

▼ DOW 33,820.38 -164.55	▼ NASDAQ 14,051.03 -39.19	▼ S&P 500 4,183.18 -3.54	▲ 30-YR T-BOND 2.30% +.01	▲ CRUDE OIL \$63.86 +.92	▼ GOLD \$1,774.00 -4.00	▼ SILVER \$26.09 -.32	▲ EURO \$1.2124 +.0035
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BRIEFING

Democrats try to reinstate rules to limit methane

Congressional Democrats are moving to reinstate regulations designed to limit potent greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas fields, as part of a broader effort by the Biden administration to tackle climate change.

The Senate planned to take up a resolution Wednesday that would undo an environmental rollback by President Donald Trump that relaxed requirements of a 2016 Obama administration rule targeting methane emissions from oil and gas drilling.

The Environmental Protection Agency approved the rule last year.

Democrats and environmentalists called it one of the Trump administration's most egregious actions to deregulate U.S. businesses, noting that methane is one of the most potent greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, packing a stronger punch in the short term than even carbon dioxide.

Fed keeps key rate near zero

The Federal Reserve is keeping its ultra-low interest rate policies in place, a sign that it wants to see more evidence of a strengthening economic recovery before it would consider easing its support.

In a statement Wednesday, the Fed expressed a brighter outlook, saying the economy has improved along with the job market. And while the policymakers noted that inflation has risen, they ascribed the increase to temporary factors.

The Fed also signaled its belief that the pandemic's threat to the economy has diminished, a significant point given Chair Jerome Powell's long-stated view that the recovery depends on the virus being brought under control. Last month, the Fed had cautioned that the virus posed "considerable risks to the economic outlook." On Wednesday, it said only that "risks to the economic outlook remain" because of the pandemic.

Aid for low-income homeowners

The Federal Housing Finance Agency on Wednesday announced a new refinance option for certain low-income borrowers, helping them take advantage of low interest rates and save money each month.

To qualify, borrowers must have a Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac backed loan, for a single-family home that they reside in. Their income must be at or below 80% of the median income for their area. And their loan needs to be in generally good standing — with no missed payments in the past six months and no more than one missed payment in the past 12 months.

While there are other requirements for the credit profile, it is designed to ease the process to allow more borrowers qualify. The cost and credit requirements can keep some lower-income borrowers from seeking refinancing. The new refinance option will be available to eligible borrowers beginning this summer.

— Bulletin wire reports

Look, up in the sky! It's Thin Mints



Sam Dean/Wing LLC via AP

Girl Scouts Alice, right, and Gracie work with a Wing delivery drone April 14 in Christiansburg, Virginia. The company is testing drone delivery of Girl Scout cookies in the area.

Girl Scout cookies take flight in Virginia drone deliveries

BY MATT O'BRIEN • The Associated Press

Missing out on Thin Mints in the pandemic? A Google affiliate is using drones to deliver Girl Scout cookies to people's doorsteps in a Virginia community.

The town of Christiansburg has been a testing ground for commercial delivery drones operated by Wing, a subsidiary of Google's corporate parent Alphabet.

Now the company is adding the iconic boxed cookies to the more mundane drugstore offerings, FedEx packages and locally-made pastries, tacos and cold brew coffees it's been hauling to a thinly populated area of residential subdivisions since 2019.

Wing said it began talking to local Girl Scout troops because they've been having a harder time selling cookies during the pandemic, when fewer people are out and about.

The organization jumped on the new twist to its skills-building mission.

"I'm excited that I get to be a part of history," said 11-year-old Gracie Walker, of the Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Troop 224. "People are going to realize and be, like, 'Hey, this is better for the environment, and I can just walk outside in my pajamas and get cookies.'"

It's the latest attempt to build public enthusiasm for futuristic drone delivery as Wing competes against Amazon, Walmart, UPS and others to overcome the many technical and regulatory challenges of flying packages over neighborhoods.

