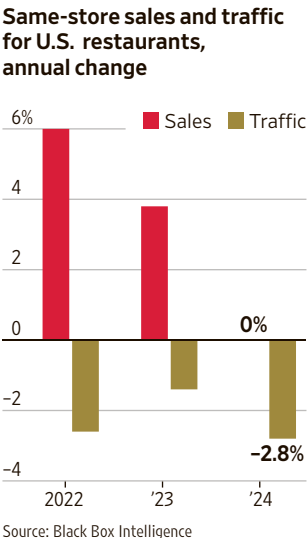
Continued from page B1 company's international division that includes Europe, Canada and Australia.

In her new role, she will lead a team that works across operations, supply chain, franchising, development, design, delivery and the company's innovation lab. The group will also include executives overseeing the chain's beef, chicken and beverage businesses across the globe.

“I wanted one person who's actually looking at all these tech things through the eyes of the restaurant general manager,” Kempczinski said.

McDonald will also oversee the global chief supply-chain officer, helping to ensure that restaurants have the right equipment and processes for handling new menu items, Kempczinski said. Charlie Newberger, who helps run the company's CosMc's offshoot, will lead work on beverages and desserts.

Kempczinski, previously an executive at Kraft Heinz and PepsiCo, said adopting a mindset similar to a consumer packaged-food company can help McDonald's move faster. A project to make the chain's core burgers taste better, for example, took around seven years of research and testing before juicier patties and



more flavorful buns began appearing in U.S. restaurants in 2023.

Having executives focused solely on beverages, for example, can determine where McDonald's might need to introduce new products, he said.

In the U.S., McDonald's has slowly regained visits after a deadly E. coli outbreak last year, and the company introduced a new value menu in January.

Sales fell last year in France, China and the Middle East as a result of geopolitical challenges and budget-strained international consumers.

McDonald's also aims to expand to 50,000 restaurants by 2027, up from 43,500 today. Kempczinski said he hoped that a year from now, the new innovation structure will help McDonald's win more market share, particularly in beef, chicken and coffee.

Vail Resorts Reports Results Above Views

By Allison Pohle

Vail Resorts' quarterly results out late Monday beat analyst estimates, providing a lift during an icy time for many stocks.

Revenue in the period ending Jan. 31 grew about 6% from a year earlier, while a key measure of profit rose by about 12%.

The Broomfield, Colo.-based company, which operates 42 mountain resorts in the U.S., Europe and Australia, also reiterated resort guidance for fiscal-year earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization.

The company expects improved performance in coming months, Chief Executive Kirsten Lynch said late Monday, because visitation has shifted, with more people skiing at destination resorts in the spring.

Earlier this ski season, a 12-day ski-patrol strike closed most runs at the company's largest U.S. resort, in Park City, Utah. A minority investor called for the ouster of multiple executives, including the CEO.

Shares of Vail climbed 7.7% in Tuesday's trading. The stock is down by 26% over the past year.

Southwest: No More Free Bags

Continued from page B1 sisted them as too punitive. As recently as September, executives were steadfast in defending their bag policy.

The company's capitulation reflects how industry dynamics have shifted: The airline that once upended industry norms is now facing pressure to adopt them.

Southwest has lagged behind competitors and promised investors it will deliver stronger financial performance. A tussle last year with **Elliott Investment Management** gave the activist's chosen directors a significant presence on Southwest's board.

The airline has already been whittling away at some of its most-distinctive features, last year saying it would ditch open seating and redesign plane cabins to sell some with extra legroom. Its vaunted employee-first culture suffered a body blow last month when the carrier slashed 1,750 corporate jobs in its first mass layoff.

Sticking to its values

Last year, as it worked to fend off Elliott's campaign, Southwest executives argued that customers flocked to the airline specifically because they can check their luggage, golf bags, skis and musical instruments for no charge.

Executives cited an analysis by a consulting firm that determined bag charges would bring in at most \$1.5 billion in revenue a year, but cost the airline \$1.8 billion in lost market share.

Free bags ranked just behind price and schedule among the top reasons travelers pick Southwest, executives said then.

“Changing our bags policy would be value destructive,” said Ryan Green, who was then in charge of the airline's transformation strategy, at the airline's investor day in September.

Board members were skeptical of that conclusion, according to people familiar with the matter. Some of them had experience at airlines that charged for bags. And they reasoned: Where else would customers go?

Executives recognized they needed to speed up financial improvements and everything had to be on the table.

Airline tickets generally

used to include checked bags. That changed by 2008 as major airlines looked for a way to cover soaring fuel costs.

Prices vary but checking two bags now costs at least \$75 each way on most major airlines. That has been a windfall for the industry, which raked in \$7.1 billion from baggage fees in 2023, according to the latest government data.

Southwest's bag policy became central to its identity. Its ads often needed competitors over their pesky charges. One ad from 2010 featured ramp workers flashing “Bags Fly Free” spelled out in body paint on their stomachs at another plane. The “belly brigade” later made an appearance at Southwest's annual shareholder meeting.

Bob Jordan, when he became CEO in 2022, said he had no intention of changing course. Southwest renewed its trademark as recently as 2023 and promoted the policy in ads and marketing materials in recent months.

“You cannot be stubborn about change,” Jordan said last summer. “At the same time, we're going to stick to our values.”

Missed chances

In recent months, executives have acknowledged that the airline has been missing out on opportunities to make more money from premium features.

It also has been losing bargain hunters. Southwest allowed its flights to be displayed on Google Flights last year and this month started selling tickets on travel booking giant **Expedia**, reversing its yearslong policy of directing travelers solely to its website.

“We went fishing for new customers in new ponds,” Watterson said. “They did not react to the bundled pricing.”

Many loyal Southwest fans already felt the airline was becoming too much like rivals. For some, bag fees might be the last straw.

Aaron and Ashley Lannon checked six bags for their family's spring break trip from Phoenix to Charleston, S.C., on Southwest early Tuesday.

“It adds up,” Ashley Lannon said. “That's the reason we fly Southwest so that we can have free bags.” She said she would shop around more once the airline's checked-bag fees kick in. That could be good news for Southwest's rivals. “I think clearly, there are some customers who chose them because of that,” Delta President Glen Hauenstein said of Southwest's free bag policy at an investor conference. “And now those customers are up for grabs.”

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BUSINESS NEWS

VW Expects 2025 Revenue To Rise Despite Tough Year

Automaker aims to cut its workforce by more than 35,000 and reduce costs

By DOMINIC CHOPPING

Volkswagen expects revenue to rise this year as it continues to focus on cutting costs and implementing profitability measures, in what is expected to be another challenging year.

The German automaker entered 2025 having recently agreed to a deal with its union to reduce its workforce by more than 35,000 and cut billions of dollars a year in costs, while averting immediate factory closures in Germany.

That deal followed a year in which Volkswagen and other European carmakers contended with a tough economic environment, high domestic costs, stuttering demand for electric vehicles and increasing competition from lower-cost Chinese EV makers.

The company said it maintains that the future of the auto industry is electric, but noted that global automotive markets are adapting to the transition at different speeds. It is therefore keeping its combustion engines technologically competitive while simultaneously investing in electric models and software.

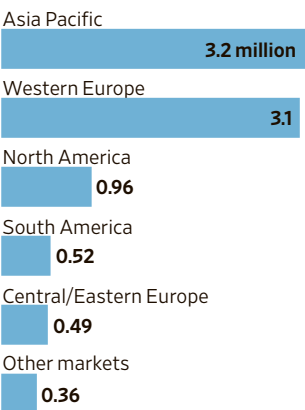
“The criticism that was leveled only recently at the Volkswagen Group is today our competitive advantage: our broad, flexible product portfolio across all powertrain types,” Chief Executive Oliver Blume said, according to a manuscript published in advance of the results presentation.

Global trade tensions have added to the uncertainty automakers face, as President



VW reported revenue equivalent to \$351.79 billion in 2024.

Volkswagen passenger vehicle deliveries in 2024*

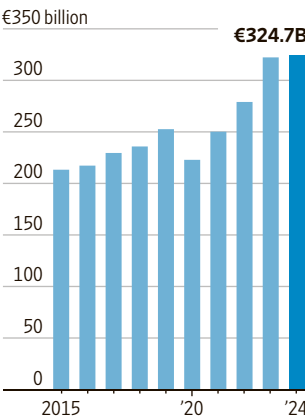


*Includes Chinese joint ventures. Note: €1 = \$1.08
Source: the company (deliveries); S&P Capital IQ (revenue)

Trump has threatened 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada as well as duties of 25% or more on imports from Europe, and on cars in particular.

The company said Tuesday that these trade restrictions and geopolitical tensions add to a host of challenges that are expected this year, including political uncertainty, intensifying competition and more stringent emissions-related requirements, among others.

Annual revenue



Despite the headwinds, Volkswagen plans to launch around 30 new models this year across its brands, with Audi focusing on new vehicles in China in conjunction with its regional partner.

The Chinese market is expected to see further price discounts offered by competitors, making for another demanding year. But the new Audi models this year will be followed by new VW-branded cars in 2026, which the company expects will boost its po-

sition in the country.

By 2030, the Volkswagen group will be delivering 30 new electric models tailored to local requirements.

In North America—a key focus for the company where it sees significant growth potential—it has invested in its Tennessee and South Carolina plants and plans to boost synergies from its brands in the region. A new plan will be developed for growth that will include making sure its vehicles are more geared toward local customers.

In Europe, Volkswagen said it sees positive signals as the year has got off to a stronger start than expected. New products in particular are being well received, it said.

Overall, Volkswagen said the measures it takes this year will lay the groundwork for it to hit the ground running from 2026.

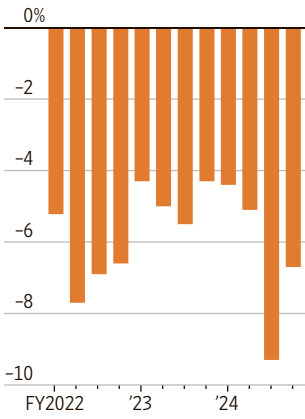
It expects revenue this year to exceed the previous year's figure by up to 5%, while the operating margin is expected to be between 5.5% and 6.5%.

“Our outlook reflects the global economic challenges and the profound changes that are happening in the industry,” said Chief Financial Officer Arno Antlitz.

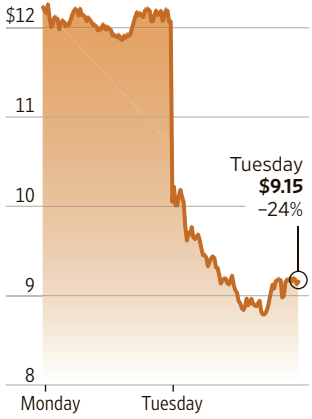
Volkswagen reported revenue of 324.66 billion euros, equivalent to \$351.79 billion, in 2024 with an operating margin of 5.9%. Ahead of the results, Volkswagen had guided to 2024 revenue of around €320 billion and a margin of around 5.6%.

The carmaker's fourth-quarter net profit fell to €3.48 billion from €4.99 billion as revenue rose 0.2% to €87.38 billion. A FactSet analyst poll had expected net profit of €3.46 billion on revenue of €85.4 billion.

Kohl's comparable sales, change from a year earlier



Share price



Note: Latest fiscal quarter ended Feb. 1
Sources: the company (sales); FactSet (share price)

Kohl's Shares Tumble To Lowest Since 1997

By DEAN SEAL

Kohl's cut its dividend and projected a larger-than-expected sales decline for fiscal 2025, weighing on shares Tuesday.

Shares fell 24% Tuesday to its lowest close since 1997. Ahead of Monday's market close, the stock was down 14% in the year to date.

