

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

D DOW JONES | News Corp *****

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WSJ.com

★★★★ \$5.00

DJIA 44782.00 ▼ 128.65 0.29%

NASDAQ 19403.95 ▲ 1.0%

STOXX 600 513.61 ▲ 0.7%

10-YR. TREAS. yield 4.193%

OIL \$68.10 ▲ \$0.10

GOLD \$2,634.90 ▼ \$22.10

EURO \$1.0499

YEN 149.59

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ Intel Chief Executive Pat Gelsinger retired abruptly, ending a nearly four-year run that saw the chip maker fall behind rivals in building semiconductors to power the artificial-intelligence boom. **A1**

◆ The S&P 500 and Nasdaq rose to records in the first trading session of December, gaining 0.2% and 1%, respectively, while the Dow fell 0.3%. **B11**

◆ Manufacturing activity in the U.S. contracted for an eighth-straight month in November, albeit at a less sharp pace. **A2**

◆ Investors have flocked to a pair of turbocharged exchange-traded funds to ride the bitcoin momentum, but they contain hidden risks that aren't widely understood. **A1**

◆ GM backed out of a nearly completed electric-vehicle battery plant in Michigan, agreeing to unload its stake in the facility to its Korean partner, LG Energy Solution. **B1**

◆ A Delaware judge upheld her earlier ruling striking down Elon Musk's multibillion-dollar pay package after Tesla shareholders approved the package for a second time. **B1**

◆ Workers at VW sites in Germany participated in warning strikes as a conflict with management escalated over the carmaker's plans to slash jobs, cut pay and close factories. **B3**

◆ Super Micro Computer said a final review showed no evidence of fraud or misconduct by its management or board relating to accounting issues that have dragged on the stock. **B4**

◆ Bowlero will rename itself Lucky Strike Entertainment to de-emphasize its bowling-alley operations as it expands into other leisure sectors. **B3**

World-Wide

◆ Syrian government warplanes struck near and inside Aleppo in northwest Syria, state media and rescue workers said, as the Assad regime moved to repel rebels who took control of the city in a lightning offensive. **A7**

◆ The U.S. introduced its latest rules on transferring advanced chips to China, but a delay between their drafting and their release allowed Chinese entities to stock up on gear they knew was likely to be restricted. **A3**

◆ Irish voters re-elected the two center-right parties that have dominated politics in the country since its independence, bucking a trend in many democracies of turning against incumbents. **A16**

◆ The U.S. is preparing to send Ukraine an additional \$725 million in military assistance, including counter-drone systems and munitions for its High Mobility Artillery Rocket System. **A16**

◆ Taiwan's president held virtual meetings with U.S. politicians and gave a speech that appeared to respond to some of the criticisms that Trump has directed at Taipei. **A16**

◆ A scientific journal detailed the discovery of a mummified saber-toothed cat cub in the Siberian permafrost, the first of its kind ever found. **A16**

◆ A stampede at a sports stadium in Guinea left at least 56 people dead in the West African country, officials and witnesses said. **A16**

◆ Hawaii crime boss Michael Miske, who was convicted of racketeering charges last summer, died in prison, authorities said. **A2**

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Le Pen Threatens to Topple French Government



STANDOFF: Far-right leader and member of parliament Marine Le Pen spoke with reporters Monday as she was set to back a no-confidence vote that could topple the government if it doesn't soften the impact of its planned budget on taxpayers. **A7**

Biden Pardon of Son Attacked, Fallout Hangs Over His Legacy

By AARON ZITNER

WASHINGTON—Joe Biden made the central purpose of his presidency clear in his Inauguration Day address: "We have learned again that democracy is precious. Democracy is fragile," he said at the Capitol, where a violent mob had tried that month to overturn his 2020 election victory. Biden's aim would be to unify the nation and shore up its democratic institutions.

That is one reason why the president's pardon of his son, Hunter Biden, on Sunday threatens to further damage his already tarnished legacy:

The reprieve he ordered risks undercutting one of the main propositions he offered for his election.

Biden's political brand as a presidential candidate—his value proposition as a leader—was largely a promise to restore democratic norms and to fight the cynicism that had helped Donald Trump build his MAGA movement on claims that self-dealing leaders had corrupted the government. Biden had repeatedly promised to respect the independence of the justice system and avoid interfering with the prosecution of his son, including by issuing a pardon.

His reversal "is not fully consonant with what he ran on," said Jim Kessler, executive vice president for policy at Third Way, a centrist Democratic group. While Kessler said he empathized with Biden's impulses to protect his son, the pardon comes as Trump will soon retake office on promises to overhaul a criminal justice system that he says unfairly targeted him and his followers. To lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Trump has nominated Kash Patel, a loyalist who has said he would fire its senior leaders and prosecute agents he thinks abused their authority.

Trump has pledged to pardon people convicted in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and seek "retribution" against his political opponents, which Democrats say threatens the independent disposition of justice. The Hunter Biden pardon "clouds the message" that Democrats will employ to protest those moves, Kessler said.

Others said the pardon will make it hard for Democrats to criticize Trump for pardons he issued to political supporters during his first term, or about his use of the justice system when he returns to office, in-

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Intel CEO Resigns As Stock, Strategy Falter

Turnaround plans missed AI boom, spelling trouble for storied tech giant

BY DEAN SEAL
AND SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN

Intel Chief Executive Pat Gelsinger retired abruptly, ending a nearly four-year run that saw the chip maker fall behind rivals in building semiconductors to power the artificial-intelligence boom.

The company on Monday said it named Chief Financial Officer David Zinsner and Michelle Johnston Holthaus, general manager of Intel's client computing group, as interim co-CEOs. The board has formed a search committee to find a permanent successor to Gelsinger, 63 years old, who stepped down Sunday.

Gelsinger's exit comes in the middle of his multiyear turnaround strategy to build a so-called foundry business manufacturing chips for other companies. At the same time, Intel's stock has underperformed the market and rivals.

Strategic missteps and missing out on the artificial-intelligence boom have combined to reshape the fortunes of the company, which reportedly was a takeover target earlier this year. "We know that we have much more work to do at the company and are committed to restoring investor confidence," said Frank Yearley, independent chair of Intel's board.

The change in leadership indicates the board wants to move in a new direction, but what that means isn't clear, Bernstein Research analyst Stacy Rasgon said.

"Is the focus on manufacturing going to start to wane? Will Please turn to page A2

Stock Bets Riding Euphoria Of Bitcoin Mask Risk

By JACK PITCHER

Investors have flocked to a pair of turbocharged exchange-traded funds to ride the momentum in bitcoin, but they contain hidden risks that aren't widely understood.

The ETFs seek to amplify the daily return of MicroStrategy, the software company that has turned itself into a bitcoin buying machine. Using complex derivative bets, they aim to offer double the daily return of the stock—to the upside or downside.

The funds, from asset managers Tuttle Capital Management and Defiance ETFs, are inherently risky. MicroStrategy itself is a leveraged bet on bitcoin, holding some \$35 billion of the cryptocurrency. But bullish investors have swelled its market value to almost \$90 billion, or more than twice the value of the bitcoin it holds. Skeptics say this is unsustainable.

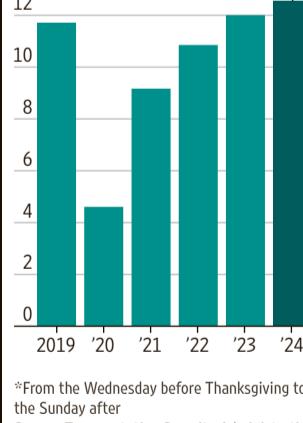
The Defiance Daily Target 2X Long MSTR ETF and the T-Rex 2X Long MSTR Daily Target ETF were designed for investors who want to place an even more aggressive bet on the stock. Collectively, the two funds have ballooned to roughly \$5 billion in assets since launching in August and September respectively.

Some analysts say the funds are contributing to the furious rally in MicroStrategy shares. They warn that if the stock Please turn to page A6

Air Travel Sets Record

Sunday set a record for most air travelers in a single day, as Thanksgiving weekend travel rose from last year. **A3**

Number of Thanksgiving air travelers*



Musk's Rivals Fear He Will Retaliate Against Them

From automakers and tech giants to OpenAI's Sam Altman, the incoming president's 'First Buddy' has a long enemies list

As the summer drew to a close, Sam Altman thought his relationship with his OpenAI co-founder Elon Musk was in a good place.

Musk had sued him earlier in the year for allegedly betraying OpenAI's nonprofit mission, but withdrew the suit a few months af-

By Keach Hagey, Emily Glazer and Dana Mattioli

ter the two spent part of an evening huddled around a fire pit on the sidelines of a March technology conference in Big Sky, Mont. Their amicable chat ended in a hug, according to people at the conference.

Even after Musk refiled the suit in Au-

gust, the long-volatile relationship seemed manageable. After all, Musk had a long track

record of picking fights then moving on.

Then came Donald Trump's electoral victory and Musk's transformation into what some describe as a shadow president. After plowing \$200 million into Trump's campaign, Musk dubbed himself on X as the incoming president's "First Buddy."

Since the election, people close to Musk have said he despises Altman. Musk has cranked up the heat on their feud, filing an expanded version of his lawsuit calling OpenAI a "market-paralyzing gorgon." Musk also pinned his personal correspondence with Altman to his X account and gave Altman his own Trump-style nickname on X:

Please turn to page A8

◆ Judge rejects Musk's Tesla pay plan..... B1

Singapore Students' Toughest Test Is Dodging Chinese Tourists

* * * *

Universities draw sightseers, annoying scholars; 'like observing zoo exhibits'

By CHUN HAN WONG

SINGAPORE—At Singapore's leading universities, students are finding it hard to focus in class. The distractions aren't coming from mobile devices, social media or campus gossip. Actually, it's the throngs of gawking Chinese tourists.

Sightseeing travelers from China have swamped the grounds of Singapore's two biggest universities, peering into classrooms, snapping selfies and even barging into lectures to get a sampling of

the education. From tiger parents and their children to trend-chasing influencers, visitors cite the allure of campus life in a Southeast Asian city-state known for its clean streets, lush greenery and first-rate colleges.

The influx has annoyed scholars and students. In online forums and on social media, they complain about being crowded out of cafeterias, study areas and other student zones by busloads of tourists.

"Tourists are openly abusing the fact that our campus

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China EV Maker Works A Side Hustle for Apple

By YANG JIE

chain," the local term for Apple's supply chain.

The combination makes sense to BYD executives, who say both businesses draw on the company's core competence of making precision devices at low cost.

Apple's rising dependence on two China-based contractors—BYD and iPhone assembler Luxshare—points to the difficulty of shedding Chinese manufacturing. The U.S. push to limit imports from China is likely to expand in the second Trump administration.

Apple has been diversifying its supply chain to countries such as India and Vietnam and

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U.S. NEWS

U.S. Steelmakers Seek More Trump Tariffs

By BOB TITA

Some U.S. steelmakers are backing President-elect Donald Trump's plans for tariffs on Mexico and China. They also want him to go even further.

The Steel Manufacturers Association wants tariffs to be reimposed on steel from the U.K., the European Union and Japan. The countries were included in Trump's 2018 tariffs, but President Biden later allowed some steel to enter the U.S. without duties. Among the association's members are **Steel Dynamics** and **Nucor**, the largest U.S. steel producer.

The call for additional tariffs was part of a trade proposal the steel manufacturers group released Monday. It said the new duties would boost the domestic steel market and help address trade-distorting practices that it believes other countries are conducting.

Executives from U.S. steel companies were enthusiastic backers of the 2018 tariffs. Steelmakers said the tariffs helped lift U.S. steel prices, boost profits and expand payrolls. In recent years, companies have opened new mills and expanded others, adding millions of tons of steel-production capacity.

Trump has pledged to make tariffs a crucial part of his economic policy to encourage more domestic manufacturing. Last week, the president-elect said he would impose 25% duties on all imports from Canada and Mexico unless the countries step up efforts to curb the flow of narcotics and migrants to the U.S. He also called for higher tariffs on imports from China.

Economists have said that an aggressive use of tariffs would drive up prices for consumer items in the U.S. Prices for durable goods with significant steel content—such as appliances, automobiles and farm tractors—are already higher as a result of supply-chain bottlenecks for materials and components after the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional tariffs on imports would give domestic steel companies more leverage to increase their prices by effectively raising the prices for their foreign competitors' products.

"We are under constant threat from nonmarket economies who evade our trade laws to dump cheap, heavily subsidized steel and other products into the American market," said Philip Bell, president of the Steel Manufacturers Association.

The trade group mostly represents companies that make steel from melting scrap. About 70% of the steel produced in the U.S. is made from scrap.

Trump's 2018 steel tariffs originally included 25% duties on steel from Canada and Mexico, but the tariffs were lifted in 2019 as part of the revised free-trade agreement among the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

The U.S. currently has some of the world's highest steel prices. But prices have been mostly stagnant in recent months amid lower demand from a weakened manufacturing sector, particularly the auto industry.

Some steel-company executives have complained that the U.S. market is being undermined by lower-cost imports from China that are circumventing existing tariffs by being routed through Mexico.

Biden imposed tariffs on Mexican imports that use steel from China. But some steel executives have said parsing steel from China and

Mexico is difficult and largely depends on vigilant monitoring by Mexican authorities.

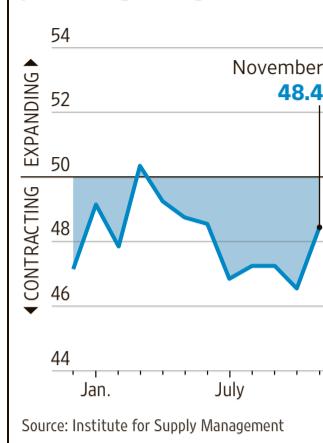
Mexico accounted for 4.2 million tons of imported steel in the U.S. last year, second only to Canada.

The steel-manufacturers group said imports from Canada should be "closely monitored," but stopped short of calling for a tariff. Instead, it suggested tighter enforcement of a requirement that steel be melted and poured in Canada to be exempted from U.S. tariffs.

The steelmakers also proposed that a separate 2018 tariff on finished products from China be raised to 60% for steel-intensive products.

That rate, they said, should be extended to satellite manufacturing operations in Vietnam, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries that were established to avoid the duties.

Institute for Supply Management manufacturing purchasing managers index



Source: Institute for Supply Management

Weak Factory Activity Persists

By ED FRANKL

Manufacturing activity in the U.S. contracted for an eighth-straight month in November, albeit at a less sharp pace, reflecting the challenge for the incoming Trump administration to revive the struggling industrial sector.

The Institute for Supply Management said Monday that its purchasing managers' index of manufacturing activity was 48.4 in November, up from 46.5 in October, which marked a low for 2024. November's reading was, however, better than expectations of 47.5 from a consensus of economists polled by The Wall Street Journal.

"Demand remains weak, as companies prepare plans for 2025 with the benefit of the election cycle ending. Production execution eased in November, consistent with demand sluggishness and weak backlog," said Timothy R. Fiore, chairman of the ISM Manufacturing Business Survey Committee.

However, the index's gauge of new orders returned to growth, after seven months of contraction, while the measure of employment recovered, but was still in contractionary territory.

Two of the six biggest manufacturing industries—food, beverage and tobacco products, and computer and electronic products—registered growth in the month, the same as in October, Fiore added.

"Business is slowing as customers destock and appear uncertain about near-term demand. Preliminary forecast for 2025 is down significantly; we hope to see improvements now that we are beyond U.S. election uncertainties," said one respondent to the survey.



SONG AND SPARKLE: A musical performance accompanied a media tour Monday of White House holiday decorations, including a gingerbread White House.

OBITUARY

Cashin, 83, Fixture Of the NYSE Floor

Arthur Cashin, a floor trader who roamed the New York Stock Exchange for decades and became a fixture on financial television, has died. He was 83.

Cashin was director of NYSE floor operations for UBS and a regular guest for decades on CNBC, which on Monday reported the news of his death.

On Wall Street, he was known for his daily commentary—Cashin's Comments—where he would muse about everything from financial mar-

kets and trading strategies to history, trivia and current events, often written with humor and wit.

He began his career at Thomson McKinnon, a brokerage firm, in 1959. By age 23, he became a NYSE member and partner of P.R. Herzig & Co., according to his CNBC bio.

Cashin was a relic of a prior era, when the NYSE floor was noisy and most trading was conducted in person. As the floor became more electronic and crowds diminished, Cashin remained a regular presence in lower Manhattan for years.

—Steven Russolillo and Joseph De Avila

HAWAII Crime Boss Misdeeds in Prison

A Hawaii crime boss who was convicted of racketeering charges last summer has died in prison, authorities said.

Michael Miske, 50, was found unresponsive Sunday at the Federal Detention Center Honolulu, and lifesaving efforts by staff and emergency medical responders failed to save him, the Bureau of Prisons said. It was unclear what caused his death.

His trial attorneys didn't respond to a Monday email seeking comment.

Miske was convicted in

July of 13 charges including racketeering conspiracy, murder in the aid of racketeering, and kidnapping resulting in death.

He was accused of orchestrating crimes that included the kidnapping of a 72-year-old accountant who owed a debt, the release of a toxic chemical into a rival's nightclubs and the killing of his late son's best friend.

The conviction entitled the government to take control of up to \$28 million in Miske's assets, including boats, houses and artwork.

He was scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 30.

—Associated Press

NEW YORK Philharmonic Gets New President, CEO

Matias Tarnopolsky will become president and CEO of the New York Philharmonic on Jan. 1 after four years heading the Philadelphia Orchestra, a hiring boosted by his long friendship with incoming music director Gustavo Dudamel.

Tarnopolsky's appointment was announced Monday. The 54-year-old, who has American, British and Argentine citizenship, fills a void created when Gary Ginstrom quit in July just one season into the job.

—Associated Press



Intel CEO Steps Down Suddenly

Continued from Page One they carve it up for parts? Will cost cuts get bigger? There's a lot of uncertainty," Rasgon said.

Shares of Intel fell 0.5% Monday and remain down by 52% from the start of the year.

Gelsinger had been CEO since February 2021. During that period, Intel's sales are on track to have fallen by nearly a third, its stock has declined 61% and the company lost its spot as the standard-setter in chip technology. During the same period, the S&P 500 index rose 53%.

Last month, Intel was replaced by Nvidia in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, a sharp reversal of fortune for the chip maker.

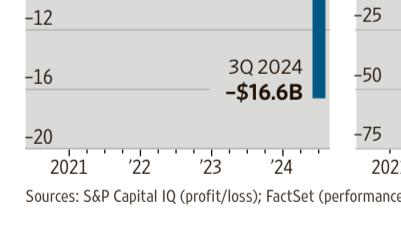
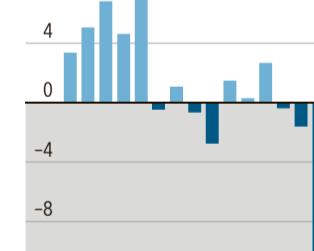
The problems started with manufacturing setbacks before

Gelsinger took the helm. And they have worsened as the CEO pursued a costly turnaround strategy to begin manufacturing chips for other companies, something that required billions in investment to build new plants.

Intel set an internal goal to be the second-largest contract chip maker in the world by 2030. In reality, it has struggled to attract big customers and has cycled through several leaders.

"We now see a greater possibility that [Intel] considers separating its Products and Foundry arms, which would grant both businesses their much-needed operational and financial independence," said Vivek Arya, a Bank of America analyst. Arya noted that any such separation could be complicated by the company's agreement to accept government funding.

Meanwhile, Intel failed to foresee how the explosion of interest in AI would redirect demand toward a type of chip made by rival Nvidia. Nvidia has since risen to be the most valuable company in the world, while Intel has continued to



Sources: S&P Capital IQ (profit/loss); FactSet (performance)

tread water. The investment surge in computing infrastructure for artificial intelligence in late 2022 crimped customer budgets for Intel's chips. In an effort to preserve the turnaround effort, Intel cut costs. Earlier this year, it laid off about 15,000 employees, suspended dividend payments for the fourth quarter and cut \$10 billion in costs for next year.

"With the foundry business burning so much cash, the current situation is not sustainable," said Ivana Delevska, chief investment officer of Spear Invest, an asset manager in New York that owns chip stocks and has evaluated Intel.

Gelsinger continued to plow resources into the turnaround, hoping for large financial efficiencies from the revamp. To offset a factory expansion that could cost more than \$100 billion in the coming years, he made partnerships with investment firms and applied successfully for almost \$7.87 billion in government money through the Chips Act, passed in 2022.

"Today is, of course, bitter-sweet as this company has been my life for the bulk of my working career," Gelsinger said. "It has been a challenging year for all of us as we have made tough but necessary decisions to position Intel for the current market dynamics."

The board likely wanted Gelsinger out because he was committed to a growth strategy that was taking too long to

work, as evidenced by declining revenue and ballooning expenses over the past two years, said David Yoffie, a former Intel board member for 29 years until 2018.

Gelsinger joined Intel in 1979, when he was just 18. The Pennsylvania farm boy turned engineer rose up the ranks to become the company's youngest-ever vice president at 30 and its first chief technology officer in 2001.