David Vos, an aerospace engineer who led Google's Wing project until 2016, said he has



Sam Dean/Wing LLC via AP

Alice and Gracie open a Wing delivery drone container.

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— Gracie Walker, 11, of the Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Troop 224

been surprised that drone delivery ventures haven't taken off more quickly.

"I thought it was completely doable to be up and going by 2021," Vos said.

While he still thinks drone technology is getting closer to delivering the size, weight and power needed to transport

goods safely in populated places, Vos said the tech industry also needs a cultural shift.

In particular, he said, it needs to bring on people from the traditional aviation industry who have experience building "safety-critical systems" that meet strict performance standards.

See **Cookies** / A12

PSEUDOEPHEDRINE

Measure would eliminate need for a prescription

Bill passes the Oregon House

BY PETER WONG

Oregon Capital Bureau

Oregon would no longer require a prescription for medicines containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine under a bill that has cleared the House.

House Bill 2648 went to the Senate on a 54-4 vote on Wednesday.

The requirement for a prescription was written into law in 2005, when people were buying medicines containing pseudoephedrine — a precursor chemical — for use in making methamphetamine, a powerful stimulant that is illegal. Oregon was the first state to do so.

"We had a meth-lab problem, and it was really bad," Rep. Bill Post, a Republican from Keizer and the bill's floor manager, said. "It worked. Meth labs went way down to almost nothing."

The law made it harder to obtain some medicines commonly used for colds and allergies.

But since then, methamphetamine manufacturing has switched from homegrown labs to Mexico.

See **Pseudoephedrine** / A12

Pharmaceutical industry lobbies to defeat Oregon drug-pricing bill

Trade group spent nearly \$800K during first quarter

BY HILLARY BORRUD

The Oregonian

The pharmaceutical industry is pumping money into lobbying Oregon lawmakers in an effort to kill a drug pricing proposal that would be the most aggressive in the nation.

Industry trade group PhRMA reported spending more than \$790,000 on lobbying in Oregon during the first quarter of the year, more than four times as much as any other entity.

Two years ago, PhRMA spent \$106,697 lobbying Oregon lawmakers in the same three-month period. Oregon's legislative session continues through June.

The prospect that Oregon could create a Prescription Drug Affordability Board empowered to set upper limits on how much individual and insurance group buyers could pay for the most expensive drugs has attracted national political spending for and against the proposal, The Oregonian reported earlier this month.

See **Drug pricing** / A12

COLUMBIA RIVER

Despite drought, good water supply predicted

BY SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN

Capital Press

COLUMBIA LAKE, B.C. — Drought plagues much of the West, but officials predict abundant water supplies this year for Pacific Northwest irrigators who rely on the Columbia River System.

That's good news for thousands of U.S. farms that rely on drainage from the Columbia River watershed, spanning Oregon, Washington, Idaho, western Montana and small portions of Wyoming, Utah and Nevada.

The Columbia — the Pacific Northwest's largest river — begins in the Rocky Mountains of British

Columbia, Canada, zigzags into Washington state, turns west into Oregon and finally empties into the Pacific Ocean. The river's largest tributary is the Snake River, crossing Idaho.

The recent positive forecast comes after a winter of heavy snowpack in British Columbia.

The Canadian Drought Monitor's most recent report labels the region surrounding the river's headwaters as "abnormally dry" this spring due to meager rainfall — 40% below average. But because of a snowy winter, officials say water supplies look healthy.

"I don't think (irrigators) will

have any problems with water supplies on the Columbia this year," said Nick Bond, Washington state climatologist. "It's tapping that healthy snowpack."

Bond said farmers that rely on the Columbia are much more fortunate than irrigators in other regions.

While it might seem strange that the Columbia River is getting more water while other areas are getting less, Bond said, it makes sense according to current climate change models, which predict lower latitudes will experience increasing drought while higher latitudes will experience more extreme winter snowfalls.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The Dalles Dam on the Columbia River. The water supply for the river system will be ample, experts say.