The department-store chain, which is under a new chief executive, joins a growing list of companies that are warning of a slowdown in spending from American households this year as recession fears mount.

Kohl's expects 2025 sales to fall 5% to 7% on a reported basis and 4% to 6% on a comparable basis, the latter of which adjusts for store openings and closures.

Earnings are expected to come in at 10 to 60 cents a share for the fiscal year.

Analysts polled by FactSet had been projecting a comparable sales decline of less than 1% for the year and earnings to at least break \$1 a share.

Kohl's was already facing a decline in traffic after a disappointing back-to-school season led the retailer to cut its guidance ahead of the holidays.

CEO Ashley Buchanan, who took the company's top role in January, stepped in during a period of turmoil as the chain aims to lure back its core customers.

To reduce its costs, Kohl's on Tuesday said it is cutting its quarterly dividend to 12.5 cents a share, down from 50 cents a share, for the next payout on April 2.

For the quarter ended Feb. 1, Kohl's posted a profit of \$48 million, or 43 cents a share, compared with \$186 million, or \$1.67 a share, in the same period a year earlier.

Stripping out one-time items, adjusted earnings were 95 cents a share. Analysts had been expecting 73 cents a share.

Sales for the quarter fell 9.4% to \$5.18 billion, about in line with analyst estimates. Comparable sales were 6.5% lower.

In the fiscal year ahead, Kohl's said it aims to regain traction lost in categories such as fine jewelry and intimate apparel while continuing to roll out Sephora shops in its department stores. It also aims to increase the brands covered by its coupons and optimize its store layout.

Nissan Replaces Its CEO After Failed Honda Merger

By KOSAKU NARIOKA

Nissan Motor replaced its chief executive weeks after it scrapped a plan to merge with rival **Honda**, promoting its chief planning officer in its latest bid for a turnaround.

Ivan Espinosa, 46, who has worked at Nissan since joining the car maker's Mexico unit in 2003, will succeed Chief Executive Makoto Uchida on April 1, the company said Tuesday.

In February, Nissan and Honda canceled their planned merger less than two months after announcing it. Merger talks broke down after Honda—whose market value is nearly five times Nissan's—sought to make Nissan a subsidiary.

Uchida, 58, became CEO in 2019 and remade its alliance with France's **Renault** in 2023 to reduce Renault's stake and restore Nissan's autonomy. In spurning the Honda deal, Uchida said he couldn't accept being a unit of Honda because he didn't know whether Nissan would lose its autonomy again.

Nissan has struggled in the U.S. and China, its two biggest markets, and has projected a loss for the fiscal year ending in March.

Analysts laid part of the blame at Uchida's feet because Nissan didn't have a gas-electric hybrid to sell in the U.S. when more American car buy-



Makoto Uchida, left, will be succeeded by Ivan Espinosa.



ers were looking for hybrids.

In China, Nissan is among the many global car makers that have lost ground amid a cut-throat price war and consumers' shift away from conventional gas-powered vehicles. Its global sales in January fell 5.9% from a year earlier.

In November, Uchida announced a turnaround plan that included cutting 9,000 jobs and reducing global production capacity by one-fifth.

Espinosa said Tuesday the company was reinforcing its lineup in the U.S. and had high hopes for a new electric sedan in China, jointly developed with partner **Dongfeng Motor**.

“I sincerely believe that Nissan has so much more potential than what we are seeing

today,” he said.

A Nissan spokeswoman declined to state Espinosa's nationality.

Nissan turned to a non-Japanese executive for a turnaround in 1999, when it tapped Carlos Ghosn for a top role. Ghosn, who was born in Brazil and grew up in Lebanon, went on to serve as chief executive and chairman before he was arrested in Japan in 2018 over financial charges that he denied.

The company's stock price and global sales sank after the arrest and haven't recovered since.

Ghosn escaped from Japan in December 2019 on a private jet before his trial began and now lives in Lebanon.

Unilever to Speed Sale of Food Brands

By MICHAEL SUSIN

Unilever's new Chief Executive Officer Fernando Fernandez expects to accelerate the company's turnaround plans by selling a number of underperforming brands in the food segment.

In a fireside chat with Barclays Head of Consumer Staples Warren Ackerman published on Unilever's website late Monday, the CEO said there are about €1 billion, or \$1.08 billion, of local brands in

its foods Europe division that “don't fit well” with the company's portfolio.

The consumer-goods company also has a further €500 million in smaller markets that it doesn't see the possibility to scale, he added.

“My intention is to act on all of these, probably at a faster pace,” Fernandez said.

The comments regarding the potential disposal of these brands comes as the company seeks to expand the business by focusing on the most-profitable

brands. The food business delivered a combined turnover of €13.4 billion in 2024, with 60% consisting of the brands Knorr and Hellmann's, which both represent significant profit margin and cash generation. “We are committed to growing that business,” he said.

Unilever plans to save €800 million over the next three years with cost-cutting measures that will shed 7,500 jobs globally. It also is spinning off its ice-cream business as a stand-alone company.



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Popular Podcasts Ascend

Continued from page B1

Downloads and views of MeidasTouch on platforms including YouTube, Spotify, and Apple more than doubled over the past month to top 115 million, according to measurement company Podscribe. That total compared with Rogan's 64 million during the same period. Rogan's show still has a larger recurring audience on Spotify and more subscribers on YouTube.

The upward trend is apparent on both sides of the aisle. Three podcasts entered the top 50 for the first time during the fourth quarter: the "Shawn Ryan Show," hosted by a former Navy SEAL; "The Charlie Kirk Show," which describes itself as "unapologetically conservative"; and conservative commentator Candace Owens's "Candace." "Pod Save America," a longer-running political show hosted by former Obama aides, made its debut to the top 10 podcasts, according to data tracker Edison Research.

"The Ben Shapiro Show," the daily conservative talk show, moved to No. 14 from No. 22 last quarter, and "The Megyn Kelly Show," hosted by the former cable news anchor, jumped to No. 27 from No. 50.

A collection of comedians and online pranksters known as the "manosphere" helped elect Trump, who shared personal details alongside policy proposals on a range of podcasts during his campaign. The Trump administration has opened the White House briefing room to nontraditional outlets including podcast hosts, TikTok influencers and YouTube stars.

Since Trump was elected, listeners have embraced rising shows along with stalwart political podcasts hosted by stars like Rogan, Tucker Carlson and Dan Bongino. Bongino, who is set to become dep-



Ben Meiselas and his two brothers started "The MeidasTouch Podcast" in 2021.

uty director of the FBI this month, plans to end his show.

'People trust it'

Owens, a former political talk show host at "The Daily Wire," launched "Candace" in June as part of her own independent media company. She said the format allows her to take more risks without corporate checks and balances. Downloads and views of "Candace" across platforms were nearly 40 million over the past month, according to Podscribe, notching her at No. 3, behind MeidasTouch and Rogan.

She has pursued investigative series that she said are particularly appealing to women, including one on vaccine skepticism and another on the Blake Lively-Justin Baldoni legal drama.

While much of Owens's work is still in the political realm—"Kamala Chronicles" delved into Kamala Harris's genealogy ahead of the election—she casts a wide net for topics that might appeal to her audience, much the way manosphere hosts do. One recent series focuses on her

prison phone calls with disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein that will end with an exclusive interview.

Like many manosphere stars, she has also appeared on other podcasters' shows.

Owens attributes much of her recent growth to going independent. "People trust it more," she said.

'Not a yelling rant'

Priscilla Lawrence, 43 years old, started listening to MeidasTouch after discovering it on TikTok, and is part of a fan base that calls themselves the Meidas Mighty. She had been an avid watcher of CNN and MSNBC, but said she grew frustrated with mainstream media for not holding Trump accountable in the run-up to the election.

"They're giving the facts and getting to the point," Lawrence, a food blogger in San Diego, said of the Meiselas brothers, who host MeidasTouch. "I want to see what they're saying."

MeidasTouch punctuates clips of policy decisions, news

conferences and Oval Office meetings with the hosts' unvarnished views. It hosted an exit interview with outgoing President Joe Biden in December, taped in the West Wing of the White House.

Three brothers started "The MeidasTouch Podcast" in 2021, recording conversations they had in a sibling group chat. Ben Meiselas is a lawyer and business partner of former professional football player Colin Kaepernick. Brett Meiselas is a video editor and producer who worked on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show." Jordan Meiselas, or Jordy, was an advertising executive.

Ben often shows charts and graphs alongside news clips. "I try to bring the evidence to everything," he said. "It's not a yelling rant."

The Meiselas brothers, who bill themselves as "pro-democracy," tape live from their living rooms, which means audio occasionally picks up on Ben's baby in the background or a dog barking. Episodes drop twice a week and stretch more than an hour. In between, Ben often publishes six more 15-minute podcasts a day. Brett and Jordy record selfie-style 90-second segments summarizing news hits for TikTok, Instagram Reels, X and YouTube Shorts.

"It almost feels like the anti-manosphere," Brett said.

Italy's Leonardo Plans More Satellite Launches

By CRISTINA GALLARDO

Leonardo said it plans to put nearly 40 satellites in orbit by 2028 to offer services for military and civilian purposes, as Europe rubber-stamps more cash for defense.

The Italian aerospace-and-defense group on Tuesday said it will launch 18 military satellites and 20 civil multisensor satellites between 2027 and 2028, which would provide European governments with an alternative to Starlink, owned by Elon Musk's SpaceX.

This low-orbit constellation will enable Leonardo to position itself as a leading European space player and key contributor to national security, the company's chief executive, Roberto Cingolani, told a news conference.

"There's an increasing demand for end-to-end satellite services all around the world in many, many fields from climatology to agriculture, observation, infrastructure monitoring and of course security and military applications," he said.

The military satellites will cost about €900 million, or about \$975 million, of which €580 million has been allocated by the Italian Ministry of Defence.

The civilian satellites will require an investment of about €450 million over three years, which will be funded by Leonardo's own cash. Leonardo will have "full control" of the constellation's data policy, Cingolani said.

In January, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni lamented the lack of "public alternatives" to Starlink. Her government has been in talks with Musk for a potential \$1.5 billion deal with Starlink that has been criticized by Italian opposition parties.

Leonardo's announcement is part of an update to its five-year industrial plan update, published in March 2024.

On Tuesday, Leonardo also lifted its near-term and mid-term targets for the company, as it forecasts sharp growth in its core business of defense electronics and helicopters.

The group expects to end 2025 with orders of €21.1 billion, revenue of €18.6 billion, adjusted earnings before interest and taxes of €1.66 billion, and free cash flow of €870 million.

In 2029, orders should increase to €26.2 billion, revenue to €24 billion, adjusted Ebit to €2.8 billion and free cash flow to €1.53 billion, Leonardo said.

This compares with orders of €20.9 billion, revenue of €17.8 billion, adjusted Ebit of €1.5 billion and free cash flow of €830 million last year.

The guidance, however, doesn't capture the full impact of increased military budgets across Europe, as most countries are still agreeing on the new figures and fresh orders arising from additional spending will take time.



Leonardo aims to be an alternative to SpaceX's Starlink.

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THE PROPERTY REPORT

Builders Pivot to Work Around Tariffs

Stockpiling lumber and swapping out materials are some tactics being used

By Rebecca Picciotto

When President Trump threatened new tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China at the beginning of February, Steve Martinez flew into action.

The Idaho-based general contractor spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on materials like lumber, windows, cabinetry and steel to stockpile them before the tariffs hit. He now has nearly one-third more of these supplies compared with last year. And he is renting out shop yards to stockpile these goods, which his suppliers often import from Canada, Mexico and China and which could rise in price under tariffs.

