

DOW 32,423.15 -308.05	NASDAQ 13,227.70 -149.85	S&P 500 3,910.52 -30.07	30-YR T-BOND 2.35% -03	CRUDE OIL \$57.76 -3.80	GOLD \$1,724.70 -13.10	SILVER \$25.20 -.54	EURO \$1.1852 -.0090
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BRIEFING

Female farmers get a boost

Female farmers in Oregon and Washington will receive training and expertise in delivering their products to market as part of a new business accelerator established by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation.

The Women's Farm-2Food Accelerator began this month in partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Oregon State University Food Innovation Center and Union Kitchen, a D.C.-based food and beverage business incubator.

Twenty women — 10 from Oregon, 10 from Washington — were accepted into the program. Courses began March 3, spanning four main sessions including product launch, marketing, lab testing, and pricing and pitching to buyers.

In its first year, the accelerator is focused on women who grow specialty crops for value-added ingredients. It is designed to support small farms with less than \$500,000 in annual gross sales and fewer than 20 employees.

Stock gains reverse across the board

Stocks closed broadly lower Tuesday and gave back nearly all of their gains from a day earlier as technology, industrial and bank stocks fell.

The S&P 500 fell 30.07 points, or 0.8%, to 3,910.52. Technology stocks were the biggest drag on the market and pushed the Nasdaq 149.85 points lower, or 1.1%, to 13,227.70. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 308.05 points, or 0.9% to 32,423.15.

Stocks of smaller companies, which have far outpaced the rest of the market this year, fell even more. The Russell 2000 index gave back 3.6%.

Industrial and health care companies also accounted for a good part of the selling. Energy stocks helped drag down the market too as oil prices fell.

Investors continue to be focused on the future outlook for the U.S. economy as millions of Americans get vaccinated every day. Investors are wavering between optimism that vaccines might allow business and travel to return to normal and fears of higher inflation after struggling economies were flooded with credit and government spending.

— Bulletin wire reports

Oregon won't say how much it has lost to unemployment fraud

BY SARA CLINE

The Associated Press/Report for America
PORTLAND — Oregon officials continue to refuse to publicly disclose how much money the state has lost to unemployment insurance fraud during the pandemic, despite neighboring states Washington and California reporting huge sums of money wrongly paid after their systems were targeted by sophisticated hackers.

The Oregon Employment Department says it is not "comfortable" disclosing the information because it could provide criminals an opening to exploit their systems further.

"Although some other states have shared fraud-related data, the Ore-

gon Employment Department is not sharing any dollar amounts — including broad estimates — for how much we have identified as fraud, or breakdowns of other numbers," said Melanni Rosales, the communications director for the department. "That information could shed light on what types of things we find, and when we find them, and could potentially aid criminal schemers."

Nationwide fraud has overwhelmed state unemployment agencies and antiquated benefit systems that are easy targets for persistent criminals. It has delayed legitimate payments and turned thousands of Americans into victims of identity theft.

California has been the biggest

target, having distributed an estimated \$11 billion in fraudulent payments and an additional \$19 billion in suspect accounts.

Washington state was among the first hit with fraudulent unemployment claims. More than 122,000 fraudulent claims made in the state siphoned \$600 million. As of January, Washington was able to recover \$357 million.

Gov. Kate Brown agrees with the decision not to release the information, saying that the goal is to preserve the integrity of the unemployment insurance system and trust fund.

However, lawmakers are divided over the department's refusal to say how much it has lost.

COVID-19 relief

Bill would offer some breaks on payroll taxes

The Oregonian

A bipartisan group of Oregon lawmakers has introduced a bill that would enable businesses that saw big payroll tax hikes due to the COVID-19 pandemic to have a portion of those bills forgiven.

Oregon employers pay higher unemployment insurance taxes when the state's jobless rate goes up. Those taxes help replenish Oregon's unemployment insurance trust fund, which is used to pay jobless claims.

About 20% of Oregon employers — including the restaurants, bars, gyms and other businesses hardest hit by the pandemic — are set to cover nearly all of the projected \$183 million increase in unemployment taxes during 2021. However, House Bill 3389 aims to ease the burden on those employers.

An idea sprouted during a wedding



Lily and Luke Klimaszewski with their son, Emmett, in one of their plant propagation greenhouses. The Klimaszewskis have been running Lil' Starts, an urban farm and plant nursery in Portland, since 2013.

Aliya Hall/For the Capital Press

Oregon couple started a small community farm soon after getting married and are thriving even amid a pandemic

BY ALIYA HALL • For the Capital Press

PORTLAND — Originally, Lil' Starts Urban Farm was strictly a plant nursery. It wasn't until Lily and Luke Klimaszewski got engaged and decided to grow all the food for their wedding that they began growing produce.

"We way overplanted, and by June we were swimming in produce," Lily Kli-

maszewski said, adding that they were already selling their plants at farmers markets and were able to sell the excess produce alongside them.

From there, the business blossomed. Lil' Starts first began in 2013. The farm sells at farmers markets, through their community supported agriculture program and directly to restaurants. They

farm half an acre on their property and in 2018 expanded to 4.5 acres they lease at the Headwaters Incubator Farm.

