

<b>DOW</b> 34,035.99 +305.10	<b>NASDAQ</b> 14,038.76 +180.92	<b>S&amp;P 500</b> 4,170.42 +45.76	<b>30-YR T-BOND</b> 2.21% -11	<b>CRUDE OIL</b> \$63.46 +.31	<b>GOLD</b> \$1,765.40 +30.50	<b>SILVER</b> \$25.96 +.44	<b>EURO</b> \$1.1975 +.0004
---------------------------------	------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------------	--------------------------------

**BRIEFING**

**U.S. jobless claims plummet**

First-time unemployment claims fell sharply last week, to a pandemic low of 576,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's down 193,000 from the preceding week's surprise spike, and an unexpectedly strong showing even as unemployment remains elevated.

Economists had projected about 710,000 fresh claims for the week ending April 10. The week before, some 719,000 Americans applied for unemployment benefits. Now, claims sit at their lowest level since March 2020, when the pandemic began, but still well above pre-pandemic levels.

For the same week ending April 10, an additional 131,975 Americans filed claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, for gig and self-employed workers.

A total of 16.9 million people are continuing to collect unemployment benefits, down from 18.2 million in the previous week.

**Dow crests 34,000 on economy news**

Wall Street notched more milestones Thursday, as a broad market rally pushed the S&P 500 to an all-time high and the Dow Jones Industrial Average crossed above the 34,000 mark for the first time.

The S&P 500 rose 1.1%, with technology, health care and communication stocks accounting for much of the upward moves. Only energy and financial companies closed lower. Bond yields fell.

The rally came as investors welcomed a suite of encouraging economic reports showing how hungry Americans are to spend again, how fewer workers are losing their jobs and how much fatter corporate profits are getting.

Expectations are very high on Wall Street that the economy — and thus corporate profits — are in the midst of exploding out of the cavern created by the pandemic, thanks to COVID-19 vaccinations and massive support from the U.S. government and Federal Reserve.

**March retail sales soar 9.8%**

Newly vaccinated and armed with \$1,400 stimulus checks, Americans went on a spending spree last month, buying new clothes and going out to eat again.

Retail sales surged a seasonally adjusted 9.8% in March after dropping about 3% the month before, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The increase was the biggest since May of last year, when stores reopened after closing at the start of the pandemic. It was also much larger than the 5.5% increase Wall Street analysts had expected.

Thursday's report, which covers about a third of overall consumer spending, is the latest sign that the economy is improving as vaccinations accelerate, business restrictions are relaxed and more people are willing to head out to shop or eat. U.S. consumer confidence surged in March to the highest level in a year.

— *Bulletin wire reports*

**COVID-19 | Portland International Airport**

## Travel soars to highest level of pandemic

BY MIKE ROGOWAY  
The Oregonian

Oregonians are flying again. Nearly 775,000 people traveled through Portland International Airport in March, more than twice as many as did in February. While still well below normal travel patterns, the March passenger count was by far the highest in the year since the pandemic began.

**Redmond Airport traffic increasing**

Redmond Airport reported 18,872 boardings in February, a 7.5% increase from January, according to the latest figures on the airport website. But that was still more than 50% below the number of passengers boarding flights in Redmond in February 2020.

The airport forecasts travel will be up again in April, to 813,000 passengers, and a number of airlines are expand-

ing service — restoring flights to Europe and a number of domestic destinations. There are several possible

explanations. March is spring break in Oregon, always a busy travel month. And Oregonians — like people everywhere — are tiring of the pandemic restrictions and missing family and their favorite vacation destinations.

Above all, though, the soaring passenger volumes surely reflect the effect of the vaccines.

The number of fully vaccinated Oregonians is now approaching 1 million. The vaccines are proving highly effective, with cases of serious COVID-19 infections extremely rare.

It took until April 2 for federal health authorities to advise that fully vaccinated people can resume domestic travel.

See **Air travel** / A8

**OREGON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES**

## EVOLVING TECHNOLOGY CHANGES THE WORK



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian photos

Umatilla Electric Cooperative linemen Nick Hardie, from left, Matt Ellis and Mitch Colvin work on a utility pole in Hermiston.

BY JADE MCDOWELL • East Oregonian

HERMISTON —

When Mitch Colvin started working as a lineman for Umatilla Electric Cooperative six years ago, he spent a lot of time looking at maps. The maps, which crews hauled around in their pickup trucks, spanned two black binders, each several inches thick and much wider than a standard binder. When linemen needed to locate a specific utility pole or other infrastructure, they had to look up the right paper map out of thousands, then search the tiny numbers on the page, looking for the right one.

Now, everything is digitized and everyone has an iPad.

"It speeds up the process a ton," Colvin said. "You just type it in and it pulls it right up."

The iPad not only pulls up the information that was previously contained in the maps, but also a treasure trove of other details, from the size of a transformer to the name and phone number of a customer associated with a meter. Linemen can also add information, such as photos, from on-site.

The geographic information system used to help crews pinpoint in-

frastructure in the field is overseen by Adelaide Zumwalt, GIS administrator for the electric co-op.

At its Hermiston office, she toggled through different maps, showing an interconnected web of information. On one map, little tree icons dotted Umatilla Electric Cooperative's service area. Pins marked places where employees used their iPads to note a tree that needs to be trimmed back from a power line, instantly making that information available to those in charge of vegetation management.

See **Electric** / A8



Hardie uses a rope to raise equipment up to fellow lineman Ellis while working on a utility pole in Hermiston.

## Senate Democrats propose overhaul of jobless programs

BY TONY ROMM

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats on Wednesday unveiled a sweeping new proposal to overhaul the country's unemployment insurance system, hoping to modernize the benefits — and add more money to millions of Americans' weekly checks — in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

The new draft legislation put forward by Sens. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Michael Bennet, D-Colo., seeks to address the financial hardships that many families experienced over the past year, as the coronavirus left a record number of people out of work and struggling to obtain aid amid the worst economic crisis in a generation.

Under the Democrats' proposal, Americans could more quickly apply to their states for jobless assistance. Their checks may be much larger as well, allowing many low- and middle-income workers to receive up to 75% of the wages they earned when they had stable employment.

In total, these workers would be eligible to obtain at least 26

weeks of unemployment aid if the new legislation becomes law. But they also would stand to collect additional sums — and do so over longer periods of time — in the event the country faces another major downturn or public-health emergency.

The bill includes additional help for part-time workers and those who drive for Uber, de-

liver for Grubhub or otherwise participate in the gig economy.

For Wyden and Bennet, the new standards seek to replace what many Democrats see as an unworkable, outdated system that experienced immense strain during the pandemic, forcing millions of Americans to wait weeks in some cases to receive much-needed aid.

See **Unemployment** / A8