Since his lenders wouldn't finance these purchases, he is paying out of pocket and using cash that he had earmarked for hiring more staff or funding new projects. But at least he felt prepared when Trump imposed tariffs last week.

Then after the president abruptly walked them back, Martinez was left with an upended business plan, less cash and feeling confused about what to do next.

"I can't keep ping-ponging back and forth," Martinez said.

The construction industry



DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG NEWS

is going through a critical period. New housing is in extreme demand to address a prolonged housing shortage, which is more than seven million units by some estimates. New construction is vital to solving one of the country's deepest economic challenges.

Yet builders and contractors are operating under mounting pressure.

They rely heavily on immigrant labor, which could be constrained by Trump's deportation threats. Now, the prospect of tariffs has added new obstacles.

Executives in the home building and construction industry experienced fleeting relief on Thursday when Trump paused the 25% tariffs imposed on most Mexican and Canadian imports. But many also say they feel frustrated

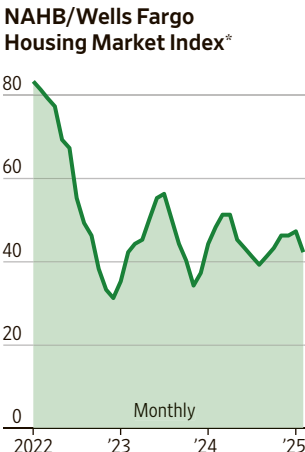
by the continued uncertainty.

Builders have been doing what they can to insulate themselves from higher import costs, from stockpiling materials and appliances to shrinking the size of the homes they will build.

But if tariffs take effect in the long term, they will only be able to absorb so much cost. In a matter of months, builders say, they will likely have to begin raising the sticker price of homes when the average sales price for a new home in January was already more than half a million dollars.

With existing-home inventory at the low end of historical levels and prices near records, more buyers view the new-home market as their only option.

In February, home-builder



A gauge of builder confidence in the market for single-family housing
Sources: National Association of Home Builders (Housing Market Index); FactSet (S&P 1500)



New housing is in extreme demand to address a shortage.

confidence in the market for newly constructed single-family homes dropped to its lowest mark since September, according to the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index, a survey of single-family home builders. That reflected softer buyer demand and difficulties for builders to secure financing.

Investor confidence in the large publicly traded builders is "decidedly negative," said UBS Research Managing Director John Lovallo. The S&P 1500 Homebuilding Sub-Industry Index is down almost 16% over the past three months.

Some bigger publicly traded companies say they aren't that worried. They think they can use their size and leverage to negotiate more aggressively with suppliers, or even outright refuse

price increases, analysts say.

"We have plenty of slack in the industry to absorb these kinds of cost increases," said Tri Pointe Homes Chief Executive Doug Bauer.

But the tariff threat is sending many smaller builders and contractors scrambling to protect themselves.

More than 70% of imported softwood lumber and nearly one-third of the imported gypsum used for drywall—both essential to residential construction—come from Canada and Mexico, respectively, according to the National Association of Home Builders. If Trump follows through with his tariff threats, the cost of building a single-family home will increase between \$7,500 and \$10,000, the NAHB estimates based on anecdotal reporting.

On March 3, hours before Trump's new tariffs were set to take effect, lumber futures spiked to their highest level since 2022. Anticipating that kind of price jump, some building material suppliers have been contacting their customers for weeks to let them know about price increases.

"Some of that started as soon as the November election," said Robert Dietz, chief economist at the National Association of Home Builders.

It isn't just raw materials: Builders are preordering bulk supplies of appliances that are built with parts imported from overseas.

Shortly before the most recent tariffs on Mexico, Canada and China went into effect, Carl Koelbel placed a bulk order of 101 water heaters for an affordable-housing complex he is building in the Denver metro area.

"There was no reason for us to accelerate those orders other than the tariffs," said the Colorado-based developer.

To store the appliances for the next six months, he is paying his supplier extra to temporarily hold them while he finds new storage space. He expects to incur roughly \$20,000 in storage fees and additional interest costs on his construction loan.

That extra cost means he likely won't be able to finish improvements on his apartment units. He is also stocking up on bath accessories and considering preordering light fixtures and door hardware.

Brookfield Raises \$1 Billion to Back Infrastructure Firms

By Rod James

Brookfield Asset Management closed its first fund for structured equity and minority equity investments in smaller infrastructure businesses, an area where it sees high demand for new forms of financing.

The manager in New York said it reached its target, raising around \$1 billion for its Brookfield Infrastructure Structured Solutions Fund. Controlled by Toronto-based Brookfield Corp., the firm manages more than \$1 trillion

across real assets, private credit and equity. Key investors in the fund include the Pennsylvania Public School Employees' Retirement System, which committed up to \$250 million. Brookfield said its affiliated investment funds put in \$150 million.

Brookfield has made two investments from the fund so far. The firm acquired a minority stake in Tiger Infrastructure Partners-backed wireless connectivity provider Strategic Venue Partners in Greenwich, Conn., and made a structured-equity investment in renew-

ables-focused developer Origis Energy. The Miami company is majority-owned by Antin Infrastructure Partners.

Borrowers typically backed through the fund need more money to develop infrastructure assets but don't want to weaken their control by selling too large a stake, according to Hadley Peer Marshall, co-lead managing partner of Brookfield's infrastructure debt and structured solutions business.

Additionally, sponsors might tap in to the new vehicle because they need to send money back to their investors

but don't want to sell businesses held by their funds to obtain the required cash, Marshall said. A slow market for buying and selling infrastructure assets left some fund investors with limited capital to make commitments to new vehicles.

Structured equity investments put holders ahead of investors with common equity, meaning Brookfield gets repaid before them but after lenders should the company go bankrupt. Such investments often include warrants, or rights to buy common equity at a fixed

future price untethered to the value of the investment when the warrants were issued.

"Investors get some cash yield coming in and also get the benefit of upside," Marshall said.

She said she expects deals from the fund to increase in line with a growing need for infrastructure investment and as persistent lending constraints on banks keep competition muted, reflecting regulations imposed after the financial crisis that ended in 2009.

Around half of all infra-

structure deals by value focus on targets with an enterprise value of less than \$1 billion, though such transactions draw fewer investors than their larger counterparts, Brookfield indicated in a presentation to the Pennsylvania pension system.

Brookfield offered its newest fund to institutional investors as its latest vehicle designed to fill needs that go beyond the firm's main infrastructure funds, which make equity investments only and target larger projects and businesses.

Biggest 1,000 Stocks | WSJ.com/stocks

How to Read the Stock Tables

The following explanations apply to NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market listed securities. Prices are consolidated from trades reported by various market centers, including securities exchanges, FINRA, electronic communications networks and other broker-dealers. The list comprises the 1,000 largest companies based on market capitalization.

Underlined quotations are those stocks with large changes in volume compared with the issue's average trading volume.

Boldfaced quotations highlight those issues whose price changed by 5% or more if their previous closing price was \$2 or higher.

Footnotes:
*New 52-week high; *New 52-week low; **dd**—Indicates loss in the most recent four quarters.

Stock tables reflect composite regular trading as of 4 p.m. ET the previous day and changes in the official closing prices from 4 p.m. ET the previous day.

Tuesday, March 11, 2025									
Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg		Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	
A B C									
ANSS	ANSS	320.36	1.65		Adobe	ADBE	433.66	-1.42	
ASE Tech	ASX	9.47	-0.10		AdvDrainageSys	WMS	109.82	-3.83	
ASML	ASML	690.21	7.10		AdvMicroDevices	AMD	96.76	0.13	
AST Space	ASTS	28.66	-0.43		Aegion	AEG	6.09	0.09	
AT&T	AT&T	28.66	-0.43		AerCap	AER	97.40	2.14	
Abbott Labs	ABT	132.66	-4.70		Affirm	AFRM	46.77	0.37	
AbbVie	ABBV	213.59	-3.07		Agilent Techs	A	121.03	-0.87	
Accenture	ACN	327.79	-7.51		AgnoceEagleWines	AEM	100.57	3.54	
Acuity Brands	AVI	268.05	0.40						

Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg		Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	
Agree Realty	ADC	75.91	-0.92		AEP	AEP	104.43	-2.89	
Air Products	APD	298.08	-5.63		AmerExpress	AEP	255.39	-5.93	
Airbnb	ABNB	125.44	-6.71		American Fin	AFG	125.25	-1.43	
Akamai Tech	AKAM	80.65	-3.50		AmHomeRent	AMH	35.60	-0.40	
Alamos Gold	AGI	23.95	0.90		AIG	AIG	81.63	-0.29	
Albermarle	ALB	72.67	-3.72		AmerTowerREIT	AMT	209.78	-5.29	
Albertsons	ACI	21.46	0.31		AmerWaterWorks	AWK	143.43	-5.88	
Alcoa	AA	31.96	0.98		Amerprise	AMP	47.05	-2.32	
Alcon	ALC	89.15	-0.79		Ametek	AME	178.86	-0.51	
Alexandria REIT	ARE	99.27	-2.90		Amgen	AMGN	318.89	-8.47	
Alibaba	BABA	139.02	6.48		Amphenol	APH	61.64	-0.15	
Allogene	ALL	125.96	-6.34		Analog Devices	ADI	209.08	-7.18	
Alliant Energy	LNT	62.62	-0.65		AngloGold Ash	AU	32.09	1.45	
Allison Transm	ALSN	97.23	1.20		AB Inbev	BUD	62.51	0.05	
Allstate	ALL	201.58	2.84		Annaly Cap	NLY	20.97	-0.70	
Ally Financial	ALLY	33.45	-0.65		Antares Midstream	AM	16.86	0.14	
Alnylam Pharm	ALNY	238.74	5.07		Antares Resources	AR	35.86	1.17	
Alphabet A	GOOG	164.04	-1.83		Aon	AON	399.74	0.75	
Alphabet C	GOOGL	165.98	-1.83		API Group	APG	36.40	0.45	
Altria	ALTR	111.34	0.25		Apollon Mgmt	APO	130.42	-4.41	
Amazon.com	AMZN	196.59	2.05		AppFolio	APPF	214.46	-1.15	
Ambev	AMBEV	21.00	-0.04		Apple	AAPL	226.30	-6.64	
Amerco	AECV	10.09	0.04		Applied Indirect Tech	AIT	226.30	-1.45	
Amdocs	DOX	88.79	-1.70		Appl Materials	AMAT	146.99	-3.00	
Ameren	AME	97.87	-0.67		AppLovin	APP	257.76	19.68	
America Movil	AMX	14.48	-0.15		Arctur Group	ATRY	147.89	-2.58	
AmerAirlines	AAL	11.46	-1.04		Activ	ATV	63.19	-1.15	
					Aramark	ARMK	24.91	-0.42	
					Baker Hughes	BKR	41.85	0.69	
					Ball	BAL	52.31	-1.66	
					Arch Capital	ACGL	90.09	-0.63	

Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg		Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	
Banco Bradesco	BBD	1.87	-0.02		Block	XYZ	55.29	0.55	
Banco Chile	BCH	26.88	0.31		Blue Owl Capital	OWL	18.86	0.30	
Banco San Brasil	BSBR	43.35	-0.01		Boeing	BA	154.06	5.91	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Booking	BKNG	493.41	-97.62	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Booz Allen	BAH	110.04	-2.60	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Boston Sci	BSX	95.52	1.39	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Bristol Myers	BMRY	61.51	0.22	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		British Am Tobacco	BTI	41.02	0.44	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brixmor Prop	BXP	25.80	0.51	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Broadcom	AVGO	190.09	5.64	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Broadridge Fin	BR	226.33	-6.12	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brookfield Asset	BLD	46.71	-0.18	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brookfield	BN	49.88	-0.47	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brookfield Infra	BIFR	28.23	0.06	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brookfield Renew	BRNC	28.30	-0.31	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brookfield Wealth	BW	49.88	-0.25	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brown & Brown	BRO	117.96	-1.67	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brown-Forman A	BFA	35.79	-1.49	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Brown-Forman B	BFB	36.03	-1.93	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Builders First	BDR	130.00	-5.58	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Bunge Global	BG	74.41	-1.90	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		Burlington St	BURL	235.43	2.72	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CACI Intl	CACI	366.94	-11.83	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CAVA	CAVA	80.01	0.43	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CBRE Group	CBRE	125.83	-0.09	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CDW	CDW	166.05	-3.46	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CF Industries	CF	76.83	-0.27	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CGI A	GIB	103.82	-0.57	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CH Robinson	CHRS	98.05	-3.51	
Banco Santander	BSAN	22.11	0.16		CME Group	CME	260.42	-1.85	

Continued on Page B10

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New Highs and Lows

The following explanations apply to the New York Stock Exchange, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market stocks that hit a new 52-week intraday high or low in the last session. *CHG-Daily percentage change from the previous trading session.

