

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOW JONES | News Corp *** MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2023 ~ VOL. CCLXXXI NO. 46 WSJ.com ★★★★★ \$5.00
Last week: DJIA 32816.92 ▼ 1009.77 3.0% NASDAQ 11394.94 ▼ 3.3% STOXX 600 457.70 ▼ 1.4% 10-YR. TREASURY ▼ 31/32, yield 3.948% OIL \$76.32 ▼ \$0.23 EURO \$1.0547 YEN 136.46

What's News

Business & Finance

Traders are scooping up hedges at the fastest clip since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic to protect against a potential stock market downturn, as Wall Street's VIX fear gauge rose above 23 last week. **A1**

◆ **Pfizer is in talks** to acquire Seagen, a biotech with a market value of some \$30 billion, in a potential deal aimed at adding to its lineup of cancer treatments. **B1**

◆ **Union Pacific said** it plans to name a new chief executive this year, hours after Soroban Capital Partners, a major shareholder, publicly urged the railroad giant's board to oust Lance Fritz from the job. **B1**

◆ **Frackers are set** to plow more cash into oil fields this year compared with last, but it isn't expected to unleash the flood of crude that past spending binges in the shale patch have. **B1**

◆ **Twitter conducted** another round of job cuts over the weekend, people familiar with the matter said, the latest among thousands of staff reductions under the company's new owner, Elon Musk. **B1**

◆ **Amazon is expanding** ultrafast delivery options, a sign that the company remains committed to pushing its logistics system for speed as it scales back plans in other areas. **B5**

◆ **Warren Buffett retained** his sense of optimism in his annual letter to investors, saying he continues to believe in the resilience of the U.S. economy. **B3**

World-Wide

◆ **The Energy Department** has concluded that the Covid pandemic most likely arose from a laboratory leak, according to a classified intelligence report recently provided to the White House and key members of Congress. **A1**

◆ **Kyiv countered** Russian claims to have taken further territory around Bakhmut as Russia seeks to surround the eastern city, which Ukraine's military has defended against withering onslaughts for months. **A7**

◆ **The EU sanctioned** a Dubai-based subsidiary of Russia's state-owned shipping giant, using new powers to hit foreign-based entities that help Moscow circumvent Western restrictions. **A9**

◆ **Sen. Joe Manchin** declined to describe himself as a Democrat during a television interview and didn't say if he is running for re-election. **A4**

◆ **Israeli and Palestinian** officials pledged to reduce the escalating violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem, but the fatal shooting of two Israeli settlers and subsequent riots in Palestinian villages underscored how tensions are spiraling. **A18**

◆ **The special counsel** investigating Trump appears to have reached the advanced stages of his sweeping inquiry after a flurry of aggressive steps in recent weeks. **A6**

◆ **Multiple newspapers** around the U.S. dropped Scott Adams's long-running "Dilbert" comic strip after the cartoonist called Black Americans a "hate group" in an online post. **A5**

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Protesters Go Pink in Mexico in Clash With Ruling Party



BIG DRAW: Protesters on Sunday rallied across Mexico, including in Mexico City, above, to protest President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's overhaul of the country's independent election agency, with many showing the agency's distinctive color. **A18**

Investors Are Getting Ready For Jump in Market Volatility

By ERIC WALLERSTEIN

Fear is creeping back into the stock market. To protect against a potential downturn, traders are scooping up hedges at the fastest clip since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

More call options betting that the Cboe Volatility Index, or VIX, will rise have changed hands on an average day in February than at any time since March 2020, Cboe data show.

After lying relatively dormant for months, the VIX, also known as Wall Street's fear gauge, rose above 23 last week,

its highest level since the first few trading days of the year. Readings below 20 typically signify complacency, while those above 30 signal investors are scurrying for protection.

The impetus for the increased demand is twofold. When stocks rebounded to kick off the year, investors piled back into the market, restoring their need to hedge their portfolios. More recently, a string of hot economic data increased the likelihood that the Federal Reserve will decide to continue raising interest rates to bring inflation down, stalling the early-year stock rally.

The S&P 500 is coming off three consecutive weeks of declines, capped by Friday's hotter-than-expected reading on the personal-consumption expenditures price index—the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation. The stock benchmark is up just 3.4% in 2023—and down 5% from its high on Feb. 2.

In the coming days, investors will be parsing updates on consumer confidence and home prices, alongside quarterly earnings reports from Target Corp. and Salesforce Inc. for insight into the market's trajectory.

"During the January rally, it

looked like we were going to glide through a Fed tightening cycle without any damage to the real economy," said Mike Edwards, deputy chief investment officer of Weiss Multi-Strategy Advisers, an investment-management firm based in New York. "Now, that certainty is fading more and more each day."

Traders have finally come to grips with the Fed's hawkish forecast on interest rates, but they are growing increasingly worried about where rates will ultimately peak. Derivatives markets show the federal-funds

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DOE Says Lab Leak Is Likely Origin of Covid-19

New intelligence about China outbreak spurs assessment; finding is given 'low confidence'

By MICHAEL R. GORDON AND WARREN P. STROBEL

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Energy Department has concluded that the Covid pandemic most likely arose from a laboratory leak, according to a classified intelligence report recently provided to the White House and key members of Congress.

The shift by the Energy Department, which previously was undecided on how the virus emerged, is noted in an update to a 2021 document by Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines's office.

The new report highlights how different parts of the intelligence community have arrived at disparate judgments about the pandemic's origin. The Energy Department now joins the Federal Bureau of Investigation in saying the virus likely spread via a mishap at a Chinese laboratory. Four other agencies, along with a national intelligence panel, still judge that it was likely the result of a natural transmission, and two are undecided.

The Energy Department's conclusion is the result of new intelligence and is significant because the agency has considerable scientific expertise and oversees a network of U.S. national laboratories, some of which conduct advanced biological research.

The Energy Department made its judgment with "low confidence," according to people who have read the classified report.

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◆ U.S. consumer companies are expanding in China..... B1

Pregnant Russians Flock to Argentina For Births

By SILVINA FRYDLEWSKY AND JUAN FORERO

BUENOS AIRES—Thousands of pregnant Russian women and their partners have been migrating to Argentina since President Vladimir Putin of Russia ordered the invasion of Ukraine, inspired by the hope of building new lives far from his autocratic and increasingly isolated nation.

The chance to begin anew over 8,000 miles away from Russia has led more than 22,000 mostly middle- and upper-class Russians to make the circuitous journey to this capital city since January 2022, according to Argentine government migration figures. Officials here said the women have been arriving in growing numbers and giving birth, which bestows immediate citizenship on newborns as well as temporary residency and work permits for their parents.

"My daughter will be born here, and she will be Argentine," said Polina Scheitner, a 31-year-old from Moscow. She and her husband moved to Bangkok in May and then looked at Mexico and Brazil before settling on Buenos Aires. Arriving with their 2-year-old son, the couple is expecting.

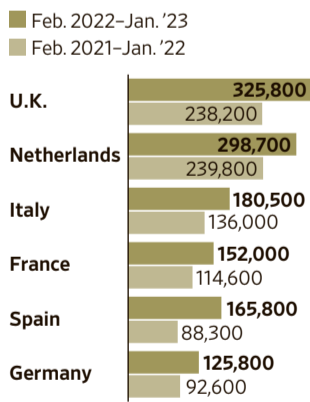
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◆ **Kyiv counters** Wagner's claims of gains..... A7
◆ **North Africa devours** Russian oil products..... A9

Europe Buys More U.S. Oil

The war in Ukraine has reinvigorated exports and the U.S.'s market influence. **A9**

Average U.S. crude exports to European countries, barrels a day



Sources: Kpler

Supreme Court to Test Limits of Presidential Power

Case examines Biden plan to forgive billions in student debt

By ANDREW RESTUCCIA AND JESS BRAVIN

The Supreme Court will consider sharp curbs to the power of the executive branch in a case beginning Tuesday, potentially diluting the influence of future presidents for years to come.

The conflict between the executive and the judiciary that has been growing in recent years will be on view when the court hears arguments over the Biden administration's roughly \$400 billion plan to forgive federal student debt for tens of millions of borrowers. Two cases before the court give the justices an opportunity to set strict limits over the president's ability to implement policies without explicit authorization from Congress.

The move would limit President Biden's ambitions at a moment when he faces few prospects for legislative breakthroughs.

Presidents have tested the bounds of their executive authority for decades, leveraging the power of the White House to put in place sweeping economic and social changes.

In recent years, both Republican and Democratic presidents have relied more heavily on the authority to circumvent congressional gridlock. George W. Bush used executive actions to expand government surveillance, and Barack Obama and Donald Trump issued directives meant to reshape the country's immigration system.

President Biden has issued economically significant regulations at a near-record pace, according to federal data compiled by the Regulatory Studies Center at George Washington University. Aides expect him to rely more

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Recipe for Frustration: Ordering A Quick Cup of Black Coffee

Simple brew gets stuck while baristas make elaborate, multipump concoctions

By HEATHER HADDON

Alex Wicker is used to odd looks from baristas when he stops by a coffee shop. His order is unusual: black coffee.

"Asking for just 'coffee' with no added context, without going through a round of 20 questions with the server, has become impossible at this point," said Mr. Wicker, a 23-year-old student from Shelbyville, Ind.

In a nation awash in Pistachio Cream Cold Brew and Iced Chocolate Almondmilk Shaken Espresso with Chestnut Praline Syrup, black-coffee drinkers like

Mr. Wicker are becoming a rare breed.

What lovers of straight black consider simple, easy-to-pour orders can wind up stuck behind a jam of customized, multipump concoctions, they said. Sometimes their pristine black joe is lightened with sugar or cream anyway. Some baristas seem bewildered by the concept of coffee taken plain.

Mr. Wicker said his purist take makes him feel like an outcast. "I don't know a single person within my age range that enjoys drinking black coffee," he said.

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INSIDE



SPORTS

The financial timing is right for Green Bay to trade Aaron Rodgers. **A14**



BUSINESS NEWS

Berkshire Hathaway recorded a big loss for 2022 in a rocky market. **B3**

U.S. NEWS

Millennials Get Squeezed, Pile on Debt

Adults in their 30s borrowed heavily in pandemic and now struggle to catch up

BY GINA HEEB
AND ANNA MARIA ANDRIOTIS

Danielle Smith and her family thought they had finally escaped the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle they had fallen into. They saved money during the pandemic while they were stuck at home. They used stimulus checks to chip away at \$20,000 in credit-card debt and enjoyed a reprieve from monthly payments on their \$160,000 in student loans.

Lately, they have been hit with one unexpected expense after another, from an out-of-pocket MRI to a broken water heater. They also took trips with their four children that they had put off because of Covid, including to Walt Disney World, local museums and the zoo. By 2022, their credit-card debt had doubled to nearly \$40,000.

"It's just a never-ending cycle of playing catch-up," said Ms. Smith, 34, who together with her husband have a household income of roughly \$80,000 a year in Lincoln, Neb.

Wealth gap

American millennials in their 30s have racked up debt at a historic clip since the pandemic. Their total balances hit more than \$3.8 trillion in the fourth quarter, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, a 27% jump from late 2019. That is the steepest increase of any age group. It is also their fastest pace of debt accumulation over a three-year period since the 2008 financial crisis.

The debt buildup could worsen a generational wealth gap that was already on the rise for millennials. Many started their careers during the 2007-09 recession with no bargaining power, crimping their earnings ever since. Even when the economy is doing well, some have said that they feel as though their financial gains are fragile. That can leave them hesitant or less able to take risks that would

power the broader economy, such as starting a business or investing.

"For millennials, it's felt like being hit from every side," said Charlotte Principato, a financial-services analyst at the research company Morning Consult who covers younger consumers. "They're not feeling in control of their financial lives."

Stacey Coquelin, 31, was nearly ready to buy her first home before the pandemic. After two years of living with her parents, Ms. Coquelin had saved up for a down payment and shrunk her credit-card debt.

When schools were shut down, Ms. Coquelin ran credit-card balances back up to cover child-care bills of \$1,200 a month for her two children. Then inflation started to squeeze her budget, while higher interest rates made it more expensive to borrow. Ms. Coquelin opened new credit cards and dipped into her down-payment money, eventually ending up with more than \$20,000 in credit-card and personal-loan debt and little saved.

"Everything was more expensive—shampoo and kids getting older and needing different things," said Ms. Coquelin, a construction-project manager in the Miami area who makes just over \$40,000 a year. "Now you're getting nowhere."

American families, on average, held up better than expected in 2020 during the Covid pandemic.

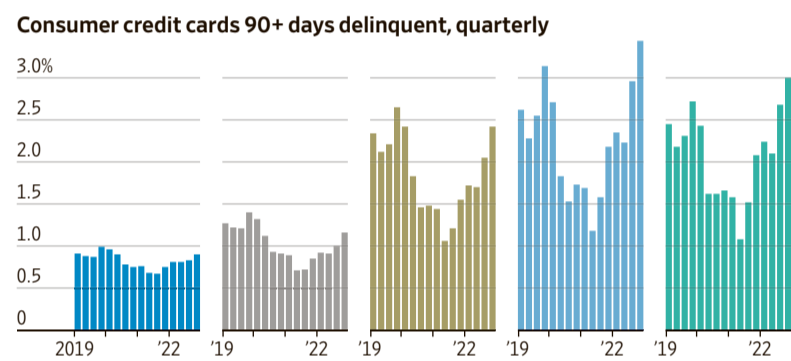
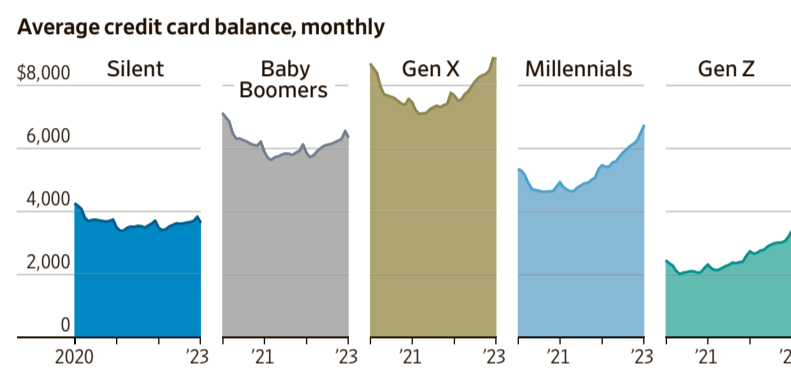
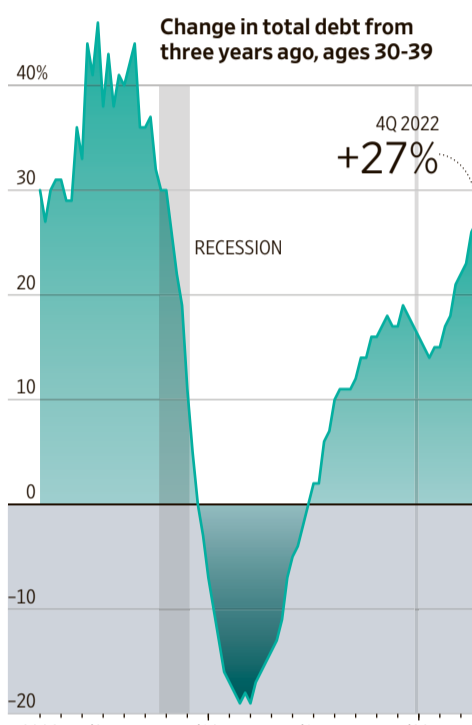
Now, rapid inflation is forcing many to spend more on gas, groceries and rent, eating into pandemic savings. The last round of stimulus checks went out in 2021. Families are back to commuting, traveling and eating out again. The Federal Reserve's campaign to curb inflation has pushed up interest rates on credit cards and other types of loans.

Falling behind

The economy is by many measures in a solid place. The jobless rate is at its lowest level in more than 50 years. Retail spending is strong. Inflation, while still high, is coming down.



Stacey Coquelin, 31, had to dip into her down-payment money for a home during the pandemic as her everyday expenses rose sharply.



Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of New York (total debt); VantageScore Solutions (credit card balance); TransUnion (consumer credit cards)

But there are signs that millennials are overstretched. The average credit-card balance for millennial borrowers was about \$6,750 in January, up 26% from three years earlier,

according to credit-score provider VantageScore Solutions. Balances were little changed for Gen X, and fell between 11% and 15% for older generations. Average personal-loan

balances for millennials rose more than they did for overall borrowers.

"We are seeing a 'credit gap' emerge in the sense that younger, less-affluent borrow-

ers are coming under financial pressure from higher living costs and inflation outpacing their income gains," said Silvio Tavares, chief executive of VantageScore.

California Clobbered With Wild Weather

BY GINGER ADAMS OTIS

California was hit with rain, floods, blizzards and colder-than-average temperatures over the weekend as the remnants of a powerful winter storm swept across the state.

Heavy snow and winds closed several roads in the California mountains, with some areas in the Sierra Nevada recording storm totals of up to 4 to 5 feet of snow, according to the National Weather Service.

Higher peaks in Southern California also got walloped, with Big Bear Lake recording a storm total of 66 inches. Nearby Snow Valley Mountain Resort in Running Springs, Calif., got between 75 to 84 inches over the course of the storm, the weather service said.

More snow will fall in the mountains of Central and Northern California in the next few days, according to the forecast, due to new weather systems approaching the state.

A steady rain lashed Southern and Central California on Saturday, bringing flash-flood warnings and forcing road closures, the weather service said.

Some areas had recorded 3 inches early Saturday and others got up to 9 inches of rainfall, according to Zack Taylor, a meteorologist with the weather service.

Many roads in areas of Southern California between Los Angeles and San Diego flooded when nearby creeks and rivers overran their banks. A few roads in the foothills north of Los Angeles were blocked by mud and debris sliding down surrounding mountainsides, he said.

Some Red States Eye Bans on Federal Gun Laws

BY SHANNON NAJMABADI

DES MOINES, Iowa—A 2021 Missouri law banning law enforcement from enforcing federal gun laws has been challenged in the courts, questioned by dozens of police chiefs. The law has failed to gain the backing of the National Rifle Association.

