

DOW 34,479.60 +13.36	NASDAQ 14,069.42 +49.09	S&P 500 4,247.44 +8.26	30-YR T-BOND 2.15% ...	CRUDE OIL \$70.91 +62	GOLD \$1,877.40 -16.80	SILVER \$28.13 +11	EURO \$1.2103 -0069
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BRIEFING

Plans scrapped for Washington plant

A company backed by the Chinese government Friday ended its seven-year effort to build one of the world's largest methanol plants along the Columbia River in southwestern Washington, following a series of regulatory setbacks.

Northwest Innovation Works proposed a \$2.3 billion project to take cracked natural gas from Canada and convert it into methanol, which it would then ship to China to make ingredients for plastics used in everything from iPhones to clothing to medical devices.

The state Department of Ecology denied a key permit for the project in January, saying it would create too much pollution and have negative effects on the shoreline. On Friday, the company notified the Port of Kalama it was terminating its lease.

Economic development officials in southwest Washington blasted the state for dooming the project, saying that the company's methods of making methanol from natural gas would have been cleaner than making it from coal, as is done elsewhere.

Judge pauses loan forgiveness plan

A federal judge has halted a loan forgiveness program for farmers of color in response to a lawsuit alleging the program discriminates against white farmers.

U.S. District Judge William Griesbach in Milwaukee issued a temporary restraining order Thursday suspending the program for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

The program pays up to 120% of direct or guaranteed farm loan balances for Black, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian American or Pacific Islander farmers. President Joe Biden's administration created the loan forgiveness program as part of its COVID-19 pandemic relief plan.

Conservative law firm Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty filed suit in April arguing white farmers aren't eligible, amounting to a violation of their constitutional rights. The firm sued on behalf of 12 farmers from Oregon and other states.

Man convicted of insider trading

A Washington state man who admitted using inside information from his wife about Amazon to trade the company's stock has been sentenced to 26 months in prison.

Viky Bohra, 37, received the sentence Thursday after pleading guilty last year to securities fraud, said Acting U.S. Attorney Tessa Gorman.

Bohra admitted he made profits of \$1.4 million between 2016 and 2018 with information provided by his wife, Gorman said. She had access to confidential information about Amazon revenue and expenses, and because of her work.

Bohra's wife, Laksha Bohra, will not face charges as a result of her husband's plea agreement with federal prosecutors. Bohra and his family have paid \$2.6 million in penalties and interest in the case. Laksha Bohra was suspended from her job in October 2018 and resigned soon after that, court records said.

— Bulletin wire reports

Hitachi plans semiconductor research facility in Hillsboro

BY MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

Japanese electronics conglomerate Hitachi plans to build a large semiconductor research facility in Hillsboro, expanding its existing presence there to work with manufacturing clients in the U.S. to develop new technologies.

Hitachi didn't say what it will

spend on the facility or how many it will hire, but the two-story, 219,000-square-foot facility could conceivably employ hundreds when it opens in August 2022. Hitachi has had a small operation in Hillsboro since 2014; it's not clear how many people it employs now.

Though the facility wouldn't manufacture chips itself, Hi-

tachi appears to be betting on growth in U.S. semiconductor production in the coming years. Most chipmaking has shifted to Asia over the past two decades, but national competition with China and global semiconductor supply shortages have both Democrats and Republicans calling for more production in the U.S.

A bill passed by the U.S. Senate this week would allocate \$50 billion in incentives to support domestic semiconductor manufacturing. Intel and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. have committed to spend billions of dollars to build new factories in Arizona.

See **Hitachi** / A6

U.S. issues COVID-19 rules for health care workers

BY CHRISTINA JEWETT
Kaiser Health News

Labor Department officials on Thursday announced a temporary emergency standard to protect health care workers, saying they face "grave danger" in the workplace from the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The new standard would require employers to remove workers who have COVID-19 from the workplace, notify workers of COVID-19 exposure at work and strengthen requirements for employers to report worker deaths or hospitalizations to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"These are the workers who continue to go into work day in and day out to take care of us, to save our lives," said Jim Frederick, acting assistant secretary of Labor for occupational safety and health. "And we must make sure we do everything in our power to return the favor to protect them."

The new rules are set to take effect immediately after publication in the Federal Register and are expected to affect about 10.3 million health care workers nationwide.

The government's statement of reasons for the new rules cites the work of Kaiser Health News and The Guardian in tallying more than 3,600 health care worker COVID-19 deaths through April 8. Journalists documented far more deaths than the limited count by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which through May tallied 1,611 deaths on case-reporting forms that were often incomplete.