Tuesday, March 11, 2025									
52-Wk %					52-Wk %				
Stock	Sym	Hi/Low	Chg	52-Wk %	Stock	Sym	Hi/Low	Chg	52-Wk %
Highs									
ACHS	ACHS	22.40	0.5		Xunlei	XNET	5.52	12.9	
Acadia	ACAD	26.21	0.5		Zeekr	ZK	33.33	1.7	
AGNC	AGNC	26.20	0.5		Lows				
GNC InPrvtEq	GNIC	25.00	0.2		AC Immune	ACIU	21.9	-6.1	
AgeCME	AGE	10.81	3.6		ACV Actions	ACVA	12.77	0.5	
Aldegra Ther	ALDX	6.46	4.96		AMC Networks	AMCN	6.59	5.9	
Alkermes	ALK	25.7	0.2		AMTD Digital	AMTD	21.2	1.3	
AlkermesN2079	AONB	25.66	0.5		Alkermes	ALB	21.2	1.3	
AlkermesN2079	AONB	25.66	0.5		Alkermes	ALB	21.2	1.3	
AlkermesN2079	AONB	25.66	0.5		Alkermes	ALB	21.2	1.3	
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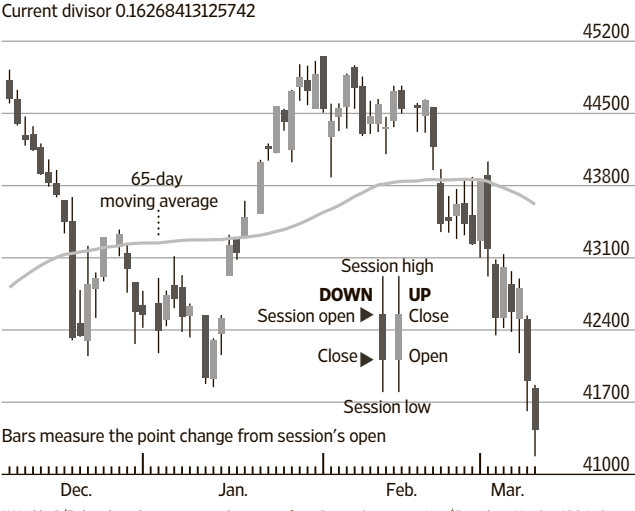
MARKETS DIGEST

EQUITIES

Dow Jones Industrial Average

41433.48 ▼478.23, or 1.14%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

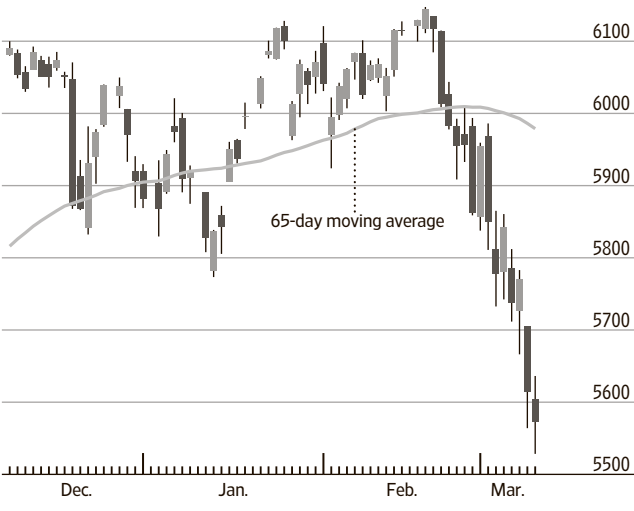
Trailing P/E ratio	24.82	27.14
P/E estimate *	19.62	18.68
Dividend yield	1.94	1.84
All-time high	45014.04, 12/04/24	



S&P 500 Index

5572.07 ▼42.49, or 0.76%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

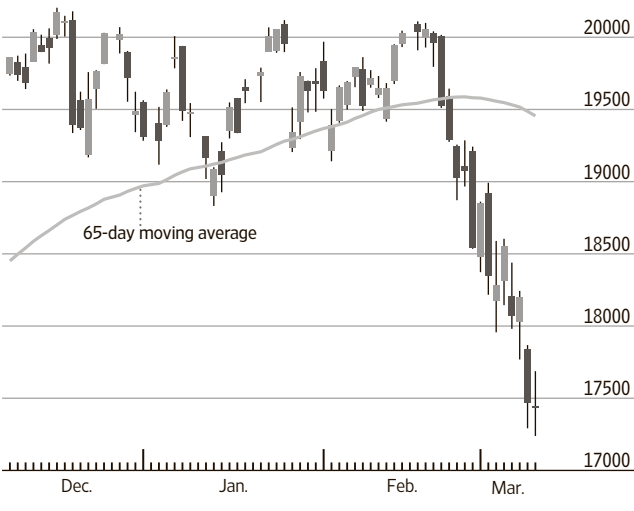
Trailing P/E ratio *	23.37	23.83
P/E estimate *	21.15	21.10
Dividend yield *	1.33	1.44
All-time high	6144.15, 02/19/25	



Nasdaq Composite Index

17436.10 ▼32.23, or 0.18%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio **	29.85	32.89
P/E estimate **	25.17	31.32
Dividend yield **	0.79	0.80
All-time high	20173.89, 12/16/24	



Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	High	52-Week Low	% chg	YTD	% chg 3-yr. ann.
Dow Jones										
Industrial Average	41868.27	41175.37	41433.48	-478.23	-1.14	45014.04	37735.11	6.2	-2.6	7.9
Transportation Avg	15289.12	14770.29	14780.19	-474.29	-3.11	17754.38	14780.19	-6.9	-7.0	-1.0
Utility Average	1004.11	986.99	990.79	-12.96	-1.29	1079.88	835.53	15.8	0.8	0.4
Total Stock Market	55673.09	54588.87	55037.71	-352.27	-0.64	61024.05	49376.46	6.8	-5.8	8.9
Barron's 400	1190.18	1169.45	1178.14	-2.75	-0.23	1356.99	1092.05	3.8	-5.9	6.5
Nasdaq Stock Market										
Nasdaq Composite	17687.40	17238.24	17436.10	-32.23	-0.18	20173.89	15282.01	7.2	-9.7	10.7
Nasdaq-100	19659.43	19180.56	19376.96	-53.99	-0.28	22175.60	17037.65	6.4	-7.8	13.4
S&P										
500 Index	5636.30	5528.41	5572.07	-42.49	-0.76	6144.15	4967.23	7.7	-5.3	9.8
MidCap 400	2942.64	2885.21	2908.60	-13.14	-0.45	3390.26	2825.94	-1.5	-6.8	4.2
SmallCap 600	1292.99	1266.48	1277.05	-5.72	-0.45	1544.66	1241.62	-1.8	-9.3	-0.2
Other Indexes										
Russell 2000	2043.49	2001.19	2023.59	4.53	0.22	2442.03	1942.96	-2.0	-9.3	0.7
NYSE Composite	19202.38	18930.06	19052.13	-150.24	-0.78	20272.04	17388.09	6.0	-0.2	6.5
Value Line	575.91	566.00	570.66	-3.76	-0.65	656.04	568.94	-4.9	-6.6	-1.9
NYSE Arca Biotech	5948.36	5795.50	5845.84	-102.52	-1.72	6318.63	4861.76	9.9	1.7	6.7
NYSE Arca Pharma	1018.60	998.41	1004.04	-14.56	-1.43	1140.17	912.71	-2.2	7.5	8.4
KBW Bank	119.05	116.02	117.18	-0.96	-0.82	140.59	96.78	18.0	-8.1	-1.5
PHLX ^S Gold/Silver	162.84	158.41	162.15	5.86	3.75	175.74	116.83	37.3	18.2	0.7
PHLX ^S Oil Service	64.55	62.99	63.35	-0.44	-0.70	95.25	63.26	-25.3	-12.8	-0.7
PHLX ^S Semiconductor	4470.33	4300.49	4374.07	-31.02	-0.70	5904.54	4306.87	-12.4	-12.2	11.6
Cboe Volatility	29.57	26.18	26.92	-0.94	-3.37	38.57	11.86	94.5	55.2	-4.3

^SNasdaq PHLX Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Late Trading

Most-active and biggest movers among NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE Amer. and Nasdaq issues from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. ET as reported by electronic trading services, securities dealers and regional exchanges. Minimum share price of \$2 and minimum after-hours volume of 50,000 shares.

Most-active issues in late trading

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	After-Hours % chg	High	Low
NVIDIA	NVDA	10,118.4	108.51	-0.25	-0.23	115.82	101.02
SPDR S&P 500 ETF Trust	SPY	8,798.3	556.32	0.40	0.07	569.87	522.00
Apple	AAPL	7,323.2	220.54	-0.30	-0.14	228.55	212.38
AT&T	T	7,015.7	26.00	-0.01	-0.04	26.02	25.90
Verizon Communications	VZ	5,888.1	43.48	0.05	0.12	43.50	43.35
Microsoft	MSFT	5,885.2	380.37	-0.08	-0.02	469.25	332.63
Amazon.com	AMZN	4,724.1	196.49	-0.10	-0.05	203.92	183.12
Carnival	CCL	4,667.8	19.13	0.03	0.16	19.17	19.04

Percentage gainers...

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	After-Hours % chg	High	Low
Stitch Fix Cl A	SFIX	2,095.7	5.11	0.88	20.80	5.30	4.23
Ross Stores	ROST	959.4	144.00	15.35	11.93	144.00	128.63
Rockwell Automation	ROK	51.2	295.98	30.83	11.63	295.98	256.38
CyberArk Software	CYBR	52.1	350.00	19.05	5.76	350.00	328.01
Smurfit Westrock	SW	151.4	45.73	2.17	4.98	45.73	43.56
...And losers							
KalVista Pharmaceuticals	KALV	127.6	11.81	-0.62	-4.99	12.81	11.81
BridgeBio Pharma	BBIO	403.5	30.78	-1.56	-4.82	32.34	30.78
Intuit	INTU	108.1	560.67	-26.04	-4.44	587.65	560.67
NET Power	NPWR	129.3	3.11	-0.11	-3.42	3.22	3.07
Driven Brands	DRVN	139.3	15.75	-0.51	-3.14	16.26	15.75

Trading Diary

Volume, Advancers, Decliners

	NYSE	NYSE Amer.
Total volume*	1,383,917,450	12,270,234
Adv. volume*	587,947,439	10,198,535
Decl. volume*	776,604,343	1,845,125
Issues traded	2,844	292
Advances	1,115	154
Declines	1,646	122
Unchanged	83	16
New highs	16	2
New lows	158	1
Closing Arms ¹	0.79	0.16
Block trades ²	6,060	143
	Nasdaq	NYSE Arca
Total volume*	9,177,327,871	458,890,985
Adv. volume*	5,369,337,374	161,720,701
Decl. volume*	3,759,576,290	289,171,914
Issues traded	4,517	2,170
Advances	2,075	693
Declines	2,279	1,454
Unchanged	163	23
New highs	41	5
New lows	430	131
Closing Arms ¹	0.64	0.86
Block trades ²	67,158	1,952

*Primary market NYSE, NYSE American, NYSE Arca only.
¹(TRIN) A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand; above 1 indicates selling pressure.

