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| ▲ DOW 34,200.67 +164.68 | ▲ NASDAQ 14,052.34 +13.58 | ▲ S&P 500 4,185.47 +15.05 | ▲ 30-YR T-BOND 2.26% +0.05 | ▼ CRUDE OIL \$63.13 -33 | ▲ GOLD \$1,779.00 +13.60 | ▲ SILVER \$26.10 +.14 | ▲ EURO \$1.1978 +.0003 |
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BRIEFING

NASA picks SpaceX for lunar lander

NASA chose SpaceX on Friday to build the lunar lander that will eventually put the first woman and person of color on the moon.

Elon Musk's Starship — the futuristic, shiny steel rocket ship that's been launching and exploding in Texas — beat out landers proposed by Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Dynetics, a subsidiary of Leidos. The contract is worth \$2.89 billion.

"We won't stop at the moon," said NASA's acting Administrator Steve Jurczyk. Mars is the ultimate goal, he told reporters.

NASA declined to provide a target launch date for the moon-landing Artemis mission, saying a review is underway. The Trump administration had set a 2024 deadline, but on Friday, NASA officials called it a goal.

"We'll do it when it's safe," said Kathy Lueders, who leads NASA's human space exploration office.

S&P 500 hits another record

Stocks added to their recent gains Friday, driving the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average to new highs.

The S&P 500 rose 0.4%, led by gains in companies that rely directly on consumer spending, health care stocks and banks, which benefited from higher Treasury yields. The benchmark index notched its fourth straight weekly gain.

The gains were tempered by modest declines in technology stocks, which have been prone to pull back when bond yields move higher. Rising bond yields tend to make shares in technology companies that have had a strong runup over the past year look too expensive. Crude oil prices slipped, weighing down energy companies.

Bond yields rose broadly after falling earlier in the week. The yield of the 10-year Treasury note rose to 1.59% from 1.53% late Thursday. Still, bond yields are down from the highs they hit earlier in the month, when the 10-year note traded at a yield of 1.75%.

Home construction beats 2006 pace

U.S. housing construction rebounded strongly in March to the fastest pace since 2006.

Builders began construction on new homes and apartments at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.74 million units in March, the Commerce Department reported Friday, a 19.4% increase over February when housing construction fell by 11.3%. It was the fastest pace for homebuilding since in June 2006 during the last housing boom.

Severe storms raked several regions of the country in February, setting construction back.

Economists expect housing construction to remain strong this year given the record low level of homes for sale. A new report from mortgage giant Freddie Mac concluded that the housing market is 3.8 million single-family homes short of what's needed to meet demand — a 52% increase from a significant housing shortage in 2018.

— Bulletin wire reports

Oregon House | COVID-19 legislation

Employer jobless tax cuts get full approval

BY MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

The Oregon House voted 56-0 Thursday night in favor of tax cuts that will save employers an estimated \$2.4 billion over the next decade, reforms triggered by the sharp rise in jobless claims during the pandemic.

The legislation makes a series of changes to how the state supports its unemployment insurance trust fund. Lawmakers say House Bill

3389, which now heads to the Senate, will blunt the impact of layoffs last year on what individual employers owe to the fund and take a more relaxed approach to keeping the fund solvent in the future.

"This is a bill that really does something," said Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene, who co-sponsored the legislation. He described it as a salve for restaurants, barbershops and others that were forced to lay off staff early in the pandemic

and would otherwise be facing a tax increase under the state's formula for funding jobless benefits.

"This is a big deal for businesses," Holvey said.

The effort to reform unemployment insurance funding began amid a steep rise in taxes for organizations that laid off workers in 2020. In Oregon, businesses that lay off the most workers pay higher taxes to keep the trust fund solvent.

See **Tax cuts** / A6

Bill extends time for businesses to repay rent

BY JAMIE GOLDBERG
The Oregonian

The Oregon House approved a bill Friday that would give businesses until the end of September to repay missed rent accumulated during the heart of the coronavirus pandemic.

The bill still needs approval in the Senate but received bipartisan support in the House in a 44-10 vote.

"This bill is coming a little bit late, but we need to protect our small businesses in this state," said Rep. Rob Nosse, D-Portland, who sponsored

the legislation.

Oregon lawmakers allowed the state's moratorium on commercial evictions to expire in September but gave business owners until the end of March to repay their outstanding rent, potentially preventing an onslaught of commercial evictions over the last six months.

But that missed rent is now coming due for struggling businesses, who urged lawmakers to act quickly to extend the grace period for them to repay their outstanding rent.

See **Rent** / A6

LEGAL POT IN NEW YORK

Hemp farmers eager to expand

BY MICHAEL HILL
The Associated Press

Legal marijuana is coming to New York, and hemp farmer Samir Mahadin sees it as a potential lifeline.