This year, it is being copied. Lawmakers in Iowa, Ohio, Georgia and other states are weighing nearly identical bills, despite criticism that such laws would be unconstitutional.

Supporters of the bills say they are meant to stop law enforcement from helping the federal government apply gun restrictions, citing as a concern a January rule that limits the use of pistol braces designed to stabilize pistols while firing.

Law-enforcement officers shouldn't have to do the government's "dirty work," be it enforcing vaccine requirements or the pistol brace rule, said Iowa state Rep. Jeff Shipley, the main sponsor of the legislation. He and other supporters also say the measure is a rejection of perceived federal overreach, and in the mold of cities that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

But the Second Amendment Preservation Act has far-reaching consequences. Opponents say it and bills like it are expansive enough to strip law enforcement of needed federal help and funding on a range of issues. Departments in Iowa could face minimum \$50,000 fines if they knowingly employ an officer who helps enforce

federal gun laws. In Missouri, residents who think their rights have been impugned can sue for \$50,000.

Marion County Sheriff Jason Sandholdt said it isn't clear what level of cooperation with the federal government is allowed. "Where's that line?" he asked. "Obviously, I'm very pro-gun. I'm a conservative Republican sheriff myself. But I still think that we have to have relationships." The Iowa State Sheriffs' and Deputies' Association is neutral on the legislation.

The bills' recent popularity stems in part from the start of the Biden presidency and pushback to pandemic restrictions. They also come amid a fringe movement to shrug off federal laws and oversight. Counties across the country have de-

clared themselves "Second Amendment sanctuaries" in recent years. Elected sheriffs have campaigned on not enforcing laws they deem unconstitutional.

The ideological underpinnings of the Missouri law appear in other legislation introduced this year. Missouri lawmakers may block state cooperation on federal red-flag gun proposals that remove firearms from those considered a danger to themselves or others. The bill could also cut off federal funding earmarked for crisis intervention programs.

The bills are among several measures meant to insulate states from a "federal government that most folks, particularly in red states, believe is completely out of control," said Missouri state Sen. Bill Eigel,

the Republican sponsor of the anti-red-flag law.

Recent efforts are backed by hard-line gun groups, like Iowa Gun Owners and the Missouri Firearms Coalition, which are connected to far-right activists accused of using no-compromise rhetoric as a fundraising tactic.

The Missouri law has been challenged by the city of St. Louis, and Jackson and St. Louis counties. The U.S. Department of Justice separately sued the state of Missouri to overturn the law. Both cases are ongoing.

Missouri state Rep. Peter Merideth, a Democrat, is this year trying to roll back portions of the Missouri law, after a school shooting killed two people in his St. Louis district in October 2022.

Far From Derailment, Fears of Contamination Spread

BY ELIZABETH FINDELL

Weeks after a train derailment near the Ohio-Pennsylvania border left hazardous chemicals burning from railcars, fears of the potential impacts are being felt in places far from the accident.

Grocery chain Giant Eagle, with hundreds of stores in five states including Ohio and Pennsylvania, pulled bottled water off shelves out of an "abundance of caution" because it was bottled 25 miles from the derailment.

Two high-school basketball teams elsewhere in Ohio forfeited games rather than venturing to the region to play.

More than a thousand miles away, Houston-area politicians rushed to assure residents anxious about firefighting wastewater from the derailment site set for disposal in Texas.

The Feb. 3 derailment occurred when 38 Norfolk Southern Corp. railcars fell off the track in East Palestine, Ohio, some of those with hazardous



An EPA worker taking water samples in East Palestine last week.

materials catching fire. Three days later, the railroad burned vinyl chloride from five tanker cars to avert a potential explosion. The incident has raised concern from residents about the long-term health risks near and around the village of 4,700 people.

The Environmental Protection Agency has said the region's air and drinking water are safe and that monitoring will continue. On Sunday, the EPA said Norfolk Southern could

resume removing hazardous materials from the derailment site, a day after saying it had asked the company to temporarily halt shipments until its plans could undergo a federal review.

Some of the reaction in recent days to potential far-reaching chemical impacts has come amid people raising concerns on social media. On Facebook, a handful of people posted questions about whether Giant Eagle water bottled south of East Palestine was

safe to drink. The grocery chain put out a statement Tuesday that it would pull water products bottled in Salineville, Ohio, about 25 miles from East Palestine, from store shelves.

The company said its water comes from a protected spring not near any affected groundwater sources and that third-party lab testing had revealed no abnormalities.

Marguerite Parker, a 66-year-old retired nurse in Vermilion, Ohio, 100 miles west of the derailment, said she wasn't personally concerned until she saw a news report about Giant Eagle. She checked six gallons of water she had recently purchased and saw they had been bottled three days after the incident.

"Who would think it's going to reach out this far, the problems?" Ms. Parker said. "I'm not using that water."

Concerns about the air around East Palestine led two high-school basketball teams to decline to play games there or elsewhere in Columbiana

County, according to the Ohio High School Athletic Association. Teams from Beachwood and Bristolville forfeited end-of-season tournament games.

In the Houston area, some residents of Deer Park, Texas, posted online that they were rattled to discover firefighting wastewater from the incident was headed to a hazardous waste disposal facility there.

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, an elected executive, said Thursday that her office is researching the transportation and disposal of the water to make sure it meets regulations.

Texas Molecular, the company handling the firefighting wastewater, has been disposing of similar hazardous water for over 40 years, said Jimmy Bracher, vice president of sales. "We are proud that our expertise, developed over many years, can help both the country and the environment recover from this tragic accident," he wrote in an email.

—Catherine Lucey contributed to this article.

U.S. NEWS



Sen. Tim Scott, above, at a county party dinner in West Des Moines, Iowa, on Wednesday. Below, Nikki Haley at a recent town hall.

Iowa Republicans Hoping for A Wide Range of Candidates

By JOHN McCORMICK

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa—National polls on the 2024 Republican presidential primary race can imply it is a two-person contest between an announced candidate, former President Donald Trump, and someone expected to jump in later this year, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

But the reality on the ground is more complex in the state that starts the GOP-nomination balloting in less than a year. Interviews with roughly a dozen Iowa Republicans suggest most are far from decided, with months of campaign visits and millions of dollars in advertising ahead.

Patti Parlee, a 64-year-old accountant from suburban Des Moines, said she was “pretty open” when it comes to the declared and prospective field. She favors Mr. Trump’s policies but said she was “more intrigued by others,” including South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the Senate’s only Black Republican.

Mr. Scott, who is contemplating a bid, appeared in a packed hotel ballroom Wednesday in suburban Des Moines. He pitched an upbeat message that stressed unity over division and a renewal of American hope through conservative ideals.

Campaigning for the 2024 Iowa caucuses accelerated last week with visits from Mr. Scott as well as Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor and United Nations ambassador who formally entered the race recently.

“We’re Iowa, so we go right out of one election and right into another one,” Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds said ahead of her introduction of Mr. Scott at the dinner, in a reference to



RACHEL NIMMEY/BLOOMBERG NEWS

November’s midterm election. “We really are going to help America narrow the field.”

Ms. Haley was the first major declared Republican candidate to travel to Iowa in this caucus cycle. Mr. Trump so far has bypassed Iowa since entering the race in mid-November and instead made appearances in New Hampshire and South Carolina, the second and third states, respectively, on the GOP nominating calendar.

“He will have to spend time here, like everyone else,” said Steve Scheffler, a Republican National Committee member from Iowa who said he doesn’t think the former president is guaranteed a strong showing in the 2024 caucuses.

Mr. Trump finished second in Iowa’s 2016 caucuses, when the last competitive GOP primary was held.

Last week’s Iowa visits follow one the previous week by former Vice President Mike Pence, who is also contemplating a 2024 bid. GOP activity in the state is expected to keep ramping up in the months leading up to the Iowa State Fair in August, a hotbed of political activity the summer be-

fore nomination voting starts. Likely caucus attendees, who turned out in significant numbers at last week’s political events, said they are in no rush to make decisions.

Jim Hubbart, a 73-year-old retired grocer who supported Mr. Trump in the past, said he worries the former president has “a lot of baggage” that could hurt him in a general election. He is also concerned Mr. Trump could run as an independent if he fails to win the GOP nomination.

“I’m afraid the whole thing could go down the toilet,” Mr. Hubbart, a resident in a Des Moines suburb, said of GOP prospects in 2024.

Trump spokesman Steven Cheung didn’t directly respond to the question of an independent candidacy when asked for comment.

“An overwhelming majority of polls show President Trump with significant and dominant leads both nationally and statewide,” he said. “There is no one else who can generate enthusiasm and excitement like” the former president.

Melissa Tangen, a 57-year-old retired health insurance ex-

ecutive, said she is worried too many candidates will enter the race and divide up the opposition to Mr. Trump. “I’m glad there are more than Trump, but I don’t want there to be too many,” said Ms. Tangen, a Republican from suburban Des Moines.

The more candidates in the race, the more likely support may be splintered. That is what happened in the 2016 Republican primary, when Mr. Trump never won more than half of the vote in the first four nominating states.

Small-business owner Brian Schepper, 49, said he liked Messrs. Trump and DeSantis but would rather see the Florida governor stay put. “The United States needs to be run like a business, and Trump did that,” he said.

Others, meanwhile, expressed more eagerness for Mr. DeSantis to enter the 2024 field.

“Trump-DeSantis is my dream ticket,” said Madonna Johnson, 70, who worked in insurance marketing and lives in suburban Des Moines. “He can be with Trump for one term and then take over from there with another two terms and we’d get three terms.”

Mr. DeSantis held a weekend gathering of Republican donors, supporters and elected officials in Florida, a display of strength made just miles from Mr. Trump’s Mar-a-Lago resort. The three-day retreat drew more than 150 people and also was a striking contrast with a small, candlelit dinner fundraiser Mr. Trump headlined at Mar-a-Lago on Thursday.

Democrats in 2024 will hold their first nominating contest in South Carolina.

—Alex Leary contributed to this article.

Manchin Declines To Describe Himself As a Democrat

By DUSTIN VOLZ

WASHINGTON—West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin declined to describe himself as a Democrat during a television interview on Sunday and didn’t say if he is running for re-election, highlighting the challenges facing the party’s thin majority in the Senate ahead of what is widely expected to be a tough mission to retain the chamber in 2024.

“I identify as an American,” said Mr. Manchin when asked repeatedly during a Fox News appearance if he considered himself a Democrat. “I’m an American through and through.”

When asked if he would run for re-election in 2024, Mr. Manchin also demurred, replying: “My main concern is how do we bring this country together? How do we make it work? How do we make Democrats, Republicans become Americans again, and not just party affiliates?”

Mr. Manchin was often the decisive vote for or against Democratic legislation over the past two years. He blocked President Biden’s “Build Back Better” social-spending plans, while ultimately agreeing to a smaller deal dubbed the Inflation Reduction Act that included tax increases on companies and new spending on climate and healthcare. A separate bill demanded by Mr. Manchin to speed up energy permitting has stalled in Congress.

Mr. Manchin also helped block Democrats’ effort to end the 60-vote filibuster threshold that applies to most legislation.

More recently, he indicated he is open to attaching spending cuts to a debt-ceiling increase in talks this year, putting him at odds with Democratic leaders who want the debt limit raised with no conditions attached. Republicans want deep spending cuts.

In the Fox News interview, Mr. Manchin defended votes that helped the party pass some of its top legislative priorities in the last Congress. He said he didn’t regret voting last summer for the Inflation Reduction Act, calling it “the most transformative bill” passed since he has been a lawmaker.

Mr. Manchin has played up his independent streak and played down his membership in the Democratic Party in recent months, while saying he is no hurry to make a decision about his party affiliation.

In an interview with CNN in December, he said: “The bottom line is, I’m not changing how I vote. I’m not changing how I approach a problem,” adding, “I’m on one team. I’m on the American team.”

Democrats and independents who caucus with them have a 51-49 majority in the

Senate. With Republicans now controlling the House, Senate Democrats have focused so far this year on confirming Mr. Biden’s nominees rather than mounting major new legislative efforts.

Mr. Manchin hasn’t said whether he is running for re-election in 2024 in West Virginia, where Republicans are hopeful they can pick up a Senate seat in a red state that voted for Donald Trump over Joe Biden by a 39-point margin in the last presidential election.

Boosting Democratic hopes of hanging on, Sen. Jon Tester said last week that he would seek re-election in 2024 in solidly conservative Montana.

Another Democrat in a state won by Mr. Trump, Ohio’s Sen. Sherrod Brown, has said he would seek another term.

Senate Democrats and aligned independents are expected to defend 23 seats in 2024, compared with 11 for Republicans. Unlike in the House, where members are up for re-election every two years, senators are up every six.

Centrist Sen. Kyrsten Sinema’s decision to register as an independent in December added to Democratic complications to retain their majority, as her state of Arizona

Mr. Manchin was often the decisive vote on Democratic legislation.

is viewed as another important contest next year. Ms. Sinema, like Mr. Manchin, was often a decisive vote in shaping legislation.

Ms. Sinema hasn’t said whether she will run again either, but if she does, it will force national Democrats to choose whether to support her or a Democratic challenger in a potential three-way race with a Republican.



West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin

Two Arizonans Show Push and Pull on GOP Speaker

By ELIZA COLLINS

HEREFORD, Ariz.—Reps. Juan Ciscomani and Eli Crane both claimed Democrat-held seats in the 2022 midterm elections, helping Republicans eke out a small majority in the House. They live close to each other, and their children even attend the same school.

But the first-term Arizona lawmakers are now on opposite sides of an intraparty fight over the leadership of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R, Calif.). Mr. Ciscomani has embraced Mr. McCarthy, while Mr. Crane was the only freshman Republican not to vote for him in January’s marathon balloting for speaker and believes conservatives should use their leverage to challenge GOP leaders.

Mr. Crane, 43, a tattooed veteran Navy SEAL whose business of bottle openers made from ammunition was featured on “Shark Tank,” joined the conservative Freedom Caucus. Mr. Ciscomani, 40, a Mexico-born immigrant who advised Arizona’s former GOP governor, has cast himself as a pro-business Republican open to deals with Democrats.

The split among two Arizona congressmen carries broader

implications for the GOP.

With Republicans’ narrow advantage, Mr. McCarthy needs to keep almost all Republicans on board to pass legislation on core items such as immigration, while also keeping a united front headed into contentious talks later this year with Democrats on federal spending and raising the country’s borrowing limit. Mr. McCarthy will need the votes of all but four Republican members and is counting on allies such as Mr. Ciscomani as well as skeptics such as Mr. Crane to pass bills without Democratic support. “I believe in his vision” Mr. Ciscomani said. “He can and has been bringing our caucus together.”

Mr. Crane said each member now has the power to shape or stop legislation because of the GOP’s weaker-than-expected midterm results. Not getting a “red wave” of Republican wins in the House “turned out to be a blessing in disguise,” he said.

Mr. McCarthy recently traveled to Mr. Ciscomani’s district to highlight border issues and criticize the Biden administration for what Republicans say has been lax enforcement. Ian Sams, a spokesman for the White House, said ahead of the visit that administration policies are now serving to de-



BILL CLARK/CO ROLL CALL/ZUMA PRESS

New Republican congressmen Eli Crane, left, and Juan Ciscomani take different tacks on the speaker.

crease border-crossing numbers and accused Republicans of partisan stunts.

Mr. McCarthy was joined by Mr. Ciscomani as well as three other GOP lawmakers from competitive districts around the country. Mr. Crane didn’t attend and said he wasn’t invited, instead meeting with constituents in his district.

“We only had a number of seats of the helicopter,” Mr. McCarthy said in explaining Mr.

Crane’s absence at the border. He said there were no hard feelings between the two.

Mr. McCarthy will return to Washington this week with Republicans’ legislative plans still unsettled, which Democrats have cast as a sign of continued disunity. In the speaker fight, holdouts secured concessions including a commitment to bring up legislation that would bolster border security and limit asylum. But so far, the



LILIANA SALGADO/REUTERS

is the only House freshman of either party chosen as a member of the Appropriations Committee, which allocates government spending. Mr. Ciscomani said he and Mr. Crane were both conservative Republicans with the same goals. “Obviously we may have different methods to get there sometimes, but there’s no animosity between us at all,” he said.

Mr. Crane took a different approach. He was the only freshman Republican to never vote for Mr. McCarthy. After 14 rounds of voting no, six Republicans including Mr. Crane voted “present” in the 15th round to let Mr. McCarthy secure the speakership in exchange for commitments to boost the right flank’s agenda.

Two days after Mr. Ciscomani’s border trip, Mr. Crane joined several prominent Arizona conservatives at a pro-gun rally in Phoenix, including fellow Arizona congressmen and McCarthy critics Paul Gosar and Andy Biggs. Mr. Crane says his political beliefs largely align with the two lawmakers.

Mr. Crane said in an interview that he expected the debt ceiling to be “the next big battle” within the party.

—Alicia Caldwell contributed to this article.

U.S. NEWS

New Tack on Kids' Diets: Fewer Limits on Sweets

By SARAH TOY

Crystal Karges celebrated her youngest daughter's 5th birthday last month with a gooey chocolate cake covered in white frosting and rainbow sprinkles. The next morning, she served her five children the leftover slices at breakfast alongside fruit, eggs, sausage and milk.

Ms. Karges is among parents, dietitians and doctors who advocate giving kids more freedom over what they eat including, at times, high-sugar, high-fat and highly processed foods. They said the approach helps children develop healthy dietary habits and protects against disordered eating—or dysfunctional eating behaviors—which

affect more than 20% of children globally, according to a recent meta-analysis in the journal JAMA Pediatrics.

"We are trying to control our kids when in reality, they need autonomy," Ms. Karges, who is a dietitian in San Diego, said.

Ms. Karges and her peers are pushing back against guidance from some pediatricians and public-health officials that they say is too prescriptive and risks fostering harmful eating habits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein, while limiting the calories kids get from solid fats, added sugars and sodium. The American Academy of Pediatrics in Janu-

ary recommended that physicians offer weight-loss drugs to children with obesity, which is linked to many health problems in early life and adulthood.