International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Net chg	Latest % chg	YTD % chg
World					
	MSCI ACWI	826.64	-6.09	-0.73	-1.7
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	344.46	-2.78	-0.80	5.7
	MSCI World	3623.17	-28.31	-0.78	-2.3
	MSCI Emerging Markets	1109.16	-3.90	-0.35	3.1
Americas					
	MSCI AC Americas	2096.08	-14.80	-0.70	-5.2
Canada	S&P/TSX Comp	24248.20	-132.51	-0.54	-1.9
Latin Amer.	MSCI EM Latin America	1984.25	-11.32	-0.57	7.1
Brazil	Bovespa	123507.35	-1012.03	-0.81	2.7
Chile	S&P IPSA	3950.49	-2.06	-0.05	9.3
Mexico	S&P/BMV IPC	51510.68	-216.20	-0.42	4.0
EMEA					
Eurozone	STOXX Europe 600	536.89	-9.31	-1.70	5.8
	Euro STOXX	548.08	-7.21	-1.30	8.5
Belgium	Bel-20	4296.63	-64.33	-1.48	0.8
Denmark	OMX Copenhagen 20	1913.12	-52.88	-2.69	-9.0
France	CAC 40	7941.91	-105.69	-1.31	7.6
Germany	DAX	22328.77	-292.18	-1.29	12.2
Israel	Tel Aviv	2462.24	-15.35	-0.62	2.8
Italy	FTSE MIB	37698.31	-527.51	-1.38	10.3
Netherlands	AEX	889.69	-12.85	-1.42	1.3
Norway	Oslo Bors All-Share	1692.02	-12.58	-0.74	2.9
South Africa	FTSE/JSE All-Share	87091.04	-200.35	-0.23	3.6
Spain	IBEX 35	12877.30	-205.40	-1.57	11.1
Sweden	OMX Stockholm	989.04	-20.80	-2.06	3.6
Switzerland	Swiss Market	12692.25	-321.20	-2.47	9.4
Turkey	BIST 100	10438.33	16.09	0.15	6.2
U.K.	FTSE 100	8495.99	-104.23	-1.21	4.0
U.K.	FTSE 250	19770.16	-105.02	-0.53	-4.1
Asia-Pacific					
Australia	MSCI AC Asia Pacific	185.02	-1.42	-0.76	1.9
	S&P/ASX 200	7890.10	-72.20	-0.91	-3.3
China	Shanghai Composite	3379.83	13.67	0.41	0.8
Hong Kong	Hang Seng	23782.12	-1.35	-0.01	18.6
India	BSE Sensex	74102.34	-12.85	-0.02	-5.2
Japan	NIKKEI 225	36793.11	-235.16	-0.64	-7.8
Singapore	Straits Times	3825.83	-73.24	-1.88	1.0
South Korea	KOSPI	2537.60	-32.79	-1.28	5.8
Taiwan	TAIEX	22071.09	-388.06	-1.73	-4.2
Thailand	SET	1187.63	10.19	0.87	-15.2

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Percentage Gainers...

Company	Symbol	Close	Net chg	% chg	Latest Session % chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg
Zseventy bio	TSVT	4.95	2.15	76.79	5.99	2.29	46.7	4.7
Hesai Group ADR	HSAT	24.08	8.07	50.41	24.18	3.52	367.8	0.03
Springview Holdings	SPHL	6.00	1.92	47.06	7.16	1.42	...	...
Cryoport	CYRX	6.65	1.95	41.49	20.11	4.58	-59.2	...
Myomo	MYO	5.87	1.70	40.77	7.17	2.51	54.5	...
Ramaco Resources Cl A	METC	11.62	3.22	38.33	19.20	8.17	-33.5	...
Dogwood Therapeutics	DWTX	11.13	2.69	31.87	29.28	1.62	41.8	...
CAMP4 Therapeutics	CAMP	5.49	1.30	31.03	12.30	3.50	...	...
Baird Medical Invst Hldgs	BDMD	4.62	1.09	30.88	13.52	1.05	-57.5	...
LifeMD	LFMD	5.58	1.31	30.56	12.88	3.99	-33.5	...
Gauzy	GAUZ	10.64	2.28	27.27	17.10	6.78	...	...
Telesat Cl A	TSAT	21.88	4.58	26.47	23.62	6.93	126.7	...
Paymentus Holdings	PAY	30.75	6.07	24.59	38.94	16.94	28.5	...
Endeavour Silver	EXK	4.52	0.88	24.18	5.67	2.02	111.2	...
Holley	HLLY	2.98	0.58	24.17	4.58	2.29	-27.7	...

Most Active Stocks

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	% chg from 65-day avg	Latest Session Close	% chg	52-Week High	Low
Syros Pharmaceuticals	SYRS	690,858	19990.8	0.14	48.47	6.93	0.07
Blue Hat Interactive	BHAT	407,957	324.9	0.04	20.90	1.45	0.03
NVIDIA	NVDA	352,126	36.7	108.76	1.66	153.13	75.61
Direxion TSLA Bull 2X	TSLL	300,732	267.7	7.91	7.18	41.50	4.94
Cutera	CUTR	216,717	7390.7	0.11	-16.03	3.00	0.09
Ford Motor	F	209,937	167.0	9.69	-2.71	14.85	9.06
Aspira Women's Health	AWH	192,190	63730.3	0.18	-11.62	3.92	0.14
Tesla	TSLA	171,045	97.0	230.58	3.79	488.54	138.80
NIO ADR	NIO	160,931	217.8	5.22	17.04	7.71	3.61
Direxion Dly SCOND 3 BL	SOXL	159,736	95.5	17.41	-3.22	70.08	16.51

NEW HIGHS AND LOWS

WSJ.com/newhighs

Continued From Page B8				Stock				Stock				Stock				Stock				Stock				Stock				Stock				Stock			
52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %			
Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg
NaturalAlt	NAII	3.27	-13.9	NewEraHelium	NEHC	1.36	-2.0	NovoNordisk	NVO	77.00	-1.1	OmniAb	OABI	3.05	-4.0	OrionOffice	ONIL	2.31	2.1	PebblebrookHotel	PEB	10.84	-4.9	PlutusFinancial	PLUT	2.87	-6.7	PurpleInnovation	PRPL	0.68	1.2	RXO	RXO	17.59	-8.2
Navigator	NAVIG	13.55	0.1	NewGenVf	NIVF	0.94	-13.3	ONE GroupHosp	STKS	2.52	-11.7	OncolyticsBio	ONCY	0.58	-4.6	OvidTherap	OVID	0.46	0.1	PebblebrookPldF	PEBPF	18.15	0.2	PowerIntegrations	POWI	54.55	-6.6	PyxisOncology	PYXS	0.99	-2.8	RainEnhTech	RAIN	1.79	2.2
NaviosMaritime	NVMS	37.75	-1.5	NewRelts2029	NEWTH	24.46	-0.6	ON Semi	ON	41.85	-2.9	Oncoretx	ONCO	0.16	-2.2	OxfordLane	OLXC	4.67	-6.2	Prisma-Fix	PESI	6.96	-2.3	PrecisionDrilling	PDS	43.00	-0.3	PyxisTankers	PXS	3.27	-0.9	Rallybio	RLVB	0.62	1.5
nCino	NCNO	28.13	-1.9	NextGen6.625Ns	NEWTH	24.65	-0.2	OSR	OSR	1.69	—	l80LifeSci	ATNF	1.06	—	PACs Group	PACS	12.25	-2.1	PetroleoBrasil	PBR	12.45	-1.3	PreludeTherap	PRLD	0.66	-1.3	Q32Bio	Q32B	1.89	-7.8	Rapid7	RPD	27.39	-1.6
NerdWallet	NRDS	8.97	-0.8	NextTechnology	NXTT	0.36	-10.0	Ocugen	OCGN	0.52	-1.8	1stdibs.com	DBS	3.20	-4.8	PVH	PVH	66.78	-3.8	PhathomPharm	PHAT	4.33	8.9	PrimeMedicine	PRME	1.83	-8.7	QVCgplnc8%CPld	QVCGP	28.51	-6.6	ReadyCapNts2026	RCB	23.51	-0.9
NetApp	NTAP	90.08	-1.2	NioCorpDevelopWt	NIOBW	0.08	2.1	OfficePropIncnc	OPI	0.71	-11.6	OneStream	OS	20.69	-5.9	PagerDuty	PD	16.35	-2.5	PicoCELA	PCLA	0.61	-12.0	Primega	PGHL	0.61	-1.9	QVCA	QVCA	0.23	-7.8	ReadyCapPldE	RCPE	16.63	-1.3
NetPowerWt	NPW	0.25	-0.2	NobelWt	NOW	10.66	-4.5	OfficePropNts2050	OPNL	9.39	-0.9	Ontolmovation	ONTIO	121.47	0.9	PangaalLogistics	PAIL	4.69	-3.3	PioneerPwrSols	PSI	2.99	0.7	ProfDiversity	IPDN	0.20	-6.1	QuestResource	QRHC	4.05	4.4	ReadyCapNts2029	RCD	23.14	-1.1
NIP	NIPG	5.19	0.2	Neurocrine	NBIX	105.18	-3.3	NordicAmTankers	NAT	2.39	—	OpndoorTech	OPEN	1.07	-7.5	ParamountGroup	PGRE	4.03	-3.1	Pixelworks	PXLW	0.60	1.4	ProspectCapPldA	PSCPA	15.50	0.6	QuickLogic	QUIK	5.55	-0.5	RedRockResorts	RRR	42.33	-3.0
NanoXImaging	NESR	7.36	1.1	NewConceptEner	GBR	0.94	-8.8	NorthArmConstr	NOA	15.62	0.3	OlemaPharm	OLMA	3.95	-2.0	OrganGram	OGI	0.96	-1.1	Park-Ohio	PKOH	22.02	-2.8	Playtika	PLTK	4.67	-4.8	PayenceBiomed	PBM	0.86	1.4	QuoinPharm	QNRX	0.27	2.1

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Bonds | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Tracking Bond Benchmarks

Return on investment and spreads over Treasurys and/or yields paid to investors compared with 52-week highs and lows for different types of bonds