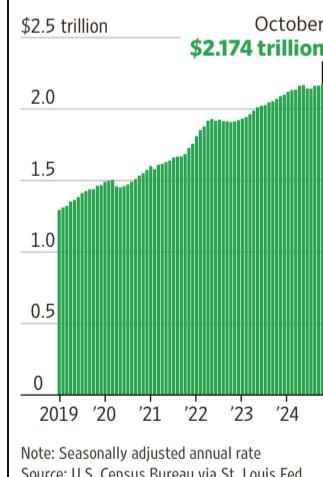
That role effectively made him responsible for upholding Moore's Law, which is named after one of Intel's founders and posits that the number of transistors on a chip doubles roughly every two years.

In his first three decades at Intel, Gelsinger played a key role in designing some of its most successful and lucrative chips that were the computational workhorses inside the personal-computer boom of the 1980s and 1990s. He became a disciple of legendary Intel CEO Andy Grove and helped pioneer USB ports and Wi-Fi, both of which are ubiquitous.

Gelsinger left in 2009 to run VMware, a maker of business software, where he spent eight years, roughly doubled sales by abandoning the company's cloud-computing business and opted to profit through partnerships.

His return was supposed to mark a turning point for Intel in its battle against market-share losses and address questions about its business model of both designing and manufacturing chips when most rivals have specialized in one or the other.

Gelsinger's inability to reverse Intel's fortunes shows that even with decades of industry experience, "this stuff takes a long time to correct," said Eric Ross, analyst at Cenascend.



Note: Seasonally adjusted annual rate
Source: U.S. Census Bureau via St. Louis Fed

Construction Spending Edges Higher

By MATT GROSSMAN

The annualized rate of U.S. construction spending edged higher in October, new data from the Commerce Department showed Monday.

October construction spending hit an annualized rate of \$2.174 trillion, up from \$2.165 trillion in September. The October figure was up 5% from a year ago, when in October 2023 construction spending came at a \$2.071 trillion annualized rate.

The annualized private construction spending rate in October was \$1.676 trillion, up from \$1.665 trillion a month earlier. The public construction spending rate declined to \$497.6 billion, from \$500 billion in September.

CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

A federal judge in San Francisco accepted the Securities and Exchange Commission's view of how to apply a legal test for

U.S. NEWS

U.S. Curbs Advanced Chip Sales To China

By LIZA LIN
AND WARREN P. STROBEL

The U.S. introduced its latest restrictions on transferring advanced chips to China, but the delay in cutting off chips useful in artificial intelligence showed how the Biden administration has struggled to stall Beijing's advances.

The rules, the fourth attempt in three years by U.S. policymakers to curb China's access to cutting-edge semiconductor technology, limited the sale of memory chips that power AI applications and narrowed the suite of chip-making tools available to China. The Commerce Department also announced the addition of 140 Chinese companies and other entities to its trade blacklist.

Industry analysts said a monthslong pause between the drafting of the rules and their release Monday allowed Chinese entities to stock up on semiconductors and machines they knew were likely to be restricted.

Previous curbs by the U.S. and its allies on chip technology have led to Chinese entities pursuing workarounds to get their hands on banned processors and computing power. In addition, the restrictions were porous, allowing Chinese companies to legally purchase some chips and chip-making equipment from the U.S. and allies such as South Korea, Japan and the Netherlands.

At the same time, the U.S. curbs are credited with constraining the ability of Huawei, a Chinese company widely seen as the country's national champion in semiconductors and other high-tech areas, to mass-produce its high-end chips.

The latest export regulations prevent makers of advanced memory chips, referred to as high-bandwidth memory, from shipping their products to China without permission from the Commerce Department. Such chips work in tandem with AI processors in the computations behind generative AI systems. There are three major manufacturers of HBM: SK Hynix and Samsung Electronics of South Korea and U.S.-based Micron Technology.

U.S. officials said the controls were aimed at squeezing China's ability to indigenously produce technologies critical to advanced weaponry and artificial intelligence. "These new rules are groundbreaking and sweeping," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said Sunday.

The rules are driving a rift between the chip-making ecosystems of the two countries. U.S. chip toolmakers are seeking to cut Chinese companies and certain components out of their direct supply chain, while Washington's export controls have galvanized China's desire to build its own self-sufficient chip industry.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Nov. 25 that the U.S. was "overstretching the concept of national security, abusing export control measures and making malicious attempts to block and suppress China."

While the newest controls may hamper China's semiconductor ambitions, they left loopholes that Huawei and Chinese companies could exploit, said Gregory Allen, the director at the Wadhwa AI Center at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Certain older versions of high-bandwidth memory chips may remain available to Chinese customers, and not every semiconductor manufacturing facility linked to Huawei was included on the trade blacklist, Allen said.

People familiar with the drafting of the rules released Monday said the bulk of the content had been composed by the middle of this year and was known to many in the industry. The release was delayed owing to negotiations with U.S. allies and chip-equipment companies, and this gave China a chance to build stockpiles, they said.

Jiyoung Sohn contributed to this article.

Drug-Abuse Survivors Enter Old Age

A generation of former addicts live with compromised health and prospects

By JULIE WERNAU

LOS ANGELES—America's drug crisis has many survivors. Jerry Schlesinger, 72 years old, is among the longest tenured.

He tried heroin at 15. Today, he has been sober for two years. In between, decades of illicit drug use wrecked his lungs and teeth and compromised his liver. America spent millions of dollars imprisoning, housing and treating him before he stopped using.

"You're not done until you're done," Schlesinger said.

His is a living history of a drug crisis that has left millions of people in poor health and searching for purpose. The most senior are entering old age. Their struggles show how the damage wrought by addiction will linger long after the death toll drops.

Drug-overdose deaths have fallen below 100,000 annually for the first time since 2021, U.S. figures show. Some of the 15% drop in annual deaths could be because hardened users are outlasting novices who succumbed in great numbers as fentanyl infiltrated the illicit drug supply.

China this year shut down some sellers of the chemicals used to make fentanyl, and President-elect Donald Trump has said he would use tariffs against Mexico and China to disrupt the illicit drug trade. Better access to treatments for hepatitis, addiction and overdoses also keeps people alive longer than in the past.

Still, more than two million people over 65 are addicted to drugs, federal figures show—a more than 10-fold increase in a decade. About three-fourths of people addicted to drugs recover, a federal study showed in 2023.

Younger people recovering from drug addiction are often encouraged to start fresh in a new place with new people. Schlesinger is past the age where he wants to start over. He won't move to a new city to avoid the people and places that fueled his addiction.

Instead, he is taking leadership roles in the recovery community. Usually, it takes years of sobriety before people feel ready to mentor others struggling with addiction. Schlesinger feels he doesn't have time to spare.

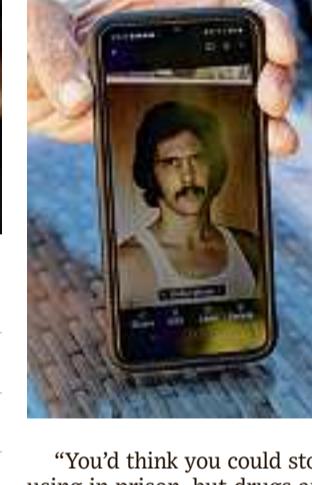
A few nights a week, he brings a carload of guys from the sober-living home where he works as a manager to an addiction-recovery meeting. He encouraged them at one



ALYSSA SCHUKAR FOR WSJ (3)



Jerry Schlesinger, after decades of illicit drug use, now works as a manager at a sober-living home. Left, he holds a medallion he received after one year of sobriety. Below, a photo of him as a younger man.



meeting recently to think broadly about the higher power invoked in 12-step programs.

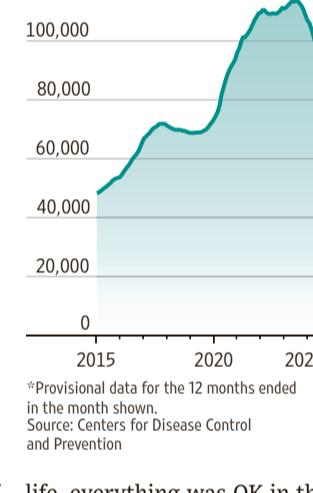
"Religion is for people who are afraid of going to hell, and spiritualism is for those who've been there," he said.

He spends his free time pampering his rescue dog, Matilda, and publishing spoken-word pieces on YouTube about sobriety.

"I always try to share my experience, strength and hope. Too bad if you don't like it if I talk about dope," he says in one.

Schlesinger remembers growing up a chubby, self-conscious child. As a teenager he drank and smoked marijuana, and left home for a house of hippies in Pomona. He started selling "reds and whites": barbiturates and stimulants. A guy offered a trade: pills for heroin. He still remembers the vinegar smell as he cooked up his first injection of heroin in a bathroom.

"For the first time in my



life, everything was OK in the world," he said.

He went on to try it all: peyote, mescaline, methamphetamine. Heroin was his go-to. He burgled stores and forged checks to pay for it. He spent 35 years across repeated stints in prison for crimes related to selling drugs or buying drugs.

"You'd think you could stop using in prison, but drugs are there, too," he said.

During the early 2000s, when much of the street supply was prescription opioids, he paid a pain doctor to prescribe pills he sold to get heroin. Then dealers started swapping heroin for fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is far more potent but shorter-acting. Schlesinger said he refused to sell it, when he could spot it in his supply.

"I didn't want to kill off the friends I had," he said.

Schlesinger said street smarts and a sense of humor helped keep him alive. When he tilts his head back, folds on his neck smooth to reveal a tattoo that reads, "Shut Up Stupid."

He started treatment at 65,

but it didn't stick. Three recovery homes kicked him out.

Seniors with a history of drug use have grown from a rarity to more than 5% of patients at Healthright 360, which provides healthcare to homeless and low-income people in Los Angeles.

"They get sicker and sicker. Life gets harder and harder," said Vitka Eisen, Healthright 360's chief executive officer.

Schlesinger enrolled in Medicare to cover treatment related to his recovery and old injuries. His shoulder, neck and back were injured when he was arrested in a heroin bust in 2008, he said, and his ribs were shattered in 2012 when a roommate body-slammed him at a sober-living home.

In 2022, Schlesinger and his longtime girlfriend were using drugs when she overdosed. He gave her three doses of the overdose-reversal drug naloxone and performed CPR for 30 minutes before she came to.

He stopped using drugs. She didn't. When he entered treatment at a recovery home affiliated with Healthright 360, she burned all his clothes in the parking lot of their trailer park.

"I started chasing sobriety like I was chasing heroin. It's the only way I know I can keep it," he said.

Schlesinger is thinking about his future, including a possible return to college. He is reintroducing himself to the most important people in his life as a sober person. He has tried making amends with family and his two ex-wives.

"I'm grateful I don't have to keep track of all the lies I've told everyone anymore," he said.

Jammed Thanksgiving Flights Lift Air Travel to Record



BY ALISON SIDER

A record number of travelers descended on U.S. airports Sunday, the peak of the busy Thanksgiving travel period.

The Transportation Security Administration said it screened about 3.09 million people on Sunday, edging out the previous record of 3.01 million travelers reached in July.

Appetite for travel has remained strong and airport passenger volumes have hit several new highs throughout the year, with TSA logging the 10 busiest days ever in 2024. In a survey last month, Deloitte found that nearly half of Americans planned to travel between Thanksgiving and mid-January—similar to last year—with high-income households and young people fueling demand. Nearly one in five intended to fly over the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays, Deloitte found.

The intense period of concentrated demand before and after Thanksgiving, a period some airport and airline officials refer to as their Super Bowl, frequently tests airline operations as well as passengers' patience. But airlines generally avoided major snafus during the holiday rush: Less than 0.5% of U.S. flights were canceled over the course of the week and about 83% were on time, according to FlightAware.

There were some of the usual weather snarls, including a winter storm that barreled through Colorado on Wednesday day and another that dumped

snow over the Great Lakes region later in the week. Flights also got backed up Sunday, contributing to the thousands of delayed flights nationwide. Train issues on Monday stranded Northeast passengers.

The FAA slowed traffic at some Florida airports over the weekend to manage the congestion. Cancellations edged higher Sunday, with about 120 flights, or less than 0.5% of the total, scrubbed that day, according to FlightAware.

Newark Liberty International Airport was one persistent trouble spot. Air-traffic-control staffing flared up there throughout the week, prompting the Federal Aviation Administration to slow flights, contributing to delays. About third of Newark's flights were delayed Saturday and a quarter were tardy on Sunday, according to FlightAware.

Jonah Burns's flight from Newark to Madison, Wis., on Wednesday night was pushed back several times. In text-message updates, United Airlines cited air-traffic-control limits on the number of flights into Newark due to staffing. It also said delays had affected the arrival of his plane's crew. He waited it out at home in Long Island City, N.Y., and his flight ended up arriving more than three hours late, after 2 a.m.

"It basically just kept getting delayed and delayed," he said.

Some airlines have struggled despite the resilient appetite for travel this year. Carriers crowded into domestic mar-

kets, overshooting demand and weighing on fares. Several airlines have pulled back on flying in recent months, which has bolstered ticket prices.

Airlines that offer more premium travel experiences and international destinations have fared better, while those geared toward budget-minded travelers have been particularly challenged—Spirit Airlines, for example, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last month.

Amtrak issues Monday hobbled one of the most popular ways to get around the Northeast. Trains between Philadelphia and New York City were suspended in the morning because of overhead wire damage, Amtrak said.

On a busy post-Thanksgiving travel day, passengers were reporting canceled rides or hourslong delays. Some were taking buses instead.

Peter Capote, a student trying to leave Philadelphia, felt the ripple effects. The George Washington University student said he was supposed to leave Philadelphia just before 10:00 a.m. to return to Washington. He said he had a class at 12:50 p.m. with a professor who is picky about attendance. He said he planned to wait at the station until his train came, but already resigned himself to the fact that he wouldn't make it on time.

"I booked well ahead of time thinking this wouldn't be a problem," he said.

—Alyssa Lukpat and Victoria Albert contributed to this article.

Travelers waited for ride-sharing and taxi service Wednesday at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Most-traveled days in TSA history, by number of air travelers

Dec. 1, 2024	3,087,393
July 7, 2024	3,013,622
June 23, 2024	2,996,495
July 18, 2024	2,957,170
May 24, 2024	2,951,859
June 24, 2024	2,944,001
June 28, 2024	2,938,292
July 14, 2024	2,937,845
Oct. 20, 2024	2,933,132
June 14, 2024	2,929,467

Note: Data is as of Dec. 1.

Source: Transportation Security Administration

U.S. NEWS

Sweeping Pardon of Hunter Biden Is Rare

By MARIAH TIMMS
AND JAN WOLFE

President Biden on Sunday granted a full and unconditional pardon to his son, Hunter Biden, who faced a possible prison sentence for federal felony gun and tax convictions. The clemency was sweeping, immunizing the younger Biden from any offenses he might have committed over the past decade.

Biden said raw politics had affected his son's treatment, and that a pardon would correct "a miscarriage of justice." Critics from both parties said the president had put his family before the country, noting that Hunter was convicted by a jury in the gun case and pleaded guilty to the tax offenses.

Where does pardon power come from?

Article Two of the Constitution says the president "shall

have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment."

That authority, which applies only to federal offenses, is perhaps the most unchecked power granted to presidents by a Constitution that otherwise is dedicated to abolishing the overwhelming power of monarchs, said University of St. Thomas criminal-law professor Mark Osler. "Sometimes the law is just too severe, and in the moment we overreact in a retributive way, and there needs to be a way to correct that," Osler said.

The Supreme Court said in an 1871 decision that it is unconstitutional for Congress to pass laws restricting the pardon power.

How unusual is it for a president to issue a pardon covering any and all offenses?

The broad terms of Hunter

Biden's pardon are a rarity. The closest parallel may be the Watergate-era pardon former President Richard Nixon received in 1974.

After Nixon resigned the presidency, his successor, President Gerald Ford, granted him a "full, free, and absolute pardon" for all federal offenses he "committed or may have committed or taken part in."

"Pardons usually are targeted toward specific offenses," said American University politics professor Jeffrey Crouch. "In contrast, the breadth of the Hunter Biden pardon is highly unusual and brings to mind the Nixon pardon."

The use of presidential pardons has waned in modern ad-

ministrations. Former President Herbert Hoover, in his one term from 1929 to 1933, pardoned or wiped out the sentences of more than 1,000 people, according to the federal Office of the Pardon Attorney, a division of the Justice Department.

Former President Donald Trump granted pardons to fewer than 150. Biden has so far issued 26 pardons.

What did Hunter Biden do?

In June, a federal jury in Delaware found Hunter Biden guilty of lying about his drug use when he bought a handgun in 2018.

In September, he pleaded guilty to all nine charges in his federal tax case. Prosecu-

tors said Hunter Biden evaded taxes by claiming hundreds of thousands of dollars in false deductions, including writing off payments for escorts and dancers, a sex-club membership and his daughter's law-school tuition as business expenses. Both cases were brought by longtime federal prosecutor David Weiss.

Weiss opened the investigation in 2018 when he was the Trump-appointed U.S. attorney in Delaware. When President Biden took office, he allowed Weiss to continue serving in the post.

In 2023, Weiss was appointed special counsel by Attorney General Merrick Garland—a move that gave him more powers and protections.

What's the basis for President Biden's claim that his son was treated unjustly?

Biden said it was clear that his son had been "treated dif-

ferently" by the Justice Department and "singled out only because he is my son—and that is wrong."

The gun case against Hunter Biden was unusual because the core claim—that he lied about his drug use on a federal form when he purchased the gun—is rarely the basis for a stand-alone prosecution.

Some former prosecutors have said the strength of the evidence that Hunter Biden lied on the federal form—he had documented his crack addiction in a memoir, which jurors heard snippets of at trial—made pursuing the gun-related charges necessary.

The tax-evasion case was unusual because prosecutors brought it after Hunter Biden paid the taxes he owed, plus interest and penalties. Such defendants are often dealt with through civil rather than criminal cases.

Even some Democrats suggested that the pardon undercut efforts to portray the Trump prosecutions as free from political interference.

"This was an improper use of power," Sen. Gary Peters (D., Mich.) wrote on X. "It erodes trust in our government, and it emboldens others to bend justice to suit their interests."

Rep. Greg Landsman (D., Ohio) wrote on X: "As a father, I get it. But as someone who wants people to believe in public service again, it's a setback."

Many Democrats and analysts said that they empathized with Biden's situation as a father watching the prospect of his son going to prison on tax and firearms convictions—something Biden referenced in his statement Sunday.

Barbara Perry, a professor of presidential studies at the University of Virginia, said Biden is well known for his devotion to his two sons after his first wife and their 13-month-old daughter were killed in a 1972 car accident. One son, Beau Biden, later died of cancer.

She sees a clash between Biden's interests as "an institutionalist, the former chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate," and the Biden who "sees himself as the patriarch, the ultimate family man."

Kessler said, "It's December of 2024, and Democrats don't want to be defending Joe Biden right now.... We have to prepare for the onslaught of Donald Trump and the discussion of how the Democratic Party becomes competitive again."

—Katy Stech Ferek contributed to this article.

Fallout Hangs Over Legacy

Continued from Page One
cluding future use of pardons.

"It makes the position that we hold more difficult to defend when Democrats of any kind, but certainly the president, behave in ways that are similar to Donald Trump," Sarah Longwell, an anti-Trump Republican and political strategist, said on a podcast hosted by the opinion website the Bulwark, where she is publisher. Trump in his first term pardoned a range of allies and at least one family relation.

The White House on Monday said that Biden has faith in the justice system but also believes his son was prosecuted only because of his connection to the president. "Two things could be true: The president does believe in the justice system and the Department of Justice, and he also believes his son was singled out politically," spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said.

Other presidents have pardoned family members—among them Bill Clinton, Abraham Lincoln and Trump, who in his first term pardoned his daughter's father-in-law, Charles Kushner. Last week, Trump said he intended to nominate Kushner as ambassador to France.

While Biden's pardon of his son, like the pardons issued by



President Biden had promised to avoid interfering with the prosecution of his son Hunter, including by issuing a pardon.

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/GETTY IMAGES

his predecessors, may not be remembered as a defining feature of his presidency, it adds to the bitter feeling that many Democrats have about his last two years in office, which diminished other aspects of the president's public image.

Once seen as a politician with the common touch—his nickname of "Scranton Joe" spoke to his blue-collar background—Biden leaves office amid the continued exodus of working-class voters from the

Democratic coalition, including many Latino and Black voters who had supported the party in prior elections.

Biden cast himself as a statesman, an image built in part on his long Senate career, which included a stint as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

While Biden rallied allies to support Ukraine in its defense against Russia, he has struggled in efforts to persuade Israel to curtail civilian war-

time deaths in Gaza, despite that country's heavy reliance on U.S. military assistance. He is likely to leave office without the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas militants that he has pursued for months.

Republicans were quick to argue that the pardon shows Democrats preside over a "a two-tiered" criminal justice system, which Trump has claimed unfairly targeted him for prosecution and so merits an overhaul and the investigation of his

perceived enemies in a second term. Trump faced federal charges for his efforts to retain power after the 2020 election and for endangering national security by retaining classified documents after he left office.