Farmers dealing with depressed prices for plants that produce CBD are eager to take part in a statewide marijuana market expected to generate billions of dollars a year once retail sales start. They already know how to grow and process cannabis plants, because hemp is essentially the same plant with lower levels of THC, marijuana's active ingredient.



Seth Wenig/AP

Gail Hepworth, right, and Amy Hepworth, sisters and co-owners of Hepworth Farms in Milton, New York, relax Monday on bags full of hemp plants.

Now they're waiting on rules that will allow them to switch seeds.

"I would love to get a license to grow cannabis. My wife and I love working with this plant. I believe in its ability and power as a medicine," said Mahadin, who runs Breathing Web Farms in the Finger Lakes with his wife. "And it could save my farm because what happened with the hemp has been catastrophic."

Last month, New York became the second-largest state to legalize recreational marijuana after California, with retail sales expected to begin as early as next year.

Existing medical marijuana businesses in New York are expected to play a major role in the new adult market, but lawmakers wrote in provisions to mitigate market dominance. Half of the licenses are supposed to go to "social and economic equity" applicants, which would in-

clude financially distressed farms.

Regulators are likely months away from answering market-defining questions such as how many licenses will be made available and how much they will cost. High prices for cultivation licenses, for instance, would freeze out some smaller farmers from the market, said Allan Gandelman, president of the New York Cannabis Growers & Processors Association.

And while commercial marijuana is often grown in highly controlled, indoor settings, Gandelman expects regulations to allow farmers to grow outdoors.

Gandelman, who runs Head & Heal CBD products, is among about 700 hemp farmers in the state. Many of them are motivated to move into marijuana not only because of their familiarity with the flower, but a crash in commodity prices driven by

oversupply. Even growers who have succeeded in the retail market for CBD, like Gandelman, see marijuana as integral to their future.

New Frontier Data estimates the legal production of smokable flower in New York will surge to 1.3 million pounds by 2025, all of which would have to be grown within the state.

"If you're a cannabis grower, you should be able to grow cannabis, period," said Gail Hepworth, CEO of Hempire State Growers in the Hudson Valley.

Hepworth grows hemp at the large organic farm she runs with her sister in the Hudson Valley and they sell CBD products retail and wholesale through their Hempire business. She said keeping farms like hers from the marijuana market would be like telling a tomato farmer, "You can only grow beefsteak. You can't grow cherry tomatoes. It just doesn't make sense."

She'd like to follow the same integrated business model for marijuana that they have for CBD, though the law sets limits on most licensed growers from running retail dispensaries.

One exception would be a "micro-business" license that would allow "limited" growing and selling. Gandelman compared it to New York's farm brewery program, but with customers coming to picturesque farms to buy craft buds instead of craft beer.

The idea would link cannabis to rural New York's tourism industry.

"Something I could envision for the northeastern states, and New York is no exception, is for example leaf peeping tours in the fall where you tour a cannabis farm and then you go wandering in the Adirondacks," said John Kagia chief knowledge officer of New Frontier Data.

Less than 25% of workers have returned to offices

BY ROGER VINCENT
Los Angeles Times

People had started showing up to the office again in greater numbers, but fled for home as the recent coronavirus surge shook the Southern California region, fresh data show.

Still, employers and landlords are betting that workers will want to return as vaccinations increase and virus fears recede, even though demand to rent space in office buildings continues to shrink.

"By the stats, it's not that encouraging," said broker Todd Doney of real estate services company CBRE. "We certainly have work ahead of us to get through this. ... But when the governor (of California) announced no more COVID restrictions on June 15, that's light at the end of the tunnel for me."

An average of 24% of employees in 10 major U.S. cities were back to the office as of April 7, down nearly a full percentage point from the week

before, according to Kastle Systems, which provides keycard entry systems used by many companies and tracks patterns of workers' card swipes.

In Los Angeles, the average at Kastle's 148 buildings was 22.1% and, like the national average, took a significant dip during the winter COVID-19 surge, but had been rising again before the latest virus resurgence. Although beneath the U.S. average, L.A.'s offices were more full than five other

cities tracked by Kastle, including San Jose at 16.7% and San Francisco at 13.4%.

Uber, Google, Facebook and Microsoft are among the companies that have reopened offices or are on the verge of doing so, according to media reports. And recent surveys have shown that many companies and their workers are eager or at least willing to get back to the office.

A February survey commissioned by software company

Eden Workplace found 85% of office workers are looking forward to being back at work, with many of them saying that they miss socializing with their colleagues. A customer poll by marketing data provider ZoomInfo in February found that more than half plan to be back in the office by June, with IT firms leading the way.

A big unknown is how businesses will configure their office space in a post-pandemic world.

See **Offices** / A6