"The reality is that weight is highly associated with a number of co-morbidities. Weight loss can improve them," said Sarah Hampl, a lead author of the guidelines and a pediatrician at Children's Mercy Kansas City in Missouri.

About a fifth of children in the U.S. are obese, according to the CDC. The rate of increase in body-mass index, a screening tool doctors use to measure excess fat, more than doubled among kids during the pandemic. Many children aren't eating enough vegetables and

fruit and have sugary drinks regularly, according to the CDC. Diets high in sugar and trans-and-saturated fats contribute to obesity, research has shown, which is linked to cardiovascular problems, diabetes and other conditions.

"Sometimes kids need some external help in saying, 'OK, you know, that's probably enough,'" said Claudia Fox, a pediatrician and co-director of the Center for Pediatric Obesity Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

But restricting appetizing foods has been linked in some studies to weight gain and higher body-mass index in kids. Some researchers think children with restrictive diets don't de-

velop the ability to recognize hunger and satiety, the state of feeling full. They often eat in the absence of hunger, similar to overweight adults, because those foods become a forbidden temptation.

Proponents of more-permissive eating said parents shouldn't consider weight when deciding what to feed their children. "It's incredibly traumatic for a child to be given the information that because of their body size or the way they look, or their weight, they can't be trusted with food," said Summer Brooks, a dietitian and co-author of "How to Raise an Intuitive Eater: Raising the Next Generation with Food and Body Confidence."

Diana Rice, a dietitian in Oklahoma City, said that eventually, even sweets-loving children will tire of junk food and gravitate toward fruits and vegetables, she said.

"We have to trust children to meet their biological needs," Ms. Rice said.

That doesn't mean parents should give into kids' every whim, she said. Parents should take the lead in planning, preparing and serving meals but incorporate children's preferences, she said. Ms. Rice said she tells clients to allow kids to eat as much as they want at a meal and encourages parents with kids fixated on sweets to serve dessert alongside main meals rather than afterward.

'Dilbert' Axed After Racist Rant by Cartoonist

By GINGER ADAMS OTIS

Multiple newspapers around the U.S. dropped Scott Adams's long-running "Dilbert" comic strip after the cartoonist called Black Americans a "hate group" in a racist rant he posted online.

The USA Today Network, Cleveland's Plain Dealer, the San Antonio Express-News, the Washington Post and other publications all said they would stop publishing "Dilbert," which has poked fun at corporate drudgery for decades.

Mr. Adams, 65 years old, on Saturday declined to comment and said he isn't doing interviews.

The former financial manager turned cartoonist made his comments on Wednesday in response to a Rasmussen Poll that said a small majority of Black Americans agreed with the statement "It's OK to be White."

Mr. Adams said, among other things, that white people should stay away from Black Americans.

"If nearly half of all Blacks are not OK with white people ... that's a hate group," Mr. Ad-

Scott Adams also called the U.S. 'a thoroughly racist society.'

ams said at one point in the video. "I don't want to have anything to do with them. And I would say, based on the current way things are going, the best advice I would give to white people is to get the hell away from Black people ... because there is no fixing this."

Soon thereafter, newspapers began announcing they were dropping "Dilbert."

On Friday, Chris Quinn, the vice president of content for Advance Ohio, which publishes the Plain Dealer, said the decision wasn't difficult. "We are not a home for those who espouse racism. We certainly do not want to provide them with financial support," Mr. Quinn wrote.

Gannett Co. also said that the USA Today Network, which includes more than 200 newspapers, had dropped the strip. "Recent discriminatory comments by the creator, Scott Adams, have influenced our decision to discontinue publishing his comic. While we respect and encourage free speech, his views do not align with our editorial or business values as an organization," the statement said.

Similar statements came from the San Antonio Express-News, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Los Angeles Times on Saturday.

Mr. Adams addressed the outrage several times. In a post on Friday, he called the U.S. "a thoroughly racist society" and said people had misunderstood the context of his remarks. "I'm accepting criticism from anyone who has seen the full context here. The rest of you are in a fake news bubble but I trust you suspected that," he posted on Twitter Sunday.



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U.S. NEWS

Special Counsel Investigation Of Trump Nears Next Phase

WASHINGTON—The special counsel investigating former President Donald Trump appears to have reached the advanced stages of his sweeping inquiry after a flurry of aggressive steps in recent weeks, some of which have set the stage for court fights that could take months to resolve.

By C. Ryan Barber,
Sadie Gurman and
Aruna Viswanatha

In recent days, special counsel Jack Smith's office asked a federal judge to override Mr. Trump's assertion of executive privilege to shield former Vice President Mike Pence from testifying before a grand jury about the former president's efforts to stay in office after his 2020 election loss, people familiar with the effort said. Mr. Pence has vowed to mount a challenge to the subpoena and take it as far as the Supreme Court.

Mr. Pence's subpoena followed a similar demand for

former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows to produce documents and testify before a grand jury as part of the investigation into efforts to keep Mr. Trump in power. Just as he did with Mr. Pence, Mr. Trump has asserted executive privilege with Mr. Meadows in connection with his subpoena.

"In a typical case, these top-level, inner-circle people are some of the last people you'd expect to be subpoenaed," said Randall Eliason, a former public-corruption prosecutor who now teaches criminal law at George Washington University.

"You don't talk to them at the beginning of the investigation, because you don't know enough yet. Just looking at that, when I see subpoenas to the highest-level inner-circle people, that makes me think they're close to wrapping up," he added.

A spokesman for the special counsel's office declined to comment. A spokesman for

Mr. Trump didn't respond to a request for comment.

It isn't clear when or even whether the special counsel's activity will result in indictments. Even if no charges are brought, Mr. Smith is expected to outline his findings in a final report. Questions directed at some of those testifying have been wide-ranging, leading some of them to come away thinking Mr. Smith's team was more interested in gathering details for a report rather than for any specific indictment, people familiar with questioning said.

Beyond his scrutiny of Mr. Trump's efforts to cling to power, Mr. Smith is separately examining the handling of classified records at the former president's South Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago.

Last month, at least three lawyers for Mr. Trump appeared before a grand jury in the investigation into the cache of classified documents kept at the residence. Among them was Evan Corcoran, a

lawyer who handled Mr. Trump's responses to government requests for the return of documents.

A lawyer for Mr. Trump, Timothy Parlatore, said: "The only reason to focus on the lawyers is where you don't have a solid underlying case."

Ahead of his grand-jury appearance in January, Mr. Corcoran retained a lawyer, Michael Levy, who previously represented current and former Enron executives during the investigation into the company's collapse. Messrs. Corcoran and Levy worked together in the 1990s as federal prosecutors in Washington.

After Mr. Corcoran cited attorney-client privilege in declining to answer some questions before the grand jury, prosecutors asked Judge Howell to invoke the crime-fraud exception to bypass that privilege and extract more testimony.

The exception applies in instances where there is reason to believe legal advice has



Special counsel Jack Smith at a war-crimes tribunal in 2020.

been used in furtherance of a crime. The move to invoke the crime-fraud exception suggests that federal prosecutors suspect that Mr. Trump or his allies used Mr. Corcoran's services in such a way.

Mr. Corcoran's grand-jury testimony followed an appearance by another Trump lawyer, Christina Bobb, who signed a statement in June attesting that all documents requested by a subpoena had been turned over to the Justice Department. Two months after

that sworn statement, on Aug. 8, a court-authorized FBI search uncovered a trove of additional materials bearing classified markings.

In an autumn interview with federal investigators, Ms. Bobb said Mr. Corcoran assured her that he conducted a thorough search of Mar-a-Lago before he asked her to certify that all records requested by a subpoena had been returned. The Wall Street Journal reported.

Ms. Bobb didn't respond to a request for comment.

FROM PAGE ONE

DOE Ties Lab Leak To Covid

Continued from Page One

The FBI previously came to the conclusion that the pandemic was likely the result of a lab leak in 2021 with "moderate confidence" and still holds to this view.

The FBI employs a cadre of microbiologists, immunologists and other scientists and is supported by the National Bioforensic Analysis Center, which was established at Fort Detrick, Md., in 2004 to analyze anthrax and other possible biological threats.

Clashing opinions

U.S. officials declined to give details on the fresh intelligence and analysis that led the Energy Department to change its position. They added that while the Energy Department and the FBI each say an unintended lab leak is most likely, they arrived at those conclusions for different reasons.

The updated document underscores how intelligence officials are still putting together the pieces on how Covid-19 emerged. More than one million Americans have died in the pandemic that began more



The Wuhan Institute of Virology, which is at the center of China's coronavirus research, is also in the city where the pandemic emerged.

than three years ago.

The National Intelligence Council, which conducts long-term strategic analysis, and four agencies, which officials declined to identify, still assess with "low confidence" that the virus came about through natural transmission from an infected animal, according to the updated report.

The Central Intelligence

Agency and another agency that officials wouldn't name remain undecided between the lab-leak and natural-transmission theories, the people who have read the classified report said.

Despite the agencies' differing analyses, the update reaffirmed an existing consensus between them that Covid-19 wasn't the result of a Chinese biological-weapons program, the people who have read the classified report said.

A senior U.S. intelligence official confirmed that the intelligence community had conducted the update, whose existence hasn't previously been reported. This official said that it was done in light of new intelligence, further study of academic literature and consultation with experts outside government.

The update, which is less than five pages, wasn't requested by Congress. But lawmakers, particularly House and Senate Republicans, are pursuing their own investigations into the origins of the pandemic and are pressing the Biden administration and the intelligence community for more information.

Officials didn't say if an unclassified version of the update would be issued.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan declined to confirm or deny The Wall Street Journal's reporting during an appearance Sunday on CNN. Mr. Sullivan said President Biden had repeatedly directed every part of the intelligence community to invest in trying to discern as much as possible about the origins of the pandemic.

"President Biden specifically requested that the national labs, which are part of the Energy Department, be brought into this assessment because he wants to put every tool at use to be able to figure out what happened here," Mr. Sullivan said.

There are a "variety of views in the intelligence community," Mr. Sullivan said. "A number of them have said

they just don't have enough information."

Asked about the Energy Department's assessment, Sen. Dan Sullivan (R., Alaska) said Sunday on NBC that Congress needed to hold extensive hearings concerning the origins of the pandemic, adding that China has sought to intimidate other countries from questioning whether the virus emerged naturally. "This is a country that has no problem coming out and lying to the world," he said.

The Covid-19 virus first circulated in Wuhan, China, no later than November 2019, according to the U.S. 2021 intelligence report. The pandemic's origin has been the subject of vigorous debate among academics, intelligence experts and lawmakers.

Four other agencies and an intelligence panel assess the virus spread naturally.

The emergence of the pandemic heightened tensions between the U.S. and China, which U.S. officials alleged was withholding information about the outbreak. It also led to a spirited and at times partisan debate in the U.S. about its origin. At first, the dominant view was that the virus likely arose naturally when a human was infected by an animal, as had happened in the past. But as time elapsed and no animal host was found, there has been greater focus on coronavirus research in Wuhan and the potential for an accidental laboratory leak.

David Relman, a Stanford University microbiologist who has argued for a dispassionate investigation into the pandemic's beginnings, welcomed word of the updated findings.

"Kudos to those who are willing to set aside their preconceptions and objectively

re-examine what we know and don't know about Covid origins," said Dr. Relman, who has served on several federal scientific-advisory boards. "My plea is that we not accept an incomplete answer or give up because of political expediency."

The FBI declined to comment.

China, which has placed limits on investigations by the World Health Organization, has disputed that the virus could have leaked from one of its labs and has suggested it emerged outside China.

The Chinese government didn't respond to requests for comment about whether there has been any change in its views on the origins of Covid-19.

Some scientists argue that the virus probably emerged naturally and leapt from an animal to a human, the same pathway for outbreaks of previously unknown pathogens.

Intelligence analysts who have supported that view give weight to "the precedent of past novel infectious disease outbreaks having zoonotic origins," the flourishing trade in a diverse set of animals that are susceptible to such infections, and their conclusion that Chinese officials didn't have foreknowledge of the virus, the 2021 report said.

Yet no confirmed animal source for Covid-19 has been identified. The lack of an animal source, and the fact that Wuhan is the center of China's extensive coronavirus research, has led some scientists and U.S. officials to argue that a lab leak is the best explanation for the pandemic's beginning.

U.S. State Department cables written in 2018 and internal Chinese documents show that there were persistent concerns about China's bio-safety procedures, which have been cited by proponents of the lab-leak hypothesis.

Wuhan is home to an array of laboratories, many of which were built or expanded as a re-

sult of China's traumatic experience with the initial severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, epidemic beginning in 2002. They include campuses of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, which produces vaccines.

An outbreak at a seafood market in Wuhan had initially been thought to be the source of the virus, but some scientists and Chinese public-health officials now see it as an example of community spread rather than the place where the first human infection occurred, the 2021 intelligence community report said.

In May 2021, Mr. Biden, a Democrat, told the intelligence community to step up its efforts to investigate the origins of Covid-19 and directed that the review draw on work by the U.S.'s national laboratories and other agencies. Congress, he said, would be kept informed of that effort.

The October 2021 report said that there was a consensus that Covid-19 wasn't the result of a Chinese biological-weapons program. But it didn't settle the debate over whether it resulted from a lab leak or came from an animal, saying that more information was needed from the Chinese authorities.

Sick researchers

The U.S. intelligence community is made up of 18 agencies, including offices at the Energy, State and Treasury departments. Eight of them participated in the Covid-origins review, along with the National Intelligence Council.

Before that report, the Energy Department's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory prepared a study in May 2020 concluding that a lab-leak hypothesis was plausible and deserved further investigation.

The debate over whether Covid-19 might have escaped from a laboratory has been fueled by U.S. intelligence that three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick enough in November 2019 that they sought hospital care.

A House Intelligence Committee report concluded last year that this disclosure didn't strengthen either the lab-leak or the natural-origin theory as the researchers might have become sick with a seasonal flu. But some former U.S. officials said the sick researchers were involved in coronavirus research.

Lawmakers have sought to find out more about why the FBI assesses a lab leak was likely. In an Aug. 1 letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray, Sen. Roger Marshall, a Kansas Republican, requested that the FBI share the records of its investigation and asked if the bureau had briefed Mr. Biden on its findings.

In a Nov. 18 letter, FBI Assistant Director Jill Tyson said the agency couldn't share those details because of Justice Department policy on preserving "the integrity of ongoing investigations."

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WORLD NEWS

Kyiv Counters Wagner's Claims of Gains

Russian forces have sought to surround Bakhmut, site of some of war's fiercest battles

By MATTHEW LUXMOORE

Kyiv countered Russian claims to have taken further territory around Bakhmut as Russia seeks to surround the eastern city, which Ukraine's military has defended against onslaughts for months.

The Wagner Group paramilitary force fighting alongside Russia's regular army in Ukraine on Saturday said it had secured control of Yahidne to the northwest of Bakhmut. The press service of Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin posted an image appearing to show Wagner fighters beside a sign marking the entrance to the village, and Mr. Prigozhin said the village had been taken.

On Sunday morning, the General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces appeared to deny the claims, without specifically commenting on the photograph posted by Wagner. It named Yahidne as one of six settlements, including Bakhmut, where Russia carried out unsuccessful offensives over the past 24 hours.

Control of Yahidne by Russia would put further pressure on Ukrainian forces defending Bakhmut in the face of a gradual Russian advance aimed at surrounding the city from the north, south and east, at a heavy cost to its military and Wagner's army of convict-recruits and mercenaries.

Ukrainian soldiers in the city, which is pounded daily by Russian artillery and where some 5,000 civilians still remain, spend much of their time seeking shelter in basements in between missions to man positions in the eastern districts, just a few hundred meters from Russian troops. Block-to-block combat is commonplace, with both sides suffering heavy casualties in the process.

Ukrainian and Western officials had warned of a major



A woman walked on Sunday through wintry conditions near Bakhmut, the eastern Ukrainian city that Russian forces have tried to capture for months.

Russian offensive in the east during the buildup to the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine last week, but no major Russian breakthrough materialized. Instead, Ukraine has continued to probe Russian positions and reinforce its lines of defense as it urges the West to provide more arms and prepares for its own offensive in the spring.

Maj. Gen. Vadym Skibitsky, deputy head of Ukraine's military intelligence, said in an interview with German media on Sunday that a Ukrainian spring offensive will likely include an attempt to push into Russian-held territory in the south, slicing through a land bridge that Russia carved out of Ukraine early in the war.

Maj. Gen. Skibitsky said the campaign would likely involve

Ukrainian strikes on ammunition warehouses inside Russian territory, including in Belgorod region, from where many attacks on Ukraine are launched. "We will only stop when we bring our country back to the borders of 1991," he said, referring to the year the Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine gained independence.

A southward thrust by Ukraine, threatening territory Russia has shored up with several lines of fortifications, would put pressure on Russia's control of Crimea, the peninsula it annexed from Ukraine in 2014 and has since used as a staging ground for attacks on Ukraine. Ukraine's military on Sunday said Russia was building further fortifications in Crimea, bringing in dozens of conscripts to carry out the work.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has insisted from the outset of the war that Ukraine won't stop fighting until it regains all the land it has lost to Russia since 2014. He reiterated that on Sunday in a social-media post marking the ninth anniversary of the start of Russia's military intervention in Crimea.

"By returning Crimea, we will restore peace," he said. "This is our land. Our people. Our history. We will return the Ukrainian flag to every corner of Ukraine."

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Belarus President Plans to Visit China

Alexander Lukashenko, the leader of staunch Russian ally Belarus, is expected to visit China this week for talks with top officials in Beijing between Feb. 28 and March 3.

The trip comes amid a flurry of diplomacy around the anniversary of the Ukraine war. China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, visited Russia this week, around the same time as President Biden made a surprise trip to Kyiv.

The visits also come as tension grows over the possibility of increased Chinese involvement in the war. U.S. offi-

cial say China is considering supplying Moscow with artillery, drones and possibly other weapons to help Russian forces stave off an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive. Beijing has responded by saying the U.S. and its allies are the biggest sources of weapons flowing to the battlefield.

Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national-security adviser, said on Sunday during an appearance on CNN that the U.S. had made clear to Beijing through private, high-level communication channels that there would be severe consequences if China goes through with providing arms to Russia. He declined to share what those consequences would be.