"Under Democrat governance, there truly is a dual system of justice. One that protects Democrats and another weaponized against their political opponents," wrote Sen. Ron Johnson (R., Wis.) on social media.

Behind RFK Jr.'s Pivot Into Vaccine Skepticism

WASHINGTON—Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been a crusader for decades, first for the environment and then about vaccines, often clashing with the medical establishment in his quest.

*By Kristina Peterson,
Liz Essley Whyte
and Natalie Andrews*

He once brought his own PowerPoint presentation to meet with Dr. Anthony Fauci to try to convince the nation's then-top infectious-disease expert that scientifically proven and widely accepted childhood vaccines weren't actually safe.

Now his distrust of authority has taken him to the unlikely pinnacle of that establishment.

Kennedy, picked by President-elect Donald Trump to lead the Health and Human Services Department, is expected to begin meeting with senators in the coming weeks. His skepticism of vaccines and medical research, and his prior support for abortion, have raised hurdles among some Republicans. Last year, he said on a podcast that he couldn't say whether the polio vaccine had averted more deaths than it caused.

"I want to make sure that the benefits of modern medicine are going to keep my kids safe," Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R., Alaska) said.

A Kennedy ally tracking his support in the Senate, Sen.

Ron Johnson (R., Wis.), said in an interview that the top concerns he has heard are about Kennedy's skepticism of vaccines and his shifting position on abortion. "Everybody's got an open mind," he said.

There are some signs Kennedy has started to moderate his tone. He didn't mention vaccines when he outlined his agenda in an opinion piece in The Wall Street Journal. In early November, he told NBC News: "I'm not going to take away anybody's vaccines." Anti-vaccine activists, including Del Bigtree and Aaron Siri, remain in his close circle of advisers.

It is an approach that Kennedy himself has alluded to. "I always had the feeling that we were all involved in some great crusade," he once wrote.

A spokeswoman for Kennedy, Katie Miller, said: "We have a generational opportunity to bring together the greatest minds in science, medicine, industry and government to put an end to the chronic disease epidemic."

The third of Ethel and Robert F. Kennedy's 11 children, Kennedy was 9 years old when his uncle, then-President John F. Kennedy, was shot dead; he was 14 when his father was assassinated. Kennedy began experimenting with drugs after his father's death and faced arrest. He eventually started going to 12-step addiction-recovery meetings.

Kennedy's interest in vaccines grew out of his environmental work, which had focused on the harms he said were caused by mercury seeping into the water. Sarah Bridges, a Minnesota mother whose son started having seizures after getting the pertussis and other vaccines with a mercury-based preservative, went uninvited to Kennedy's

environmental work. He ran a litigation clinic on environmental law at Pace University.

"I think he's an advocate—pure and simple—with no other real experience," said Dan Reicher, a former U.S. assistant secretary of energy, who worked with Kennedy in his environmental work.

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home in Hyannis Port, Mass., around 2003 with a box full of studies. A consultant with a Ph.D. in neuroscience, she had won a government settlement that helped pay for her son's living expenses. Vaccine injuries are real but rare.

Bridges said she waited while Kennedy left for several hours to go sailing with friends. When he returned, she was still sitting on his porch. He finally agreed to look at the data if she would leave, she said. Kennedy said on Joe Rogan's podcast that the meeting prompted him to start calling health researchers, including Paul Offit, an infectious-disease specialist.

Offit said he walked Kennedy through a slew of studies, which Offit said didn't show any harm from mercury in vaccines. He noted that by 2001, the U.S. had removed a preser-

vative containing mercury from vaccines for young children as a precautionary measure. Still, Kennedy wrote a 2005 article linking vaccines to autism in Rolling Stone and Salon, which both publications later retracted.

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some children's vaccines meant they weren't safe.

Vaccine scientists have met with Kennedy and answered his questions on multiple occasions, people familiar with the conversations said, explaining that all vaccines go through safety testing ahead of their release and are also monitored after. Some shots for children, if tests in adults show that they safely prevent deadly diseases, don't undergo placebo testing, because medical experts consider it unethical to withhold proven lifesaving treatment.

Vaccinologist Peter Hotez, who has a daughter with autism, also spoke to Kennedy in a series of phone calls in 2017. "He had already set it in his mind that vaccines cause autism," Hotez said, adding: "He didn't have a lot of interest in the science, and wasn't willing to bend."

Autism link debunked

A 2015 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association of the health records of 95,000 children showed the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine didn't increase the risk of autism.

Kennedy persisted, eventually launching the nonprofit Children's Health Defense to promote his views. In 2017, he brought his own presentation to an hourslong meeting with Fauci and other top health officials, convinced that the lack of long-term placebo trials for



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is Donald Trump's pick to lead the Health and Human Services Department.

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FROM PAGE ONE

EVs, iPads Have BYD In Common

Continued from Page One
often turns to Chinese partners for expertise.

"We could not do what we do without them," Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook told Chinese state media on a visit to Beijing in late November, his third to China this year. In the first Trump administration, Cook successfully lobbied the president to exempt electronics including the iPhone from a tariff on Chinese-made goods.

An EV is like a smartphone on wheels: Both rely on batteries, chips and software. The blending of cars and phones is increasingly part of everyday business in China. BYD, which stands for "build your dreams," supplies parts and contract manufacturing for both.

Smartphone maker Xiaomi ventured this year into sporty sedans, and BYD helps assemble the phones and supplies some technology for the cars, Xiaomi founder Lei Jun said in

April, describing BYD founder and chairman Wang Chuanfu as a friend. Another BYD customer is Huawei, which makes both phones and EV software and sometimes displays phones and cars side-by-side in its showrooms.

Cook met BYD's Wang in March at Apple's Shanghai office, where Wang and his staff showed Cook a miniature model of the iPad production system. Cook said on Chinese social media that BYD was among the Apple suppliers "pushing the boundaries of what's possible."

For Apple, which abandoned hopes of making its own EV, working with BYD helps it diversify away from Taiwan's Foxconn, which assembles the most iPhones and iPads. BYD isn't in line to assemble completed iPhones, according to industry executives and analysts, but it is taking a bigger role in parts such as the titanium frame.

BYD has said it also works with Apple rival Samsung, supplying hinge-related components for some foldable phones.

BYD made news recently when its quarterly revenue exceeded Tesla's for the first time, \$28 billion to \$25 billion. The was possible because of



Working with BYD helps Apple diversify away from Taiwan's Foxconn, which assembles the most iPhones and iPads.

BYD Electronic, the company's contract-manufacturing arm, which had revenue of about \$6 billion in the quarter.

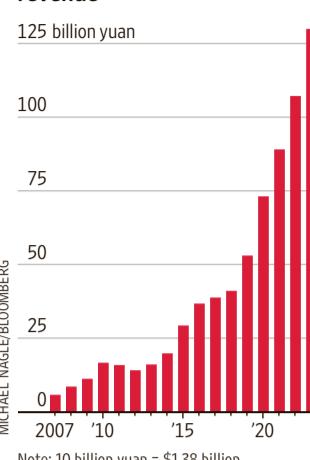
Wang, a chemist by training, started BYD three decades ago as a battery maker, and the company received an investment in 2008 from Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, also an Apple investor.

In its early days, BYD was often accused of imitation and landed in litigation with global leaders such as Sony and Foxconn. Legal battles between BYD and Foxconn, typi-

cally involving allegations of trade-secret theft and employee poaching, date back nearly two decades and continue to this day.

BYD's relationship with Apple began around 2009, when BYD started processing components, according to a company history published recently. It gradually won Apple's trust and was tapped to provide structural components such as metal, glass, ceramics and sapphire as well as assembly services, according to the book.

BYD Electronic annual revenue



Note: 10 billion yuan = \$1.38 billion

Source: S&P Capital IQ

as titanium parts for the frame of Apple's latest iPhone Pro models, said Ivan Lam, an analyst with Counterpoint Research. The company likes to boast that its robot drillers can carve patterns on the surface of an eggshell without cracking it.

It has expanded through acquisitions, including the purchase of facilities in two Chinese cities last year from U.S.-based Apple supplier Jabil for about \$2 billion.

One of BYD's responsibilities is helping Apple diversify its China-centric manufacturing, and it has helped Apple in countries such as Vietnam. BYD already makes smartphones in India for brands such as Xiaomi and could expand there if asked by Apple, said Counterpoint's Lam.

BYD said its next big thing would be developing AI-powered robots together with Nvidia for factories.

"It is like we are raising many fish in a pool, and honestly, we're not entirely sure which area of the market will mature in the future," said BYD battery executive Wang Haoyu at an event this year, citing the company founder's philosophy. "When a fish matures, we can scoop it out."

Funds' Bets On Bitcoin Mask Risks

Continued from Page One
were to drop 51% in a single day, the ETFs could be completely wiped out, a blowup similar to what happened with some volatility-linked ETFs after the 2018 market episode dubbed Volmageddon.

On top of that, the two 2X ETFs haven't been working as intended in recent days. MicroStrategy shares rose 9.9% Wednesday, but the T-Rex fund rose just 13.9%, instead of the 19.8% target. The fund's performance disappointed when the stock declined, too. Its share price dropped 6.2% on Monday,

when MicroStrategy fell 1.9%.

The performance caused an uproar among investors on social media who questioned the discrepancy and said they felt cheated.

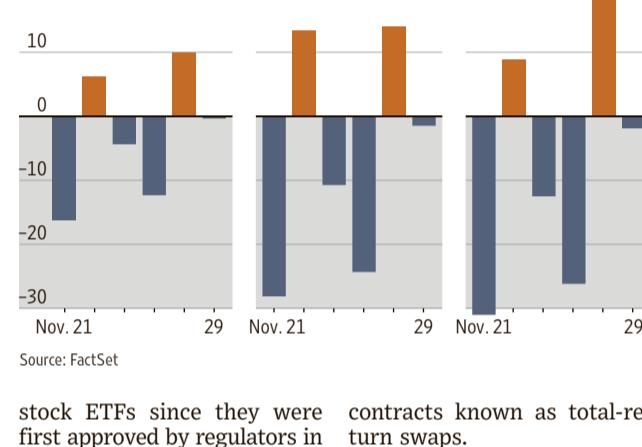
Jesse Schwartz, a 36-year-old winemaker and day trader in Washington state, has been using the funds as a tool to amplify his exposure to the stock.

He was surprised to see the shares weren't performing as advertised. Schwartz called his broker, Charles Schwab, to ask about the discrepancy and wasn't satisfied with the explanation. He sold all of his shares by the end of the week.

"It's disappointing to say the least," Schwartz said. "I'm getting more than the full risk to the downside and then not getting rewarded on the upside."

Niche fund managers have launched dozens of single-

Daily performance



stock ETFs since they were first approved by regulators in 2022. Until this point, the funds have largely worked as advertised. Popular funds that aim to double the daily return of Nvidia and Tesla tend to track closely to their target, thanks to their use of financial

contracts known as total-return swaps.

Proponents of the funds say they give regular investors access to strategies long used by Wall Street. Critics argue they can be dangerous because they don't offer diversification. In the case of the MicroStrategy

funds, they add leveraged exposure to a volatile stock that moves in relation to an unpredictable cryptocurrency. They warn the hype is part of a broader investor euphoria for speculative assets that will eventually collapse.

The managers of the MicroStrategy funds say they might be struggling to hit the 2x targets because their prime brokers—firms that provide securities lending and other services to professional investors—have reached the limit of the swap exposure they are willing to offer.

Leveraged ETFs typically achieve their desired result through the use of swaps, which are widely available for the biggest, most liquid stocks. Swap contract payments are tied directly to the performance of an underlying asset and allow a fund to double the daily performance of a stock or

index with precision.

Matt Tuttle, who runs the Tuttle Capital and Rex Shares 2x long MicroStrategy fund, said he can't get anywhere close to the amount of swaps he needs for his booming fund. He says his prime brokers are offering him \$20 million to \$50 million in swaps when at one point last week he could have used \$1.3 billion.

Both Tuttle and Sylvia Jablonski, chief executive of competitor Defiance ETFs, said they are turning to the options market instead to achieve leveraged outcomes for their MicroStrategy funds. Traders can effectively use options to double the daily return of an asset, but analysts say it is more of an inexact science. Options prices fluctuate, and big buyers like the ETFs can move the market.

—Alexander Osipovich
contributed to this article.

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WORLD NEWS

Airstrikes Pummel Rebel-Held Aleppo

Syrian and Russian forces target key city where control had shifted rapidly

By JARED MALSIN
AND ALEXANDER WARD

BEIRUT—Syrian government warplanes struck Aleppo in northwest Syria on Monday, state media and rescue workers said, as President Bashar al-Assad's government moved to repel rebels who took control of the city in a recent lightning offensive.

Airstrikes also hit residential buildings in the city of Idlib, which has become a refuge for people displaced by the war, killing at least 12 civilians, according to the White Helmets, an independent rescue organization.

The outskirts of Aleppo came under attack in a joint operation by Russian and Syrian forces, SANA, a Syrian state-run news agency, reported. The White Helmets said strikes also hit hospitals, a camp for displaced people, and the city of Aleppo.

The opposition offensive poses the most serious



A woman mourns relatives killed in a Syrian regime airstrike on a displaced-persons camp.

it out," Tabler said.

Holding Aleppo, which was Syria's largest city and an important trading hub before the war, has been a significant prize during the more than decade-long war. In 2012, Assad and Russia launched a year-long military offensive to reclaim part of the city that was taken by rebel forces that year. The rebels retreated from the city in 2016 after holding out against a month-long siege.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani, has said in recent years that he has given up the cause of transnational jihad, part of a rebranding effort aimed at easing international pressure on his organization. He appeared last year in front of the green, white and black flag of the Syrian opposition, rather than the black banners used by jihadist movements. The FBI is offering a \$10 million bounty for Jawlani.

Robert Ford, the former U.S. ambassador to Syria who pushed to list Hayat Tahrir al-Sham as a terror organization in 2012, said the group is no longer the hard-line jihadist organization it once was.

"What they are now is not what they were in 2011 or

2012," Ford said. "They're allowing Christians to rebuild churches. That's not what jihadis usually do."

But U.S. officials also fear they might get dragged deeper into the conflict if the roughly 900 U.S. troops in eastern Syria are attacked or if Turkey targets the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces.

Turkey has fought a slow-burning war with Kurdish separatists, including against the SDF, which includes Kurdish fighters. After Syrian army troops withdrew from Aleppo over the weekend, the SDF sought to evacuate some of the roughly 300,000 Kurds living in the city and its vicinity.

Turkish-backed armed fighters have disrupted this humanitarian corridor, SDF commander General Mazlum Abdi wrote on X. "The situation in northwestern Syria has rapidly and unexpectedly escalated, with our forces facing intense attacks from multiple fronts."

Watch a Video

Scan this code for a video on the Russian and Syrian regime airstrikes.

Touch-and-Go Diplomacy Led to a Truce in Lebanon

A surprise threatened to upend a Lebanon cease-fire as the U.S., France and Israel were completing talks on a deal: The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

By Michael R. Gordon,
Matthew Dalton
and Dov Lieber

Israel demanded that French President Emmanuel Macron disavow the warrant or they wouldn't accept France's monitoring role. Macron instead offered to end France's involvement, which risked scuttling the deal. Western officials familiar with the exchange said.

Top-level diplomatic maneuvers preserved France's pivotal role in monitoring the truce and cast doubt on whether the country would ever carry out the warrant. How the negotiators saved a rare moment of Middle East peacemaking is a tale of international law and great power politics.

That cease-fire is being put to the test, with both sides accusing the other of violating it. The shaky truce followed a diplomatic push involving a

flurry of calls among President Biden, Macron and Netanyahu.

The result was a French Foreign Ministry statement, negotiated with Israeli officials in confidential talks, suggesting Netanyahu might have diplomatic immunity if the court sought his arrest. That kept the cease-fire deal on track, but it has raised new questions about the reach and influence of the court, particularly when challenging the interests of nations like Israel, the U.S., China and Russia that haven't signed the institution's founding treaty, the Rome Statute.

France, one of 124 countries that are parties to the statute, has been one of the court's most vocal supporters.

A debate is under way about whether the statement has undermined the court's authority as it pursues war-crime charges against Russian President Vladimir Putin. U.S. officials say the court's charges of war crimes against Netanyahu are wrongheaded and risk months of diplomacy to end the Middle East war.

The Biden administration has regarded France as an integral part of a Lebanese truce because of its considerable influence in Lebanon, which is a former French protectorate, its support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and its central role—alongside the U.S.—in monitoring the cease-fire for violations, U.S. officials say.

Amos Hochstein, the U.S. envoy for the talks and a chief architect of the pact, spoke to Netanyahu days before the Nov. 5 U.S. presidential election. He said the talks had reached a decisive moment, and Israel had an opportunity to turn its major military gains against Hezbollah into a political achievement. But if Israel wasn't ready for a deal, Hochstein would pause his efforts and Israeli officials would have to reckon with the possibility that if Donald Trump won, it could take until February or March for the incoming president's Middle East team to be organized and resume the diplomacy, U.S. officials familiar with the discussions said.

Netanyahu signaled then that Israel was prepared to conclude a truce that could cement Israeli gains, provide its forces with an exit strategy and avoid a prolonged delay. Trump and his advisers were briefed on the talks, and indicated they had no objections.

On Nov. 21, the ICC issued a warrant for the arrest of Netanyahu and former Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant. French Prime Minister Michel Barnier appeared to suggest France would honor the warrant should Netanyahu visit.

Israeli officials told their U.S. counterparts that Israel wouldn't approve a deal giving France a role in overseeing the monitoring and implementation of the truce if Paris backed a court ruling that cast the Israeli leadership as war criminals.

In a Nov. 22 call to Macron, Biden said the court issues shouldn't frustrate the cease-fire push and urged him to call Netanyahu. Macron called Netanyahu and told him he was prepared to remove France from the truce pact to clear the way for a deal, a point the French president also made to Biden. Western officials familiar with the exchanges said.

But Lebanese officials said the French role was essential, as did their U.S. counterparts. Macron refused Netanyahu's demand for a statement saying he had broad immunity against the ICC warrant. But Macron acknowledged there was a legal question around the matter, and said a French judge ultimately would decide whether the warrant would be executed if Netanyahu visited.

The Israelis wanted something in writing. So Israeli and French officials negotiated a statement that cast doubt on whether the French government actually would arrest Netanyahu, but stopped short of saying he would have blanket immunity. It said, as leader of a country that hasn't signed the ICC treaty, Netanyahu has immunity that must be taken into account if France is asked to arrest him. That determination, French officials say, would be left to a French judge.

The cease-fire took effect on Nov. 27.

Le Pen Tightens Screws in Budget Battle

By NOEMIE BISSEBRE
AND STACY MEICHTRY

PARIS—Anti-immigrant leader Marine Le Pen is engaged in a high-stakes game of chicken with the French government and a multitude of global investors who finance the country's sizable debt load.

For weeks, the French public and markets have hung on Le Pen's every word for indications of whether she is willing to follow through on her threats to topple the government if it doesn't soften the impact of its planned budget on taxpayers.

Now a moment of truth has arrived. On Monday, Le Pen said she was prepared to back a vote of no-confidence in the government after Prime Minister Michel Barnier rammed a section of the government's budget through the National Assembly by exercising article 49.3 of the French Constitution.

Barnier doesn't have the votes to garner a majority in the badly splintered lower house, where Le Pen's far-right National Rally holds the balance of power. So he is essentially daring Le Pen to bring down his administration, kill the budget and, Barnier warned, unleash a run on France's sovereign debt.

French stocks have fallen sharply in recent weeks, and the premium investors demand to hold the government's long-term debt has risen to its highest since the eurozone debt crisis of 2012.

France's borrowing rate has in recent days eclipsed that of Greece, the eurozone's perennial fiscal laggard.

"We will vote in favor of the censure motion," Le Pen said on Monday, referring to the no-confidence vote expected this week. "The French people have nothing to fear."

The standoff provides a test of whether Le Pen and her ranks have the credibility to replace decades of rule by France's political establishment, including President Emmanuel Macron, whose term ends in 2027. Macron and his allies have long argued that Le Pen lacks the knowledge and skill to manage the second-largest economy in the eurozone and that her rise to power would shake investor confidence to its core.

For Le Pen, the front line of this battle is the cost-of-living crisis that has weakened the working and middle class. Barnier's budget demands 60 billion euros—equivalent to \$63.5 billion—in spending cuts and tax increases to narrow the deficit, which is projected to reach more than 6% of gross domestic product this year, double the European Union's limit.

Le Pen has acknowledged the need to narrow the deficit but would like it done without measures—such as electricity-tax increases and delays to pension increases—that affect her base. Instead, she wants France to slash its contributions to the EU; cut medical

care for foreigners in France; and further reduce international development aid.

Le Pen is flexing her muscles as her political future is imperiled. She has been charged with embezzlement in a trial that is expected to reach a verdict at the end of March. Prosecutors allege her party used close to €7 million that was earmarked for assistants working inside the Strasbourg, France-based European Parliament—to pay party staffers in other parts of the country between 2004 and 2016.

Prosecutors in November requested a five-year prison sentence and a five-year ban from public office, an outcome that would prevent her from running for president in 2027.