Total return close	YTD total return (%)	Index	Yield (%) Latest	Low	High	Total return close	YTD total return (%)	Index	Yield (%) Latest	Low	High
Broad Market Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices						Mortgage-Backed Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices					
2138.74	2.3	U.S. Aggregate	4.650	4.100	5.310	2118.14	2.5	Mortgage-Backed	4.960	4.340	5.570
U.S. Corporate Indexes Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices						2084.48	2.4	Ginnie Mae (GNMA)	4.970	4.460	5.580
3248.42	1.8	U.S. Corporate	5.200	4.640	5.750	1249.46	2.6	Fannie mae (FNMA)	4.960	4.310	5.580
3179.15	1.7	Intermediate	4.940	4.400	5.670	1924.17	2.5	Freddie Mac (FHLMC)	4.850	4.150	5.510
4215.90	1.9	Long term	5.730	5.070	6.010	598.32	0.7	Muni Master	3.410	3.074	3.760
615.35	1.8	Double-A-rated	4.860	4.260	5.330	423.59	1.2	7-12 year	3.169	2.838	3.557
884.89	1.8	Triple-B-rated	5.390	4.850	5.950	483.32	0.5	12-22 year	3.872	3.469	4.032
High Yield Bonds ICE BofA						457.09	-0.3	22-plus year	4.422	3.959	4.533
576.23	1.3	High Yield Constrained	7.491	6.975	8.322	Global Government J.P. Morgan¹					
588.57	-0.3	Triple-C-rated	12.202	11.050	13.872	546.30	0.3	Global Government	3.610	3.010	3.740
3853.22	1.7	High Yield 100	6.787	6.208	7.871	842.29	1.7	Canada	2.990	2.820	3.870
503.74	1.4	Global High Yield Constrained	7.185	6.808	8.112	354.92	-2.1	EMUS	3.389	2.726	3.403
379.41	0.9	Europe High Yield	5.658	5.219	6.710	644.55	-1.7	France	3.520	2.900	3.530
U.S. Agency Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices						457.17	-2.8	Germany	2.850	2.080	2.860
1874.71	1.8	U.S. Agency	4.380	3.960	5.190	262.75	-2.8	Japan	1.870	1.110	1.910
1661.64	1.6	10-20 years	4.320	3.920	5.190	497.33	-3.1	Netherlands	3.050	2.290	3.060
3536.42	3.4	20-plus years	4.890	4.240	5.300	785.18	0.4	U.K.	4.840	4.030	5.070
2860.15	2.2	Yankee	4.910	4.380	5.580	920.05	2.5	Emerging Markets **	7.368	7.084	8.073

¹ Constrained indexes limit individual issuer concentrations to 2%; the High Yield 100 are the 100 largest bonds
² In local currency
³ Euro-zone bonds
** EMBI Global Index
Sources: ICE Data Services; Bloomberg Fixed Income Indices; J.P. Morgan

Global Government Bonds: Mapping Yields

Yields and spreads over or under U.S. Treasurys on benchmark two-year and 10-year government bonds in selected other countries; arrows indicate whether the yield rose(▲) or fell (▼) in the latest session

Coupon (%)	Maturity, in years	Country/	Latest(●)	1	2	3	4	5	6	Previous	Month ago	Year ago	Spread Under/Over U.S. Treasurys, in basis points
4.125	U.S. 2	3.939 ▲								3.895	4.290	4.532	
4.625	10	4.286 ▲								4.213	4.536	4.103	
4.750	Australia 2	3.750 ▼								3.815	3.844	3.716	-19.7
3.500	10	4.386 ▲								4.446	4.398	3.962	9.7
0.000	France 2	2.377 ▼								2.393	2.240	2.775	-157.1
3.000	10	3.544 ▲								3.503	3.161	2.755	-74.5
2.200	Germany 2	2.198 ▼								2.222	2.083	2.801	-174.9
2.500	10	2.896 ▲								2.837	2.433	2.306	-139
2.950	Italy 2	2.430 ▼								2.479	2.416	3.351	-151.7
3.650	10	4.013 ▲								3.965	3.535	3.620	-27.6
0.800	Japan 2	0.831 ▼								0.864	0.802	0.205	-311.7
1.200	10	1.506 ▼								1.571	1.316	0.767	-278.3
2.500	Spain 2	2.397 ▲								2.389	2.310	2.981	-155.1
3.450	10	3.482 ▲								3.413	3.071	3.133	-80.7
4.125	U.K. 2	4.153 ▼								4.189	4.190	4.252	20.6
4.250	10	4.630 ▲								4.601	4.512	4.065	34.1

Source: Tullett Prebon, Tradeweb FTSE U.S. Treasury Close

Corporate Debt

Prices of firms' bonds reflect factors including investors' economic, sectoral and company-specific expectations

Investment-grade spreads that tightened the most...

Issuer	Symbol	Coupon (%)	Yield (%)	Maturity	Spread¹, in basis points	Current	One-day change	Last week
John Deere Capital	...	2.000	4.60	June 17, '31	57		-8	n.a.
Morgan Stanley	MS	4.300	5.53	Jan. 27, '45	90		-7	92
Banco Santander	...	6.350	5.87	March 14, '34	165		-6	158
Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria	...	5.381	4.73	March 13, '29	75		-5	80
Intesa Sanpaolo²	...	3.875	4.89	July 14, '27	99		-4	98
PG&E Recovery Funding	...	4.838	4.78	June 1, '35	n.a.		-4	n.a.
Wells Fargo	WFC	4.400	5.76	June 14, '46	121		-3	123
CNO Global Funding	...	5.875	4.66	June 4, '27	77		-2	n.a.

...And spreads that widened the most

Citigroup	C	4.125	4.75	July 25, '28	85		11	72
Jackson National Life Global Funding	...	5.550	4.68	July 2, '27	78		11	n.a.
John Deere Capital	...	4.950	4.36	July 14, '28	46		10	36
Commonwealth Edison	...	6.450	5.49	Jan. 15, '38	127		10	n.a.
Oracle	ORCL	6.500	5.68	April 15, '38	145		10	132
Walt Disney	DIS	2.650	4.75	Jan. 13, '31	76		9	65
Home Depot	HD	5.875	5.19	Dec. 16, '36	97		9	85

High-yield issues with the biggest price increases...

Issuer	Symbol	Coupon (%)	Yield (%)	Maturity	Bond Price as % of face value	Current	One-day change	Last week
Sealed Air	SEE	6.875	5.99	July 15, '33	105.750		0.37	106.088
Transocean	RIG	7.500	10.65	April 15, '31	86.125		0.37	86.053
Hughes Satellite Systems	...	5.250	10.19	Aug. 1, '26	93.750		0.25	93.250
ADT Security	...	4.875	5.86	July 15, '32	94.197		0.20	94.476
Telecom Italia Capital	...	7.721	7.32	June 4, '38	103.375		0.18	103.158
Cleveland-Cliffs	CLF	6.250	7.98	Oct. 1, '40	84.750		0.13	n.a.
Verde Purchaser	...	10.500	7.86	Nov. 30, '30	108.329		0.08	108.438

...And with the biggest price decreases

Walgreen	...	4.400	5.46	Sept. 15, '42	88.125		-3.50	74.250
Paramount Global	PARA	6.875	6.53	April 30, '36	102.713		-1.25	104.448
Methanex US Operations	...	6.250	6.48	March 15, '32	98.699		-0.80	100.320
Rakuten	...	9.750	7.16	April 15, '29	109.043		-0.66	109.870
Occidental Petroleum	OXY	7.950	6.40	June 15, '39	114.359		-0.54	115.847
FiberCop³	...	6.375	7.08	Nov. 15, '33	95.500		-0.50	97.909
Bath & Body Works	BBWI	6.950	6.61	March 1, '33	102.077		-0.42	101.616
Genworth Financial	GNW	6.500	6.83	June 15, '34	97.773		-0.40	98.025

¹ Estimated spread over 2-year, 3-year, 5-year, 10-year or 30-year hot-run Treasury; 100 basis points=one percentage pt.; change in spread shown is for Z-spread.
Note: Data are for the most active issue of bonds with maturities of two years or more

Source: MarketAxess

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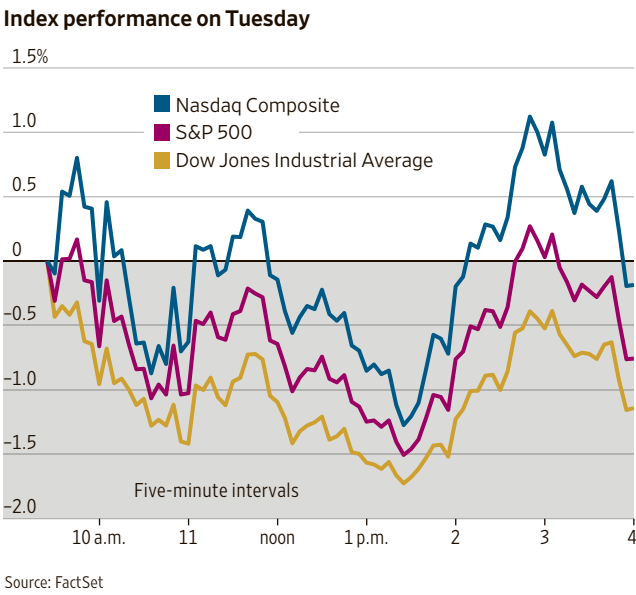
BIGGEST 1,000 STOCKS

Continued From Page B6																																							
Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg								
Centene	CNC	58.57	-0.87	FairScape	FICO	172.85	27.50	KT	KZ	17.78	0.18	OldKorn	OKTA	107.00	1.81	PublicStorage	PSA	308.21	-5.39	Samsara	IOT	35.90	1.84	TAL Education	TAL	13.09	0.18	TransUnion	TRU	82.30	1.44	Trimble	TRMB	66.49	-0.02	WEC Energy	WEC	105.77	-3.21
CentraisElBras	EBR	6.73	0.07	Fastrack	FAST	77.35	-2.45	Kanzhun	BZ	18.27	0.86	OmegaHealthcare	OHI	36.65	-0.14	PulteGroup	PHM	105.84	-1.56	SareptaTherap	SRPT	100.71	1.02	TC Energy	TRP	46.29	0.06	Trip.com	TCOM	61.59	-0.63	WPCarey	WPC	62.96	-1.53				
CharlesRiverLabs	CLRL	166.63	-8.49	FederalRealty	FRT	98.28	-1.45	Kaspi.kz	KSPI	97.59	0.09	Omnicom	OMC	82.51	-0.20	PureStorage	PSTG	48.63	0.73	Schlumberger	SRLB	40.01	1.06	TD Synnex	SNX	127.67	1.44	TrustFinl	TFCF	39.91	-0.46	Wabtec	WAB	11.21	-0.07				
CharterComms	CHCR	355.87	-17.65	FedEx	FDX	242.96	-8.58	Kellanova	K	82.23	-0.22	OnHoldng	ONON	45.17	0.94	QuantasServices	PWR	246.03	9.32	SchwabC	SCHW	72.47	1.23	TE Connectivity	TEL	144.56	-3.49	Twilio	TWLO	100.08	1.51	Walmart	WMT	87.44	-0.38				
CheckPoint	CHKP	222.39	-2.88	Ferrari	RACE	441.25	-8.17	KenigDrPepper	KDP	33.24	0.70	Oracle	ORCL	144.18	-4.61	QuestDg	QDG	168.15	-4.97	Seagate	STX	68.97	0.56	Telus	TLU	15.36	-0.43	TylerTech	TFT	565.22	-0.60	WalgreensBoots	WBA	10.37	-0.22				
Chemd	CHMD	598.50	1.74	FidNatInfo	FINF	68.23	-0.45	KeyCorp	KEY	15.16	...	Orix	IX	20.75	...	ServiceNow	SNOW	808.40	24.57	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TM MobileUS	TMU	256.67	-9.96	Tyson Foods	TSN	61.31	-0.62	WarnerBros	WBD	33.44	-0.64				
CheniereEnerPtrs	CHEN	120.07	3.46	FidNatInfo	FINF	68.23	-0.45	KeyCorp	KEY	15.16	...	OtsWorldwide	OTIS	101.15	-2.77	Shell	SHEL	66.81	0.02	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TPG	TPG	48.63	2.13	UnitedHealth	UHL	486.04	5.82	Westlake	WGL	33.44	-0.64				
Chevron	CVX	154.08	-3.49	FifthThirdBncp	FTIB	38.12	-2.75	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	SherwinWilliams	SHW	353.02	-4.76	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	T RowePrice	TRP	96.30	-2.47	U-Haul	UHAL	59.50	-2.74	WasteMgmt	WM	28.20	-3.56				
Chevy	CHWY	33.20	1.37	FirstHorizon	FHN	18.19	0.49	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Chipotle	CMG	49.98	0.13	FirstSolar	FSR	139.10	5.99	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Chubb	CB	290.70	-2.26	FirstEnergy	FE	39.15	-0.22	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ChurchHwa	CHT	38.75	-0.36	Fiserv	FI	235.41	1.21	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ChurchHwaDwms	CHD	112.19	-1.01	Flex	FLEX	33.75	0.80	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ChurchHillDwms	CHD	108.60	-0.49	FloorDecor	FND	98.85	-3.04	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Ciena	CI	317.87	-8.81	FlutterEnt	FLT	231.12	3.62	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Cinematifl	CINF	140.13	-1.67	FomentoEconMex	FMX	96.29	-2.24	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Cintas	CTAS	195.66	-4.05	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
CiscoSystems	CSO	66.07	-1.39	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Citigroup	C	67.50	0.09	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
CitizensFin	CFG	39.91	0.10	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
CleanHarbors	CLH	148.13	3.99	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Clorox	CLX	192.43	0.37	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Cloudflare	NET	120.07	3.46	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Coca-Cola	KO	71.04	-0.41	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
CocaColaCon	COKE	138.52	75.92	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
CocaColaEuropac	CECEP	33.37	2.42	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
CognizantTech	CTSH	82.47	-1.53	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Cohesent	CHCO	66.48	3.67	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
Comcast	CMSCA	39.55	-0.14	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ComcastSystems	CSX	324.58	11.32	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ComcastSystems	CSX	324.58	11.32	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ComcastSystems	CSX	324.58	11.32	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ComcastSystems	CSX	324.58	11.32	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
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ComcastSystems	CSX	324.58	11.32	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ComcastSystems	CSX	324.58	11.32	Fortivt	FTV	74.20	-0.72	KimberlyClark	KMB	14.09	-3.31	Ovto	OVV	38.94	1.10	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	Shutterstock	S	79.97	-4.19	TaiwanSecs	TSM	170.97	0.32	US Foods	USFD	90.34	-0.96	Waters	WAT	57.85	-11.42				
ComcastSystems	CSX																																						