—Dustin Volz

Russians Flock to Argentina

Continued from Page One

ing a baby any day now. "It's a ticket for the whole family to be safe from the government in Russia," she said, referring to Moscow's increasing crackdown on dissent.

Argentine migration data show that as of mid-February, nearly 11,000 Russian women and about 11,400 men have arrived here since the beginning of 2022. There is no precise data on how many of the Russian women were pregnant, though Argentine migration and hospital officials said increasing numbers are arriving in the third trimester of pregnancy. Russians don't need a visa to enter Argentina.

With the temporary residency, parents can begin the process to gain citizenship, migration authorities said. An Argentine passport can be obtained in as little as two years, immigration lawyers and migration officials said, and gives the holder the ability to travel visa-free to Europe, which Russians can't do.

"You wait only two years for the whole family to get a passport, it's crazy," said Asya Davydova, 40, who arrived in December with her then-boyfriend and is expecting a baby in May. "We chose Argentina because it was the easiest country for my baby to get another passport."

Ms. Davydova and other new arrivals said they feel welcomed. Argentina has historically been a destination for emigrants from Europe and more recently from Bolivia, Paraguay and Venezuela.

Since the war started, hundreds of thousands of Russians, many of them young professionals, have fled to neighboring nations and distant continents. In Argentina, Florencia Carignano, director of migration for the government, told a group of foreign reporters in a recorded briefing that many new arrivals are women in advanced stages of pregnancy.

"You can see it in the flights that have been coming. More



Polina Scheiner, from Moscow, plans to give birth in Buenos Aires.

and more pregnant Russians arriving," she said. In January, more than 4,500 Russians arrived in Argentina, compared with just over 1,000 in the same year-earlier month.

Many take the daily Ethiopian Airlines flight that originates in Moscow, stopping in Addis Ababa and São Paulo before landing in Buenos Aires—considered a relatively inexpensive route at around \$2,500. They usually buy a round-trip ticket but don't use the return.

On Feb. 9, 33 young Russians in advanced stages of pregnancy arrived on that flight, Ms. Carignano told a local radio station. Two days later, another 83 passengers, 16 of them pregnant Russian women, arrived via the same route, she said.

The Russian Embassy in Argentina didn't respond to requests for comment.

One couple in their 30s arrived earlier this month and expect a baby in April. The two said they didn't want to raise a child in Russia, but being in Argentina hasn't been easy. They don't speak Spanish, and they have been living in an Airbnb rental. The muggy heat of Buenos Aires this time of year was also a shock.

"I cried because I wasn't just leaving the country, but leaving my old life and beginning a new life halfway around the world," the woman said.

The Buenos Aires Health Ministry said at its busiest public hospital, the Fernández Hospital, 85 of the 985 births last year, or 8.6%, were to Russian women. This year through Feb. 14, 38 of the 168 births, or 22.6%, have been babies born to Russian women. At the private Finochietto Hospital, doctors delivered 50 Russian babies in

December of the total 180 births recorded, said Dr. Guido Manrique, chief of obstetrics.

"Since the middle of 2022, the number of pregnant Russians has been growing," he said.

Those who want to come to Argentina can pay for advice by contracting agencies like RuArgentina, which on its website calls Argentina "the best country to give birth."

Run by Kirill Makoveev, a Russian who has been living in Buenos Aires for eight years, RuArgentina serves affluent Russians willing to pay up to \$15,000 for advice on giving birth and settling in Argentina. "We are full with clients until May," Mr. Makoveev said.

Most Russians, though, seem to have found out about Argentina through the Telegram messaging app. Argentina's runaway inflation and its troubled economic history haven't stifled interest.

For some Russian men, coming to Argentina was an easy decision in the face of a mobilization as the Kremlin's military sought to throw more soldiers into the fighting in Ukraine. "We came mostly to get away from the war because I was at the risk of getting drafted and we don't support this terrible aggression," said Alexander Nechaev, 28.

Ms. Scheiner and her husband, for now, have settled in a small apartment. He works remotely as a financial analyst. Though she misses family back in Russia, Ms. Scheiner said she has felt at home.

"I'm in a country where people get together, where they sing, dance in the street," she said. "For me, Argentina is a real pleasure. It's freedom."

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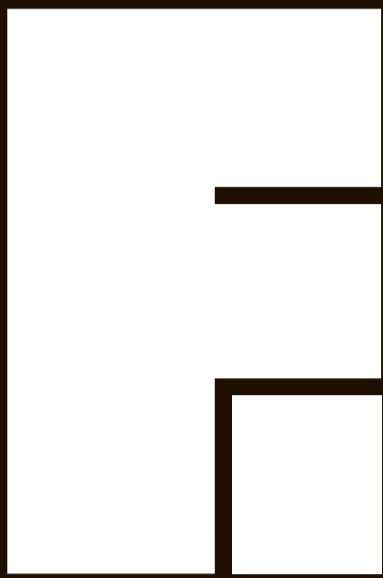
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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
TRUST YOUR DECISIONS

FROM PAGE ONE

Ordering Black Coffee Isn't Quick

Continued from Page One

Hassles over getting black coffee aren't unique to Starbucks, which Mr. Wicker patronizes, but afflict many chains offering complicated, customizable brews, according to black-coffee enthusiasts.

Asked about Starbucks Corp.'s black-coffee practices, a company spokesman referred to a recent earnings call in which executives said that new equipment is increasing efficiency and improving service times.

sauce double shot check engine oat milk diet coke macchiato with light triangle ice cubes," he vented on Twitter. Mr. Muslih said he still goes to Starbucks.

said, since he sometimes gets stuck behind long lines of cars in the drive-through, which he attributes to complex drinks that take time to construct.

bucks estimates that each year it sells about \$1 billion of coffee drinks with "modifiers" such as syrups and sauces, a figure that has doubled since 2019.

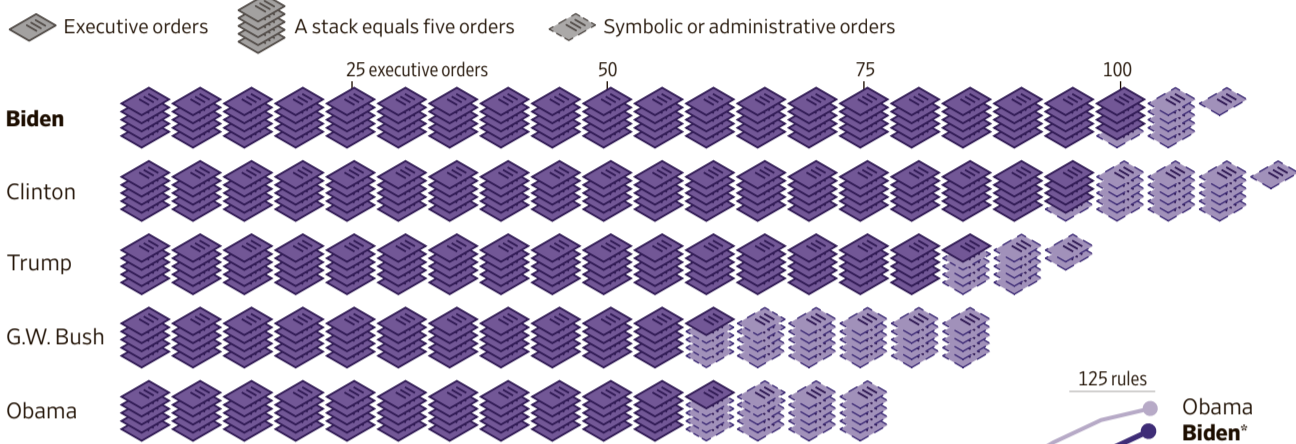
And many people don't seem to know what black coffee is, baristas said. Some customers will order black coffee, they said, and later complain it contained no sugar or cream.

Court Looks At Powers In Aid Case

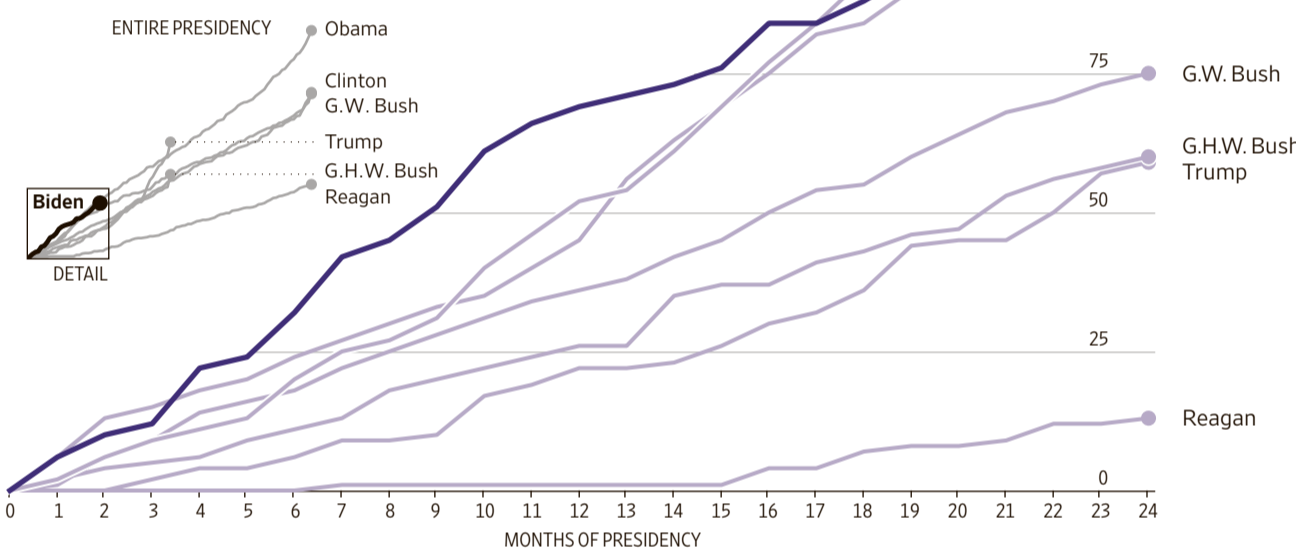
Continued from Page One

heavily on executive actions now that Republicans control the House of Representatives. That strategy is meeting resistance from the Supreme Court, where a 6-3 conservative majority that Mr. Trump helped install has repeatedly found the Biden administration overstepping its authority.

Executive orders in president's first two years in office



Cumulative economically significant final rules, in president's first two years in office



Data as of February 17. Note: Rules issued by executive branch agencies that meet the federal definition for economically significant, including by having an effect on the economy of \$100 million or more. The \$100 million figure isn't adjusted for inflation.

whether he had the power to put in place a sweeping forgiveness plan without congressional action. "I don't think I have the authority to do it by signing with a pen," he said during a CNN town hall in 2021.

that ought to belong to Congress," Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said in an interview. The official helped lead a group of Republican-leaning states in filing a friend-of-the-court brief against the debt-relief plan.

peals. That court issued an injunction to stop the program from going into effect, following a similar order from a federal district judge in Fort Worth, Texas, who acted on the case filed by individuals.

found overreach when the government took steps that limited marriage rights for LGBT couples, while their conservative colleagues have affirmed broad powers the executive asserted to fight terrorism.

Pandemic origins

Tuesday's cases—one filed by a group of Republican state officials, the other by individuals—stem from the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, when Congress and the Trump administration sought to mitigate damage to the economy.

In August, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona invoked the Heroes Act to cover permanent forgiveness of up to \$10,000 for borrowers who earn less than \$125,000 a year, with an additional \$10,000 of relief for those who held Pell Grants, which typically are awarded to the neediest students.

Republicans and some Democrats said the program was unfair to people who didn't go to college, didn't take out student loans or already paid them back. "They campaigned on free college," said Rep. Virginia Foxx (R., N.C.), the chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Founding document

The cases illustrate warring beliefs over the separation of powers laid out in the Constitution. The Supreme Court's conservative justices see the Constitution as imposing rigid constraints on government branches, with the framers placing structural obstacles to make sure the arbitrary and tyrannical powers King George III and the British Parliament exercised over the colonies were never revived.

But the high court's current majority has made clear its reservations about liberal doctrines in place since the 1930s, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt won a series of landmark court decisions affirming New Deal initiatives that put the federal government at the tiller of a nationwide economy.

The 2003 law authorizes the secretary of education to waive or modify provisions of student-aid programs as he or she deems necessary in connection with a national emergency so borrowers don't lose ground economically.

They dispute that the language in the Heroes Act authorizes the secretary of education to write billions of dollars off the Treasury's books, and said it doesn't allow the secretary to put nearly every borrower in a better position by reducing or eliminating their principal balances.

Neither court faction has been absolutist on the issue. In past years, liberal justices have found overreach when the government took steps that limited marriage rights for LGBT couples, while their conservative colleagues have affirmed broad powers the executive asserted to fight terrorism.



President Biden spoke about student-debt relief at Delaware State University in Dover in October.

The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks accelerated the concentration of executive power, and presidents increasingly imposed major policy changes without congressional signoff. Mr. Bush asserted national security powers to establish military tribunals to prosecute enemy combatants and secretly expand surveillance programs.

—Gabriel T. Rubin contributed to this article.

Unloved, Unwanted and Unavoidable



No one wants to buy a printer, but everyone needs to print. Holdouts confront the stress of printerless life.

F. MARTIN RAINING/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL; STYLING BY ELENA SCOTT



**WORK
& LIFE**
RACHEL
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The apartment building had a 24-hour gym, a swimming pool flanked by grills and something called the Sky Lounge on the 12th floor, with an expansive view of downtown Minneapolis.

But the amenity that Olga Lobasenko and her husband couldn't get out of their minds as they sized up potential apartments last year was situated in the lobby, illuminated by the glow of a fireplace. People sometimes gathered around it.

It was a printer. "We just assumed it would have to be something you'd struggle to find for your entire life," says Ms. Lobasenko, 33 years old.

They moved in and now feel the sweet relief of being able to print whenever they want, without having to beg, borrow or curse a dried-out ink cartridge.

"This one," Ms. Lobasenko says of the printer, "is somebody else's problem."



When only paper will do
Much of the world has moved on from hard copies. We have our

phones and our tablets, scannable QR codes and the DocuSign app. And yet, it comes for all of us eventually—the need to print, and print now.

"When you need it, you need it," says Leigh Stringer, who works at architecture firm Perkins&Will helping companies design sustainable offices.

How much of our lives have we given to the mad dash of trying to find a working printer? Hybrid schedules mean we're in the office, with its gleaming fleet of equipment, only a few times a

**Even in a world of
cellphones, tablets and
QR codes, the need to
print at times remains.**

week. So too, it seems, is the IT department, which has yet to fix that combination printer-scanner-fax closest to your desk. Sure, we could buy our own for home—or replace the mysteriously ailing one languishing in the cabinet—but why invest in a hulking piece of hardware when you're living in a nearly paperless world?

Until you realize that that return label or your kid's homework assignment isn't going to print itself.

"Paper doesn't go away," says Keith Kmetz, an analyst who tracks the printing market for re-

search firm International Data Corp. Printer sales have mostly been declining since 2007, the year the first iPhone was released. Still, IDC forecasts more than 17 million printers will be sold in the U.S. this year.



Agony and opportunity

Not that owning a printer is any guarantee you'll be able to print. In an attempt to produce two sheets—pages one and five of a tax form—Chella Diaz of Orange, Calif., unknowingly embarked on a three-hour odyssey last summer. Her computer wouldn't connect to her printer. On to Staples, where all three printers were labeled with (handwritten) "out of order" signs. She got into her car, screamed, listened to smooth jazz for five minutes and continued on to FedEx. There, her flash drive wasn't showing any documents.

"You begin to doubt yourself," she says. Eventually, she was able to locate the documents and successfully print them, though she ended up paying for thick résumé paper someone had fed into the tray. By that point, she didn't care. When it was all over, she took herself to the taco place across the parking lot, where she enjoyed a bean burrito, french fries and some cathartic journaling.

Where there's a problem,

there's a business opportunity. Tyler Eshleman was wandering through a dorm at Michigan's Grand Valley State University his freshman year when he came across two intrepid roommates. They'd purchased a color printer and were charging students to print out term papers, reading assignments, even entire textbooks.

They weren't doing people's homework. Just printing.

"I wish I would have gotten in on something like that," Mr. Eshleman says, noting the pair was turning a profit.

Now 21 and living in Troy, Mich., Mr. Eshleman is mostly envisioning a printer-free life for himself, like many young people I talked to.

"Some point, you buy an apartment, house, car, second house or a boat. Then maybe you think about buying a printer," he reasons.



The power of being the printer person

Printing at the office comes with its own struggles. Terri Barris of Ontario, Canada, once found herself sending off confidential tax documents, including her pay information, to...where exactly?

The list of printers to choose from, some in offices hours away, were named by nonsensical strings of letters and numbers. After

guessing wrong, she clicked cancel, only to be confronted with "this spinning wheel of death," she says. "You're starting to sweat and your heart is palpitating."

After a year of mounting printing difficulties, her manager bequeathed his personal printer to her. She loved it. So did everyone else. Her colleagues would line up at her door, bearing chocolate chip cookies and candy, wondering if she could print their documents.

"There's this sense of power," Ms. Barris says.

Some printer hookups can reach their limit. The day after 38-year-old Theresa Paolo coached her dad through printing out five separate forms for her business as a romance novelist on his home printer, there was a knock at the door of her Long Island, N.Y., house. There was her dad, holding a brand new printer. She felt conflicted.

"It was super sweet of him to take the time to go to the store, do what I never wanted to do and pick out a printer," she says. And yet, she dreaded having to install it, house it and tend to its ink and paper needs. "Where the heck am I going to put this big hunk of plastic?"

It would be a year before she even opened the box. The Brother MFC-J480DW, now set up, is mostly something she has to dust every week.

"I feel too guilty to get rid of it," she says. "I have it now. I have it for life."

By ASHLEA EBELING

IT MAY BE 2023, but taxpayers still have time to make last-minute retirement contributions that could lower their 2022 tax bill.