"It's revolting," Le Pen, who denies any wrongdoing, said in a TV interview, adding that prosecutors "are asking for a political death penalty with immediate execution."

In the budget battle, Le Pen

has a series of moves available to her. She has the option of holding her fire during the vote of no-confidence this week. Barnier used article 49.3 to pass a section of the budget that finances pensions, healthcare and child-care benefits. If his government survives, he will then be under pressure to pass the rest of the budget by the end of the year.

Le Pen's brinkmanship carries acute political risks. As she has expanded her influence in the National Assembly—reaching 124 seats in the 577-seat house after this summer's snap elections, she has encouraged her lawmakers to cast votes that show her party is responsible and ready to carry the mantle of government.

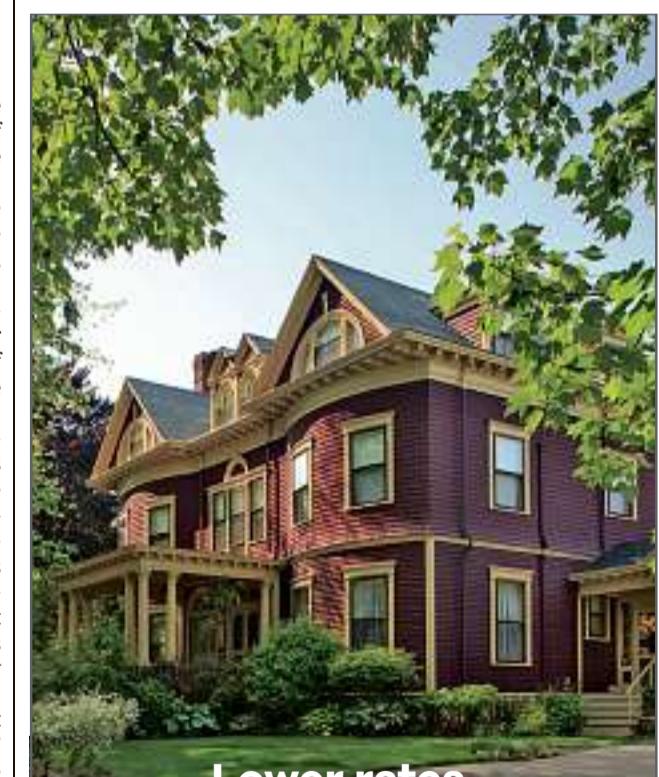
"If I fall, the government stops, and what happens?" Barnier said recently. "There will be a storm, probably quite severe, and turbulence on financial markets."

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FROM PAGE ONE

Universities Attract Tourists

Continued from Page One
is open to the public," said Benjamin Liu, a fourth-year psychology student at Nanyang Technological University, or NTU. "We were inherently trusting the public not to abuse our facilities. But these tourists show no such respect for us."

"Many of them weren't shy to take a few pictures or videos too. I think to them it's like observing zoo exhibits," recalled a recent graduate from one of the universities. "At the same time, we were observing them and the reac-

tions on their faces."

The problem has grown so irksome this year that NTU, located in what locals consider to be Singapore's western boondocks, imposed entry fees and other curbs on tour groups. National University of Singapore, whose main campus straddles the island's southern ridges not far from the business district, is posting security guards to ensure only students and staff can board internal shuttle buses, and getting student volunteers to lead walking tours—as a way to steer tourists away from classrooms.

Sean Tham, a 23-year-old undergraduate studying mechanical engineering at NUS, says he tried to avoid the crowds by taking public transport instead of free campus shuttle buses, and not eating lunch between noon and three o'clock. When a Chinese tourist

tried to cut the line for a campus bus ahead of Tham, he barked at her to wait for her turn. "I didn't really take note of her reaction because I couldn't care less," he said. "I'm a confrontational person and I don't tolerate this kind of behavior."

College campuses—especially those of prestigious institutions like Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge—have long been popular travel spots thanks to their architecture, landscapes and cultural significance. The tourist rush is newer for universities in Singapore, a former British colony that became an independent nation in 1965. Schools here have seen recent surges in visitors following recommendations on Chinese social media.

Chinese tourists have been particularly enamored with NTU, which occupies a 490-

acre campus with sleek facilities enmeshed in a tropical setting. Many Chinese travel agencies offer visits to NTU as part of Singapore tour packages, appealing to parents who want to give their children a taste of life at a leading Asian university. Sights include two arches emblazoned with the Nanyang University name, a Chinese Heritage Center, and the Hive—an eight-floor structure, completed in 2015, that resembles stacks of dim sum baskets. The Hive is a favorite for visitors who often wander inside to marvel at its architecture and observe lessons in its 56 classrooms.

Some NTU staff and students say they are flummoxed by the tourist interest. There are plenty of clues, though, across Chinese social media. On the Instagram-like Xiaohongshu, or "Little Red Book,"

and the video-streaming app Douyin, influencers take fans on tours through what they call "one of the world's most beautiful campuses," and post "sightseeing" strategy guides."

The tourist flows swelled after Beijing lifted its Covid-19 border controls early last year. The Hive became "packed with busloads of Chinese tourists" on a daily basis, said an NTU academic, who had to contend with visitors peeking into his classes, in some cases, trying to enter and shoot videos. "It's really quite bad."

In December last year, Singapore announced plans to allow visa-free entry for Chinese citizens for the first time, under a mutual 30-day visa waiver agreement with Beijing. Days before the visa waiver went into effect in February, both NTU and NUS took action. NTU started requiring

travel agencies to register with the university, schedule visits, pay entry fees, and abide by restrictions on where tourists can go. NTU says such measures have improved the situation and there "was no notable increase in tourist numbers during the recent holiday periods."

During China's Golden Week holiday in October, a peak travel period for Chinese tourists, NUS said it would require staff and students to show credentials when using campus shuttle buses and entering some food courts during certain hours of the day—to keep out visitors. "NUS is first and foremost an academic institution and not a tourist destination," a university spokesperson said. The university will add more measures by January, "in time for the next tourist peak season," the spokesperson said.

Elon Musk Rivals Fear Retaliation

Continued from Page One
"Swindly Sam."

Altman, a registered Democrat who chose not to endorse a candidate in this election, felt blindsided, a person familiar with his thinking said.

Musk's scorched-earth tactics have sent waves of concern through his lengthy list of business rivals, who over the years have included Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates and Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos. They have watched him ascend to an unprecedented level of power for a private citizen while continuing to nurse his private business grievances.

The world's richest man is poised to have significant influence not only over how his six companies, including X, Tesla and SpaceX, interact with the federal government, but also over how the new administration treats his rivals.

Musk's influence with Trump extends far beyond the Department of Government Efficiency, or "DOGE," the newly created advisory body that he will co-lead with Vivek Ramaswamy with the goal of slashing federal head count and regulations. He has rarely left Trump's side since the election, sleeping at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's private club and informal MAGA headquarters in Palm Beach, Fla.

He has joined Trump's calls with everyone from Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky to Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai and publicly pushed for Trump cabinet picks for agencies that will impact his companies, like Brendan Carr to lead the Federal Communications Commission.

Persona non grata

At Mar-a-Lago, people seeking to bring something to the president-elect's attention often go through Musk to do it. TikTok's CEO has been talking to him about tech policy.

That puts personal rivals like Altman in an unenviable position. "It's known that he's PNG," or persona non grata, said one person close to the Trump family, speaking of Altman. The new administration will hold huge sway over the regulation of the nascent AI sector, including over Musk's own rival AI company, xAI.

Altman has been in contact with friends and business associates within Trump's circle, including Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law; and Josh Kushner, his brother and the owner of the venture-capital firm Thrive Capital that is a major investor in OpenAI. Not much has worked so far. Some Altman contacts have been hesitant to pass on his entreaties, knowing how unwelcome they would be to Musk.

In recent weeks, Altman asked a mutual friend to arrange a meeting with Howard Lutnick, co-chair of the president-elect's transition team, people familiar with the meeting said. Lutnick ranks as one of Trump's closest advisers, and is also close to Musk. At a meeting in Palm Beach, Altman touted the investments OpenAI intends to make in the U.S. by building large data centers and making lots of hires, some of the people said.

Lutnick has since become Trump's pick to lead the Commerce Department, which



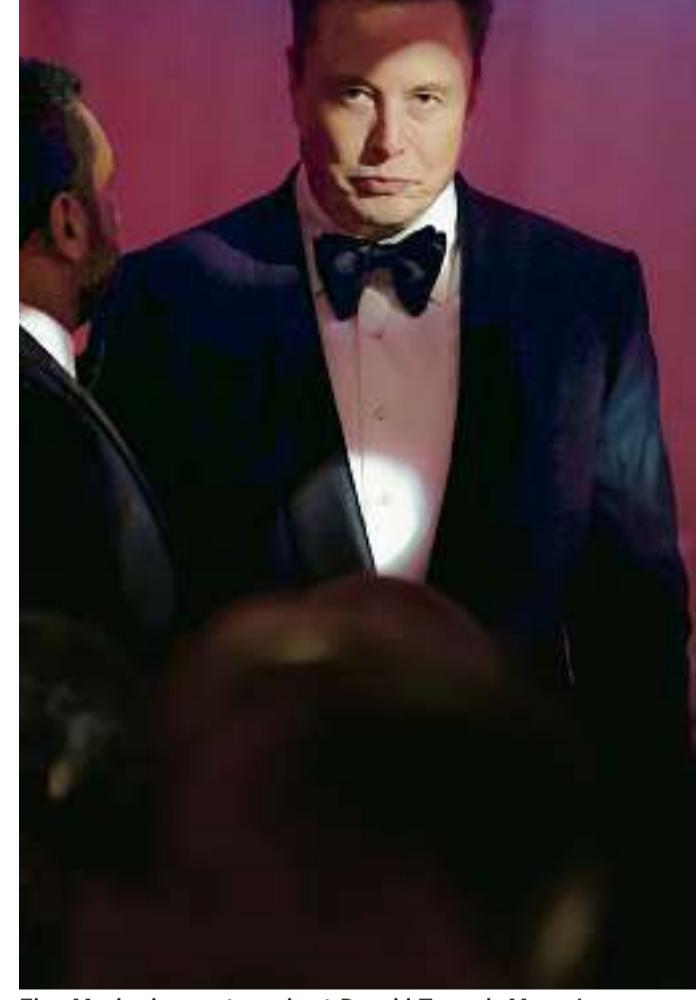
Sam Altman



Bob Iger



Mark Zuckerberg



Elon Musk, shown at a gala at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago.



Mark Cuban



Bill Gates



Jeff Bezos

oversees AI regulation.

A number of executives who compete with Musk's companies are hesitant to speak out against him publicly for fear of alienating him at a time when his power has found unmatched heights.

Musk didn't respond to requests for comment. He has said on X that he hasn't asked Trump for any favors or has been offered any.

Karoline Leavitt, a spokeswoman for the Trump transition, said: "President Trump will serve ALL Americans, even those who did not vote for him in the election. He will unify the country through success."

Trump rode to the White House on promises to use federal power to exact "retribution" against his political enemies. Musk has shown a similar taste for revenge, with a long list of perceived foes he has gone after through the courts and with his 200 million followers on X. People who have worked with Musk say he draws energy from the idea of having enemies.

'Large graveyard'

"Sometimes I think my list of enemies is too short," he once tweeted, later following up with this: "There is a large graveyard filled with my enemies. I do not wish to add to it, but will if given no choice."

Bill Gates got on the enemies list when he placed a short bet on Tesla's stock, wagering that a surplus in electric cars would drive down the price of Musk's car company. Musk was so enraged that he posted an unflattering photo of Gates on X next to a pregnant man emoji.

"Once he heard I'd

shorted the stock, he was super mean to me," Gates told Musk biographer Walter Isaacson. "But he's super mean to so many people, so you can't take it too personally."

He also targeted advertisers for pulling money from X after he purchased the platform in 2022. Some were boycotting because of a post that was

ceived as antisemitic. "Go f— yourself. Is that clear?" he said at a New York Times event, singling out Disney CEO Bob Iger.

He followed up by suing a coalition of advertisers in August, alleging the ad boycott was illegal, claiming on X: "We tried peace for 2 years, now it is war." The coalition denied wrongdoing but disbanded a brand-safety initiative that had been in Musk's crosshairs.

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When Making a Living Will, Talk to Your Loved Ones

Court ruling strengthens the legality of a directive and shows the stakes for getting details right

By ASHLEA EBELING

After getting diagnosed with a degenerative disease, high school principal Lynne Chesley signed a legal document stating she didn't want her life to be extended by artificial means.

She ended up on a feeding tube anyway for more than three years while family members fought over her fate. Her wishes were honored after a ruling this year by the Oklahoma Supreme Court, and Chesley died in August.

Such a drawn-out case shows the stakes for getting the details right on a living will, including who is designated to fulfill the person's wishes and how the information is shared with family and healthcare providers. While end-of-life planning decisions rarely go to court, the Oklahoma ruling strengthens the legality of the documents, lawyers said.

Unlike a will—which outlines how someone wants to distribute investments, real estate and heirlooms *after* you are gone—a living will covers your most important asset while you are still around: you.

It spells out what kind of care you want—or don't want—if you're unable to speak for yourself. You can name someone to make medical decisions for you if you can't. About a third of all Americans, and nearly half of older adults, have signed these advance directives, according to a University of Pennsylvania study.

Sigining the papers isn't enough. Ambiguity or confusion around end-of-life issues is happening in every hospital every day, said Amitai Heller, a senior staff attorney at Compassion & Choices, a nonprofit focused on expanding end-of-life options.

The most frequent problem is that people don't know where to find the directives when an emergency arises. When family members or healthcare providers don't know where the document is, it effectively doesn't exist.

How they work

People draw up advance directives to spell out their wishes and to make heart-wrenching decisions easier on their family members. You can specify medical preferences, such as whether you want artificial nutrition.

"This is a gift you're giving your family. They don't have to decide if you're going to live or die," Heller said.

Medical professionals have created forms, available from Prepare for Your Care, and Five Wishes, that go beyond the basic state forms. They cover softer issues, such as what kind of comfort care you want or don't want such as lip gloss or a chaplain's visit.

The person you name to act on your behalf is called your health-care proxy, agent or surrogate. That person is supposed to follow your wishes. If you don't name one, default state rules determine who it would be.

Estate lawyers say it is important that you talk ahead of time to the person you name to make decisions for you and make sure they are on board. "Tell them what you want, and ask the question, 'Can you carry out my wishes?'" said Martin Shenkman, an estate lawyer in New York.

What can go wrong

But even when there is a piece of paper with instructions on it, families can fight over the document itself: its validity or the meaning of



▲ Lynne Chesley, left, and her daughter, Allison White, at Chesley's retirement party.

a certain provision. Each state has its own forms and requirements for witnesses and notarization.

When Chesley was hospitalized for pneumonia in 2021, a feeding tube was put in place. Her relatives fought over the advance directive she completed in 2013, which called for not using life-sustaining treatment. Her children argued that the advance directive should be enforced and the feeding tube removed.

◀ A living will spells out the kind of care you want if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Chesley's designated proxy for healthcare decisions was her sister Amy Meyer, according to court filings. When the moment came, she argued that Chesley didn't want the tube removed.

The sister declined to comment, her lawyer said. In a deposition taken in a related case over spending money out of Chesley's trust, she said, "I don't believe in killing someone before they are ready to die."

Meyer argued that her sister revoked her signed directive by making limited movements after being told that removing the tube would be painful. She couldn't speak or walk at the time. Her doctor said he could administer medicine to ease any pain.

The court sided with the children that the document should be honored, stating that it takes clear and convincing evidence to revoke an advance directive, and that standard wasn't met. The treating doctor then ordered the tube to be removed.

Chesley's daughter, Allison White, a trauma therapist, stayed with her mom at Clarehouse, a hospice in Tulsa. She played Koshi chimes to help her let go, she said.

"When they took out the feeding tube, her whole demeanor was different, like she could finally rest," White said.

After Chesley's case it is not going to be easy to challenge or undercut these directives, said Jon Eisenberg. He was one of the appellate lawyers who represented Terri Schiavo's husband in the lengthy case against her parents, who wanted to keep her alive artificially.

"This case points in the direction that courts will likely go," he said.

Talk now

Even when you sign the papers, it is vital to talk about it with your family, said Catherine Auriemma, a pulmonary and critical-care physician at Penn Medicine. Her dad was going in for heart surgery, and said he had a directive when asked at check-in. His wife thought it was in their safe-deposit box, but he said he closed the box and put the papers in their bedroom closet. It wasn't there.

He confirmed his wishes to the clinical team: His wife should make decisions for him if needed, after consulting with Auriemma and one of her brothers. "We just did the conversation without the paperwork," she said.

In a study, Auriemma and colleagues found that few patients discussed their directive with their family and clinical team. Patients felt that after completing the form, they didn't have to talk about it.



▲ This year's picks include books about aging parents, preserving traditions and a podcast filled with unusual history.

should really be driving when he's essentially blind." The list goes on to include legal issues, dealing with new romantic interests and practicing safe sex.

'Custodians of Wonder: Ancient Customs, Profound Traditions, and the Last People Keeping Them Alive'

By Eliot Stein
St. Martin's Press (336 pages)

Wonder is present throughout BBC journalist Eliot Stein's enchanting travelogue in search of unsung individuals around the world devoted to keeping alive endangered cultural traditions. In the quaint medieval town of Ystad, Sweden, Stein climbs a 14-story tower to visit its full-time guard, the 74-year-old, tunic-cloaked Roland Borg. Beware of

vertigo as Stein crosses the last bridge in use dating to the Incan Empire, a grass-woven span 70 feet above Peru's Apurimac River. Foodies, meanwhile, will delight in reading about the lace-like Sardinian pasta *su filindeu* (or threads of God), product of a 300-year-old recipe that requires intensive work and is now prepared by only three local women.

'The Joy of Connections: 100 Ways to Beat Loneliness and Live a Happier and More Meaningful Life'

By Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer, Allison Gilbert and Pierre Lehu
Rodale Books (176 pages)

Ruth K. Westheimer, the sex and relationship therapist familiarly known as Dr. Ruth, who died this year at the age of 96, begins her final book by revealing that beneath her cheerfully ebullient public personality, "I've been sleeping with my loneliness my entire life." She was a

child refugee from Nazi Germany whose family was murdered in the Holocaust. Living in an orphanage in 1945, she wrote in her diary, "Above all, I'm longing for a friend." To make new friends and build new relationships today, she says, start by reframing your self-image from unlovable loner to someone of worth; that shift in self-esteem will allow you to begin to say yes to opportunities you had previously automatically rejected.

PODCASTS

'Stuff You Missed in History Class'

You don't have to be a history buff but you might become one listening to this podcast. Hosts Holly Frey and Tracy Wilson regale listeners with tales of memorable if eccentric historic figures and lesser-known but nonetheless momentous incidents. The topics range across centuries and include science, art, music, politics and all aspects of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. Frey and Wilson regularly answer questions and provide updates on mysteries that remain unresolved.

'This Is Growing Old'

This podcast is produced by the Alliance for Aging Research, a nonprofit devoted to "the common human experience of aging." Listeners get advice on topics such as being your own health advocate, navigating the web safely, legislation important to seniors, coping with loss and grief, and, on the brighter side, the positive impacts grandparents and grandchildren can have on each other.

Best Books, Podcasts For Advice on Aging

By DIANE COLE

Savoring the pleasures of life and discovering fulfillment even as you deal with the challenges of aging. These are two themes that thread their way through this year's recommended books.

BOOKS

'How to Retire: 20 Lessons for a Happy, Successful, and Wealthy Retirement'

By Christine Benz
Harriman House (320 pages)

"It's difficult to be happy or even content if you're worrying about money," Christine Benz writes. Benz, director of personal-finance and retirement planning at Morningstar, interviews 20 experts in aging and retirement, and goes beyond economic topics of retirement to include psychological, medical, emotional and practical issues that can affect your decision-making. Her advice can be pithy. "Invest in relationships and your health just as you would invest in stocks: Start early and make ongoing investments." Finally, wherever you are in your retirement planning, remember to relish the "micro-joys" each day brings.

'Learning to Love Midlife: 12 Reasons Why Life Gets Better with Age'

By Chip Conley
Little, Brown Spark (240 pages)

Midlife has always been a period of transition. But the transition is

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

BY IMANI MOISE

Theives who grab packages off the front porch have become so common that shoppers can now spend hundreds of dollars to protect themselves.

Online shopping has become the main way millions of people buy everything from gifts to groceries. But there is a pitfall at the front door. Nearly half of shoppers can expect to have at least one delivery fall victim to porch pirates during the holiday season, according to the personal-finance site ValuePenguin.

To deter them, Americans are shelling out for such high-tech gadgets as doorbell cameras, \$400 lockboxes or self-service locker rentals.

Now there is also insurance. PorchPals, a subscription-based startup that launches nationwide on Monday, says it will cover the cost of your stolen packages. It costs \$120 a year and covers up to \$2,000 of deliveries, or up to three claims a year.

None of the options are foolproof. For shoppers, whether to buy insurance comes down to the price of what you are buying and the risks of your porch. There are also free ways you can avoid package theft, such as being at home when items are delivered or picking them up in person at a warehouse or store, though those options are less convenient.