It wasn't until this year that the income from the farm completely supported them. Despite the challenges with the pandemic, Klimaszewski said that was proof that small scale agriculture is sustainable.

"Last year people needed something to do and wanted to get more connected to anything, but also where their food is coming from," she said. "Part of it is that with everything going on, people want to feel good about what's going on with their money, and supporting a small farm makes them feel good."

When they first started their CSA, they had 12 members. Now they have sold out with 160 members.

Sustainability is an important aspect of Lil' Starts farm. They only use non-GMO seeds and both their plants and produce are free of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. They make their own soil mix, and their compost is locally sourced.

Along with it being better for the environment, Klimaszewski said that it's actually harder to run a small farm without sustainability being a keystone. She said they couldn't even find GMO seeds and aren't big enough to get an account at a farm supply store. Synthetic fertilizer was also more expensive than organic, she added.

"It's not a decision we make — it's the only decision to make," she said before adding that she doesn't want to demean conventional farmers because everyone has reasons for the way they farm.

They have four employees plus a farm manager and want to help support other farmers who are starting out. Eventually, they also want to give land back to the tribe it originally belonged to.

The biggest challenge for Klimaszewski is access to land. Before they moved to Headwaters Incubator Farm they had to find land in their neighborhood. Now their biggest goal is finding their "forever farm."

What they expected to be a challenge was selling the product, but that "happened organically," Klimaszewski said. In fact, it was that community that has been the most rewarding part of what they do.

"Especially this past year, the CSA and customers kept us in the community," she said.

Regal Cinemas to start reopening its theaters in April

BY JAKE COYLE

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Regal Cinemas, the second largest movie theater chain in the U.S., will reopen beginning April 2, its parent company, Cineworld Group, announced Tuesday.

Regal had been one of most notable holdouts in the gradual reopening of cinemas nationwide. For nearly half a year, its 7,211 screens and 549 theaters in the U.S. have been dark. Doors will open early next month with attendance limited to 25% to 50% capacity in about 500 locations.

The company hasn't specified which locations will reopen or in what sequence. It operates 18 theaters in Oregon.

In Oregon, movie theaters in counties designated by the state to be at high risk of coronavirus spread are allowed to open with 25% occupancy or with 50 people total, whichever is smaller. Movie theaters in moderate-risk counties can open with 50%

occupancy or 100 people total, whichever is smaller. Theaters in both risk categories must close by 11 p.m. daily. Theaters must remain closed in extreme-risk counties.

Cineworld also agreed to a new multi-year deal with Warner Bros. Beginning next year, the studio's releases will have a 45-day exclusive window at Regal cinemas, roughly slicing in half the traditional period. That doesn't apply to Warner releases this year, which are streaming simultaneously on HBO Max when they open in theaters.

Regal's April 2 reopening coincides with the release of Warner Bros.' "Godzilla vs. Kong."

The agreement is the latest in a reordering of the theatrical marketplace — a sea change accelerated by the pandemic but viewed as long-in-coming by some analysts given the rise in streaming services. About half of North American theaters were open as of last week, according to data firm Comscore.

■ The Oregonian contributed to this report.

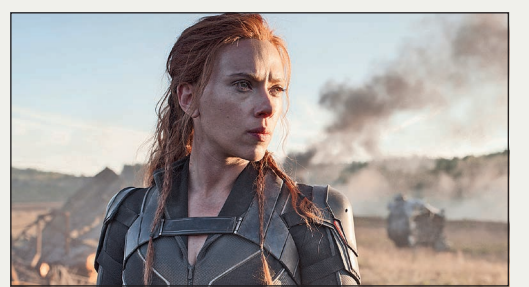
Disney shifts 'Black Widow,' doubling down on streaming vs. theaters

The Walt Disney Co. on Tuesday overhauled its upcoming film release plans, postponing some of its biggest films and shifting Marvel's "Black Widow," among other titles, to Disney+ the same time they arrive in theaters.

"Black Widow," once planned to debut in May 2020, had been set to kickoff the summer movie season on May 7. It will instead premiere July 9. And it will do so simultaneously on the company's streaming platform for a \$30 early-access fee.

For theaters, the announcement was a blow to hopes of an imminent recovery. While bigger and bigger films have turned to streaming and premium-on-demand in recent months, Marvel movies are Hollywood's most bankable box-office behemoths.

Disney will instead launch its summer with "Cruella" on its previously scheduled date, May 28. The "101 Dalmatians" spinoff with Emma Stone will also premiere in both theaters and on Disney+ for \$30 — the same hybrid approach the studio took with the recent release of "Raya and the Last



Marvel Studios/Disney via AP

"Black Widow," starring Scarlett Johansson and the latest movie in Marvel's lineup, will be released in July in theaters — and on Disney+ for \$30.

Dragon." The Pixar film "Luca" will bypass theaters entirely. On June 18, it will debut exclusively on Disney+.

Some studios have begun to move up, not postpone, their biggest films. Paramount Pictures moved "A Quiet Place Part II" from September to May 28.

— Associated Press