

▲ DOW 33,503.57 +57.31	▲ NASDAQ 13,829.31 +140.47	▲ S&P 500 4,097.17 +17.22	▼ 30-YR T-BOND 2.32% -01	▼ CRUDE OIL \$59.60 -17	▲ GOLD \$1,756.80 +16.70	▲ SILVER \$25.57 +.34	▲ EURO \$1.1917 +.0051
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BRIEFING

Right-to-repair bill dies in committee

The Oregon Legislature has once again shelved a bill that would have required electronics manufacturers to give consumers the tools and instructions to repair their own gadgets.

So-called "right to repair" laws have been a flashpoint between big electronics companies like Apple and consumer advocates as manufacturers guard the parts, tools and guides needed to fix broken devices.

Critics say that prevents the gadgets' owners, and independent repair shops, from making inexpensive repairs or, often, any repair at all. Consumer groups say that often forces consumers to buy expensive new electronics and discard the old one, creating unnecessary waste.

Right-to-repair advocates made a big push in two-dozen state legislatures across the country this year but appear to be making little headway. A right-to-repair bill died in Colorado last month and now Oregon's bill is also dead after a House committee declined to move it forward.

U.S. jobless claims up to 744K as virus still forces layoffs

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits rose last week to 744,000, signaling that many employers are still cutting jobs even as more people are vaccinated against COVID-19, consumers gain confidence and the government distributes aid throughout the economy.

The Labor Department said Thursday that applications increased by 16,000 from 728,000 a week earlier. Jobless claims have declined sharply since March of last year. But they remain high by historical standards: Before the pandemic, weekly applications typically remained below 220,000 a week.

For the week ending March 27, more than 3.7 million people were receiving traditional state unemployment benefits, the government said. If you include supplemental federal programs that were established last year to help the unemployed endure the health crisis, a total of 18.2 million are receiving some form of jobless aid the week of March 20.

Mortgage rates dip for first time since January

Mortgage rates fell for the first time in more than two months as buyers continue to be stifled by high prices and limited supply.

Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac reported Thursday that the benchmark 30-year loan rate dipped to 3.13% this week from 3.18% last week. At this time last year, the long-term rate was 3.33%.

The rate for a 15-year loan, popular among those looking to refinance, fell to 2.42% from 2.45% last week. One year ago it was 2.77%.

Last week, the National Association of Realtors reported that its index of pending home sales tumbled 10.6% to 110.3 in February, its lowest level since May of 2020.

— Bulletin wire reports

OREGON | COMMERCIAL RENT

Applicants outpace relief by \$15M

BY ZANE SPARLING
Oregon Capital Bureau

Hundreds of commercial landlords and tenants who applied for state funding to cover unpaid rent went away empty-handed last month — a disappointment worth approximately \$15.5 million.

Oregon's Commercial Rent Relief program is set to hand

out \$49.9 million to property owners after the first round of grant funding closed March 22.

Applications outpaced cash, with the requests totaling \$65.4 million.

The results aren't unexpected: Oregon hasn't had a commercial eviction moratorium in place since the end of September, and business owners

in arrears had until March 31 to make up the back rent.

But state data released to Pamplin Media Group shows those applicants with empty pockets — more than 350 business owners in total — are all located in the Portland metro area.

"There was simply more demand than supply in the metro

region," said Nathan Buehler, a spokesman for Business Oregon. "Only some businesses in the Portland metro area weren't able to get funded, but they will automatically be considered in round two of funding we'll roll out mid-April."

The state's agency funding formula allocates 20% of the fund each to Portland metro

and Willamette Valley businesses, as well as a 15% slice each to the eastern, southern, central and coastal regions of the state. But rural applications came in well below their cap, so the money rolled over and Portland area businesses ended up with 63.7% of the allocation.

See **Rent** / A8

GM, FORD | PRODUCTION

Chip shortage forces more cuts



Jeff Roberson/AP

Mid-sized pickups and full-sized vans are parked outside a General Motors assembly plant where they are produced in Wentzville, Missouri.

Associated Press
DETROIT —

The global shortage of semiconductors has forced General Motors and Ford to further cut production at their North American factories as chip supplies seem to be growing tighter. The shutdowns likely will crimp dealer inventory of vehicles made at the plants.

GM says it has managed to keep humming factories that make hot-selling and very profitable full-size pickup trucks and SUVs.

"GM continues to leverage every available semiconductor to build and ship our most popular and in-demand products," the company said Thursday in a statement.