MARKETS

Stocks End Volatile Day Lower

Continued from page B1 forecasts amid concerns about travel demand, but Southwest unveiled moves to boost revenue, lifting its stock 8.3%. Other S&P 500 leaders included CrowdStrike Holdings, GE Vernova and Super Micro Computer. Verizon shares dropped more than 6% and were the weakest performer of the Dow industrials on Tuesday, after a company executive flagged heightened industry competition at an investor conference. Teradyne was the worst performer on the S&P 500, followed by Expedia and Delta. The Cboe Volatility Index, known as Wall Street's fear gauge because it tracks the



cost of options used to protect against market downturns, hovered around 27 after spending most of 2025 under 20. "This is not a drill," said Bob Lang, chief options analyst at Explosive Options. "This is real life going on right now. And if you're not careful, you're going to lose a lot of money."

Elsewhere:
◆ The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.286%, having slipped on Monday to 4.21%.
◆ The U.S. dollar weakened further against most major currencies.

◆ Meanwhile, the euro strengthened as German conservative leader Friedrich Merz seeks backing for a huge spending plan.
◆ Bitcoin traded above \$83,000, having slipped below \$80,000 on Monday.

WEDNESDAY'S EVENTS:
The February CPI reading is due at 8:30 a.m. Economists see core CPI, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, rising 0.3% for the month, versus 0.4% in January. Year-on-year core inflation is expected to come in at 3.2%.

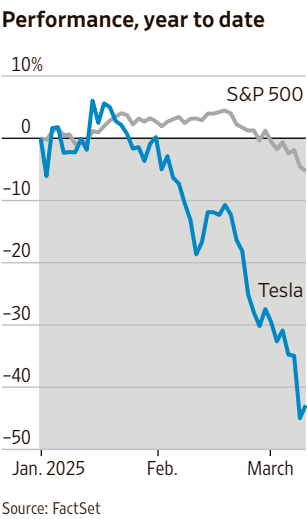
Federal-budget data is due at 2 p.m.

EARNINGS EXPECTED:
Adobe
American Eagle Outfitters
Crown Castle
SentinelOne
UiPath

STOCK SPOTLIGHT

Delta Air Lines
The carrier cut its outlook, as did American Airlines. Shares of Delta dropped 7.3% and American fell 8.3%.
Dick's Sporting Goods and Kohl's
The sports-equipment retailer and the department-store operator both warned about slowing consumer spending. Kohl's stock plummeted 24%, while Dick's declined 5.7%.
Illumina
The maker of genetic-sequencing machines lowered its 2025 financial guidance and said it would reduce spending because China barred sales of its devices. Shares dropped 1.7%.
Nissan Motor
The car maker is replacing Chief Executive Makoto Uchida. It named Chief Planning Officer Ivan Espinosa as his successor. The company's stock rose 1.4%.

Vail Resorts
The resort operator's quarterly results out late Monday beat Wall Street analysts' estimates. Revenue in the quarter grew by about 6% The company's shares closed 7.7% higher.
AUCTION RESULTS
Here are the results of Tuesday's Treasury auctions. All bids are awarded at a single price at the market-clearing yield. Rates are determined by the difference between that price and the face value.
SIX-WEEK BILLS
Applications \$208,279,873,900
Accepted bids \$70,705,423,900
* noncompetitively \$663,602,600
* foreign noncompetitively \$0
Auction price (rate) 99.50917 (4.235%)
Coupon equivalent 4.315%
Bids at clearing yield accepted 75.95%
Cusip number 912797NC7
The bills, dated March 13, 2025, mature on April 24, 2025.
THREE-YEAR NOTES
Applications \$157,411,731,700
Accepted bids \$50,983,121,300
* noncompetitively \$166,862,700
* foreign noncompetitively \$5,000,000
Auction price (rate) 99.907190 (3.908%)
Interest rate 3.875%
Bids at clearing yield accepted 4.83%
Cusip number 91282CMS7
The notes, dated March 17, 2025, mature on March 15, 2028.



Trump, Musk Make Tesla Sales Pitch After Company's Slide

A day after Tesla stock tumbled 15%, notching its worst day since 2020 and taking year-to-date losses to 45%, Elon Musk's electric car got an infomercial of sorts Tuesday at the White House. Several models were parked on the White House grounds for President Trump to inspect. Holding notes that detailed the prices of each model, the president expounded on the virtues of Musk's vehicles. The stock gained 3.8% on Tuesday.

Trump's event was an attempt at correcting what he sees as a wrong: Musk's alignment with Trump's White House and efforts to slash the size of the federal government are causing problems for the brand. Protesters have picketed Tesla showrooms across the country and some liberals have boycotted the brand. Tesla stock has also been hit by weak sales data. Trump said overnight on social media that Musk was doing a fantastic job and

vowed to buy a new Tesla, after the steep selloff in shares. "I'm going to buy a brand new Tesla tomorrow morning as a show of confidence and support for Elon Musk, a truly great American," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. He said the carmaker faced attempts to "illegally and collusively boycott Tesla." On Tuesday at the White House, a silver Cybertruck glistened in the sun for the president to inspect. But Trump folded his 6-foot-3-

inch frame into a red Tesla sedan with Musk standing nearby. "Watch the Secret Service go crazy," Trump said. "If you actually drove it around, it would really be wild," Musk observed, and then entered the vehicle on the passenger side. "Wow. That's beautiful," Trump gushed as he appraised a computer panel near the steering wheel. He didn't drive the car, but he said it was the one he would purchase. Trump said he hasn't driven a car in a long time. The presi-

dent said that he plans to allow his staff to use the car. UBS on Monday lowered its first-quarter delivery forecast for the EV maker, noting low delivery times for Model 3 and Model Y vehicles in key markets. Last week, Wednesday analysts wrote that while Musk's involvement in the administration has triggered brand concerns, the firm believes that under 5% of Tesla sales across the world are at risk due to those concerns. —Annie Linskey

New Highs and Lows

Continued From Page B9				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %				52-Wk %											
Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg	Stock	Sym	Hi/Lo	Chg								
RedHillBio	RDHL	2.79	-7.6	RingCentral	RNG	26.64	-0.9	SageParentGolf	SPGC	0.09	-33.2	Sphere3D	ANY	0.53	1.2	TopFinancial	TOP	1.13	-1.7	TopgolfCallaway	MOOG	5.59	-5.2	TyrraBiosciences	TYRA	9.93	7.1	VerraMobility	VRRM	19.77	-1.5	Wellchange	WCT	0.43	-71.5				
RegalReimord	RRX	113.73	1.0	RocketPharm	RCKT	8.06	-4.4	SagteGlobalGolf	SAGT	3.28	-5.5	SplashBeverage	SBEV	0.13	-1.1	T RowePrice	TROW	95.98	-2.5	TownsquareMedia	TSQ	7.63	-2.5	U-BX Tech	UBXG	2.36	-8.8	VerticalAerospace	EVTL	3.16	-6.8	WernerEnterprises	WERN	30.48	-5.0				
RelianceGlobalWt	RELW	0.02	-9.8	RockyMtnChoc	RKCF	1.44	-1.3	SailPoint	SAIL	18.43	-2.4	SportsandWine	SPWH	1.16	-6.5	TangoTherap	TNGX	1.72	0.5	TradeDesk	TD	58.57	-2.4	UltraClean	UCTT	22.40	-3.0	VinFastAutoWt	VFSW	0.17	-20.8	WilliamPembroke	WPNP	10.43	-4.0				
Rentokilinit	RTO	20.80	-3.5	RydeGroup	RYDE	0.28	1.1	SailPoint	SAIL	18.43	-2.4	ShuttlePharm	SHPH	0.38	-4.8	StardustPower	SDST	0.60	-2.9	Trane	TTGT	13.18	-0.1	Traeger	COOK	1.82	-3.7	UltraLife	ULBI	5.72	-1.5	VirpaxPharm	VRPX	0.17	-4.2	WindtreeTherap	WINT	1.78	10.2
Repay	RPAY	5.63	-0.2	SAB Biotherap	SABS	1.45	-2.6	SigmetJewelers	SIG	46.16	-1.9	SteakholderFds	STKH	1.11	-4.2	TeekayTankers	TNK	35.23	-2.0	TreasureGlobal	TGL	0.10	-3.2	Unifi	UF	5.02	-0.2	VirTra	VTST	5.13	-4.1	Winnmark	WINA	304.77	-0.6				
ReShapeLife	RSLS	0.63	-5.8	SAIHEAT	SAIH	0.44	6.2	Scienture	SCNX	1.21	-10.6	StevenMadden	SHOO	26.66	-4.8	Teradata	TDC	22.14	-0.8	TreasureGlobal	TGL	0.10	-3.2	UnifiElectronics	UEIC	6.77	-0.7	VirtusInvPrt	VRTS	170.14	2.4	Xwell	XWEL	0.74	-7.7				
ResourcesConnect	RGP	6.88	-2.7	SCYNEXIS	SCYX	0.88	-1.7	ScioPactentans	STCH	3.14	-2.2	StructureTherap	GPCR	19.39	1.8	Teradyne	TER	82.98	-17.1	Trex	TREX	52.75	-0.1	UrbanOne D	URB	0.73	12.4	Vivakor	VIVK	0.55	-2.8	XcelBrands	XELB	0.26	...				
RexAmerRscs	REX	35.86	0.2	SFL	SFL	1.36	1.4	SleepNumber	SNBR	6.83	-5.3	SunovionEnergy	NOVA	0.42	-16.5	TernsPharm	TERN	3.24	3.6	TritonIntIPt	TRIP	24.13	...	UrbanOne D	URB	0.73	12.4	Vivakor	VIVK	0.55	-2.8	XcelBrands	XELB	0.26	...				
RezolveAI	RZLV	1.27	8.9	SifcoInd	SIF	2.84	-0.7	Soluna	SOLN	0.85	-2.0	SutraBio	STRO	1.26	-5.2	ThorIndustries	THO	77.11	-4.1	TritonIntIPt	TRIP	24.13	...	UrbanOne D	URB	0.73	12.4	Vivakor	VIVK	0.55	-2.8	XcelBrands	XELB	0.26	...				
Ridgetech	RDET	0.72	18.8	SOS	SOS	4.80	-2.2	Semrush	SEMR	9.45	-1.0	SphereEnt	SPHR	31.56	-3.5	TEN Holdings	TEN	0.48	-2.9	TenBioPharm	TEN	15.05	-1.8	TrueBlue	TBI	5.25	-3.3	VaronisSystems	VRNS	39.49	-0.7	YatraOnline	YTRA	0.80	-7.9				

WSJ

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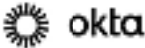
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HEARD_{ON THE} STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

Don't Expect Buyers to Save the Economy

Recession fears rekindle concerns that American consumers are overstretched on debt

U.S. consumers and their credit cards have helped the economy weather many rough moments. Now, as recession fears resurface, the worry is they may be maxed out.