"A lot of insurance products duplicate what you already have access to as a consumer," says Terri Bailey, a Florida-based financial counselor.

Insurance gap?

Victims of package theft can often get the retailer to send a replacement item. Even though the retailer doesn't have to, it doesn't want to lose a customer. Retailers typically pay carriers, including FedEx or the U.S. Postal Service, for shipping insurance, but that coverage ends once the package makes it to your door, and might not cover the full value of the purchase.

Porch theft isn't covered under standard credit-card benefits. For example, American Express says its purchase protection doesn't cover items that aren't "reasonably safeguarded" and left at unoccupied locations.

"They usually send you back to the retailer, creating an endless

Shoppers Now Can Buy Insurance To Guard Against Package Theft

Nearly half of buyers can expect to be hit at least once by 'porch pirates' during the holidays



loop of finger-pointing," says PorchPals co-founder James Moore.

PorchPals had only been in California, but is now available across the country. Once a credit or debit card is linked to an account, all deliveries paid for with that card, including groceries and takeout, are covered. PorchPals says it doesn't charge a deductible and pays out all claims within 72 hours.

The limit of three claims a year means the insurance could be least useful for the people who need it the most, says Divya Sangameswar, an insurance specialist at ValuePenguin. Porch pirates tend to hit the same locations over and over. More than a quarter of people who have been victims in the past year say they have had three or more packages stolen, according to ValuePenguin.

Cost of theft

The rise of porch pirates is changing how—and even where—some people live.

Jenny Eckstein, a 31-year-old software developer in New York City, moved to an apartment with a doorman after living in a building that was a favorite of porch pirates. Her new apartment costs hundreds of dollars more a month, but she likes the peace of mind.

▲ The rise of porch pirates is changing how—and even where—some people live.

Nearly half of consumers have security systems in place to monitor package delivery, according to estimates from Capital One Shopping Research. Those systems cost an average of \$143.45.

Adam Sticha, a 32-year-old in Minneapolis who works from home, says he monitors notifications from his doorbell camera when he is expecting a delivery so he can pick it up right away.

He got the system on sale for \$99 and pays for the lowest-tier subscription that keeps footage for up to 30 days for \$8 a month. Last year a thief grabbed a box of sweatshirts from Amazon.com. The sweatshirts were eventually replaced by Amazon, but that would have hap-

pened even if he hadn't submitted video evidence of the crime.

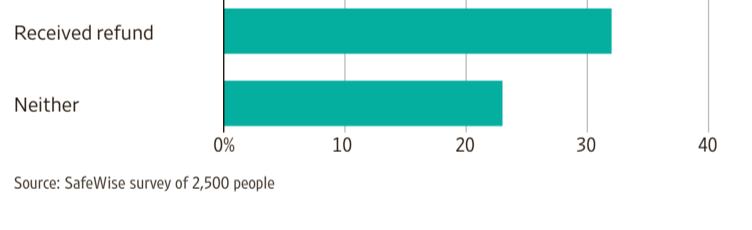
"All the cameras are good for is just having an FYI that your package was stolen," he says.

Often, porch-pirate victims need to file several claims—with the retailer, shipping company, credit-card company or local police department. The process can take up to 14 business days, and there is no guarantee of your money back, Sangameswar says.

Package theft is typically covered by homeowners or rental insurance policies, but paying a \$500 deductible to cover an \$800 iPhone that was stolen doesn't make much financial sense.

"With home insurance rates rising as quickly as they are, you probably don't want to be filing a claim for frivolous things like a package going missing," says Sangameswar.

BRUNNIA MAESTAS/MARILLO GLOBE-NEWS/TODAY NETWORK

Outcomes for victims of porch piracy

Source: SafeWise survey of 2,500 people

To Boost A Workout, Try to Vary Your Routine

BY PAULETTE PERHACH

Your workout might be more like your investment strategy than you realize. Sometimes your portfolio needs rebalancing. Modern fitness experts suggest varying your routine for maximum results.

How often should you look to change it? More often than you might think—every six to eight weeks, says Kate Mihevc Edwards, a board-certified orthopedic specialist who works with Olympic athletes and founded Precision Performance & Physical Therapy in Atlanta.

She says doing the same workout is like driving a car on a muddy, unpaved road, using the same grooves, creating ruts that get deeper and deeper.

"If you want to change the way that you move or the way that your body looks, then you have to change your movement pattern so you're not going down that same path all the time," she says.

This doesn't have to mean taking the often expensive step of changing equipment. She says it doesn't matter if you continue to use kettlebells, resistance bands or free weights. What matters is changing the actual movement.

Changes could be subtle, like the grip on your pull-up bar from wide to more narrow, or a squat stance from shoulder-width to sumo stance. You might also change from bilateral movements like squats to unilateral movements like lunges. You can also change how many sets and repeti-



tions you do, or try different types of exercises altogether.

Feed your head

Karl Erickson, a performance specialist at Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine in Rochester, Minn., emphasizes the importance of the mental benefits of changing your workout: the new challenge, the learning and the variety.

"Mental engagement is huge," says Erickson, who runs fitness classes and creates new programming monthly to ensure variety for his members. "We're still doing similar movement patterns, but there's variation in those movements, and muscles are challenged

a little bit differently."

This also helps prevent injury, he says.

"I definitely do believe that variety is beneficial in avoiding any of those chronic overuse injuries that we particularly see with doing the same movement pattern repeatedly," he says.

Trina Morris, a fashion blogger living in Rochester, started training with Erickson after a meniscus tear. She had previously been a runner and dancer, but had avoided switching up her workout with weight training because she had heard it would cause her to bulk up.

As she started to strength train, she noticed both better balance

and tone.

"And so I coupled that with Pilates and yoga," she says.

She calls the new mix perfect. She looks forward to remixing her routine every four to six weeks. "I never felt like I ever hit a plateau," she says.

Warning signs

Other factors can also signal that it's time to change.

"Let's just say you're going in consistently, you don't miss, you're seeing stagnant results, or you're actually decreasing in performance," Erickson says. "Definitely time to try something different."

These results might show in your running speed, muscle development or weightlifting capabilities.

A beginner will see accelerated initial gains that are typically unsustainable. At some point, a principle

of diminishing returns sets in and progress slows. It can feel like stagnation.

"When you see a decrease in performance, see chronic injuries, you're not enjoying the workouts—those are like tell-tale signs," Erickson says.

A few elements of your workout should remain consistent, no matter what other changes you make. Erickson recommends a balanced approach, with a foundation of what's known as Zone 2 exercise—moderate aerobic exercise that's sometimes called talk pace, where you're breaking a sweat but still able to carry on a conversation.

Long-term commitment to exercise should be the goal, says Kathryn Larson, co-director of the Sports Cardiology Clinic at Mayo in Rochester. You may want to consider changing other aspects of your fitness life to make it more pleasurable. Consider whether you want to work out alone or in a group, indoors or outside.

One of the most common mistakes Larson sees is an unrealistic timeline. You want to make sure you have an appropriate trajectory, in both the level of the goal and how much time you need. Take into consideration your overall goals and any limitations.

As far as your heart is concerned, variety matters less.

"I don't know that there's a golden rule in terms of cardiac health, in terms of switching up or modifying the schedule, so much as just being consistent in getting some sort of aerobic exercise for at least 150 minutes weekly," Larson says.

If you're thinking about switching your routine up, she says to look for what brings you joy.

NICOLAS ORTEGA FOR WSJ

ARTS IN REVIEW

By MICHAEL J. LEWIS

Kennett Square, Pa. It is tricky business to put new buildings on an old campus, and the thoughtful architect balances innovation with tradition. But a balancing act need not be a tug-of-war, where a gain on one side means a loss on the other. The new buildings at Longwood Gardens treat its historic character not as shackles to be suffered but as a springboard to creativity.

Longwood Gardens is the former estate of Pierre S. du Pont, the philanthropically minded industrialist who opened it to the public long before his death in 1954. Since then it has grown into one of the world's great botanical gardens, with a wooded landscape of nearly 1,200 acres, horticultural displays, fountains, and a vigorous research program. Last month, it completed a \$250 million expansion campaign that created 17 acres of new gardens and added a new conservatory, restaurants and other buildings. They demonstrate that, if done respectfully, contemporary buildings can transform a beloved campus without disturbing the features that made it beloved in the first place.

The project is a collaboration between Reed Hilderbrand, the prominent landscape architects, and Weiss/Manfredi, the firm of New York architects responsible for the new visitor center at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. That remarkable building begins at the street as a sleek glass pavilion and soon melts away under a berm, turning quickly from architecture into landscape. Rare is the architect who is happy to reduce the amount of visible construction to the minimum. For Longwood Gardens, Weiss/Manfredi performed a similar vanishing act, but on a much larger scale.

The principal topographic feature here is a ridge line that runs from east to west and which is fronted by a 400-foot-long retaining wall, forming a terrace upon which sits an array of glass conservatories. This is approached from the south by a grand fountain garden, whose central axis provides the one note of formal geometry in Longwood's otherwise



View of the new West Conservatory at Longwood Gardens, left; interior of the conservatory, below.

with the meandering processional paths. The sense is of strolling around a balmy lagoon under a festive canopy. Even the color is well chosen, a neutral gray that lets the flowers and leaves stand out in all their chromatic splendor.

As much is achieved through passive means as possible, using natural displacement ventilation in preference to artificial air conditioning; before fresh air is introduced, it is alternately cooled or heated by means of 10 ducts deep in the earth, where the temperature holds at a steady 55 degrees. The result, Marion Weiss has said, is "the largest free-standing living, breathing, glass house in North America."

The Conservatory does not contain the plants of one particular locale but rather offers a generalized Mediterranean ecosystem, a fictitious habitat circling the world at about 40 degrees latitude. Here the architects, with characteristic understatement, made one concession to climate anxiety: "as our world becomes hotter and wetter, these display gardens may in fact be the very gardens that will thrive in the future."

Among other additions is the Grove, a 46,000-square-foot building containing offices, classrooms and the library, and bringing together 85 workers who used to be scattered across the site. Like all of Weiss/Manfredi's buildings here, it is subtly detailed, its wood paneling taken from ancient trees whose time had come. The architects made no effort to match its style with their adjoining colonnade, preferring the sense of a complex that grew up slowly, incrementally, organically.

When I told its creators that their spare and elegant colonnade reminded me of Gunnar Asplund, they seemed to grow an inch in height. Visitors to reborn Longwood Gardens will feel a similar kind of physical pleasure.

Mr. Lewis teaches architectural history at Williams and reviews architecture for the Journal.

ARCHITECTURE REVIEW

A Careful Grafting

Longwood Gardens recently completed an elegant \$250 million expansion

picturesque landscape of rolling hills and meadows. New public spaces located here would enjoy spectacular views but would also run the risk of disrupting the character of the formal garden.

Weiss/Manfredi solved the problem with a bit of spatial legerdemain, making real estate out of thin air, or rather dirt. The firm excavated behind the retaining wall and beneath its terrace to create nearly 12,000 square feet of new public space, including a restaurant to one side and an event space to the other. To relieve the long linear expanse, the rooms are broken up into discrete and humanly scaled units, each under a shallow barrel vault. All this is tucked behind a stately arcade that from the outside reads as the north wall of the formal garden



while those within enjoy what feels like their own private vista.

Still farther beneath the terrace, and efficiently connected to the dining spaces, is as pleasant and functional an apparatus of kitchens I have seen. (If they can wrangle a visit, those who know the gritty reality of the food industry are likely to be as impressed with the kitchens' design as with the specimen plants above.)

Nobody would mistake the new buildings and spaces for historical ones, yet they draw imaginatively from the great buildings of the past. Here is a nod to Gunnar Asplund's Woodland Cemetery in Stockholm, there to London's Crystal Palace of 1851. The real centerpiece of the project is the West Conservatory, a 32,000-square-foot greenhouse that up-

dates the Crystal Palace in terms of modern technology and understanding of ecology. It disperses its some 6,000 plants among rambling walkways that seem to float above shallow pools of water. Overhead is a glass roof carried on an armature of delicately curved steel beams, each of unique form. There is no repetitive module as in a conventional greenhouse, but a relaxed order, the frame shifting along

FROM TOP: ALBERT VECERA/ESTO; NGOC MINH NGO

ARTS CALENDAR



HAPPENINGS FOR THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 3

By WSJ ARTS IN REVIEW STAFF

Film

"The End" (Dec. 6)

Musicals and the apocalypse aren't usual bedfellows, but Joshua Oppenheimer ("The Act of Killing") combines them here in a tale of a wealthy family living in a bunker decades after they helped bring about the end of the world. Tilda Swinton, Michael Shannon, George MacKay and Moses Ingram depict the well-heeled survivors.

"Oh, Canada!" (Dec. 6)

Paul Schrader's time-hopping drama recounts the life of an ailing documentary filmmaker who moved north as a Vietnam War resister in his youth and agrees to tell his life story to another pair of documentarians, who struggle to believe his recollections due to his faltering mind. The protagonist late in life is played by Richard Gere and as a young man by Jacob Elordi; Uma Thurman, Victoria Hill and Michael Imperioli also appear.

TV

"Black Doves"

(Netflix, Dec. 5)

Boy meets girl. Boy falls in love. Boy falls victim to the criminal underworld. Girl is a spy. Girl decides to take revenge. Keira Knightley, Ben Whishaw and Sarah Lancashire star in this spy thriller, set in London during the Christmas season.

"A Nonsense Christmas With Sabrina Carpenter"

(Netflix, Dec. 6)

The past few years have seen the revival of the holiday variety special, and this year's offering from Netflix features-of-the-moment pop stars like its host and Chappell Roan alongside guests of less recent vintage such as Shania Twain and Sean Astin.

Music

Rosé, "rosie" (Dec. 6)

The first solo record from this member of Blackpink, the hit K-pop group, is a 12-

track album that offers listeners an intimate glimpse into her guarded personal life beginning with its title, the name her closest friends and family call her.

Dance

"Ailey at New York City Center" (New York City Center, Dec. 4-Jan. 5, 2025)

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's new season features fan favorites from its repertoire—especially "Revelations"—the return of Ronald K. Brown's "Grace," a

which is part visual-arts extravaganza, part bacchanal, returns with numerous museum and gallery openings, talks and events, parties and, of course, the ubiquitous fairs—including Art Basel Miami Beach, Untitled and NADA.

Other

Notre-Dame Reopening

(Paris, Dec. 8)

More than five years after a fire devastated the iconic cathedral, it will welcome tourists and worshippers



▲ A scene from Paul Schrader's 'Oh, Canada.'

new production of Elisa Monte's "Treading" and world premieres including "Al-Andalus Blues" by Jamar Roberts and "Many Angels" by Lar Lubovitch.

Exhibitions

"Imaginary Books: Lost, Unfinished, and Fictive Works Found Only in Other Books" (Grosvenor Club, New York, Dec. 5-Feb. 15, 2025)

The 100 items in this show don't actually exist (well, sort of). Curator Reid Byers worked with a team of printers, bookbinders, artists and calligraphers to create these versions of books with no known surviving copies, books that were left unfinished, and works that exist only in fiction such as the Necronomicon.

Art

2024 Miami Art Week

(Dec. 3-8)

The annual art-world pilgrimage to the sunny city,

once again. Citywide celebrations are scheduled to mark the event and almost every part of the structure has undergone restoration and reconstruction, with new features including a reliquary for the Crown of Thorns, new liturgical furniture, sacred vessels, seating and more.

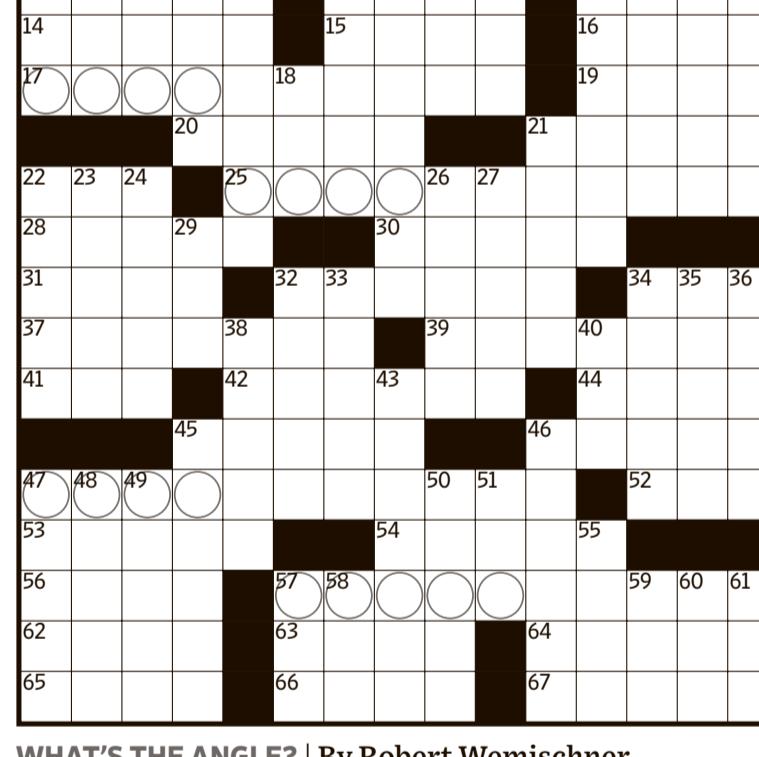
Last Call

"Lumen: The Art and Science of Light" (Getty Center, Los Angeles, through Dec. 8)

The Getty presents a spectacular if scattershot show containing over 100 works, ranging from medieval illuminated manuscripts to contemporary installation art. Our critic called it "visually magnificent," saying the exhibition "represents a cohesion of art and science more than a collision of the two."

For additional Arts Calendar listings visit wsj.com. Write to brian.kelly@wsj.com.

The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shenk



29 Indian honoric

32 African language family

33 "Samesies"

34 Valentine symbol

35 Object of many prayers

36 Rolling, as countryside

38 Time being

40 Gibbon, e.g.

43 Still hungry

45 Country music?

46 Hardly convincing

47 On the up and up

48 Stay away from

49 Plane divider

50 Ancient Peruvians

51 Advanced degree?

55 Smelting waste

57 Instagram shot

58 State west of Mont.

59 Even a shred of

60 Spending limit

61 Hobby shop buy

Previous Puzzle's Solution

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WHAT'S THE ANGLE? | By Robert Wemischner

Across	31	Cordelia's father	62	Just sitting	11	Buzzer meaning, sometimes	
1	Shoe blemish	32	Villainous character	63	Ponderer's product	12	Garlicky condiment
2	State bordering 16-Across	34	"Fat chance!"	64	Veranda	13	Back with bucks
3	DNA sample tool	37	Spots for yachts	66	Rude dudes	18	Floral necklace
4	Fourth of twelve	39	Nazareth native	67	Lake Nasser setting	21	Track figure
5	"Oh, hell!"	41	Hit the slopes	50	51	22	Soothing substances
6	One of the Great Lakes	42	Working, as a police officer	52	53	23	Move furtively
7	Fruit with orangy flesh	44	Gloomy atmosphere	54	55	24	Arcade name
8	Tooth part	45	Composer Bruckner	56	57	26	Cancel the relationship
9	Boat back	46	Wild	58	59	27	Clamorous
10	Park (site of Edison's lab)	47	Sister brand of Stouffer's	60	61	28	Stay away from
11	Troop grp.	52	Your of yore	62	63	29	Plane divider
12	Being an eavesdropper	53	Upper class	64	65</td		

SPORTS

BY ANDREW BEATON

Joe Burrow is having a season for the ages.

The Cincinnati Bengals quarterback leads the NFL in touchdown passes and has been terrorizing defenses across the league. He's now just the 29th quarterback in the sport's modern history with at least 30 throwing scores in the first 12 games of a season. In any normal year, he'd be among the favorites to become crowned Most Valuable Player.

There's just one hold-up: Cincinnati has one of the worst records in the league.

It was more of the same for Burrow and the Bengals on Sunday, when their record dropped to 4-8 following a 44-38 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers in the highest-scoring game of the season so far. Once again, Cincinnati's offense produced fireworks. Once again, Cincinnati's defense was shredded, while other crucial miscues robbed them of a prime opportunity to revive a campaign that began with Super Bowl aspirations.

As things stand, the Bengals are a long shot to make the playoffs at all—and they could wind up missing out even if they win all their remaining games. So unless they pull off something improbable, this year will be remembered for something else entirely: It could go down as one of the all-time biggest wastes of an epic season by an NFL quarterback.

"I just have to play to the absolute peak of my ability every week for us to go and win," Burrow said. "Some games I've done that. Some games I haven't."

Most teams with a quarterback playing as well as Burrow are among the leading teams in the league—if not the best. Quarterbacks who have thrown at least 30 touchdown passes this early in the season include the likes of Tom Brady in 2007, when the New England Patriots went 16-0, and more recently Patrick Mahomes in 2022, en route to a Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl win.

All told, the 28 other quarterbacks who accomplished the feat won 74.7% of their games in those seasons. Drew Brees was the only one of the bunch to experience a losing season when the New Orleans Saints finished 7-9 in 2012 and 2016.

Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow leads the league in touchdowns, but his team continued to disintegrate. Meanwhile, one of the greatest kickers of all time is mired in a slump.



Above: Joe Burrow and the Bengals dropped to 4-8. Bottom left: Justin Tucker missed two field goals and an extra point in a 24-19 loss. Bottom right, Kirk Cousins threw four interceptions as the Falcons slipped to 6-6.

What makes Burrow such an outlier among that group isn't merely that the Bengals have managed to win a mere one-third of their games so far. It's that for the most part, the 27-year-old has played mistake-free football—with only five interceptions all year. There are only six other instances of a quarterback tossing 30 touchdowns with five or fewer picks through 12 games, and they won at an 86.5% clip.

But even when Burrow plays out of his mind, Cincinnati still usually ends up on the losing side. In fact, last month the Bengals became the first team ever to lose back-to-back non-overtime games when their quarterback threw for at least 300 yards with at least three touchdowns and no interceptions in each one.

All of which means it's hardly a secret what is holding the Bengals back—their defense has regressed into one of the worst units around. They're now giving up a whopping 28.3 points per game, second-most in the entire league. In Sunday's loss they surrendered 520 yards, or 7.9 yards per play, to Pittsburgh.

On Sunday, Burrow added three more touchdown passes against the Steelers, but he also lost two fumbles under pressure—one of which was returned for a touchdown.

It all added up to a defeat that put Cincinnati's season on life support. According to the NFL's modeling, the Bengals' chances of making the postseason would have been 20% had they won.

Instead, they lost again—and now that's down to just 4%.

A Star's Steep Decline

The Baltimore Ravens' Justin Tucker is arguably the greatest NFL kicker of all-time. He entered this season with the highest percentage of field goals made (90.2%) and did it with astonishing power, too—the 66-yarder he nailed in 2021 is still the longest on record. But the kicker who for so long gave the Ravens an edge may now be their biggest problem.

In Baltimore's 24-19 loss to the Eagles, Tucker missed two field goals and an extra point. He has now made just 19-of-27 field goals this season (70.4%).

It marks a dramatic fall-off for the 35-year-old. In six seasons, he has made over 90% of his kicks. He had never made fewer than 80% over the course of a full season. And he's been especially unreliable on the long attempts that were once his signature—Tucker is now 4-of-9 from 50-plus yards.

Another Coach Gets Axed

It wasn't the happiest Thanksgiving for the Chicago Bears, who suffered their sixth consecutive loss when they fell to the Detroit Lions. The defeat dropped them to

4-8 and led to Matt Eberflus becoming the third coach to get fired this season.

While Eberflus's position had come under increased pressure during the team's slide, his decision-making faced mounting questions following the end to Thursday's game. Chicago had come back from a 16-0 deficit and trailed by just three points when they got the ball back with three minutes left. But late on, with the ball in Detroit territory, Eberflus made a critical clock management error. Quarterback Caleb Williams got sacked with about 30 seconds to go, and he didn't call his final timeout. Instead, seconds continued to trickle off the clock, leaving Chicago with only enough time to run one more play: an incomplete pass that ended the game—and Eberflus's tenure with the Bears.

A Brewing QB Controversy

The Atlanta Falcons took an unorthodox approach this offseason when they signed veteran quarterback Kirk Cousins to a lucrative contract and then used their first-round pick on another passer, Michael Penix Jr. The idea was that Penix could develop for a couple of years behind Cousins before taking the reins.

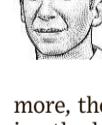


Could that come sooner than everyone expected? Atlanta coach Raheem Morris said that the 36-year-old will remain the starter, but more performances like Sunday might cause him to rethink that stance. In a 17-13 loss to the Chargers, Cousins had one of the worst days of his career with four interceptions—one of which was returned for a touchdown that proved to be the decisive score.

The defeat dropped the Falcons to 6-6, which is still tied for first in the NFC South. And if Cousins continues to struggle, Atlanta won't have to look too far to find his replacement.

JASON GAY

Saquon Barkley and the Eagles Are Making a Super Run

*Baltimore*

Noisy and gleeful, they made their presence known early, and as the fourth quarter ticked down in chilly Baltimore, the visiting flock began filling the lower half of the stadium, claiming another aerie as their own. Bright green and barrel-chested, the interlopers from up Interstate 95 weren't hard to identify:

Eagles fans.

As in the loud, proud fans of Philadelphia football Eagles, a sui generis NFL species—aggressively passionate, seldom content, and never shy. On Sunday their beloved squad won their eighth game in a row, defeating the scatter-shot Ravens, 24-19, and lifting their record to a soaring 10-2, with five regular season games remaining.

Everyone's buzzing about the Lions, Bills, Chiefs. Philadelphia is right there, too.

Hold on. Philadelphia's right there, too.

Eagles fans have a unique relationship with good news—it triggers a deep-seated fear the other cleat is about to drop—but this grinding, defense-first team has become hard to deny. Philadelphia is a punishing, physical squad that is getting stronger at the right time, in the December cold.

"We've got a tough football team," said Eagles head coach, Nick Sirianni.

Vibes are high. Last year was a disastrous campaign for Philadelphia—the team started 10-1, lost

five of six to finish 11-6, and got chased out of the playoffs by the Buccaneers in the opening round. It couldn't have ended worse.

This season, amid a middling 2-2 start, the boo birds started hooting for Sirianni—followed by predictable speculation he could be replaced, perhaps by crusty wizard Bill Belichick. Sirianni didn't help matters by verbally tangling with local fans after a narrow win over Cleveland, an outburst he later apologized for.

Everyone's buzzing about the Lions, Bills, Chiefs. Philadelphia is right there, too.

Hot seat gossip and sideline meltdowns can unravel a team. Didn't happen. These Eagles and their fervent head coach may be an acquired taste, but results are results: they haven't lost since late September. That 2023 collapse feels like someone else's bad dream.

"Last year is over," Sirianni said. "We don't care about last year."

In the victorious visitor's locker room in Baltimore, "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough" pumped while Philadelphia dressed to hit the road. Again they'd done enough—the Eagles started slowly, but gradually turned up the heat and pulled away late.

Defense again led the way, holding Baltimore's quarterback dynamo, Lamar Jackson, in check most of the day. Jackson entered the game a spectacular 23-1 versus NFC teams in his career. Despite a few brilliant highlights—Lamar is going to Lamar—he finished the afternoon 23-2.

On the opposite side, Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts kept his team steady and moving. Hurts's stats were modest—11 of 19 for 118 yards, one touchdown pass, a signature "tush push" for a score—but he saved his best for last, assembling a long, late drive to put the game away.

Hurts is sometimes damned with the faintest quarterback praise—game manager—a term that doesn't seem to faze him ("Everyone that plays a position is asked to manage a game," he said) but riles his coach.

"That's all B.S.," Sirianni said, deploying the more fragrant term. "Jalen played an awesome game."

Also undeniable was Philly's shiny addition to the backfield, running back Saquon Barkley, who arrived from the fetid Giants in the offseason and has responded with a career season, averaging just under 125 yards a game.

Sunday was positioned as a battle of the NFL's two best backs, Barkley and Baltimore's imposing Derrick Henry—"I don't know if I would want to tackle Derrick Henry," Saquon said, smiling—and Barkley got the upper hand, collecting 107 yards and breaking the



Saquon Barkley rushed for 107 yards and a touchdown in the Eagles' win.

game open with a 25-yard touchdown run with eight minutes left.

"I'm having a blast," Barkley said afterward, a comment which should make any fan of the 2-10 Giants want to crawl under a table—that is, another table, beneath the table they've already crawled under.

Barkley is on track for 2,000 yards, and could break LeSean McCoy's Eagles single season rushing record (1,607) next week.

They call victories like Sunday's statement wins, though a statement has a short shelf life in the

NFL. The coach, who is fond of a mountain climbing metaphor—don't look down, don't look up—favours a narrowly focused approach.

"The [monotonous], boring, day-to-day grind is what gets results," Sirianni said.

They might not have the sizzle of Kansas City or the adorableness of the Lions, but they're a story, Philadelphia. Winter is coming, the playoffs are beckoning, and the mood is cautiously confident. When the Eagles and Eagles fans are involved, one outcome is certain: They will be heard.

OPINION

It's Good to Be Hunter Biden

MAIN STREET
By William McGurn

No one was surprised Sunday evening when Joe Biden made it official that he was pardoning his son Hunter. The surprise was the statement that the president issued along with the pardon. He blamed his "political opponents" in Congress for all Hunter's woes.

Many will empathize with a father doing whatever he can to keep his son out of prison. Many have also experienced the pain and trauma of a family member with a drug addiction. There's even a case that Hunter's pardon is good for the country, by letting us move forward from a rather ugly episode.

But what's striking about the president's statement is that it speaks of righting a wrong done to Hunter, not extending mercy to a man who has suffered enough for his own wrongdoing. It will be illuminating to see if similar empathy is extended to those imprisoned for actions at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, if Donald Trump issues pardons. Some of them committed violent acts but some were given sentences that were excessive. To re-purpose Joe Biden's words about his son, "no reasonable person who looks at the facts" could "reach any other conclusion."

How different the conversation today is from a few months ago, when Mr. Biden calculated that even talking about a pardon might cost him re-election. In an inter-

view on ABC News in June—while Hunter's trial was going on—David Muir asked the president if he would "accept the jury's outcome, their verdict, no matter what it is." Mr. Biden tersely answered, "Yes."

Mr. Muir followed up: "And have you ruled out a pardon for your son?" Mr. Biden was categorical. "Yes," he said.

A week later, after the jury had found Hunter guilty, the president was again asked about it by reporters at the Group of Seven summit in Italy: "I said I'd abide by the jury decision, and I will do that. And I will not pardon him." All that was missing was, "I give you my word as a Biden."

No one believed him. Everyone knew that the promise was meant only to bury the issue through Election Day. The idea that he came to this decision to pardon Hunter over the Thanksgiving holiday doesn't pass the smell test. It was always going to happen if Hunter faced the real prospect of jail time, and everyone knew it—especially Hunter.

President Biden's promise not to pardon his son wasn't the only whopper he's told. He denied meeting Hunter's overseas business associates when in fact he did. He also insisted during the 2020 presidential debate with Mr. Trump that Hunter had taken no money from China—something Hunter later admitted to doing in federal court.

Many were happy to join the president in the Hunter falsehoods. Most notorious were the 51 former intelligence officials, mostly veterans of the Obama administra-

tion, who tried to ward off honest reporting about Hunter's laptop. They jumped in right after the New York Post verified the laptop's provenance in 2020. The paper had reported the incriminating emails about Hunter's sordid business dealings in Ukraine.

Couched in weasel words that they knew would be lost in the reporting, the 51 declared the emails had "all the classic earmarks of a Russian

information operation." We now know the statement was ginned up at the suggestion of Antony Blinken, the future secretary of state who was then working for the Biden campaign.

The statement is dated Oct. 19, 2020. And it worked. During his final presidential debate three days later, Mr. Biden cited the 51 (without caveats) when Mr. Trump brought up what he called the "laptop from hell." Mr. Biden responded by saying that "50 former national intelligence folks" had said the laptop emails were "a bunch of garbage." This was less than two weeks before the election. By the time the truth finally caught up with the story, Mr. Biden was president.

The same goes for Mr. Biden's claim that the justice system has been "infected" by raw politics in Hunter Biden's

case. The president is right but not in the way he pretends. Attorney General Merrick Garland presided over a Justice Department that at every turn gave Hunter kid-glove treatment.

That included letting the statute of limitations expire for the most serious tax-evasion charges against Hunter. It also included the sweetheart plea deal designed to bury the whole affair—until Judge Maryellen Noreika asked some basic questions in court that the prosecution couldn't answer. Then Mr. Garland elevated the man who orchestrated this sweetheart deal to special counsel.

The pardon is only the latest Biden promise broken. It was timed to pre-empt Hunter Biden's sentencing, scheduled for Dec. 12 on the gun charges and Dec. 16 on the tax charges. The expansive breadth of the pardon—which lets Hunter skate not only on the crimes he was convicted of but on any he may have committed in the past nearly 11 years—indicates the president may be worried about other Hunter criminal activities coming to light.

"No one is above the law," President Biden likes to say, especially when moralizing about Mr. Trump. When asked Monday about the president's clearly broken promises not to pardon Hunter, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said her boss has always believed in being "truthful to the American people."

That is perhaps the biggest lie of all. And the most fitting end to the Biden presidency.

Write to mcgurn@wsj.com

BOOKSHELF | By Michael O'Donnell

The Road To Stardom

From Under the Truck

By Josh Brolin

Harper, 240 pages, \$30

Josh Brolin is a postmodern cowboy. Masculine but too vulnerable to be macho, at ease on a motorcycle or on horseback, he looks best with dust in the grooves of his skin. Some of his scars are self-inflicted. "I have made life harder than it's needed to be," the actor concedes in his memoir, "From Under the Truck." Mr. Brolin's coin of the realm is a face that has a grin on one side and a scowl on the other. The former lets him portray a certain type of aging scoundrel in films such as "Sicario" (2015); the latter produces tough stoics. In "Dune" (2021), when admonished to smile for visiting dignitaries, his character growls, "I am smiling." Yet Mr. Brolin was probably the first cast member to start laughing after the director yelled cut.

"From Under the Truck" is raw, honest and self-effacing. It gives snapshots of a life filled with highs and some staggering lows, including lies told, drunken rants, trips to jail and at least one knife to the gut. Composed by Mr. Brolin himself rather than ghostwritten, the narrative is presented in non-linear, diarylike prose and occasional verse. If a celebrity memoir can be typecast by its author's

preoccupations—status, vanity, political moralizing, petty scorekeeping—this is a book about parents and children. Its best passages recall Mr. Brolin's mother, Jane Cameron Agee, who "was armored with a character so unique and memorable that to die would be an insult to her mythology."

Mr. Brolin's early years were spent in Paso Robles, Calif., and he writes vividly about his childhood. "As a kid I woke up before first light and fed at least forty horses." On Saturdays, the tradition was to eat a huge breakfast at Hoover's Beef Palace, where cowboy hats "were customary and worn without affectation." Mr. Brolin adapted to the coastal lifestyle after moving to Santa Barbara at age 11. He and his friends called themselves the Cito Rats and spent their days surfing, taking LSD and getting arrested. "We'd learned what punk rock was before we could put a name to it."

The constant—or inconstant—through the years was Mr. Brolin's peripatetic mother. He calls her the most important person in his life, and she brings out his best writing. "My mother was five feet three inches tall, at best. She weighed a measly 105 pounds and she drank Calypso Coffees by the dozen," he writes, describing her favorite spiked beverage. "Rhinestoned and leather fringed," she had a "three-hundred-pound voice," slept with a pistol next to her bed, was once committed to a state mental hospital and seduced many a man. "She'd make herself known. She couldn't help herself." Yet for the young Josh, Jane represented stability. His father, the actor James Brolin, was rarely around. Jane died after a car crash in 1995.

When it comes to the movies, the younger Brolin seems less interested in slick entertainments than the friendships and adventures that his line of work affords. After early success as a child actor, he disappeared into the Hollywood wilderness for decades. "I was a loser," he bluntly admits. "I was someone who had never hit but was supposed to have. I had 'The Goonies' but that was long over and I had done nothing of note since. I was past the point of rediscovery." Then came his starring role in the celebrated 2007 western "No Country for Old Men," directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. Star struck to be near

Josh Brolin had a renaissance after 'No Country for Old Men,' yet the actor cares more about family and the friends he's made along the way.

Tommy Lee Jones and suffering from a broken collarbone, Mr. Brolin nevertheless recognized his chance. "Something's trying to keep me down," he writes of the charged moment. "I won't let it." The performance relaunched his career. Steady work has followed with the finest directors in the business, including Ridley Scott, Denis Villeneuve and Paul Thomas Anderson.

Parenthood is the source of the author's greatest joys and fears. Stories about small moments with his four children fill the pages. "Sleeping with an infant next to you, I've learned, is not sleeping. It's resting your eyes." Mr. Brolin catalogs all the points to keep straight—"sleep on the back, now on the side; don't run on wood floors with socks; we can pretend things are knives but we don't actually pick up knives; pull over when you forget to buckle them into their car seats"—and recounts a heart-stopping night when he thought his adult son had died in an accident. He concludes that the arrival of children was "like a divine intervention that slapped the ego out of my self-absorbed youth."

With his own father hovering just outside the frame, Mr. Brolin found a friend and father figure in Cormac McCarthy—the novelist who wrote "No Country for Old Men," the basis of the film. Naturally, the two talked about their children, and the actor was with the author the night before McCarthy died in June of last year. Mr. Brolin—who, like his mother, often seems to go one step too far with people—lacerates himself for once asking McCarthy to sign his typewriter. It was an insult to their friendship, he realizes. What Mr. Brolin valued was not proximity to literary brilliance but a wise friend who was "simple, straightforward, and uninterested in nonsense." That is also a good description of this remarkable book.

Mr. O'Donnell is the author of "Above the Fire." His next novel, "Concert Black," will be published in 2026.

Josh Brolin on Cormac McCarthy

"I thought of him in front of his Olivetti typewriter writing what he writes: words that come to him like ghosts feeding chickens handfuls of pellets. Not everyone has that. He eats off the dirt of what the ghosts feed his brain."

The Lessons of Syria for Washington

GLOBAL VIEW
By Walter Russell Mead

The Middle East never loses its capacity to surprise. This week the surprises are from Syria, where members of the long-smoldering rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad's murderous regime have burst into flames. With Mr. Assad's Hezbollah allies decimated, his Russian backers stretched in Ukraine, and his Iranian paymasters reeling under Israel's hammer blows, the rebel forces smelled weakness, and they came down from the hills.

The collapse of Mr. Assad's poorly trained army of sullen conscripts humiliated the regime. The loss of Aleppo has wounded it. Before civil war wrecked the Syrian economy, Aleppo was the country's commercial capital. It's where Mr. Assad kicked the rebels to the curb in four years of bitter warfare starting in 2012. The regime's 2016 victory in Aleppo signaled to the world that Mr. Assad was here to stay.

Now a loose coalition of rebel groups has retaken the city as Mr. Assad's demoralized forces flee in disorder. Russian and Syrian war planes are strafing rebel-held territory and supply lines, but the rebels continue to advance. While nobody knows how this ends, there are im-

portant lessons here for policymakers around the world.

One lesson concerns the uses and limits of military power. The rebel victory in Aleppo is a direct consequence of the wars in Ukraine and the Levant. Ukraine's gallant resistance to Russian aggression has degraded Russia's global capabilities and reduced Vladimir Putin's power to aid his pals in Damascus. More vitally, Israel's victories in Gaza and Lebanon have weakened its enemies in Damascus and beyond. Mr. Assad can't count on Hezbollah and Iran to bail him out in Aleppo—the mullahs and their proxies have problems of their own.

But Mr. Assad's defeats aren't all good news for Jerusalem. In the Middle East, the enemy of my enemy isn't necessarily my friend. The strongest of the rebel groups around Aleppo are forces formerly linked to al Qaeda and separate factions supported by Turkey's Islamist-leaning President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. An Islamist Syria under Turkish protection could be an even more dangerous neighbor for Israel than Mr. Assad's Syria has been. As was the case since its 1948-49 War of Independence, Israel can defeat its enemies, but it can't conquer its way to peace.

There are two other lessons that Washington needs to take in. The first is that Israel is an excellent ally, and the U.S. benefits when we

support it. Overall, the Biden administration has given Israel the weapons it needed to prevail in Gaza and Lebanon.

As a result, a weakened Iran is ready to offer more concessions to both Israel and the U.S. than it was a year ago. The superiority of American weaponry over Russian gear has been convincingly demonstrated. All this was accomplished without the

rica and the Red Sea.

On President Biden's watch, the U.S. remained strategically passive as Russia expanded its global reach. As billions of badly needed dollars flowed into Moscow from mercenary contracts, mines, oil fields, and the smuggling of drugs and arms across much of North Africa and the Middle East, Washington failed to respond.

As the fall of Aleppo reminds us, Russia's far-flung network of bases and relationships is vulnerable. A strategically alert and forward-thinking American war strategy would activate local allies against Russian interests worldwide, forcing Mr. Putin either to divert resources from Ukraine to defend his global network or to accept the loss of Russian influence and the revenues it brings.

This isn't a slam dunk. The rebel groups in Syria have some unsavory roots and are pitted against the Syrian Kurds that the U.S. supports. But this is where diplomacy comes in. Building a strong anti-Assad Syrian coalition would pressure Russia, weaken Iran and resolve some prickly issues in U.S.-Turkish relations.

Russia is weak in Syria, and the U.S. and its allies are, if we choose to be, strong. To get better peace terms for Ukraine, and to restore the balance of power worldwide, Washington should tighten the screws on Mr. Putin in Syria.

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Pardon Me, Dad: The Hunter Biden Story

How many times did President Biden or one of his press minders tell the voting public that he wouldn't pardon his son Hunter? Now we can see how seriously the President takes his "word as a Biden," as he likes to say. On Sunday Mr. Biden saved his son a likely prison term, and he did it in sweeping language that provides Hunter an immunity almost without precedent.