The chip shortage has already been

rippling through various markets since last summer. It has made it difficult for schools to buy enough laptops for students forced to learn from home, delayed the release of popular products such as the iPhone 12 and created mad scrambles to find the latest video game consoles, such as the PlayStation 5.

But things have been getting even worse in recent weeks, particularly in

the auto industry, where factories are shutting down because there aren't enough chips to finish building vehicles that are starting to look like computers on wheels. The problem was recently compounded by a grounded container ship that blocked the Suez Canal for nearly a week, choking off chips headed from Asia to Europe.

See **Chip** / A8

HERMISTON

Midwest distribution company plans \$11M warehouse

BY JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — A new warehouse starting construction in Hermiston is expected to produce 100 new jobs once it is completed later this year.

Meyer Distributing, a company headquartered in Jasper, Indiana, received a building permit from the city of Hermiston in March to begin work on a new \$11 million warehouse. Meyer Distributing Chief Executive Officer Jeff Braun said he expects the warehouse to begin operations in December.

According to its website, the family-owned company is "a leader in specialty products marketing and distribution" and uses strategically placed warehouses around the country to distribute auto parts, sanitation supplies and lifestyle products.

After the Hermiston warehouse opens near the end of 2021, Braun said the company expects to hire between 75 and 100 people by the end of 2022. He said starting wages for all positions will be at least \$15 an hour, and the company will likely begin hiring in November.

The Hermiston warehouse will house inventory ready to be shipped to customers in the region. The facility will be in Hermiston's southern industrial area.

Braun said the company's Indiana headquarters has a population of 16,000 people in a county with a population of about 43,000 people.

"We are aware of how important an impact a company like ours can have on the local community and look forward to being a good partner with the city and its citizens," he said.

For more information about the company, visit www.meyerdistributing.com.

UNION DISPUTE

Powell's says laid-off workers will have to reapply for their jobs

BY MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

Powell's Books says it plans to add more employees as it prepares for business to pick up again as the pandemic recedes. But laid-off workers will have to reapply for their old jobs after the bookstore and its union failed to strike a deal over terms for rehiring them.

Before the pandemic, Powell's had 400 union workers across the business. About 85% of them lost their jobs in March 2020 as the bookstore shuttered all its locations in the early days of the pandemic.

Those stores are open again, except for the Powell's location at

"We are appalled at Powell's decision to eliminate the recall list and force laid off employees to apply for their former jobs."

— Myka Dubay, union representative

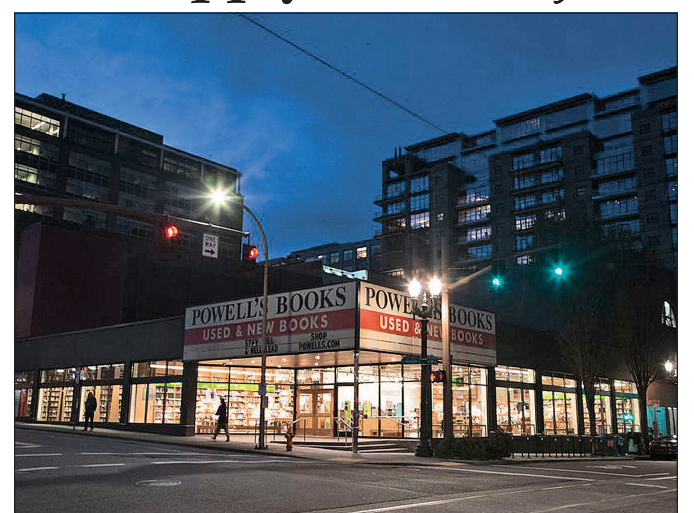
Portland International Airport, which closed permanently. But Powell's employs just around 170 laid-off workers, about 135 of them in union jobs.

Powell's says laid-off workers right to be their old jobs had expired under terms of its contract with ILWU Local 5, the

union representing its workers. The bookstore's new CEO, Patrick Bassett, said in an "open letter" Tuesday that the company had talked with the union about extending those recall rights for another six months.

Having failed to reach agreement, though, Bassett wrote that the recall rights have lapsed and Powell's will post its openings publicly.

"I want to emphasize that any former Powell's employees whose seniority and employment were lost under the labor contract remain eligible to apply for new positions," Bassett wrote.



Beth Nakamura/Oregonian file

See **Powell's** / A8

Powell's Books flagship store in downtown Portland.