The Lost on the Frontline project documented early calls for better respiratory protection for health care workers than loose-fitting face masks, noted serious complaints to OSHA from hospital workers that went unaddressed and revealed repeated employer failures to report dozens of worker deaths. It also found that health care employers were often remiss in notifying workers about exposure to the coronavirus on the job.

The new standard would address some of those problems.

The rules require workers to wear N95 or elastomeric respirators when in contact with people with either suspected or confirmed COVID-19. They strengthen employer record-keeping requirements, saying employers must document all worker COVID-19 cases (regardless of whether they were deemed work-related) and report work-related deaths even if they occur more than 30 days after exposure.

See **Health care** / A6

Wellspring of water worries

Most new Oregon wells are being drilled in areas of groundwater concern

BY MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI • Capital Press

Most new wells in Oregon are drilled where groundwater is already at risk of depletion, potentially aggravating conflicts among irrigators, according to state water regulators.

In the past decade, about 80% of applications for groundwater permits were in "areas of concern" or "significant concern" for declining aquifers and other groundwater problems, an agency study found.

Roughly 80% of those applications were approved by the state's Water Resources Department, the study said.

One-third of the "significant concern" areas identified in the OWRD's analysis aren't currently subject to regulatory groundwater restrictions, the report said.

The report's findings were recently met with consternation by some members of the Oregon Water Resources Commission, which oversees the agency.

The problem is reminiscent of falling chinook salmon populations in the Willamette River, which some consider the "best studied extinction ever," said Joe Moll, commission member and executive director of the McKenzie River Trust.

"I kind of fear we have a similar situation where we're watching something get worse. We're kind of working but we're somewhat limited, i.e. helpless," Moll said during the commission's most recent meeting.

Under Oregon water law, regulators are limited in their ability to reject permits for new wells, said Justin Iverson, OWRD's groundwater section manager.

For example, wells must generally be within a mile of a stream or river to trigger concerns about substantially interfering with surface waters, he said.

Similarly, new wells are only considered to interfere with existing ones in limited circumstances, Iverson said. "There is a fairly high threshold for finding injury."

Applicants are often "savvy" enough to know which locations are more likely to be approved for drilling, he said.

"The statutes say that we're going to presume that a new application is in the public interest, but that's a rebuttable presumption," Iverson said.

Permitting entities must always make decisions based on "imperfect information," but the study indicates that Oregon may not have the correct standards for approving groundwater applications, said Meg Reeves, retired general counsel for Oregon State University and the commission's chair.

"This does raise the questions for me as to whether we have drawn the line in the right place as to whether we would act to limit further appropriation," she said.

The analysis will also help prioritize aquifer monitoring and may indicate where the agency should re-evaluate the boundaries of groundwater restricted areas, Iverson said. For example, some wells next to the Mount Angel Groundwater Limited Area are showing declines similar to those within its boundaries, said Ben Scandella, OWRD's groundwater data chief.

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“This does raise the questions for me as to whether we have drawn the line in the right place as to whether we would act to limit further appropriation.”
— Meg Reeves, Oregon Water Resources Commission chair

House proposes bills that could break up Big Tech

BY MARCY GORDON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A group of House lawmakers put forward a sweeping legislative package Friday that could curb the market power of Big Tech companies and force Facebook, Google, Amazon or Apple to sever their dominant platforms from their other lines of business.

The bipartisan proposals are the culmination of a 15-month investigation by the

House Judiciary Committee's antitrust subcommittee, led by Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I. It concluded that the four tech giants have abused their market power by charging excessive fees, imposing tough contract terms and extracting valuable data from individuals and businesses that rely on them.

"Right now, unregulated tech monopolies have too much power over our economy," Cicilline said in a state-

ment. "They are in a unique position to pick winners and losers, destroy small businesses, raise prices on consumers and put folks out of work. Our agenda will level the playing field and ensure the wealthiest, most powerful tech monopolies play by the same rules as the rest of us."

The proposed legislation targets the structure of the companies and could break them up, a radical step for Congress to take toward a

powerful industry.

Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado, the senior Republican on the antitrust panel, is pushing the legislation with Cicilline. Many Republican lawmakers denounce the market dominance of Big Tech but don't support a wholesale revamp of the antitrust laws.

The proposals also would prohibit big tech companies from favoring their own products and services over competitors on their plat-

forms. The House antitrust investigation found, for example, that Google has monopoly power in the market for search, while Facebook has monopoly power in the social networking market. The subcommittee said Amazon and Apple have "significant and durable market power" in the U.S. online retail market, and in mobile operating systems and mobile app stores, respectively.

See **Big Tech** / A6