Mr. Biden's change of heart after the November election was predictable, and neither political party has clean hands on questionable clemency. If Hunter is now on the straight and narrow, good for him. Many people have enough experience of addiction to sympathize with what the Biden family went through. But we can't let the President explain away the political ramifications of his pardon by rewriting what actually happened.

"No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son," Mr. Biden said in a statement. He added that "raw politics has infected this process." He cited the no-jail plea agreement that Hunter was offered last year by prosecutor David Weiss, before it fell apart in court. Those terms "would have been a fair, reasonable resolution of Hunter's cases," the President said.

That might arguably be true about the gun charges, though the context matters. In June a jury convicted Hunter of three firearm crimes, including lying about his illegal-drug use when he bought a Colt revolver. Rarely is this prosecuted. On the other hand, most people don't write memoirs all but confessing, as Hunter did. He owned the gun for 11 days before his then-girlfriend threw it in the trash at a grocery store across from a high school.

As for the tax charges, two IRS whistleblowers testified that Hunter was singled out—for favorable treatment. The handling of his investigation "was very different from any other case in my 14 years at the IRS," Supervisory Special Agent Gary Shapley told Congress. "At every stage, decisions were made that benefited the subject." Special Agent Joseph Ziegler cited evi-

The President tries to rewrite the facts to justify breaking norms.

dence of willfulness, saying Hunter approved alleged false business deductions in 2020, after he was supposedly sober.

What killed Hunter's plea deal wasn't politics but federal Judge Maryellen Noreika. When the two sides got to her courtroom, they didn't agree on whether the terms would immunize Hunter from other possible charges. They also wanted to insulate Hunter by putting Judge Noreika in the position of determining whether a future prosecutor could charge Hunter for failing to comply with the deal. The judge wasn't sure if that was constitutional.

President Dad has now granted Hunter the broad protection he wanted. The unconditional pardon covers any and all offenses Hunter may have committed from Jan. 1, 2014, through this past weekend. This is an effort to shield Hunter from prosecution under President Trump. The 2014 date is significant because it's about when Hunter went into business with Burisma, the Ukrainian energy company that paid him money he failed to pay taxes on.

Legal experts are saying they've never seen a pardon so open-ended, other than maybe Gerald Ford's for Richard Nixon. Add this to the list of democratic norms broken by Mr. Biden, who claims to stand up for them.

Mr. Trump is already citing it to justify the next bad precedent. He has pledged clemency for the crowd that stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. This is an awful idea, especially if Mr. Trump includes anybody who hit a cop that day. But get ready for the MAGA mantra: What about Hunter? Already Mr. Trump is linking this pardon with leniency for "the J-6 Hostages," as he put it on Truth Social.

"I hope Americans will understand why a father and a President would come to this decision," Mr. Biden said. As a father? Yes. But what a pitiful end to his Presidency.

In 2020 he promised a return to normalcy, defended Hunter's influence hustling, and claimed Hunter's laptop was Russian disinformation. Then he tried to be FDR, encouraged the prosecution of Mr. Trump, and gave his son a "get out of jail free" card. The history books will not be kind.

Trump, Biden and Hamas's Hostages

One of President Biden's failures has been his reluctance to speak up about the Americans held hostage by Hamas since Oct. 7, 2023. He rarely mentions them, and when he does it's usually to criticize Israel's government for not agreeing to a cease-fire with Hamas that would cause the terrorists to release them.

On Monday Donald Trump signaled he'll pursue a different strategy. "Everybody is talking about the hostages who are being held so violently, inhumanely, and against the will of the entire World, in the Middle East - But it's all talk, and no action!" Mr. Trump said on Truth Social.

"Please let this TRUTH serve to represent that if the hostages are not released prior to" when he returns to the White House, "there will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East, and for those in charge who perpetrated these atrocities against Humanity," he added. "Those re-

sponsible will be hit harder than anybody has been hit in the long and storied History of the United States of America. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW!"

Call that bombastic if you want, and Mr. Trump would have to follow through on his threat if Hamas doesn't act by Jan. 20. But at least he's demanding that Hamas release the hostages it kidnapped, rather than leaning on Israel, which has agreed to cease-fire terms Hamas has refused.

The terror group on Saturday released a propaganda video of 20-year-old Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander. The Israel Defense Forces said Monday it has confirmed that another Israeli-American, 21-year-old Capt. Omer Neutra, was killed in the Oct. 7 massacre; his body remains in Gaza. Three Americans are still believed to be alive in Gaza's dungeons: Mr. Alexander, Sagi Dekel-Chen and Keith Siegel. Hamas is the source of their suffering.

CEOs Get the Industrial Policy Boot

It's a hard-knock life for underperforming CEOs these days, as Intel's Pat Gelsinger and Stellantis's Carlos Tavares are learning. Their resignations this week are a reminder that business results still matter even if they were following government designs.

Mr. Gelsinger announced his retirement on Monday after a more than 30-year career at America's storied computer chip maker during which it lost its competitive edge. Bloomberg News reports that he was forced out by Intel's board, which had lost confidence in his plans to turn around the struggling company.

When Intel tapped Mr. Gelsinger as CEO in 2021, the company was at a crossroads. Some 15 years earlier, former Intel CEO Paul Otellini had passed on the opportunity to make chips for the iPhone. His successors then failed to position the firm for growth by investing in chips to power artificial intelligence.

Intel for a time could ride the profits from its data server and PC businesses. But its latteness to the AI race, trailing Nvidia and AMD, was costly. Mr. Gelsinger then looked to government support for its lagging foundry business. His goal was to compete in manufacturing with TSMC and Samsung.

He lobbied Congress and the Administration to pass the \$280 billion Chips Act to subsidize U.S. plant expansions, which were expected to cost more than \$100 billion. Last week the Biden Administration awarded Intel a \$7.9 billion grant for chip projects in New Mexico, Oregon, Ohio and Arizona.

Despite the promised subsidies, Intel has struggled to execute. Reuters reported last month that Intel had to cancel a deal with Google's self-driving taxi company Waymo amid manufacturing challenges. Apple, Qualcomm and others have passed, for technical reasons, on using Intel's new 18A architecture to manufacture cutting-edge chips.

Despite the promise of subsidies, Mr. Gel-

Federal subsidies can't save the leaders of Intel and Stellantis.

singer in August announced 15,000 layoffs, and Intel is expected this year to record its first annual net loss since 1986. Its stock price has plunged by 43% over the last year while Nvidia's has surged 205% and TSMC has climbed 100%.

Mr. Tavares's resignation on Sunday also followed a year when the car company's profits, market share and stock price have plunged. Mr. Tavares previously led Europe's PSA Group, which merged with Fiat Chrysler in 2021 to form Stellantis. He never did understand U.S. truck and SUV-loving consumers.

While a vehicle supply shortage and inflation boosted Stellantis's profits during the pandemic recovery, Mr. Tavares failed to invest in developing newer models of popular SUVs and pick-ups for the U.S. market while he steered billions into electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids.

But the market isn't evolving as fast as governments in the U.S. and Europe have ordered. Stellantis dealers in the U.S. complained about outdated and pricey vehicle lineups that led to cars piling up on lots. Mr. Tavares infuriated the company's European dealers and competitors by opposing an easing of the continent's stringent auto-emissions rules.

European dealers warned that EVs weren't selling. No matter. Mr. Tavares this spring formed a joint-venture with China's Leapmotor to export low-priced EVs to Europe. His plan was undermined by Brussels's recent imposition of tariffs on Chinese EVs. Phasing out profitable gas-powered models in the U.S. has made it harder for Stellantis to invest in EVs to meet government mandates.

Stellantis has been axing tens of thousands of workers in manufacturing and engineering to reduce costs. Its board may have concluded that this won't lead to long-term business success. It's hard truckin' nowadays for CEOs, especially when government tells them how to run their business.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Biden's Inflation Was Not Difficult to Predict

As William Galston notes in "How Inflation Killed Bidenomics" (Politics & Ideas, Nov. 27), "Some Democratic-leaning economists have argued that inflation was a global, pandemic-induced supply shock on which fiscal stimulus had little or no effect."

Having spent 40 years working in the supply chain, I can draw a straight line from government policies to the supply-chain shock. First, Covid shutdowns removed huge portions of the supply of goods and services. Government money then flooded the nation to stimulate demand.

Shelf stockers and warehouse workers were paid sufficiently not to work. They stayed home and stores weren't stocking shelves. Truck drivers were dropping loads at stores, distribution centers and warehouses only to find that the previous loads hadn't been unloaded.

The inconsistent flow of equipment further contracted the supply of transportation. Loaded trailers and containers backed up at truck terminals, rail yards and ports. Hundreds of ships were at anchor with hundreds of thousands of loaded containers that couldn't move. Producers bid up the price of transportation so more would be supplied. People flush with government money demanded goods and were willing to pay more.

Bidenomics decreased supply and increased demand. Those policies caused the supply-chain disruption. Of course we got inflation. To now say that they didn't have the foresight to see it coming is economic malpractice. To still maintain that it wasn't the fault of their policies is a stunning denial of reality.

RICHARD HAGEMEYER
Nashville, Tenn.

Jared Bernstein, President Biden's chief economic adviser, now acknowledges what so many knew all along: The administration ran the economy too hot and we're still paying for it with grossly elevated prices. Nevertheless, Mr. Galston maintains "the need for alternatives" to neoliberalism to address wage stagnation, wealth inequality, globalization and job losses of recent decades.

Our low-inflation, pre-Covid economy achieved record low poverty and unemployment, rising median incomes and declining income inequality. Aside from the unsustainably high federal debt, which has increased by \$10 trillion in the years since, those really were the good old days.

TIM PARKER
Baltimore

Two points that Mr. Galston could add: First, the president's chief economic adviser has no formal training in economics. Mr. Bernstein holds a bachelor's degree in music, with graduate degrees in social work. For years he was a fixture in the New York jazz community. Once, during an interview, he couldn't explain how the government finances a budget deficit.

Second, a nod to Modern Monetary Theory would be nice. I suspect this debunked model is behind many of the Hewlett Foundation's ideas. It's easy to get zero inflation when you insist that the aggregate supply curve is always horizontal.

Along with Prof. Larry Summers, I predicted Bidenflation. It wasn't difficult for anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of macroeconomics.

EM. PROF. TONY LIMA
California State University, East Bay
Hayward, Calif.

Conservatives Will Find Much to Like in HUD

In "What Does HUD Have to Show for the Trillions It's Spent?" (op-ed Nov. 16), Jack Ryan recommends that the Department of Government Efficiency take a sharper look at how the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development claims to support homeownership. I agree. When DOGE does so, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy will find government programs that conservatives should love.

HUD supports homeownership through the Federal Housing Administration and the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae). Except for administrative expenses and IT, taxpayers don't fund the FHA. Most of HUD's budget is for subsidized rental housing, not the FHA.

The mortgage insurance that the agency offers homebuyers—80% are first-time purchasers—is funded by borrowers' premiums paid through their lenders. The agency's reserves come entirely from borrowers' premiums and investment income.

Combined with the annual surplus

it gives to the Treasury (estimated at \$6.2 billion for fiscal year 2025), that makes the FHA a model of efficiency. Its recent annual audit revealed a positive economic value of more than \$171 billion.

As for Ginnie Mae, it guarantees timely payment of principal and interest to private investors. The fees that investors pay Ginnie Mae allows it to make money for the government. It has never been bailed out, as Mr. Ryan contends.

The incoming administration seeks to increase the homeownership availability and affordability while trimming government waste. Ginnie Mae and the FHA are examples of getting that job done through smart management and strong partnerships with the private sector.

BRIAN MONTGOMERY
Washington

Mr. Montgomery was HUD deputy secretary under President Trump and FHA commissioner under three presidents.

Government Efficiency Means Personnel Cuts

The head of a union of 800,000 civil-servants and the CEO of Planned Parenthood bellyache about the new Department of Government Efficiency (Letters, Nov. 27). The union leader does, however, pinpoint potential savings to be reaped from private contractors. But personnel cuts are also essential. After *Janus*, public-employee unions are skating on thin ice.

Planned Parenthood's fall-back position—that it provides comprehensive medical care for women—is at best an overstatement. Everyone knows abortion is the group's bread and butter, and many, like me, feel the government ought not chip in. Pushing abortion on demand, including in advanced pregnancies, didn't work any magic for Vice President Kamala Harris, and it doesn't here.

BILL APPLE
New York

In "The DOGE Cheat Sheet" (Inside View, Nov. 18), Andy Kessler misses one more federal agency that we can do without: The General Services Administration. The GSA's mission is to minimize government costs associ-

ated with administrative functions, such as leasing office space. It doesn't; it increases those costs enormously.

When a federal agency needs to make a purchase, its administrative staff does the hard work of specifying product requisites, finding vendors and procuring bids. GSA then swoops in and tacks on an overhead charge, often without doing any real work.

FRANCIS H. CHAPELLE
Columbia, S.C.

Liberals Arts in the Age of AI

As a satisfied graduate of a liberal-arts college, I've endured years of shirt-rending diatribes that a liberal-arts education is detrimental to one's financial future. Now I'm relieved to learn that artificial intelligence is making the liberal-arts principles of critical thinking, problem-solving and educated open-mindedness—as well as being a bit of a misfit—great again ("How Students Can AI-Proof Their Careers," Journal Report, Nov. 25).

JULIA WELCH
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Warrenites and Sandernistas

Regarding your editorial "Scott Bessent's Treasury Gauntlet" (Nov. 26): Mr. Bessent will have to face the Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders alumni who currently staff the Treasury Department. He should immediately tell them it is time to move on. "Elections have consequences," said President Obama. Mr. Bessent should hire qualified people loyal to the president's agenda. This wasn't handled well the last time.

CARTER EVANS
Charlotte, N.C.

Letters intended for publication should be emailed to wsj.ltrs@wsj.com. Please include your city, state and telephone number. All letters are subject to editing, and unpublished letters cannot be acknowledged.

Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"Your energy bill will be surprisingly lower than you anticipated."

OPINION

A Lame Duck Can Still Swim

By Tevi Troy

Joe Biden has only seven weeks left in office but is still pushing his agenda: His Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission continue to prevent mergers; his State Department is imposing sanctions on Israeli citizens; he is still nominating judges for lifetime appointments; and he has just pardoned his son Hunter for a host of misdeeds.

Until noon on Jan. 20, Mr. Biden holds the full authority of the presidency. The question is how far he or any president should go after the

Biden still has all powers of the presidency. Like some of his predecessors, he's using them vigorously.

people have chosen his successor in an election. Mr. Biden's predecessors took various approaches to their final months in office, with their choices always influencing their legacies.

One method is simply going along with the normal course of business. Proposing judicial nominees fits this category. Indeed, the tradition of appointing judges up to the last minute dates back to John Adams and his midnight appointments of 1801, which led to the Supreme Court case *Marbury v. Madison* (1803).

Another option is leaving the pub-

lic with a final message. George Washington did this with a Farewell Address warning against foreign entanglements. Dwight D. Eisenhower did something similar with his "military industrial complex" speech, which warned about "the acquisition of unwarranted influence" within our defense infrastructure. It remains one of the most memorable presidential addresses of all time.

Yet another approach is settling scores. Mr. Biden's imposition of sanctions against certain types of Israelis is in line with what Barack Obama did when he left office in 2017. In his administration's waning days, Mr. Obama and others worked behind the scenes to craft an anti-Israel resolution at the United Nations, one that the U.S. traditionally would have vetoed. With this resolution, President Obama sent a message of disapproval to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the incoming Trump administration about their proposed pro-Israel policies.

Some presidents are reluctant to begin something new in the home stretch. Al Qaeda bombed the USS Cole shortly before the November 2000 election, but the departing Clinton administration didn't respond, apparently thinking it was up to the next team to handle it.

When George W. Bush came in, his administration felt the moment for reprisal had passed. According to the 9/11 Commission report, this unfortunate paralysis in the transition between two administrations helped al Qaeda recruitment and signaled that the U.S. was a paper tiger.



CHRIS KLEPONIS/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Mr. Clinton might have been predisposed to inaction because of a situation he inherited from George H.W. Bush. Bush sent troops to Somalia in the waning days of his administration.

Once Mr. Clinton came in, he wanted to get those troops out, but couldn't before the Battle of Mogadishu, in which 18 U.S. soldiers were killed and 84 wounded.

Although Mr. Clinton made no big foreign-policy moves in his administration's last days, he was active in pardons and domestic policy. He rightfully took a lot of heat from all sides for pardoning "fugitive financier" Marc Rich. Rich and his former wife, Denise, had both been big donors to Clinton-backed causes. It isn't unusual for a president to ac-

cept a final political hit for controversial pardons on the way out the door: Donald Trump issued 143 pardons and commutations on his last day four years ago. Still, the Rich pardon was seen as particularly egregious. Mr. Biden's pardon of his son may have a similarly lasting effect.

The Clinton administration also pushed through a host of last-minute "midnight regulations," which the George W. Bush administration had to triage as it came in. Mr. Bush's team was able to use the Congressional Review Act to overturn the Labor Department's ergonomics rule, but the Environmental Protection Agency's "arsenic in the water" regulation stymied the arriving team and created bad headlines for the new

presidential administration.

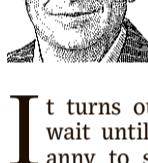
Mr. Bush may have overreacted to this experience in his final months. Determined not to impose midnight regulations on his successor, he told his team to complete all regulatory actions by the summer of 2008. Some Bush staffers felt frustrated by this unilateral disarmament, which made it difficult to complete some long-standing regulatory reform.

Mr. Bush was more active when an external crisis hit. As he was about to leave office, the economy was teetering amid the 2008 financial meltdown. In December of that year, Congress failed to pass an auto assistance package, so Mr. Bush used executive authority to push through a \$174 billion bailout of General Motors and Chrysler.

A departing president must always keep his successor in mind. In 1932 and 1933, as Herbert Hoover was about to leave office during the Great Depression, he continually looked to Franklin D. Roosevelt for support. Roosevelt refused to grant such support under the theory summarized by the humorist Will Rogers: "It's your onion. You peel it until March 4." Mr. Biden has only until Jan. 20, but the theory holds. It's still an onion, but history recommends that he not take too big a bite before passing it on.

Mr. Troy is a senior fellow at the Ronald Reagan Institute and the author of five books on the presidency, including "The Power and the Money: The Epic Clashes Between Commanders in Chief and Titans of Industry."

Pardon Me, What Was That About the Rule of Law?



FREE EXPRESSION
By Gerard Baker

It turns out we didn't have to wait until Jan. 20 for the tyranny to start. The Democrats were right all along when they warned that a bad outcome would give us a president ready to abuse power to serve his own interests and lie about it. But it's Joe Biden leading the way.

On a human level it's easy to empathize with Mr. Biden's decision Sunday to pardon his son Hunter. The decision will ensure that Hunter avoids prison time for crimes he's already been convicted of and prosecuted for any crimes he committed between 2014 and this Sunday.

Joe Biden is a father, first and foremost. What parent, equipped with a magical power granted to him by a dusty document to wipe away a child's errant behavior and shield that child—even a grown one—from punishment, wouldn't be tempted to exercise it? Only a saint

would allow the law to take its course out of a sense of duty to a higher moral principle. Joe Biden is no Thomas More.

For him, the degree of parental self-denial required would have been even greater than for most parents. President-elect Trump has made it clear, both in his rhetoric and in a stream of law-enforcement-related cabinet nominations, that he is intent on "retribution" against his political opponents. Having dubbed them the "Biden crime family," it is a near certainty that Mr. Trump, absent a comprehensive pardon, would have had his Justice Department spend the next four years hounding the younger Mr. Biden. The older one, too, presumably.

President Biden could argue that the lawful-but-unethical pardon precedent is now so deeply established—not least by his predecessor—that granting clemency to his own son could hardly be considered beyond political norms. If you doubt that, consider the pardon granted to Ivanka Trump's father-in-law, Charles Kushner, who is now on track to enjoy a stint in the ultimate offender rehabilitation program as

U.S. ambassador to France.

And yet, for all that, the Hunter pardon is a lamentable one, another bruising blow to the institutions of American democracy.

For one thing, it pre-emptively collapses expected Democratic criticisms of Mr. Trump's behavior when he returns to office next month. Accusations that Mr. Trump

Letting Hunter Biden off the hook makes a mockery of warnings that Trump will govern as a tyrant.

abuses his office to help friends and family will ring even more hollow after Biden Jr. has been relieved of any accountability for his crimes.

For another, it erases any vestige of trust Americans may have had in their outgoing president. He and his aides repeatedly insisted—during an election campaign—that he wouldn't pardon his son. That he then went and did it after the election raises political cynicism to a new level.

The larger problem, though, is that the Hunter pardon reinforces the case that the Democrats, for all their claims about the unique threat Trumpism poses to American democracy, have no more respect for basic democratic principles than Mr. Trump does.

They have spent four years in a prosecutorial pursuit of Mr. Trump, much of which was a nakedly political lawfare campaign to undermine and ultimately lock up their political opponent. The Hunter pardon represents something like the inverse of lawfare: the use of executive power to shield the Democrats' favorites from the reach of justice, thereby upholding the worst sort of double standard and undermining respect for the rule of law itself.

