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BRIEFING

Jobless claims tick down to 411,000

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits dropped last week, a sign that layoffs declined and the job market is improving.

The Labor Department said Thursday that jobless claims fell 7,000 from the previous week to 411,000. Weekly claims have fallen steadily this year from about 900,000 in January.

All told, 14.8 million Americans received jobless benefits during the week ending June 5, the latest data available. That was little changed from the previous week. Starting this month, 26 states will end an extra \$300 weekly federal unemployment payment and 22 of those states will also cut off all jobless assistance to self-employed, gig workers, and those out of work more than six months. The extra \$300 ends nationwide on Sept. 6.

Microsoft debuts Windows 11

Microsoft has unveiled the next generation of its Windows software, called Windows 11, that has sleeker visual features and is more open to third-party apps.

The newest version of Microsoft's flagship operating system announced Thursday will be a successor to today's Windows 10, which the company introduced in 2015.

In a challenge to rival Apple, the company also announced that it won't force app developers to pay fees to Microsoft for using its app store; and that Google's popular Android apps will run on its new system.

Windows 11 is expected to become available later this year on new computers and other devices and as a free update for those with Windows 10. It includes a host of cosmetic upgrades, such as a new Start button, a revamped task bar and sounds, and under-the-hood features designed to boost speed and efficiency.

CDC extends eviction moratorium

The Biden administration on Thursday extended the nationwide ban on evictions for a month to help millions of tenants unable to make rent payments during the coronavirus pandemic, but said this is the last time it plans to do so.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, extended the evictions moratorium from June 30 until July 31. The CDC said "this is intended to be the final extension of the moratorium."

By the end of March, 6.4 million American households were behind on their rent, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. As of June 7, roughly 3.2 million people in the U.S. said they faced eviction in the next two months, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.

The news brought a sense of relief to tenants on the verge of being evicted and whose only lifeline was the CDC moratorium.

— Bulletin wire reports

INFRASTRUCTURE

Biden announces bipartisan deal

BY JONATHAN LEMIRE, JOSH BOAK AND LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden announced on Thursday a hard-earned bipartisan agreement on a pared-down infrastructure plan that would make a start on his top legislative priority and validate his efforts to reach across the political aisle. He openly acknowledged that Democrats will likely have to tackle much of the rest on their own.

The bill's price tag at \$973 billion over five years, or \$1.2 trillion over eight years, is a scaled-back but still significant piece of Biden's broader proposals.

It includes more than a

half-trillion dollars in new spending and could open the door to the president's more sweeping \$4 trillion proposals later on.

"When we can find common ground, working across party lines, that is what I will seek to do," said Biden, who deemed the deal "a true bipartisan effort, breaking the ice that too often has kept us frozen in place."

The president stressed that "neither side got everything they wanted in this deal; that's what it means to compromise," and said that other White House priorities would be tackled separately in a congressional budget process known as reconciliation.

He made clear that the two items would be done "in tandem" and that he would not sign the bipartisan deal without the other, bigger piece. Progressive members of Congress declared they would hold to the same approach.

"This reminds me of the days when we used to get an awful lot done up in the United States Congress," said Biden, a former Delaware senator, putting his hand on the shoulder of a stoic-looking Republican Sen. Rob Portman as the president made a surprise appearance with a bipartisan group of senators to announce the deal outside the White House.

See **Infrastructure** / A8



Jacquelyn Martin/AP
President Joe Biden, with a bipartisan group of senators, speaks Thursday outside the White House in Washington. From left are, Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, Biden, Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., rear, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz, and Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va..

WITHERING WHEAT



Wheat lines the edge of a field June 23 as a combine harvester harvests at Starvation Farms outside of Lexington.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian photos

Farmers, experts look toward grim harvest as drought consumes Oregon

BY BRYCE DOLE • East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The wheat harvest started early this year on Starvation Farms, named for the frequently harsh growing conditions on the 7,000-acre plot of land roughly 10 miles north of Lexington.

Chris Rauch, the farm owner, said conditions are looking grim for this year's crop, with sparse patches of harvestable wheat among big swaths of nothing.

"It's been dry from day one," said Rauch, whose family built his farm back in 1918. It used to be called Poverty Flat, he said. "We're coming off a dry year last year. And this year's been even worse. We've only had two events — some snow in February and some rain back in November. And that's been it. It hasn't been fun."

See **Wheat** / A8



Andre Rauch navigates a combine harvester while harvesting wheat at Starvation Farms.

See **Workers** / A8

AGE DISCRIMINATION

U.S. House moves to expand protections for workers

BY MIKE ROGOWAY
The Oregonian

The U.S. House of Representatives voted Wednesday to restore protections against age discrimination that had been stripped by a 2009 Supreme Court decision.

The House passed nearly identical legislation last year, but it died in the Republican-controlled Senate. With Democrats now in charge in that chamber, and two Senate Republicans on board to help shepherd it, this bill may stand a better chance.

The vote was 247-178, with 29 Republicans joining all 218 Democrats in support of the bill. Cliff Bentz, the only Republican representing Oregon in the House, voted against the bill. Jaime Herrera Beutler, a Republican representing southwest Washington, voted in favor.

"My home state of Oregon has one of the most rapidly aging populations in the country, and I have heard from many workers, particularly those in the technology industry, who believe they have been dismissed or denied employment because of their age," Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Beaverton, said in comments on the House floor Wednesday. Bonamici was among those who introduced the legislation.

When workers file complaints, Bonamici said, "the burden of proof is very high and often results in uncertain outcomes."

The Oregonian has reported a series of articles over the past six years about the experiences of older Intel workers who lost their jobs in mass layoffs in 2015 and 2016.

Port of Astoria to host cruise ship this summer

BY EMILY LINDBLOM
The Astorian

The Pride of America is planning to spend the summer in Astoria.

The Port of Astoria announced it has signed an agreement with Norwegian Cruise Line to host the vessel for 69 days, from July to September.

Will Isom, the Port's executive director, said it's a fairly

significant deal for the Port. "In rough financial terms it's \$4,000 per day in dockage plus another approximately \$900 in security fees, so all told gross it's right around \$350,000 in revenue to the Port to host them," he said.

Isom added the timing is fortunate. Depending on what happens with the late summer and fall cruise ship season, the Port is not scheduled to host

any other vessels until later in September, at which point the Pride of America would be gone.

Norwegian Cruise Line originally sent the vessel berth request to the Port in May.

The Pride of America is much larger than the Regatta, the cruise ship that docked in Astoria from October to April as cruises were on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic.

While the Regatta is about 600 feet long, the Pride of America is 920 feet.

"I think this is exciting news for the Port," Isom said. "In particular at a time when there's so much question — even going through the budget committee meetings — of what the cruise ship revenue is going to look like, this is a huge development for us."

Isom thanked terminal ser-

vices manager Sue Transue and deputy director Matt McGrath for their work in setting up the agreement.

The cruise ship will not have any passengers aboard. It will be crew-only and the cruise line has its own list of approved safety measures for how it operates. As of Monday, there have been no cases of COVID-19 on board the cruise ship.