The stock market's recent plunge has been broad. But it has been sharper in a few sectors. Among the most notable is in consumer lending. Major lenders and card companies **American Express**, **Capital One Financial**, **Discover Financial** and **Synchrony Financial** were all down more than 4% on Monday. So far this year those four are down an average of around 12.5%, compared with a 5.3% fall in the S&P 500.

This isn't the first time consumer lenders' stocks have borne the brunt of economic concerns. At several points in the past couple of years, surges in late payments or in banks' charge-offs of consumer loans have sent consumer lenders' shares falling; charge-offs are loans that are written off as a loss. A big worry is that if Americans aren't paying their debts, they won't be able to spend like before—removing a critical pillar of the economy.

Those recent incidents were often false signals. Rising delinquency rates were in many cases concentrated among certain groups of borrowers, in particular people who took on a lot of new debt during 2021 and 2022. During that time, many consumers were able to borrow more than they usually could because they were flush with stimulus payments and the savings forced on them by lockdowns. Many banks have since made it harder to get cards.

Now, a lot of those bad debts are being finally digested. Moody's Ratings projects auto-loan and credit-card loan charge-offs are set to decline, albeit very modestly, in the latter part of this year.

Yet investors suddenly have fresh concerns. For one, Americans' inflation-adjusted debt burdens are starting to grow further beyond prepandemic levels on a per-household basis. As of the fourth quarter of 2024, the average household's credit-card debt surpassed \$10,000, adjusted for inflation, for the first time since 2009, according to data compiled by consumer-finance website WalletHub.

Then there is the rising risk of an economic downturn, or even an outright recession. Investors are clearly concerned about the fallout from Trump's tariff policies. The market's alarm level only rose on Monday after administration officials and Trump signaled a willingness to accept near-term pain—in the markets and the economy—to achieve long-term aims that are less than clear. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said the economy could need "a detox period" to re-



Consumers' behavior isn't purely a function of the money they have today. It is also what they think they will have in the future.

duce dependency on government spending.

Lenders often say the biggest input on their credit modeling is employment. Whatever is happening with economic growth, or stock prices, so long as people are working they are likely to keep up with their payments. So lenders could be sensitive to job losses, even if they are concentrated among federal workers or people who work in sectors that rely on imported goods.

Amid economic stress, credit cards and auto loans may suffer from consumers' changing debt-repayment priorities. Rising home prices and superlow rates on mortgages taken out during the pandemic mean consumers might be more reluctant than ever to lose their homes, meaning that mortgage payments might win in a budgeting battle. The prioritization of mortgage debt, as evidenced by a sample of consumers' behavior, has recently been higher than at any time this century, according to research recently published by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Big consumer lenders' results only represent a slice of the U.S. consumer economy. The most economically vulnerable people, such

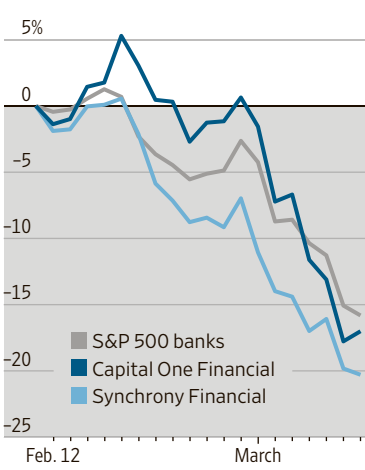
as those receiving government benefits that may be cut, may not have credit cards. They also may rely on smaller, specialized auto lenders for car loans. These consumers are also the ones most likely to have their budgets thrown off by higher costs for imported goods such as car parts.

These economically marginal consumers represent a smaller slice of spending, especially on discretionary goods and services. What would be especially worrisome to the broader market, then, would be delinquency rates rising among higher-income consumers.

From January 2023 to January 2025, the rate at which people earning \$150,000 or more a year are 60-to-89 days behind on their overall debts has more than doubled, according to CreditGauge, which is produced by VantageScore, an independent joint venture of the three major credit bureaus. Those late payments are far lower than for other groups, at 0.16% of outstanding balances. But the jump well outpaces the rise for the middle-income tier of consumers and the lowest-income group.

"We're seeing heightened credit stress among high-income con-

Performance of consumer finance and bank stocks over the past month



Source: FactSet

sumers," says Rikard Bandedo, chief strategy officer and chief economist at VantageScore.

Bandedo says the stresses are higher among people who don't have large nest eggs behind them, in the form of homeownership or a big investment portfolio. "In 2025, more consumers are likely to struggle with balancing increased outlays with their real income," he says.

These consumers, many of

whom are hardly filthy rich, allocate less of their income to necessities and more to discretionary purchases, which means they also have the most flexibility to step up savings, making them potentially a big fulcrum for the broader economy.

There remains a lot of cushion for American spenders. Coming into 2025, Americans overall had solid household balance sheets. For example, as of the third quarter of 2024, household debt-service payments were around 11% of disposable personal income, a level still below prepandemic norms, according to Fed data.

But consumers' behavior isn't purely a function of the money they have today. It is also what they think they will have in the future. In a February survey of consumers by the Federal Reserve, respondents on average thought that they had 14.6% chance of not being able to make one of their minimum required debt payments over the next three months, which is the highest level since April 2020.

The risk is that an economic reversal could lead to an especially sharp pullback in spending. That makes the nation's consumer lenders a key stress point to watch.

—Telis Demos

Southwest Gets More Investor-Friendly, Harder to Recognize

Southwest Airlines is heading for clearer skies, but shouldn't leave the value of its brand on the ground.

On Tuesday, the Dallas carrier aped its peer **Delta Air Lines** in saying business will be slower than anticipated in the first quarter. Its shares surged.

Investors are encouraged by the direction of travel: Southwest, which is undergoing a radical transformation shepherded by activist hedge-fund firm Elliott Investment Management, recently unveiled its first-ever mass layoffs. It said Tuesday that cost-cutting plans are bearing fruit and will be accelerated.

What solidified the carrier's commitment to change in the eyes of investors was the news it will start charging nonpreferred customers for checking luggage. That overturns a "bags fly free" policy that has been at the core of the airline's identity. Last year, Elliott pushed Southwest to ditch its signature open seating in favor of assigned cabins.

While fliers bemoan paying for add-ons, the success of no-frills specialists such as Ireland's **Ryanair** shows they don't usually put their wallet where their mouth is. So-called ancillary revenues, like charging for snacks, have become a big revenue source for budget carriers.

Yet baggage fees make up 3% of U.S. airline revenues. And Southwest is in a different position than

Ryanair, because it is the only big airline not charging them. Just months ago, executives pointed to surveys suggesting 60% of customers were lured in by free luggage checking, and research estimating attrition could cut \$300 million from its sales.

Several Wall Street analysts have come to similar conclusions.

That makes the new bags policy look like a mistake. Elliott is right to push for a modernized and streamlined Southwest, but should beware of making the airline unrecognizable. The paint on the aircraft isn't enough to retain a loyal customer base.

—Jon Sindreu

Oracle's AI Boom Is Coming, It's Just Not Here Yet

Oracle has some big business coming. Just not soon enough for antsy investors.

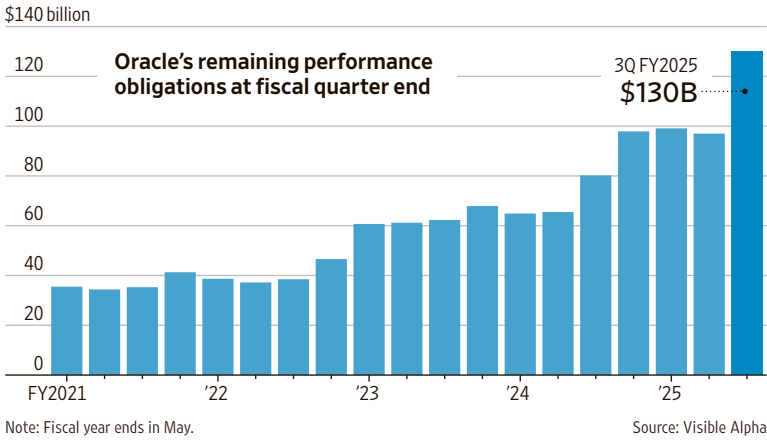
The software giant said late Monday that remaining performance obligations—a measure of the value of cloud computing deals it has signed that haven't yet been recognized as revenue—soared to \$130 billion in its fiscal third quarter ended February. That is a record jump of \$33 billion in RPO from the previous quarter, which was about five times the gain that analysts had expected for the quarter, according to FactSet data.

The company noted that the massive Stargate artificial-intelligence-infrastructure initiative announced during the quarter didn't contribute to that growth.

Still, Oracle's revenue and adjusted operating income for the just-ended quarter came in below Wall Street's estimates. The company also projected revenue growth and per-share earnings for the current quarter that was a bit short of analysts' targets.

In a market still reeling from President Trump's comments about a possible recession, investors weren't taking a glass-half-full view. Oracle's share price slid 3.1%.

Wall Street is still largely positive on Oracle given its growing position in the cloud and AI computing. About 63% of analysts cur-



Note: Fiscal year ends in May.

Source: Visible Alpha

rently rate the stock as a buy—the highest such ratio in at least five years, according to FactSet. But Oracle has made a habit of showing weaker near-term results while touting future growth, as the company missed Wall Street's revenue targets in six of the past eight quarters.

"Bottom line, Oracle has work to do in convincing investors of the long-term value of their building RPO balance," Morgan Stanley analyst Keith Weiss wrote in a note Tuesday.

Oracle is also following the path of its other big tech peers in blow-out spending to build up its AI infrastructure, having spent just under \$15 billion in capital expenditures over the past four

quarters. That seems a pittance compared with the \$68 billion averaged by megacap cloud peers Amazon, Microsoft and Google parent Alphabet over roughly the same period, but it is also more than double what Oracle spent a year ago and amounts to about 27% of the company's annual revenue, compared with its average of less than 12% over the past four fiscal years.

In a report Tuesday, Jackson Ader of KeyBanc Capital noted the jump in spending but added "it's also pretty easy to point at that RPO number and say 'maybe they should be investing more, faster.'"

Nobody runs the AI race cheap these days.

—Dan Gallagher