While most tax-saving moves must be done by Dec. 31 to count for that year's return, certain retirement maneuvers related to traditional and Roth IRAs can be done several months into the next year. For these transactions, tax year 2022 actually doesn't end until April 18, 2023—or even later for some.

These contributions offer the double benefit of boosting future retirement savings and potentially reducing present tax burdens, tax advisers say. The ability to deduct a contribution to a traditional IRA depends on the saver's income and other factors, such as whether the taxpayer is covered by a 401(k) or other workplace retirement plan.

For millions of taxpayers, the savings can be up to thousands of dollars a year. A big lump-sum payment into a retirement account is eligible for a full or partial tax deduction. And for those taxpayers who don't qualify for a tax break, they still benefit from the April deadline as a way to boost their retirement savings.

Among the many ways Americans can benefit, a single taxpayer with no workplace plan can deduct the full amount of an IRA contribution. A single taxpayer with a workplace plan gets a full deduction with an adjusted gross income of \$68,000 or less.

For married couples filing jointly, both spouses can deduct the full amount of an IRA contribution if neither has a workplace plan. If only one spouse has a workplace plan, the other can get a full deduction for IRA contributions if their joint income is \$204,000 or less.



Last-Minute Retirement Account Moves That Can Cut Your Tax Bill

Diane Benson, a 70-year-old retail store manager in Atlanta, recently made a last-minute \$7,000 IRA contribution for tax year 2022. It saved her nearly \$2,000 in federal and state income taxes.

"She had money sitting in the bank. Why not put it in an IRA and save on taxes?" said Tracey Ann Gordineer, an enrolled agent in Buford, Ga., who prepared Ms. Benson's tax return and brought up the idea.

Ms. Benson could have contributed anywhere up to \$7,000. For every \$100 contributed, she would save \$27.75 in taxes. "It's more of a cash-flow question of whether you

should or shouldn't contribute," Ms. Gordineer said.

Despite the benefits, many taxpayers are leaving money on the table. In tax year 2021, 85% of all U.S. households made no contributions to traditional IRAs or Roth IRAs, according to the Investment Company Institute.

Anyone with earned income can open an IRA. The limit on contributions to traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs is \$6,000 for tax year 2022. Savers age 50 and older can contribute an additional \$1,000.

Maggy Fermo, a 30-year-old marketer in Fargo, N.D., didn't give re-

irement savings much thought until she sat down in 2020 to go over her 2019 tax return with her tax preparer.

"He candidly said, 'What are you doing about retirement?'" she recalls.

Ms. Fermo had just left a job where she contributed the minimum to a workplace 401(k) retirement plan to get employer matching dollars, and was at a new employer that didn't offer a retirement plan.

David Tolleth, a tax preparer and enrolled agent in Holmdel, N.J., helped Ms. Fermo open up a traditional IRA and rolled the 401(k) balance in. Then Ms. Fermo set up monthly contributions directly from her checking account into the IRA going forward. "It was hard to start and get momentum," she said.

At tax time, she'll check that her contributions are on track for 2022 and 2023, she said. The limit on contributions to traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs jumps to \$6,500 for tax year 2023, due to an inflation adjustment. The \$1,000 catch-up amount isn't adjusted for inflation.

Traditional IRA vs. Roth IRA

Many taxpayers choose a traditional IRA for the upfront tax break, Mr. Tolleth said. Contributions to traditional IRAs are often tax-deductible, but withdrawals years later in retirement are taxed at the same rates as ordinary income, like wages.

By contrast, there is no deduction for contributions to a Roth IRA. But by making the contribution now, you're setting yourself up for tax benefits that come later given withdrawals can be done tax-free. Eligibility to contribute to a Roth IRA directly is based on your income. For tax year 2022, the limits for most single filers begin at \$129,000 and \$204,000 for most married joint filers.

Non-deductible IRAs

The April deadline offers an opportunity for taxpayers who don't qualify for a deduction for a traditional IRA to top up their retirement savings by making after-tax, non-deductible contributions to a traditional IRA. The money grows tax-free, and only the earnings are taxable when you take withdrawals in retirement. Taxpayers who make these contributions need to keep track of how much they have contributed over time, said Mr. Tolleth.

When to consider a backdoor Roth IRA

Taxpayers who earn too much to make contributions directly to a Roth IRA can still do so via a two-step process known as a backdoor Roth. First, contribute to a traditional non-deductible IRA. Then immediately move the money into a Roth IRA, pay any income tax on the earnings, and leave the money to grow tax-free.

Options for business owners or the self-employed

For taxpayers with self-employment income, SEP-IRAs have higher contribution limits than traditional IRAs: \$61,000, plus an extra \$6,500 for those age 50 and above, for tax year 2022. In many cases, savers can make contributions for 2022 until Oct. 16, 2023, if they have requested an extension to file their returns.

Save your tax refund

Mr. Tolleth encourages clients to consider using some or all of their tax refund to increase their retirement savings. You can include your retirement account routing information on your 1040 tax return. "It's a subsidized retirement account. Why wouldn't you?" he said.

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

By DARYL AUSTIN

When casting veteran Jodi Wincheski met Lindsay Carmine in 2020, she knew she had a reality star on her hands.

A pediatric nurse from Pennsylvania, Ms. Carmine was magnetic and strategic, making her a fit to compete on “Survivor”—“the toughest reality show to land,” according to Ms. Wincheski. But years of submitting audition tapes failed to get her past the interview stage. She hired Ms. Wincheski to help her change that.

For \$350, Ms. Wincheski worked with Ms. Carmine to highlight the most interesting parts of her back story, cut extraneous scenes from her audition tape and craft a pitch that reflected her enthusiasm for the show. “I was able to help her understand where she had gone wrong so she could fix it,” Ms. Wincheski said. She also calmed her client’s nerves before meetings with producers.

By the following summer, Ms. Carmine had made it onto the 43rd season of the show.

Ms. Carmine declined to be interviewed, citing an agreement in her contract with CBS, but in an email said Ms. Wincheski “was such an integral part of me getting cast.”

Ms. Wincheski is part of a growing cottage industry of former casting agents and contestants who are now working directly with people who want to be on reality TV. It used to be that a single casting director or producer could make or break an applicant’s chances at getting on a show. Now, independent coaches are offering wannabe stars the chance at a do-over. Part career counselor, part therapist and part drama instructor, they help clients overcome rejection and put forward their most camera-worthy selves using tips from the trade.

According to Lynne Spillman, a two-time Emmy-nominated casting director, getting on reality TV is more competitive than ever, as applicants look to parlay contestant roles into lucrative influencer gigs or bona fide acting careers. To stand out to the producers and directors eyeing their applications, it’s key to convey that they can elicit a range of emotions.

“A show only resonates with an audience if it has a cast that peo-

How to Make It Big on Reality TV: Hire a Coach



Reality-TV coaches are helping wannabe stars get on their favorite show, from ‘Survivor’ to ‘Making the Cut.’

ple can relate to, feel inspired by, or has someone you want to cheer for or against,” said Mrs. Spillman, who has put together casts for “Making the Cut,” “The Amazing Race,” “Lizzo’s Watch Out for the Big Grrrls” and 38 consecutive seasons of “Survivor.”

Former casting producers and contestants say their experiences on reality sets make them particularly suited to advise applicants going through the audition process.

Adam Klein, a former “Survivor” contestant who won the show’s 33rd season, is now a reality-television consultant. Mr. Klein offers group workshops and provides a number of one-on-one coaching packages as well that range in cost from \$150 for basic help to \$450 for extended time and guidance.

Mr. Klein said that many of his clients yearn for feedback after facing rejection. “It’s brutal for people

Former casting agents and contestants act as career counselor, drama instructor and therapist.

who get so close to their dream to put so much into the process, only to never really find out why it didn’t pan out for them,” he said.

Ms. Wincheski, who spent two decades casting people for “Survivor,” “Big Brother” and “The Amazing Race” before striking out on her own, said she’s met thousands of would-be contestants over the years who have attended casting calls or sent in a multitude of audition videos. Common mistakes often boil down to cinematography, she said, such as people filming with poor

lighting or in distracting environments. Other reality hopefuls struggle with storytelling.

“Too many people come off like they’re reading a job resume,” Ms. Wincheski said. What’s more, she said, most shows offer little in the way of explanation about why a contestant isn’t a good fit.

“You really have to know what you are doing to get anyone’s attention the right way,” she said.

Through her company, Casting Reality, she charges \$150 to review a written application, \$250 to review an audition video with a follow-up telephone critique, \$300 to help put together the right video in the first place, and \$500 for a full-service consultation: audition-video help, interview prep, written-application guidance and reviews of up to four videos.

To some, this level of preparation might seem antithetical to the

genre—in other words, not real. On Season 18 of “The Bachelorette,” for instance, one contestant was sent home for arriving on set with a binder full of tips for how to win, collated by friends who were fans of the franchise. (A representative for ABC declined to comment.) Ms. Wincheski said that isn’t what her company does.

“I’m certainly not ‘gaming the system,’” she said. “I don’t turn anyone into something they’re not, don’t introduce them to casting directors and don’t provide any casting shortcuts. I just help contestants put their best foot forward.”

Gavin Whitson, the runner-up on season 38 of “Survivor,” said that coming from a small town in Tennessee, he found the L.A. casting process intimidating. “Jodi kept reminding me to be confident because the producers already liked me for who I was,” he said.

Chanel Wright, who was on Bravo’s “Spy Games” in 2020, said that Ms. Wincheski was particularly helpful to her during the interview process. “Reality television is a funny business because you constantly find yourself second-guessing if you’re saying the things the producers want to hear, or if you should just be yourself. They rarely give you any feedback.” Ms. Wright said that Ms. Wincheski gave her the confidence “to stay true to myself” the whole way through. “While other people keep reinventing themselves during the casting process, Jodi kept me on track,” she said.

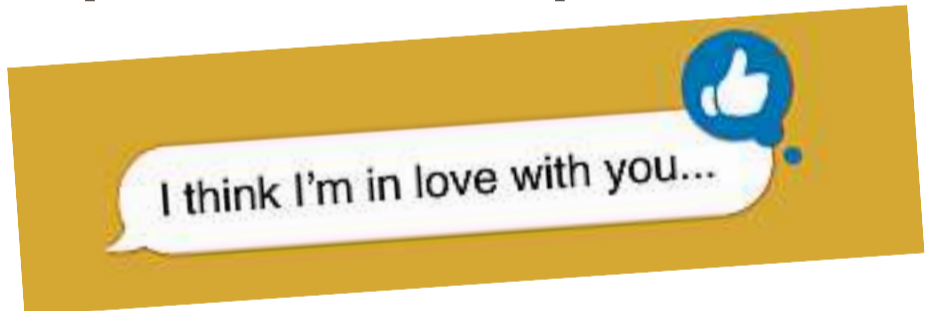
Though Mrs. Spillman, the casting director, would have once looked down on the idea of contestants being coached before auditions, her perspective has changed.

“Some contestants oversell or undersell themselves and someone monitoring that can certainly make a contestant better,” she said. “Even I have coached some people who came to me for advice, because I know how trying the process can be,” she said.

Jeff Probst, the longtime “Survivor” host and executive producer, said that every show is looking for specific attributes and qualities in would-be contestants, so authenticity is key.

“There’s a tendency to think if you act crazy or behave in a controversial way that you’ll end up on a show,” he said. “You don’t have to do, say or behave in any one particular way, just be yourself. The truth is what we’re seeking.”

Baring Your Soul On Text? Expect a Thumbs-Up



By ANN-MARIE ALCÁNTARA

Lizzie Buckley sent her mom three text messages on a recent Sunday. Two were about working on a weekend, and a third was about an impressively long run she had just completed.

Her mother responded quickly: thumbs-down, thumbs-up, double exclamation marks.

Though prompt, the reaction was a letdown, says Ms. Buckley, a 25-year-old financial auditor who lives in Virginia. “I just expected more,” she says. She would have loved to receive—at the very least—a party or applause emoji.

The reactions in Apple Inc.’s Messages app can make your day or make you feel deflated. Designed as a quick way for people to respond to incoming iMessage-based (“blue bubble”) texts on iPhones, iPads and Macs, you tag them with the little symbols. Apple’s “tapbacks,” as the company calls them, offer six options: heart, thumbs-up, thumbs-down, HAHA, double exclamation marks and question mark.

Other platforms also offer reactions, with most mobile-communication platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal and Slack letting users choose from a library of emojis.

On an iPhone, the reactions are convenient but can occasionally annoy others in text threads. As with debates over which emoji to use, people differ about what each reaction means—and when an actual, worded response

might be better.

Ms. Buckley’s mom, Tess Buckley, 60, who lives in New Jersey, says she responds with reaction icons when there isn’t much more to say but wants the message sender to know she is paying attention.

Facebook started offering quick reactions in 2015 when it went beyond the “like” button with six animated ones: Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad and Angry. In 2020, the social network added Care, a yellow smiley face hugging a heart, as a seventh.



Tess Buckley uses iMessage reactions to show texters she is paying attention. Daughter Lizzie Buckley wants more.

Chris Tosswill, a former Facebook product manager who worked on the reactions, said they were meant to help people express themselves on posts with more than just “like.” The team limited the options to keep them from overwhelming users.

“You’re striking the balance,” says Mr. Tosswill, now chief executive of marketing company Addressable.

Apple brought reaction icons to iMessage in 2016, and the initial options remain today. A spokeswoman

declined to say if it would ever release more.

The meaning of the six varies depending on the user. The heart generally means you love something. It’s also a response for people who think a thumbs-up is too cold.

Thumbs-down can mean commiseration when someone shares bad news; it can also be a veto when, say, a friend proposes a lame lunch spot. It gets a bit messy from there. Thumbs-up can mean OK, or can be an acknowledgment that seeks to end the conversation.

Brian Moore, a 36-year-old creative director in Los Angeles, says the thumbs-up has gotten him in trouble.

When, in a group chat, a friend bashfully admitted being slow to get a joke, Mr. Moore gave the confession a thumbs-up. It was “condescending,” says the friend, Aisea Launauge, 38, who was looking for a tad more emotion. “If I put something that I want a HAHA and I get a thumbs-up, that’s a declaration of war,” says Mr. Launauge, who heads strategy at an advertising agency.

Even HAHA can be polarizing: Are you laughing with or at the texter?

People have come to understand emojis’ utility, says Jennifer Daniel, who works at the Unicode Consortium, the nonprofit organization that standardizes text we see across our devices.

“Emoji were pretty predictable for about a decade,” says Ms. Daniel, who in her role helps decide which ones reach the masses. Today, she says, “they’re in darndest places. Now, I mean—my refrigerator has emoji on them—they’re everywhere.”

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ARTS IN REVIEW



ART REVIEW

Small Focus, Wide Reach

Clockwise from top left: Johannes Vermeer's 'View of Delft' (c. 1660-61); 'Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window' (c. 1657-58); and 'Officer and Laughing Girl' (c. 1657-58)

By MARY TOMPKINS LEWIS

When the Frick Collection announced plans several years ago for a major renovation, the Rijksmuseum here saw a once-in-a-lifetime chance to borrow its three magnificent paintings by the Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), which normally would never leave their New York home. Museums around the world and two private collectors also agreed to lend, and a retrospective, the largest ever assembled of the painter's surviving work, took shape. "Vermeer," the first exhibition devoted to the artist in the Rijksmuseum's history, consists of 28 paintings (with one, his magisterial "Girl With a Pearl Earring," leaving town March 30) out of the roughly 36 known to still exist. Organized by the museum's curators Gregor J.M. Weber and Pieter Roelofs and designed by the architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, it is a staggeringly beautiful, brilliantly realized show unlikely to be repeated.

Vermeer spent virtually his whole life in the small Dutch city of Delft, and his "View of Delft" (c. 1660-61), a landmark in his oeuvre, opens the exhibition. Seen from a vantage point above the wide Rijn-Schickanaal, the painting divides Vermeer's subject into four horizontal bands and showcases his richly varied brushstrokes. Smooth touches of paint convey soft gray clouds and the canal's shimmering, reflective surface. Patches of grainy pigment capture waterside quays and the sunlit spires of Delft's Nieuwe Kerk, while brightened dots of paint catch the scattered, early morning light (the hour confirmed by the clock on the shadowed city gate at center). Though he took license with topographical details to render his composition more harmonious, Vermeer's unobtrusive portrait of Delft—in which townspeople calmly go about their quotidian lives—could hardly be more true or affectionate.

A room of large, ambitious figure paintings from the mid-1650s indicates the artist's early plans to become a history painter, a path he soon abandoned. Like his father, Vermeer was also an art dealer, and he must have recognized the demand in Delft—where most of his paintings remained—for smaller genre scenes that

would appeal to private collectors and fit in their homes. As the show underscores at every turn, such works would play to his unique strengths.

Vermeer's breathtaking "Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window" (c. 1657-58) is exhibited alone, like a treasured icon, and spotlighted in its darkened, high-ceilinged gallery. Daylight streams into the room through a draped window at left and above a rucked oriental carpet and tilted bowl of fruit. Another curtain seemingly hangs from a rod in front of the canvas, a theatrical, *trompe l'oeil* effect mirrored elsewhere in his work as well as by heavy drapes hung on walls throughout the show, which contribute to its gorgeous, rarefied aura. In the painting, a stylish young woman stands absorbed and in profile, her lips slightly open as she reads the text of the letter she holds, while on the wall behind a large painted Cupid (discovered during a recent cleaning) intimates its likely amorous contents. And finally, in a particularly virtuoso passage, the woman's face is softly reflected in the open window's leaded glass panes. This is the Vermeer we know, who stops us in our tracks, whose enigmatic themes, startling illusionism and unrivaled pictorial gifts so capture our imagination.

Vermeer's evocative depictions of women reading or writing letters allowed the artist to conjure

up his subjects' innermost thoughts in their genteel, private domains, and such paintings punctuate the show. His ravishing "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" (c. 1662-64) is built around sumptuous lemon-yellows and blues that lend the painting a gently melancholic air and would mesmerize Van Gogh. Though a fragment of a well-known Dutch map, tacked to the back wall, may hint of the wider world, there is little

A monumental tribute to the legendary Dutch Golden Age painter Johannes Vermeer.

to distract us from the stilled poetry of its impenetrable and subtly articulated space.

