

▲ DOW 31,522.75 +64.35	▼ NASDAQ 14,047.50 -47.97	▼ S&P 500 3,932.59 -2.24	▲ 30-YR T-BOND 2.09% +0.8	▲ CRUDE OIL \$60.05 +5.58	▼ GOLD \$1,797.20 -24.40	■ SILVER \$27.32 ...	▼ EURO \$1.2115 -0.0016
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BRIEFING

Oregon lawmakers urged not to hike food safety fees

Farmers, processors and grocers are encouraging Oregon lawmakers to restore food safety funding with general tax revenues rather than sharply increase maximum fees on their industries.

In 2017, the Legislature shifted more of the responsibility for funding the state's food safety inspection program to regulated businesses, such as dairies, egg handlers, bakeries and grocery stores.

Their license fees now represent 75% of the program's funding, up from 60% before the fee structure was changed. The balance comes from the state's general fund, which comes from taxes on individuals and companies.

The state Department of Agriculture, which oversees food safety, is now asking lawmakers to "reverse the downward trend" in the program's budget by hiking maximum license fees by 15% in mid-2022 and another 15% in mid-2023.

Biden extends ban on foreclosures

President Joe Biden is extending a ban on housing foreclosures to June 30 to help homeowners struggling during the coronavirus pandemic.

The moratorium on foreclosures of federally guaranteed mortgages had been set to expire on March 31. On his first day in office, Biden had extended the moratorium from Jan. 31. Census Bureau figures show that almost 12% of homeowners with mortgages were late on their payments.

The White House says the coordinated actions announced Tuesday by the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs and Agriculture also will extend to June 30 the enrollment window for borrowers who want to request a pause or reduction in payments and will provide up to six additional months of forbearance for borrowers who entered forbearance on or before June 30 of last year.

Tuesday's actions do not address a federal moratorium through March 31 on evictions of tenants who've fallen behind on rent.

Bitcoin price over \$50K for first time

The seemingly unstoppable rise of Bitcoin continued Tuesday with the cost of a single unit of the digital currency rising above \$50,000 for the first time.

The price of Bitcoin has risen almost 200% in the last three months, and its volatility was on display Tuesday. After rising above \$50,600, it fell back to \$48,674 at 11:15 a.m. Pacific time.

Bitcoin is rallying as more companies signal the digital currency could eventually gain widespread acceptance as a means of payment. The vast majority of those who have acquired Bitcoin have treated it as a commodity, like gold, with few places accepting it in exchange for goods or services.

Companies have been leery because of Bitcoin's volatility and its use by parties who want to avoid the traditional banking system for a myriad of reasons.

— Bulletin wire reports

NASA enlists universities, companies to help design ... **FLYING TAXIS?**

BY GARY ROBBINS

The San Diego Union-Tribune
SAN DIEGO — NASA has given the University of California, San Diego, \$5.8 million to help develop electric-powered flying taxis, a form of ride sharing that has been envisioned for decades but is struggling to get beyond the concept stage.

UCSD will lead a group of universities and companies in creating software tools to design small fleets of vertical take-off-and-landing aircraft that

are quieter, safer, cleaner and more efficient and affordable than helicopters.

Customers would go to conveniently located taxi stands, where they could hail a ride with a smartphone app and join other passengers in getting quickly transported significant distances in areas where ground traffic is often congested.

Some taxis might be pilotless, flying automated, preset routes.

The concept — also known as urban air mobility — is

largely meant for sprawling areas such as Los Angeles, which has some of the nation's worst traffic. Air taxis also could shuttle riders between places like San Diego International Airport and such outlying cities as Oceanside and Escondido.

A "90-minute ground commute to a downtown workplace could be reduced to a 15-minute air taxi flight," said John Hwang, a UCSD mechanical and aerospace engineering, said in a statement.



Dreamstime

See **Taxis** / A12

NASA enlists universities, companies to help design flying taxis.

Canada's cruise ban puts **SEASON IN DOUBT**

BY EDWARD STRATTON

The Astorian

The Alaska cruise season — an important source of revenue for the Port of Astoria — could be in jeopardy after Canada banned cruise ships with more than 100 passengers until March 2022 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement, the Canadian government said the ban was necessary to focus on vaccine rollout amid new variants of the virus.

"Temporary prohibitions to cruise vessels

and pleasure craft are essential to continue to protect the most vulnerable among our communities and avoid overwhelming our health care systems," said Omar Alghabra, the minister of transportation in Canada. "This is the right and responsible thing to do."

U.S. maritime law requires foreign-flagged cruise ships visiting multiple domestic ports to stop in another country during each cruise. Canada provides the stopover for cruise ships shuttling between the West Coast and Alaska.

As of last week, the port still had 17 cruise

ships scheduled to dock in Astoria through the year, starting with the Celebrity Eclipse on May 4. Ten spring cancellations have so far cost the port an estimated \$314,000 in revenue. Canceling the rest of the season could cost another \$500,000.

"I anticipate that we will have more cancellations if the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines don't change and the COVID situation doesn't change," Sue Transue, the port's terminal manager, recently

See **Cruise** / A12



The Regatta is riding out the coronavirus pandemic at the Port of Astoria.
Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Young inventor makes coding fun

BY GINA RICH

Special To The Washington Post

When Samaira Mehta was 6 years old, her father played a prank on her.

"He showed me basically something on his computer which had one button and a command which said, 'Press this if you're beautiful.' And he told me to give it a try," she said.

As Samaira hovered her mouse pointer over the command, the button disappeared.

Intrigued, Samaira asked her dad how he did it. He explained that he'd used something called coding, using a programming language to get a computer to do something. That lighthearted moment inspired Samaira to develop a passion for computer science. Now age 12, she is founder and chief executive of CoderBunnyz, a business that aims to make coding fun for everyone.

After her dad's prank, Samaira was eager to learn coding tricks. Her father recommended a website with practice exercises. Scrolling



Coder Bunnyz via The Washington Post

Samaira Mehta, who is 12, became interested in coding at age 6. Her friends didn't share her enthusiasm. She thought a game might convince them that learning to code can be fun. So she invented a board game called CoderBunnyz.

down the page, Samaira saw the words "make your own app." She tried following the instructions but made so many mistakes that "it

made my whole screen just look red," she said. Frustrated, she gave up.

See **Coding** / A12

Vaccine delays leave grocery workers feeling expendable

BY ALEXANDRA OLSON, DEE-ANN DURBIN AND ANNE D'INNOCENZIO

The Associated Press

As panicked Americans cleared supermarkets of toilet paper and food last spring, grocery employees gained recognition as among the most indispensable of the pandemic's front-line workers.

A year later, most of those workers are waiting their turn to receive COVID-19 vaccines, with little clarity about when that might happen.

A decentralized vaccine campaign has resulted in a patchwork of policies that differ from state to state, and even county to county in some areas, resulting in an inconsistent rollout to low-paid essential workers who are exposed to hundreds of customers each day.

See **Grocery** / A12