The same map figures in full in the Frick Collection's "Officer and Laughing Girl" (c. 1657-58), in which a dashing cavalier charms a smiling maidservant in the light-filled corner of a room. Another bravura detail reflects, as captured at far left in its open window, a tiny slice of his urban environs. Vermeer's gentlemen callers routinely appear in their traveling clothes, as if fleeting visitors to the feminized spaces pictured. The Frick painting's shadowed male

figure, who looms large next to his seated companion, also indicates the artist's increasing mastery of perspective, as discussed in the show and exhibition catalog. A literal pinpoint on the painting's top-most layer would have indicated a central vanishing point, from which Vermeer could calculate the composition's illusionistic perspective, including the cavalier's powerful foreshortening. A similar marking appears on the paint-encrusted surface of "The Milkmaid" (c. 1658-59), still visible just above the subject's right hand. Like his contemporaries—though with incomparable skill—Vermeer may have also employed a camera obscura. Hung alone here and illuminated to highlight its countless dots, "The Milkmaid" suggests the use of such studio implements, with which Vermeer could craft for his humble, working-class subject a palpable world to inhabit and an ennobling monumentality.

Vermeer's interest in science, an inescapable thread through his art, is newly considered in the show's later galleries. "The Geographer" (1669), for example, offers (as does the Louvre's "The Astronomer," on loan elsewhere) a rare male protagonist who may personify Delft's vibrant scientific milieu. The pensive, blue-robed scholar, surrounded by maps, a globe and scientific instruments, is a striking image of active, intellectual engagement. The curators propose

that his ruminative gaze and the familiar light-flooded windows may be signs of both cerebral and spiritual enlightenment.

The painter's late genre scenes may likewise exhibit larger, moralizing themes. His "Young Woman Standing at a Virginal" and "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal" (both c. 1670-72) hang together on a beautifully conceived wall, and are Vermeer's final works on the popular theme of musicmaking as a metaphor for harmony and, when shared, for love. Their comely, outward gazing figures—one standing in a crisply ordered, geometric room, the other seated amid luxurious swirling curves—invite a reading, supported by the familiar pictures-within-pictures on their background walls, as opposing images of moral virtue and carnal sensuality. The paintings, both owned at one time by the French art critic Théophile Thoré, who rediscovered the all-but-forgotten artist in the mid-19th century and would have appreciated their photographic-like illusionism, are also rife with the inimitable pictorial incidents that characterize Vermeer's art, and, like everything on view, make this historic exhibition an absolute must-see.

Ms. Lewis, who taught art history for many years at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn., writes about art for the *Journal* and other publications.



Vermeer's 'The Milkmaid' (c. 1658-59), right, and 'The Geographer' (1669), far right



BUSINESS NEWS

Berkshire Posts Large 2022 Loss In Rocky Market

By AKANE OTANI

Warren Buffett is still betting on America.

Stocks and bonds slumped in 2022 after central banks raised interest rates at a rapid pace to try to rein in inflation. But Mr. Buffett retained his sense of optimism in his annual letter to investors Saturday, saying he continues to believe in the resilience of the U.S. economy.

"I have been investing for 80 years—more than one-third of our country's lifetime. Despite our citizens' penchant—almost enthusiasm—for self-criticism and self-doubt, I have yet to see a time when it made sense to make a long-term bet against America," Mr. Buffett said in the letter.

Mr. Buffett, widely regarded as one of the world's top investors, has been publishing the letters for more than half a century. Over that time, he hasn't just reflected on the past year for his company, **Berkshire Hathaway Inc.**, but also shared his thoughts on everything from esoteric accounting rules to his aversion to excessive risk-taking.

Saturday's letter offered readers a glimpse into how Mr. Buffett, 92, viewed what wound up being a shaky stretch for markets. Mr. Buffett's portfolio took a hit, too, with Berkshire posting a loss for 2022 in large part due to investment losses.

The volatility offered Berkshire an opportunity to jump in and buy stocks. While Berkshire largely bought back its own shares in 2021, it focused more in 2022 on investing in other companies—opening up new positions in media company **Paramount Global** and building-materials manufacturer **Louisiana-Pacific Corp.**, among other businesses, and swiftly becoming **Occidental**

Petroleum Corp.'s biggest shareholder.

As of the end of 2022, Berkshire was the largest shareholder of eight companies—**American Express Co.**, **Bank of America Corp.**, **Chevron Corp.**, **Coca-Cola Co.**, **HP Inc.**, **Moody's Corp.**, **Occidental** and **Paramount Global**.

Berkshire is able to make big investments because its insurance operations generate billions of dollars of float, or premiums that customers pay upfront, which Berkshire can in turn put to work in the markets. Its acquisition last year of property-casualty insurer **Alleghany Corp.** helped increase its insurance float—which Mr. Buffett called an extraordinary asset for Berkshire—to \$164 billion last year, Mr. Buffett said.

How do Mr. Buffett and right-hand man **Charlie Munger** decide where to put that money? Both have said they refrain from basing their decisions on where they think interest rates, oil prices, or other factors that affect markets will be in a year's time.

"Though economists, politicians and many of the public have opinions about the consequences of that huge imbalance, Charlie and I plead ignorance and firmly believe that near-term economic and market forecasts are worse than useless," Mr. Buffett said in Saturday's letter.

Instead, the two focus on investing Berkshire's money in "a manner that will achieve an acceptable result over time and that will preserve the company's unmatched staying power when financial panics or severe worldwide recessions occur," he said. Berkshire reported having cash and cash equivalents of \$128.6 billion at the end of 2022, down from a near-record \$146.7 billion at the end of 2021 but up from



Investment and derivative contract losses stung Berkshire Hathaway in 2022. Last year's shareholders meeting in Omaha, Neb.

the third quarter.

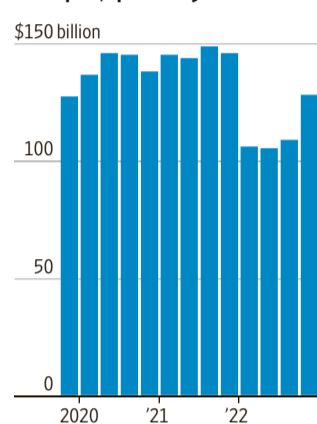
While Berkshire's original business, a New England textile operation, no longer exists, Mr. Buffett said Berkshire has continued to be able to deliver returns to shareholders because of its focus on what he called the American tailwind.

"America would have done fine without Berkshire. The reverse is not true," he said. In his letter, Mr. Buffett also defended the practice of stock buybacks. Berkshire spent nearly \$8 billion repurchasing its shares in 2022, down from a record of \$27 billion the previous year.

Although critics of buybacks contend that companies would be better off investing that money into their businesses, proponents, like Mr. Buffett, say they can benefit shareholders if they are executed when a company's share price is trading below its value.

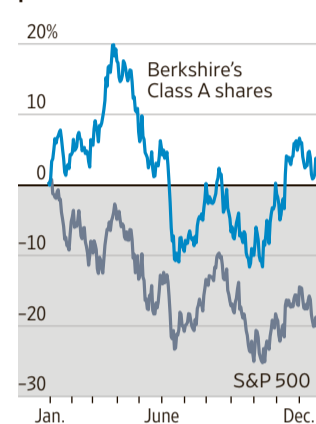
"When you are told that all repurchases are harmful to shareholders or to the country, or particularly beneficial to CEOs, you are listening to ei-

Berkshire Hathaway's cash pile, quarterly



Sources: FactSet analysis of company filings (cash pile); FactSet (performance)

Share-price and index performance in 2022



ther an economic illiterate or a silver-tongued demagogue," he said.

Berkshire also released its results for 2022 Saturday.

The Omaha, Neb., company, which owns businesses including insurer **Geico**, railroad **BNSF Railway** and chocolate maker **See's Candies**, posted a loss of \$22.82 billion for the year, stung by \$67.9 billion in investment and derivative con-

tract losses. In 2021 when stocks surged, Berkshire posted a profit of \$90.8 billion.

Total revenue rose 9.4% to \$302.1 billion.

Berkshire's operating earnings, which exclude some investment results, rose to a record \$30.8 billion. For the fourth quarter, operating earnings fell 8% to \$6.7 billion, weighed down by lower profits at its railroad business.

Mr. Buffett, Berkshire's chief executive, has long held that operating earnings are a better reflection of how Berkshire is doing, since accounting rules require the company to include unrealized gains and losses from its massive investment portfolio in its net income.

Volatile markets can make Berkshire's net income change substantially from quarter to quarter, regardless of how its underlying businesses are doing.

"Capital gains, to be sure, have been hugely important to Berkshire over past decades, and we expect them to be meaningfully positive in future decades," Mr. Buffett said in his letter.

"But their quarter-by-quarter gyrations, regularly and mindlessly headlined by media, totally misinform investors," he said, adding that he and Mr. Munger urge shareholders to focus instead on Berkshire's operating earnings.

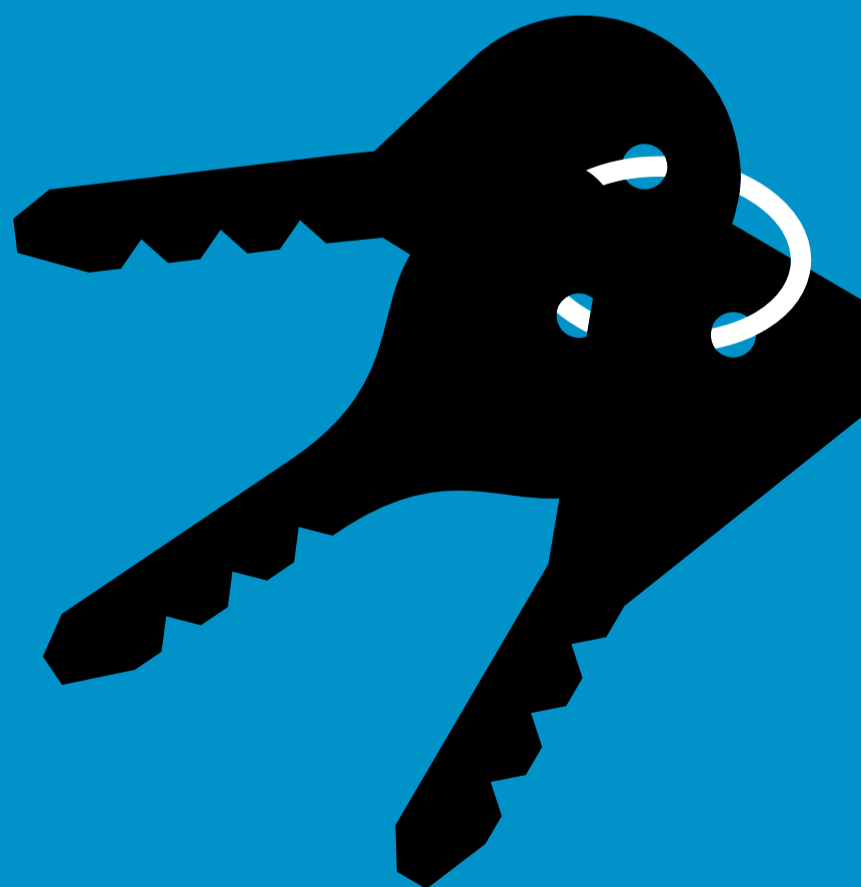
◆ Heard on the Street: Buffett wannabees lose luster..... B10

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TECHNOLOGY

WSJ.com/Tech

Plant Points Up Battery Snags

Panasonic describes challenges on path to profits as subsidies attract newcomers

By RIVER DAVIS

SPARKS, Nev.—A pioneer in making electric-vehicle batteries in the U.S. has a message for newcomers: It takes time to power up.

Japan's **Panasonic Holdings Corp.** started building what would become America's first large-scale EV-battery plant in 2015, at a site owned by **Tesla Inc.** in the rolling hills outside of Reno, Nev.

After years of training workers and adapting machinery, Panasonic's battery production lines now run around the clock churning out some two billion finger-size battery cells a year.

Many battery and auto makers would like to follow. Enticed by federal subsidies, those companies have outlined plans for tens of billions of dollars in factory investments in the U.S. **General Motors Co.**, **Honda Motor Co.**, **Samsung SDI Co.** were among those announcing big plants last year.

"The word 'gigafactory' has often been thrown around recently, but just how big one of these is and how many resources it requires is hard to imagine," said Yasuaki Takamoto, the head of Panasonic's EV-battery business.

People at Panasonic and industry consultants say the early efforts at building EV batteries in the U.S. have shown the ways companies can go astray. One of the biggest issues is training workers in the finicky art of battery making, in which the slightest exposure to moisture might mean a whole batch has to be thrown out.

Also, equipment can't necessarily be shipped from Asia and plopped onto an American assembly line, given U.S. safety regulations and different operating conditions, while equip-



Tesla's 'gigafactory' outside Reno, Nev., uses batteries produced by its partner Panasonic Holdings at the U.S.'s first large-scale electric-vehicle battery plant on the same site.

ment customized for the U.S. is in short supply. Consultants say when auto makers and battery makers try to build batteries jointly, careful planning at the outset is needed to prevent squabbling and missed deadlines.

GM Chief Executive Mary Barra last October told Wall Street analysts that a slower-than-expected start at an Ohio battery plant that GM operates with South Korea's **LG Energy Solution** would cause the auto maker to miss its EV sales target for North America through 2023.

David Verner, an executive vice president at Gresham Smith, which designs battery facilities for clients in the U.S., said it isn't unusual to encounter a company that hasn't worked on a major factory-building project in the past 15 years.

"For a long time with the kind of outsourcing that was going on in the U.S., you were not building as many large manufacturing plants. And the skill set got smaller and smaller and older and older," he said.

Panasonic experienced both first-mover advantages and headaches when it set up shop in Nevada. In its early years operating at what Tesla calls

its gigafactory—a term now often used generally for big EV-battery factories—the Japanese company struggled to boost production volumes.

Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk handed Panasonic tough deadlines and at times blamed it for holding back Tesla's vehicle output. The companies' joint battery business was in the red for years before eking out a quarterly profit for the first time in late 2019.

Panasonic's Mr. Takamoto said the company underestimated the difficulty of shifting lithium ion-battery production outside of East Asia, the industry's traditional center.

The company was surprised to find that American workers' hands were sometimes too big to efficiently operate machinery made in Asia, he said. "It sounds like a joke, but these kinds of issues were frequently encountered in the early stages," he said.

Boosting production took a year or two longer than expected because of issues such as training workers without battery experience and adapting equipment and production processes to them, he said.

Panasonic's battery operations take up more than half of Tesla's Nevada gigafactory site outside of Reno.

Farm Tool Helps Trap Carbon

Continued from page B1

of carbon dioxide removed to Microsoft and others. The extra revenue let Mr. Hunt cut prices and sales grew. Pacific Biochar's sales are expected to hit a few million dollars this year.

Companies are willing to pay many times more for removal credits like these than traditional offsets because there is more certainty they are removing carbon. Many offsets linked to projects such as keeping trees standing have been shown to have limited environmental benefits. The potential to remove large amounts of carbon and additional soil benefits make biochar credits attractive, said Brian DiMarino, JPMorgan's head of operational sustainability.

Biochar was used by farmers in South America thousands of years ago. They found that it helped soil retain water and nutrients. Most biochar is made using a process called pyrolysis that heats up organic matter while restricting levels of oxygen. Analysts estimate the U.S. currently produces roughly 100,000 tons of biochar a year, a fraction of what would be needed to make a dent against climate change. The U.S. emits about 6 billion tons of greenhouse gases a year.

One of the sector's biggest

obstacles is making sure the carbon stays sequestered for hundreds or thousands of years. The length of time carbon stays sequestered through biochar can vary based on soil and microbial conditions. That uncertainty and some studies showing that the time could be shorter than expected have led to calls for the creation of an independent standards body to oversee the new market.

Governments and nonprofits are attempting to grow the nascent industry. The U.S. Agriculture Department recently said funding is available for farmers who apply biochar and meet certain conditions. The International Biochar Initiative is spreading the word to farmers and project developers in poor countries.

Tom and Tony Marrero, 50-year-old twin brothers, started **Wakefield Biochar** in 2014 with their father. Sales took off recently when the company signed contracts with big companies such as Koch Industries Inc.'s Georgia-Pacific LLC to dispose of their wood waste by turning it into biochar.

Wakefield Biochar has removed roughly 15,000 tons of carbon, the most in the industry, according to CDR.fyi, and generated a few million dollars in sales last year. Selling carbon credits to companies including JPMorgan and reinsurance firm **Swiss Re AG** has allowed the company to continue expanding its operations.

"All these things are happening partly because of our ability to be in the carbon market," said Tom Marrero, the company's president.



Biochar helps soil retain water and nutrients, sequestering carbon.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Amazon Expands Same-Day Delivery

Tech giant invests in ultrafast service as it tries to trim expenses and boost growth

By Sebastian Herrera

Amazon.com Inc. is expanding ultrafast delivery options, a sign that it remains committed to pushing its logistics system for speed as it scales back plans in other areas.

The technology giant is continuing to devote resources to facilities and services structured to deliver packages to customers in less than a day. The expansions are happening at a crucial point for Amazon, which faces competition for fast-delivery options while Chief Executive Officer Andy Jassy puts a renewed focus on profits.

A central part of Amazon's ultrafast-delivery strategy is its network of warehouses that the company calls same-day sites. The facilities are a fraction of the size of Amazon's large fulfillment warehouses and are designed to prepare products for immediate delivery. In contrast, the larger Amazon warehouses typically rely on delivery stations closer to customers for the final stage of shipping.

Amazon has opened about 45 of the smaller sites since 2019 and could expand to at least 150 centers in the next several years, according to MWPVL International Inc.,

which tracks Amazon warehouse operations. The sites have primarily opened near large cities and deliver the most popular 100,000 items in Amazon's catalog, MWPVL said. New locations recently opened in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Phoenix, according to Amazon, which declined to provide information on how many same-day sites it has.

With ultrafast delivery, the tech company is seeking new ways to use its broad logistics apparatus to compete with the likes of Walmart Inc. and Instacart, which provide quick shipping options to customers. Walmart has used its thousands of stores to help fulfill fast online orders.

Analysts say Amazon's service can help the company retain users of its \$139-a-year Amazon Prime subscription, which also provides streaming, discounts at Whole Foods Market and other perks. Amazon's fast-shipping service can add fees for small orders.

"We're always exploring ways to bring our customers new levels of convenience and delivery options that work best for them. Same-Day Delivery is one of the latest innovations," an Amazon spokeswoman said, adding that more than 1.5 million customers a month are trying same-day delivery for the first time.

The costly nature of fast shipping is a challenge. Amazon uses contractors to make deliveries from the same-day sites. "Last mile" costs to de-



Amazon is seeking new ways to use its broad logistics apparatus. An Illinois warehouse.

liver items from the locations can be around \$3.30 a package, compared with \$1.75 for packages at its traditional fulfillment sites, according to MWPVL. Using same-day sites can eliminate other costs that apply to the company's standard fulfillment system, MWPVL said.

Ultrafast deliveries can arrive in a matter of hours, although Amazon charges members of its Prime subscription service a fee of \$2.99 per order if customers don't meet a \$25 threshold.

"They need volume to make it work," said Marc Wulfraat,

president of MWPVL.

As Amazon expands ultrafast shipping across the country, some customers are experiencing the option for the first time.

Kristin Whitehair, a customer in the Kansas City area, first saw the option earlier this month when shopping for electric-toothbrush heads, which she wanted as soon as possible. She ordered the heads in the morning and received them in the evening.

"If I have a same-day need, I will now look at Amazon's app, where in the past I may have to go to Target or an-

other store," Ms. Whitehair said.

She said she doesn't mind paying the extra fee if needed because she sees it as a premium service.

Amazon executives recently reiterated their commitment to quick shipping. Chief Financial Officer Brian Olsavsky this month said the company aims to expand its fast-shipping services and Amazon Prime subscribers respond well to them.

Amazon remains in one of its toughest stretches in its history. Mr. Jassy, the CEO, has focused on costs as sales

have slowed from a record-breaking period during the pandemic.

The company also has seen sales weaken at two of its main earnings drivers, the cloud-computing unit Amazon Web Services and its advertising business.

"They're being squeezed in a way they have not been before," said Andrew Lipsman, an e-commerce researcher at market-research company Insider Intelligence. "Andy Jassy has to thread the needle for the next four quarters."

Amazon's first-party e-commerce growth was essentially flat in 2022. Analysts estimate the company's share of e-commerce sales has flattened after years of growing rapidly, and that growth for Prime subscriptions has stalled.

Amazon recently laid off more than 18,000 employees and has sunset a number of projects including its Amazon-Smile charitable program.

While businesses have slowed, Amazon has made efforts to become more of a services provider. Independent merchants make up most of its sales, and the company is expanding its Buy with Prime program, which offers merchants the ability to offer Prime shipping outside of Amazon's website.

Investment firm Morgan Stanley in January estimated Buy with Prime could eventually add \$3.5 billion in yearly profit, not accounting for interest and taxes.

Railway To Replace Its CEO

Continued from page B1

worst in key operating metrics, including safety, volume growth and total shareholder return during Mr. Fritz's eight-year tenure, despite the strength of its network.

The Omaha, Neb., railroad's returns to shareholders, including dividends, are the worst on a percentage basis among Class 1 freight railroad operators in that period, according to FactSet.

"We want UNP to prosper," Soroban founder Eric Mandelblatt wrote. "Unlike typical shareholder engagements which come with numerous demands, Soroban has only one ask: install new leadership who can get the trains to operate safely and on time."

Soroban is a longtime Union Pacific investor and one of the company's biggest shareholders, with a 1%-plus stake valued at about \$1.6 billion.

Union Pacific said it decided to disclose its expected timing for the leadership change after Soroban advised the company recently that it intended to make its concerns public.

The railroad operator said it first engaged with an outside consultant and formed a task force among its directors last year to help identify successors for Mr. Fritz, 60 years old, following conversations between him and the board.

Soroban is pushing for railroad veteran Jim Vena, 64, Union Pacific's chief operating officer from 2019 to 2020, to take the top post. Soroban believes the company's stock price could double in two years under Mr. Vena given his operational experience in the industry, said the letter.

Contacted by the Journal, Mr. Vena said he would be open to a conversation with Union Pacific about taking the CEO role and expressed admiration for the company. "Union Pacific has a chance to be the best in the industry," he said.

Soroban's letter said the fund for years, including most recently in August, had privately expressed its unhappiness with the company's performance.

Soroban has told the board that quick action must be taken so Union Pacific can take advantage of trends the investor believes are converging to benefit railroads, including renewed investment in domestic manufacturing and efforts to reduce emissions.

In January, Union Pacific reported fourth-quarter profit and revenue that fell short of Wall Street's expectations, with labor shortages, inflation and winter weather weighing on growth.



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ESG MSCI RATING*

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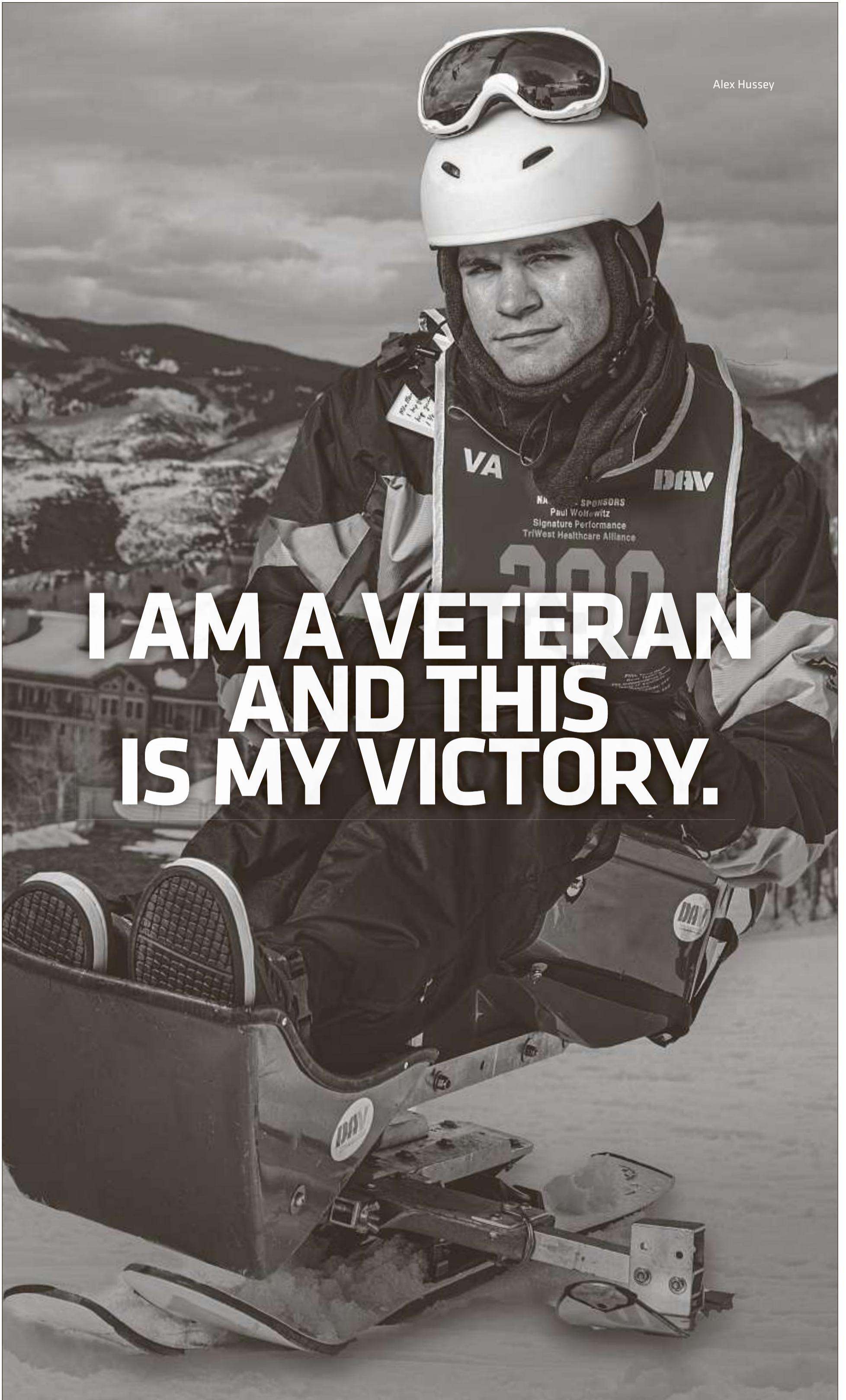
CSA SCORE DJSI**

* MSCI 2022 rating assessing environmental, social and governance-related business practices.

** 2022 edition of the Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA), an S&P Global Assessment of corporate sustainability performance. Top performers are eligible for inclusion in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI).

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Alex Hussey

I AM A VETERAN AND THIS IS MY VICTORY.

“My victory is removing ‘can’t’ from my vocabulary.” Alex was hit by an IED in Afghanistan. He lost both legs, his left hand and has a traumatic brain injury. With support from DAV, Alex is taking on mountains. DAV helps veterans of all generations get the benefits they’ve earned—helping more than a million veterans each year. Support more victories for veterans® **Go to [DAV.org](https://www.dav.org).**

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MARKETS & FINANCE

Private-Equity Rebound Seen

Slowdowns in deals, fundraising may reverse sooner than expected, a new report suggests

By CHRIS CUMMING

Private equity's recent challenges in fundraising, deal making and exits don't dim the long-term outlook for the asset class, a new report from Bain & Co. says.

While interest rates have risen and many investors are worried about the future, a long-expected recession hasn't arrived, and many private-equity deal makers are ready to get back to work, said Hugh MacArthur, chairman of private equity for the Boston consulting firm. "Fundamentally, nothing is broken in the global economy," he said. As such, Mr. MacArthur

said the buyout industry could recover later this year from the slump in activity that set in around the middle of 2022.

He said he has seen an uptick in private-equity mergers and acquisitions in recent months and that deal making could rebound by the summer. However, he doesn't expect a return to the record pace of 2021 and the start of last year, but rather the typical healthy level of activity in the years prior.

Bain's annual private-equity report, expected to be released Monday, shows how abruptly private equity's slowdown set in last year. Global buyout deal value fell 35% last year, to \$654 billion, as strong momentum in the beginning of the year halted in the second half. Alternative-asset managers raised \$1.3 trillion last year, 10% less than in the previous year.

Despite the slowdown, the Bain report said, deal making and fundraising last year were strong by long-term standards and appear unimpressive only by contrast with the record-setting levels of 2021. Excluding 2021, last year's buyout deal value was the highest since 2007.

The fundraising sum was the second-highest ever, and came at the end of a multiyear fundraising boom that has brought the industry's dry powder—money raised but not yet invested—to a record \$3.7 trillion. Private-equity firms have plenty to invest even if fundraising continues to slow, said Mr. MacArthur.

The bigger problem for the industry is the exit environment, he said. Buyout exits fell 42% last year, to \$565 billion. All types of exits fell, with sales to strategic buyers down 21%, sales to other private-equity

sponsors down 58% and initial public offerings down 94% by deal value.

Mr. MacArthur said he expects sponsor-to-sponsor transactions to pick up, due in part to the industry's large amount of dry powder, while firms wait and hope that the IPO market recovers.

Higher interest rates are perhaps the biggest obstacle to an industry recovery. The Bain report shows that since 2011, the industry increased the value of the companies firms own by multiple expansion—that is, the increase in sale-price multiples over time—more than by any other means, such as growth in profitability.

Rising rates will likely slow multiple expansion, forcing firms to engineer real profitability growth to achieve the returns their investors expect, the Bain report said.



Kroger is expected to post per-share earnings of 90 cents.

THE TICKER

MARKET EVENTS COMING THIS WEEK

Table with market data for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, including short-selling reports, earnings expected, and various indices.

* FactSet Estimates earnings-per-share estimates don't include extraordinary items (Losses in parentheses) ♦ Adjusted for stock split Note: Forecasts are from Dow Jones weekly survey of economists

Frackers' Outlays to Increase

Continued from page B1

sion of Ukraine to record profits in 2022, but suggests their ability to grow is limited.

EOG reported this week that its yearly profit jumped \$3 billion to \$7.7 billion. Pioneer said it netted \$7.8 billion last year, almost four times what it made in 2021. Diamondback Energy Inc. said its net income more than doubled from 2021 to \$4.5 billion. These three companies churned out more than \$20 billion in free cash flow last year, compared with \$11.1 billion in 2021.

Those profits may be difficult to replicate. The industry is dealing with inflation, which sent the price of equipment, labor and materials to new heights, analysts said. Drillers are warning they will have to splurge more to extract the same volumes of hydrocarbons, in part because shale fields from North Dakota to Texas, the oil basket of America, are maturing.

Shale companies in the past decade capitalized on low-cost debt to fuel explosive growth in the oil patch, which contributed to a glut of supply and a collapse in oil prices in 2014 to 2016. The free spending led to multibillion-dollar losses and angered investors.

Drillers pledged to rein in spending and focus on capital returns and showered their investors with cash last year. According to energy research firm Wood Mackenzie, through the third quarter of 2022, a group of 38 shale companies distributed \$42 billion to stockholders through dividends and buybacks—slightly more than what these companies spent on production over the same period.

The fact that companies have moved to funnel most of their cash back to shareholders, and not into squeezing out new molecules, has become a source of pride for oil bosses. Marathon Oil Chief Executive Lee Tillman told investors earlier this month that his company had "the lowest reinvestment rate in our peer group, a full 10 percentage points below the S&P 500 average."

The companies' frugality has attracted investors: In the past year, the S&P 500 Energy stocks increased by over 26%, even as the broader index fell 5%.

The industry is now reversing its austerity measures. Investment bank Evercore ISI estimated in December that shale companies' budgets would increase by 46% in 2023, putting U.S. spending on par with levels last seen in 2009—about half its historical peak. That rise follows a 30% increase in spending last year from 2021, according to Wood Mackenzie. In 2022, the 51 largest U.S. shale companies spent \$52.6 billion on oil fields, the firm said.

Drillers say they are spending more to keep production roughly flat. Their budget increases in 2022 resulted in a 4% increase in oil production for the group, according to Wood Mackenzie's models. Companies largely attributed their ballooning budgets in 2022 and this year to inflation, which raised the cost of labor and materials by around 20%, as well as to one-time items, such as well maintenance.

In 2022, 51 U.S. shale companies spent \$52.6 billion on oil fields.

But some frackers, such as Pioneer, said they have been dealing with capricious wells. The driller last year said its Permian Basin wells had disappointed, and that it would reshuffle its drilling portfolio to generate higher returns in 2023.

In addition to productivity troubles, frackers face an existential predicament: fewer sweet spots to drill, analysts said. Shale executives privately concede the problem and in earnings calls this month tried to reassure investors they had ample running room, pointing to recent acquisitions that added to their inventories of drilling locations.

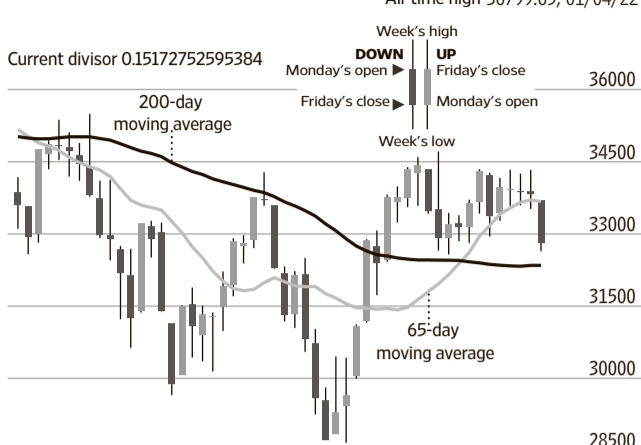
Marathon's Mr. Tillman, for instance, said the company bought Ensign Natural Resources, in the Eagle Ford region of Texas, last year as it looked for "assets or opportunities that would also have a net positive effect on inventory life."

Advertisement for CME Group featuring a surfer and the text 'WHERE RISK MEETS OPPORTUNITY'. Includes sub-headers like 'VOLATILITY', 'UNCERTAINTY', 'STRATEGY', and 'POSITION'. The main text reads: 'Whatever the conditions, CME Group provides the tools that global market participants need to manage risk and capture opportunities. With 24-hour access to trading in futures, options, cash and OTC across all major asset classes, you can determine your best position and take action at just the right moment. VISIT CMEGROUP.COM/OPPORTUNITY'.

MARKETS DIGEST

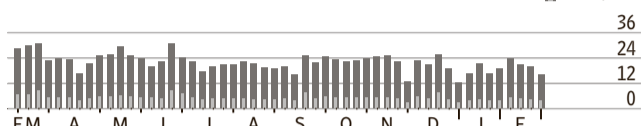
Dow Jones Industrial Average

32816.92 ▼1009.77, or 2.99% last week Trailing P/E ratio 21.78 18.89 P/E estimate * 17.60 17.90 High, low, open and close for each of the past 52 weeks Dividend yield 2.13 2.06 All-time high 36799.65, 01/04/22



Current divisor 0.15172752595384

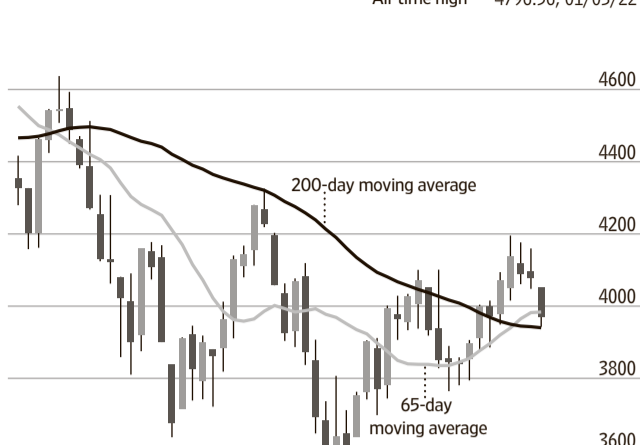
NYSE weekly volume, in billions of shares



*Weekly P/E data based on as-reported earnings from Biriiny Associates Inc. †Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

S&P 500 Index

3970.04 ▼109.05, or 2.67% last week Trailing P/E ratio * 17.82 23.83 P/E estimate * 17.92 19.49 High, low, open and close for each of the past 52 weeks Dividend yield * 1.71 1.41 All-time high 4796.56, 01/03/22

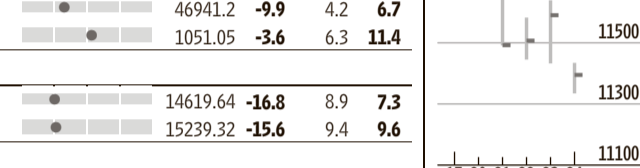


Expected pricing date Filed Issuer/business Symbol/primary exchange Shares (mil.) Pricing Range(\$)

Table listing IPOs in the U.S. Market with columns for expected pricing date, issuer/business, symbol, shares, pricing range, and bookrunner(s).

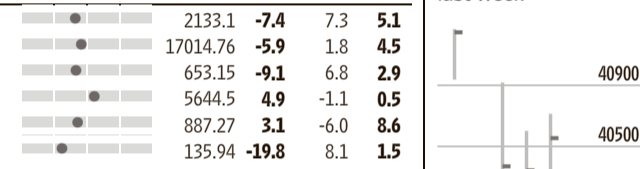
Nasdaq Composite

▼392.33, or -3.33% last week



DJ US TSM

▼1120.32, or -2.72% last week



Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

Table showing performance of major U.S. stock market indexes including Dow Jones, Nasdaq Composite, S&P 500, and Russell 2000, with columns for high, low, latest week close, net change, and percentage change.

Lockup Expirations

None expected this week

IPO Scorecard

Performance of IPOs, most-recent listed first

Table showing IPO scorecard performance with columns for company, symbol, IPO date, offer price, and percentage change from offer to last day.

International Stock Indexes

Table showing international stock indexes by region/country, including MSCI ACWI, S&P/TSX Comp, Euro STOXX, and others, with columns for close, net change, and percentage change.

Commodities and Currencies

Table showing commodity and currency prices, including DJ Commodity, Crude oil, Natural gas, Gold, U.S. Dollar Index, and others, with columns for last week close, net change, and percentage change.

Consumer Rates and Returns to Investor

U.S. consumer rates

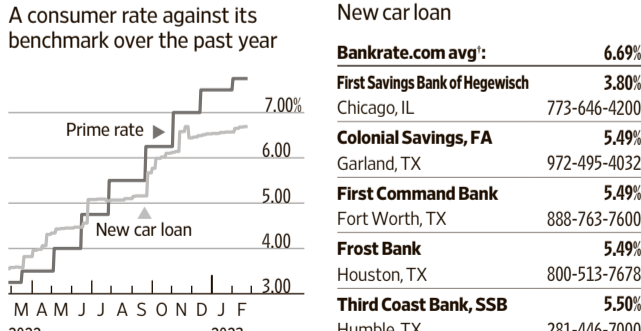
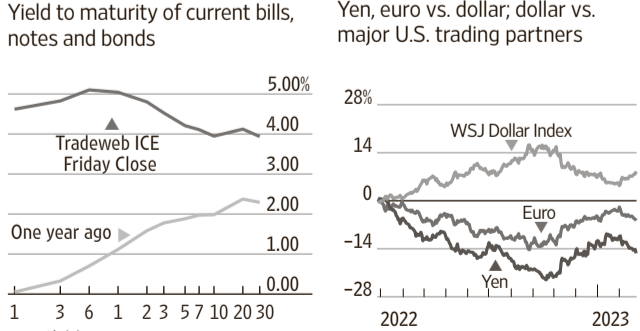


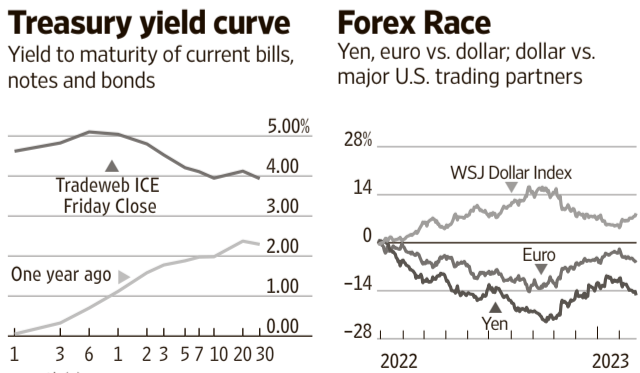
Table showing selected rates for new car loan, including Bankrate.com avg, First Savings Bank of Hegewisch, Colonial Savings, FA, and others.

Benchmark Yields and Rates

Treasury yield curve



Forex Race



Corporate Borrowing Rates and Yields

Table showing corporate borrowing rates and yields for U.S. Treasury, Aggregate, Fixed-Rate MBS, High Yield 100, Muni Master, and EMBI Global.

New to the Market

Continued on page B9

Public Offerings of Stock

IPOs in the U.S. Market

Initial public offerings of stock expected this week; might include some offerings, U.S. and foreign, open to institutional investors only via the Rule 144a market; deal amounts are for the U.S. market only

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Lockup Expirations

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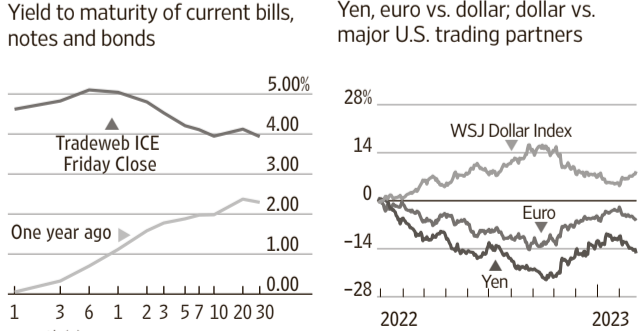
Consumer Rates and Returns to Investor

Selected rates

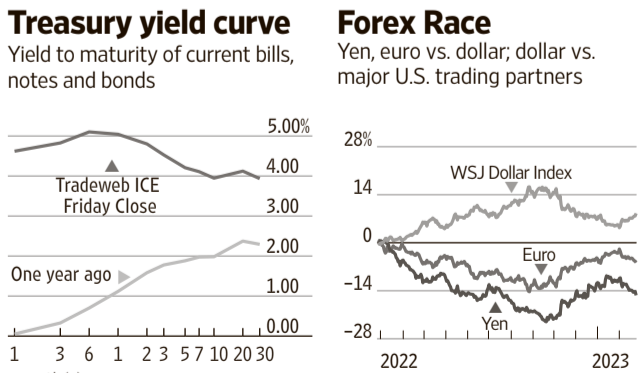
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A Week in the Life of the DJIA

A look at how the Dow Jones Industrial Average component stocks did in the past week and how much each moved the index. The DJIA lost 1,009.77 points, or 2.99%, on the week. A \$1 change in the price of any DJIA stock = 6.59-point change in the average. To date, a \$1,000 investment on Dec. 31 in each current DJIA stock component would have returned \$30,208, or a gain of 0.69%, on the \$30,000 investment, including reinvested dividends.

Table showing the week's action for DJIA component stocks, including columns for stock price change, point change, company, symbol, close price, and \$1,000 invested return.

CLOSED-END FUNDS

Listed are the 300 largest closed-end funds as measured by assets. Closed-end funds sell a limited number of shares and invest the proceeds in securities. Unlike open-end funds, closed-end funds generally do not buy their shares back from investors who wish to cash in their holdings. Instead, fund shares trade on a stock exchange. NA signifies that the information is not available or not applicable. NS signifies funds not in existence for the entire period. 12 month yield is computed by dividing income dividends paid (during the previous 12 months for periods ending at month-end or during the previous 52 weeks for periods ending at any time other than month-end) by the latest month-end market price adjusted for capital gains distributions. Depending on the fund category, either 12-month yield or total return is listed.

Source: Lipper

Friday, February 24, 2023

Table of closed-end funds with columns: Fund (SYM), NAV, Close, Disc, Ret, Prem, Ttl, Ret. Includes categories like General Equity Funds, Specialized Equity Funds, Income & Preferred Stock Funds, and High Yield Bonds.

Table of closed-end funds with columns: Fund (SYM), NAV, Close, Disc, Ret, Prem, Ttl, Ret. Includes categories like U.S. Mortgage Bond Funds, Investment Grade Bond Funds, Loan Participation Funds, and High Yield Bonds.

Table of closed-end funds with columns: Fund (SYM), NAV, Close, Disc, Ret, Prem, Ttl, Ret. Includes categories like International Funds, Real Estate Funds, and Specialty Funds.

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New to the Market

Public and Private Borrowing

Treasuries

Table of Treasury auctions with columns: Date, Description, Amount, Status.

Insider-Trading Spotlight

Trading by 'insiders' of a corporation, such as a company's CEO, vice president or director, potentially conveys new information about the prospects of a company. Insiders are required to report large trades to the SEC within two business days. Here's a look at the biggest individual trades by insiders, based on data received by Refinitiv on February 24, and year-to-date stock performance of the company.

Biggest weekly individual trades

Based on reports filed with regulators this past week

Table of biggest weekly individual trades with columns: Date, Company, Symbol, Insider, Title, No. of shares in trans, Price range, \$ Value, Close, % Ytd.

Sellers

Table of stock sellers with columns: Date, Company, Symbol, Insider, Title, No. of shares, Price range, \$ Value, Close, % Ytd.

Buying and selling by sector

Based on actual transaction dates in reports received this past week

Table of buying and selling by sector with columns: Sector, Buying, Selling.

Other Domestic Taxable Bond Funds

Table of Other Domestic Taxable Bond Funds with columns: Fund (SYM), NAV, Close, Disc, Ret, Prem, Ttl, Ret.

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Borrowing Benchmarks | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Money Rates

Key annual interest rates paid to borrow or lend money in U.S. and international markets. Rates below are a guide to general levels but don't always represent actual transactions.

Table of money rates including Inflation, U.S. government rates, Discount, Federal funds, International rates, Prime rates, Policy Rates, and Overnight repurchase.

Notes on data:

U.S. prime rate is the base rate on corporate loans posted by at least 70% of the 10 largest U.S. banks, and is effective February 2, 2023. Other prime rates aren't directly comparable; lending practices vary widely by location. Discount rate is effective February 2, 2023. Secured Overnight Financing Rate is as of February 23, 2023. DTCC GCF Repo Index is Depository Trust & Clearing Corp.'s weighted average for overnight trades in applicable CUSIPs. Value traded is in billions of U.S. dollars. Federal funds rates are Tullett Prebon rates as of 5:30 p.m. ET.

Sources: Federal Reserve; Bureau of Labor Statistics; DTCC; FactSet; Tullett Prebon Information Ltd.

Cash Prices | wsj.com/market-data/commodities

These prices reflect buying and selling of a variety of actual or "physical" commodities in the marketplace—separate from the futures price on an exchange, which reflects what the commodity might be worth in future months.

Table of commodity cash prices for Energy, Metals, Fibers and Textiles, Grains and Feeds, and Food, with columns for commodity name, price, and date.

KEY TO CODES: A=ask; B=bid; BP=country elevator bids to producers; C=corrected; D=CME; E=Manfra, Tordella & Brookes; H=American Commodities Brokerage Co; K=bi-weekly; M=monthly; N=nominal; n.a.=not quoted or not available; P=Soiland Platinum; R=S&L Energy; S=Platts-TSI; T=Outlook Limited; U=USDA; V=Benchmark Mineral Intelligence; W=weekly; Y=International Coffee Organization; Z=not quoted. *Data as of 2/23

Sources: Refinitiv; Dow Jones Market Data

Source: Dow Jones Market Data

HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

Chips Find Their Way To Russia Via China

Beijing has refused to join Western sanctions

The U.S. invented microchips and it has threatened sanctions on anyone who sells many, if not most, varieties to Russia. Still, recent leaks—and some publicly available data—make clear that they keep showing up on Russian shores. At the center of the trade is China and, allegedly, a few other intermediary countries such as Turkey.

The adaptability of global trade networks in response to sanctions and tariffs isn't a new story: For another recent example, look no further than global energy markets, which have adapted with remarkable speed to the West's decision to wean itself off Russian energy. But stemming the flow of semiconductors—which power both everyday appliances and military equipment—into Russia presents a particularly tough problem.

One key reason is that China, which has refused to join Western sanctions on Russia, sits at the center of the global chip trade. It is the world's electronics factory floor and the largest global importer of chips, as well as a significant manufacturer of low-end chips itself. Its publicly available export statistics also omit comprehensive information on overseas business partners.

Public data does show a certain number of semiconductor devices, for example, continuing to flow to Russia—but not who sold them or whether they were in fact sanctioned items.

That makes curbing the flow of semiconductors from China to Russia—directly or via third countries “repackaged” as new goods—ex-



China sits at the center of the global chip trade. A Shanghai tradeshow.

tremely difficult without completely halting chip exports to China and bringing the world's electronics industry to a crashing halt.

What is clear is that after a dip in early 2022 following the U.S.'s initial sanctions, Russia's semiconductor imports have rebounded strongly, and that Chinese companies play a key role. Leaked Russian customs records show Russia's imports of chip and chip components were nearing their prewar monthly average by late 2022, more than half of which came from China. And publicly available Chinese customs data show that integrated-circuit shipments to Russia were valued at \$179 million in 2022—against just \$74 million in 2021.

Chips and chip components from China are showing up in some other interesting places, too. Chinese customs data shows that exports of certain semiconductors to Turkey—including basic building blocks of electronics such as diodes and transistors—also more than doubled in 2022. China's total exports of such semiconductors only grew 36%.

Turkish exports of similar semiconductors to Russia, meanwhile, rose from \$79,000 in 2021 to \$3.2 million in 2022, United Nations data shows. And Turkey, which also has declined to endorse U.S. and

European sanctions on Russia, has become a major exporter of overall electronic equipment to Russia. Turkey's total electrical machinery and electronics exports to Russia more than doubled in 2022 to \$559 million, U.N. data shows.

U.S. Treasury officials visited Turkey and several other Middle Eastern nations including Oman and the United Arab Emirates in early February to try to clamp down on Russian procurement networks. Turkey's foreign minister said on Feb. 20 that Turkey doesn't export electronics used in the defense industry to Russia.

Curtailling sales and shipments of the most advanced chips to China and Russia is one thing but, as Western nations are once again discovering to their chagrin, trying to stifle trade flows of more-commoditized items like basic semiconductors is a different matter. That is particularly true when the world's largest trading nation is directly involved and large portions of the developing world are openly skeptical of the West's sanctions regime.

As in the 2018 and 2019 Sino-U.S. trade war—when tariff-laden Chinese goods made their way to third countries and overall Chinese exports held up well—Washington is finding that trade flows, like life, tend to find a way.

—Nathaniel Taplin

Buffett Wannabes Lose Luster

Warren Buffett, who has earned Berkshire Hathaway's investors close to 4 million percent, once said “the stock market is designed to transfer money from the active to the patient.” Now many younger investors are coming around to his way of thinking.

In 2008, as the seeds of the recent tech boom were being sown during the financial crisis, Tim Ferriss, bestselling author of “4-Hour Workweek,” which told readers how to “join the new rich,” snagged a coveted microphone at Berkshire's annual meeting. He asked Mr. Buffett and his business partner Charlie Munger how a 30-year-old with his first million dollars should invest.

“I'd probably have it all in a very low cost index fund,” Mr. Buffett said. “I'd recognize the fact that I'm an amateur investor...forget it and go back to work.”

Mr. Ferriss ignored those pearls of wisdom. He invested early in Facebook, Shopify, Uber Technologies, Twitter and others, penned more bestsellers and launched a popular podcast. An older, wiser Mr. Ferriss said he largely stepped back from angel investing, calling many of his wins “lucky.” His words of wisdom for a 30-year-old insta-millionaire today? “Follow Buffett's advice.”

Not every wunderkind saw the light. Some tempted fate by comparing themselves to Mr. Buffett. But the ranks of acolytes hungry for investing secrets are thinning as the tide goes out on the tech stocks and cryptocurrencies they touted.

Booming alternative asset classes like crypto and meme stocks made big scores seem deceptively easy, while social media amplified gurus' voices. Barstool Sports founder David Portnoy declared himself “the new generation” in investing to his millions of Twitter followers. Mr. Buffett, he said, was “old” and “washed up.”

Venture capitalist Chamath Palihapitiya became so optimistic about tech's stock potential that in 2020, he reserved ticker symbols IPOA through IPOZ as placeholders for his firm's sponsorship of what he hoped would be dozens of special-purpose-acquisition-company mergers. “My ambition is to be our generation's Berkshire Hathaway,” he told Fortune that year, adding his version would focus on platforms. After its listing in late 2020, Mr. Palihapitiya's “IPOB”—now known as real-estate platform Opendoor—lost 97% of its value in just over 12 months.

The ultimate danger sign might have been when Cathie Wood of ARK Invest was touted as “the next Buffett.” Her main fund had returns of almost 160% in 2020 through concentrated bets in stocks like Tesla. It is down by 75% since peaking two years ago while Berkshire is up 25%.

The younger generation's interest in investing wasn't matched by acumen, making influencers' job easier. A recent Gen Z survey from Intuit found nearly three-quarters know it is important to invest but don't know how. Roughly half of respondents bought crypto without fully understanding the blockchain.

Messrs. Buffett and Munger probably won't be around to dole out advice during the next bubble. Their slow-and-steady approach seems to be ascendant at the moment. Last month, trading activity among individual investors hit its lowest level since January 2020, according to Vanda Research. Monthly active users at brokerage app Robinhood recently fell to their lowest level since it went public and index funds are newly popular on the platform.

Many paid a steep tuition to realize neither they nor their favorite pundits were investing geniuses. They could have listened to Mr. Buffett's tough-love advice to Mr. Ferriss back in 2008. —Laura Forman

Monitor the Market

Build a custom watchlist to track companies and indexes you care about.

EXPLORE

WSJ.com/buildwatchlist



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