Backdating the pardon to cover all potential crimes from 2014 onward is especially egregious. Most acts of presidential clemency are retrospective, washing away a criminal conviction or foreshortening a prison sentence for a felony. This one looks deliberately designed to block a likely investigative process of real significance. Many legitimate

questions remain unanswered about the Bidens' foreign entanglements in Ukraine and China in the period when Joe Biden was vice president and then out of office after 2017.

At the heart of all this is the constitutional provision that created the presidential pardon prerogative in the first place. In the right hands the power represents the quality of mercy, dropping as a gentle rain from heaven. In the wrong hands it becomes nothing less than executive despotism, showering favors like a medieval monarch on family, friends and retainers.

In *Trump v. U.S.*, the Supreme Court declared this year that the president's Article II, Section 2 pardon power falls within his "conclusive and preclusive" official authority. Not only does any president enjoy immunity for official acts, but he can effectively extend that immunity to anyone he likes.

Americans fought a revolution against a monarch they accused of setting himself beyond the reach of justice. How ironic that the ensuing constitutional settlement should contain within it a codification of that same tyrannical idea.

'Transgender Health' Group Tries to Stack the Legal Deck

By Steve Marshall

Montgomery, Ala.

The Supreme Court convenes Wednesday to hear oral arguments on whether Tennessee's law imposing age restrictions for sex-change procedures violates the Constitution. A trial court issued a preliminary injunction in June 2023 ordering Tennessee not to enforce its law pending a trial on the merits. The Biden administration then asked the Supreme Court to decide the constitutional issue before discovery, the pretrial evidence-gathering process, could take place. The administration's tactics are interesting because the Justice Department sued Alabama over a similar law over two years ago and it knows what discovery uncovered there.

In their arguments before the high court, Justice Department lawyers assert that the facts are already settled. They rely on the so-called Standards of Care from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, or WPATH, to assure the justices that "overwhelming evidence establishes" the wisdom of medically "transitioning" minors diagnosed with "gender dysphoria"—

stress caused by the feeling of being the wrong sex—through hormones and surgery. The American Civil Liberties Union, which represents the plaintiffs challenging the Tennessee law, likewise asked the justices to make the "evidence-based" WPATH guidelines the constitutional standard. These guidelines characterize the surgical removal of a teenager's genitals as a "medically necessary" treatment for gender dysphoria. Relying on these appeals to authority, the Justice Department and ACLU have persuaded several federal courts to block age limits for sex-change procedures.

Left undisclosed is that the WPATH standards were specifically crafted to enable such legal victories. Internal documents from WPATH and the Department of Health and Human Services—received by my office as part of court-ordered discovery while defending Alabama's law—reveal that WPATH authors were acutely aware of the weight their guidelines had in court. One of them wrote: "The wording of our section for Version 7 has been critical to our successes, and I hope the same will hold for Version 8."

One way to make the guidelines a

more effective litigation weapon was by *not* looking for evidence. Some authors of the WPATH standards reported that they avoided conducting systematic evidence reviews of the safety and efficacy of transition treatments because of "concerns, echoed by the social justice lawyers we spoke with," that "evidence-based review reveals little or no evidence and puts us in an untenable position in terms of affecting policy or winning lawsuits." In other words, to get courts to defer to "evidence-based" guidelines, WPATH obscured the lack of evidence supporting them.

WPATH leaders similarly asserted that it was important for these ostensibly medical guidelines to be reviewed by movement lawyers, "because we will have to argue it in court at some point." Two of the organizations WPATH considered to conduct that review, the ACLU and Lambda Legal, represent the plaintiffs at the Supreme Court.

Emails also revealed regular contact between WPATH leaders and movement attorneys, such as one passing on "thoughts which may be helpful for Chase and the legal team." Chase Strangio is the ACLU

lawyer who will argue before the justices on Wednesday—and who, a few years ago, responded to the publication of Abigail Shrier's book "Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters" by tweeting that "stopping the circulation of this book and these ideas is 100% a hill I will die on."

The so-called Standards of Care are based on the concealment rather than evaluation of evidence.

The Biden-Harris administration likewise worked with WPATH to craft the guidelines. WPATH sent a final draft in June 2022 to Rachel Levine, assistant secretary for health at HHS, who feared that the draft's proposed age minimums for hormones and surgery would be politically damaging and pressured WPATH to get rid of them. After some initial consternation "about allowing US politics to dictate international professional clinical guidelines," WPATH obliged.

Other government officials were also aware of the dearth of evidence supporting WPATH's recommendations. A team at Johns Hopkins University hired by WPATH to review outside evidence reported to HHS officials that it "found little to no evidence about children and adolescents" and that WPATH was "trying to restrict" their "ability to publish" the findings.

The "social justice lawyers" in and outside the administration told the Supreme Court none of this. Instead, they used the manufactured "medical consensus" to attack Tennessee's law as "targeting" transgender individuals in purported violation of the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.

The path forward for the court is simple. Because Tennessee's law treats minors of each sex the same, there is no suspect classification under the Equal Protection Clause, and the trial court thus erred by second-guessing the Tennessee Legislature's regulation of sex-change procedures for minors. The justices won't need to dive into the factual disputes, which are typically resolved by trial courts and reviewed under a deferential standard.

The political, medical and legal scandal my office uncovered confirms the wisdom of this legal practice. The Constitution recognizes that difficult policy questions are best addressed not by self-appointed experts or even by the courts, but by the people and their elected representatives. Here that means states like Tennessee and Alabama are free to recognize that children suffering from gender dysphoria deserve better than sterilizing hormones and irreversible surgery—even if groups like WPATH and the current administration think otherwise.

Mr. Marshall, a Republican, is attorney general of Alabama. He filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of Tennessee at the Supreme Court.

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WORLD NEWS



Incumbent Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris of Fine Gael spoke to the media at the election-count center on Saturday.

Irish Voters Buck Global Trend By Re-Electing Ruling Parties

By MAX COLCHESTER

The Irish have given another term to the two center-right parties that have dominated politics in the country since its independence, bucking the trend in a year when voters in many democracies have turned against incumbents.

With nearly all the votes counted following a general election on Friday, the country looks set to return a coalition led by the nation's governing duopoly, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Sinn Féin, which promotes unification between the Republic of Ireland and the U.K. province of Northern Ireland, is on track to finish third in the election, having failed to build on momentum from the prior election.

Ireland's vote for more of the same is a reflection of its unique economic position. While other governments in Europe struggle with ballooning deficits and meager growth prospects, Ireland has

no such worries. Thanks to a vast influx of corporate tax revenue from U.S. multinationals, the government has been handing over cash to voters while splurging on infrastructure projects.

Moreover, this influx of foreign cash has underpinned robust economic growth.

It also meant the cost-of-living crisis, caused by high inflation after the pandemic, didn't hit Irish people as hard. Handouts from the Irish government "were sufficient to stave off some of the greater hardships during the period," said Theresa Reidy, a senior lecturer in the department of government and politics at University College Cork. "Not all countries had the same capacity to react so generously."

Irish voters aren't completely divorced from the trend of anti-incumbency that ousted ruling parties from power in the U.S. and U.K., or handed them setbacks in South Africa, France and In-

dia. The vote share of the leading two Irish parties continued to fall, turnout was at a low and several independent candidates ran on anti-immigration platforms, though they didn't do as well as expected.

As of Monday, Fianna Fáil had 21.9% of the ballots, Fine Gael 20.8%, and Sinn Féin 19%. However, no single party will get close to the 88 seats needed to have a majority when results are announced, and so will enter into talks to form a coalition.

If Fianna Fáil finishes first, it will expect its leader Micheál Martin to become taoiseach, or prime minister, succeeding incumbent Simon Harris of Fine Gael. After the 2020 election ended in a near dead heat, the two rival parties shared power, with Martin serving for the first part of the term, before Fine Gail leaders took over—first Leo Varadkar, and then Harris this year.

"The people of Ireland have now spoken," Harris said. "We

now have to work out exactly what they have said, and that is going to take a little bit of time."

The two center-right parties will have to enter talks with smaller parties to get the necessary numbers to build a solid parliamentary majority.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have long ruled out entering a coalition with Sinn Féin, the former political arm of the Irish Republican Army, which fought a violent three-decade campaign to forcibly unify Ireland.

The incoming government will still need to tackle problems familiar to other developed Western nations: Concerns about a housing shortage and how to manage the growing number of asylum seekers arriving in the country.

There also is concern that President-elect Donald Trump could deliver a blow to Ireland's tax boom by imposing tariffs or enticing U.S. corporations to re-domicile international profits booked via Ireland.

Taiwan's Leader Seeks Continuity In U.S. Support

By JOYU WANG

HONOLULU—In a speech and in a series of meetings with American political figures during his visit to the U.S., Taiwan President Lai Ching-te signaled that Taipei hopes to maintain the same support from the incoming Trump administration that it has gotten from President Biden.

On the second day of a highly sensitive visit to Hawaii, Lai held virtual meetings with several U.S. politicians, including former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and delivered a keynote address that appeared to be a response to some of the criticisms that President-elect Donald Trump has directed at Taiwan.

Lai is taking a seven-day Pacific tour that includes Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam. The trip is a delicate one because the U.S. and Taiwan have no formal relations, although Washington is Taipei's staunchest ally.

U.S. support for Taiwan is critical because China, which considers Taiwan a part of the country despite having never ruled there, has promised to take the island democracy by force if necessary. Beijing has condemned Lai's visit to Hawaii.

Taiwan has gotten robust support from Biden, but Trump has criticized Taipei, creating uncertainty as to how he would respond to Chinese aggression.

Trump has called for Taiwan to spend more to defend itself against the threat from China, and has accused Taiwan's world-class chip makers of stealing American jobs.

In a closed-door speech delivered in English, Lai appeared to address some of those criticisms, outlining plans to bolster the island's self-defense. Lai promised deepening coop-

eration with the U.S. in the semiconductor industry.

Lev Nachman, a political scientist who teaches at National Taiwan University, said Lai has been consistent since taking office this year in seeking to continue his predecessor's efforts to bind the island close to Washington.

While the U.S. doesn't have a formal security treaty with Taiwan, U.S. law requires Washington to provide it with the weapons it needs to defend against military threats from China.

The day before Lai's departure, the Biden administration approved its 18th arms sale to Taiwan, including spare parts and advanced radars for U.S.-made F-16 jet fighters, as well as tactical telecommunications equipment. Beijing has protested the potential deal.

On Monday, a Chinese military spokesperson reiterated objections, saying Beijing would "resolutely crush any 'Taiwan independence' separatists." Taiwan is "sacrificing the safety and well-being of its people, spending their hard-earned money to pay 'protection fees' to the U.S.," the spokesman said. "In the end, it's like a moth to the flame—rushing toward destruction."

In a keynote speech on Sunday, Lai highlighted cooperation between Taiwan and the U.S. in the semiconductor industry, saying Taiwan is "a trusted and reliable partner" to the U.S.

After leaving Hawaii, Lai is scheduled to arrive on the Marshall Islands, after which he will visit Tuvalu and Palau. The three Pacific countries are among Taiwan's few remaining official diplomatic partners.

The Taiwanese president is expected to make another stop on Guam, home to a large U.S. military facility, on Dec. 4 before returning to Asia.

Saber-Toothed Mummy Is the First of Its Kind

By AYLIN WOODWARD

A mummy with curved, sharp claws, pads on its paws, well-preserved skin and thick inch-long fur has been uncovered in the Siberian permafrost.

The saber-toothed cat cub is the first of its kind ever found.

"Perhaps the most surprising thing is the dark brown color and softness of the mummy's fur," said Alexey Lopatin, director of the Borissiak Paleontological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and lead author of a study detailing the find published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Lopatin's group used the cub's fur for radiocarbon dating and figured out it lived around 35,000 years ago.

Discovered four years ago when diggers were prospecting for mammoth tusks in the Siberian region of Yakutia in Russia, the mummy's soft tissues provide insights into how these Ice Age predators, an extinct species known as *Homotherium latidens*, hunted and grew—and how they differ from modern-day lions.

For scientist Jack Tseng, who wasn't involved in the study, the discovery prompted initial feelings of "euphoria."

"It is essentially showing this preservation is possible in these predators, which are extremely rare to begin with," said Tseng, a curator at the University of California, Berkeley, museum of paleontology.

Previous studies suggest

these carnivores were long-limbed with shorter bodies, supporting the idea that their forelimbs played a role in their hunting. Those anatomical proportions, the study authors said, are present in this cub, which, based on its teeth, they determined was 3 weeks old when it died.

Lopatin said they assume the cub drowned, "quickly became covered with sediment and froze into the ground, becoming part of the permafrost the following winter."

Analysis showed it had a thicker neck and longer forelimbs than a modern lion cub around the same age. In addition to small ears, the saber-toothed cat had an unusually shaped muzzle with a large mouth and long upper lip—in adults, the latter covered the long, bladelike canines after which they are named.

The new specimen can't reveal how *Homotherium* used these canines, according to Tseng, because its sabers hadn't erupted. The discovery, however, adds to knowledge about how these ancient cats grew from tiny cubs to powerful predators, he said.

Lopatin's group will continue to study the mummy, including looking to extract DNA to establish its relationship with other cat species and help determine the cub's sex.

"Since the back part of the body with the genitals is not preserved, we do not yet know whether it is a male or a female," Lopatin said of the cub.

Radiocarbon dating of the fur puts the cub at 35,000 years old.



Radiocarbon dating of the fur puts the cub at 35,000 years old.



Police used water cannons to disperse government opponents protesting in front of Parliament in Tbilisi, Georgia, on Monday.

GEORGIA

Police, Protesters Escalate Clashes

Police in Tbilisi again moved to disperse thousands of demonstrators on Monday after more than 200 people were detained in the capital during four previous nights of protests against the government's decision to suspend talks to join the European Union.

Police used water cannons and tear gas to drive protesters away from Parliament, where they have gathered each night since Thursday, when the ruling Georgian Dream party declared its decision to put EU accession talks on hold.

Georgian Dream's disputed victory in the country's Oct. 26 parliamentary election, widely seen as a referendum on Georgia's aspirations to join the EU, has sparked mass demonstrations and the opposition boycott of Parliament.

The opposition and the country's pro-Western president have accused the governing party of rigging the vote with Moscow's help.

—Associated Press

GUINEA

Stadium Stampede Kills At Least 56

Chaos erupted at a soccer match in this West African nation after fans protested a referee's call and thousands of panicked spectators tried to flee the stadium, leaving at least 56 dead, officials said on Monday.

Amid the confusion, security forces used tear gas, news website Media Guinean reported. Many of the dead were crushed as they tried to escape through the gates, a journalist covering the match said.

"I was saved because I did not rush towards the exit," said Cissé Lancine, who got away by climbing over a stadium wall.

Lancine said between 20,000 and 30,000 people were in the stadium to watch the local Labe and Nzerekore teams compete in the final of a national tournament.

Information is sparse and government-controlled at the best of times in the military-run nation. It wasn't clear how high the death toll could rise.

—Associated Press

UKRAINE

U.S. Readies More Military Assistance

Washington is preparing to send Ukraine an additional \$725 million in military assistance, including counterdrone systems and munitions for its High Mobility Artillery Rocket System. U.S. officials didn't say whether the munitions for the HIMARS are the longer-range ATACMS—Army Tactical Missile Systems—that Ukraine has been pressuring for more of to strike more targets inside Russia.

The package includes more of the antipersonnel land mines on which Ukraine is counting to slow Russian and North Korean ground forces in Russia's Kursk region.

President Biden has pledged to spend all of the military-assistance funds Congress approved this year for Ukraine before his administration ends on Jan. 20. There is widespread speculation about what the next administration will mean for Ukraine, as President-elect Donald Trump has promised to end the conflict.

—Associated Press

CONGO

ISIS-Linked Rebels Make Deadly Attack

At least 10 people were killed and an unspecified number of others were abducted in eastern Congo by extremist rebels linked to Islamic State, a military spokesperson said on Monday.

The rebels with the Allied Democratic Forces, an ISIS affiliate in the region, attacked the area of Batangi-Mbau in the North Kivu province on Sunday night, the spokesperson, Mak Hazukay, said. Several houses were burned down in the attack, he added. "We call on the population to be vigilant and we assure them that we will drive the enemy out of our territory," he said.

Eastern Congo has struggled with armed violence for decades as more than 120 groups fight for power, land and valuable mineral resources, while others try to defend their communities. Some armed groups have been accused of mass killings. Nearly seven million people have fled their homes amid the violence.

—Associated Press

DAVID MDZINARISHVILI/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

BUSINESS & FINANCE

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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Stellantis CEO's Cuts Cost Him Job

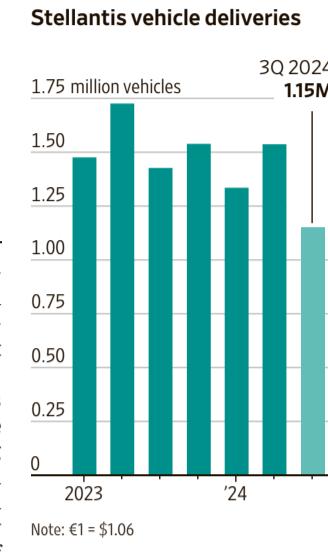
Tavares's abrupt departure came amid concerns over efficiency drive

By STEPHEN WILMOT
AND RYAN FELTON

A ruthless focus on efficiency made Carlos Tavares a giant of the automotive industry. It was also his undoing at Stellantis.

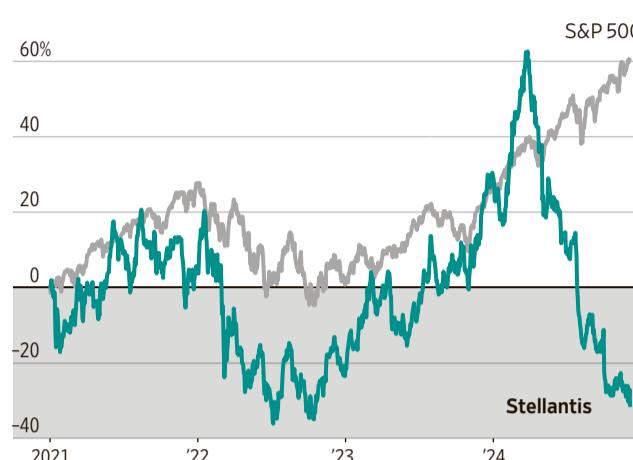
Tavares resigned Sunday as chief executive officer of the Chrysler owner after losing the confidence of the board and key shareholders. In a statement, the company pointed to the emergence of "different views" in recent weeks.

The leadership change caps a dramatic fall from grace for a company that Tavares created through a blockbuster 2021 merger and turned into a profit powerhouse during the pandemic. This year, a drop in sales has led to mounting inventories and a sharp fall in the company's share price.



Note: €1 = \$1.06

Share-price and index performance since 2021



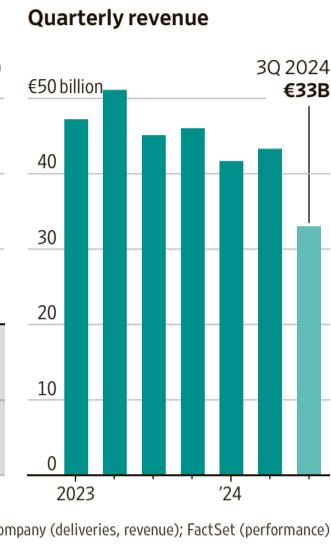
cians, according to people familiar with the matter, prompting concern among board members.

"The machine was being driven too aggressively," one of the people said.

One focus for Tavares was ensuring that the company beat its cash-flow guidance for the year, according to some of the people familiar with the

matter. This would involve delaying payments to parts suppliers, bringing a cash windfall this year at the expense of 2025, while also putting stress on key business partners, the people said.

The board worried that the move would risk long-term relationships with suppliers on which the company depends, the people said. The board



Sources: the company (deliveries, revenue); FactSet (performance)

GM to Exit EV-Battery Plant in Michigan

By CHRISTOPHER OTTS

General Motors is backing out of a nearly completed electric-vehicle battery plant in Michigan, agreeing to unload its stake to its Korean partner, **LG Energy Solution**.

Plans for the \$2.6 billion facility, sprawling over about 30 football fields in Lansing, Mich., were disclosed in 2022, when the Detroit automaker had designs on producing one million EVs by 2025. It has shelved that target because of slower-than-expected demand for fully electric vehicles.

Automakers globally have been dialing back electric-car investments they outlined as demand for battery-powered vehicles surged earlier this decade. Now the market faces further uncertainty, with President-elect Donald Trump having vowed to cut government funding for EVs.

Trump has said he wants to eliminate a \$7,500 tax credit available for some EV buyers. Also at risk are billions of dollars available in tax credits for the production of batteries at factories such as the Lansing facility, analysts say.

GM said the sale of its stake would close in the first quarter of next year and that it expects

Please turn to page B2

Tariffs Challenge Railroad's Vision

By ESTHER FUNG

Railroad boss Keith Creel drove a shiny ceremonial spike through the track in Kansas City, Mo., last year to celebrate a \$28 billion deal that forged the only freight railroad that directly connects Mexico, the U.S. and Canada.

Affixed to his gray striped suit was a lapel pin with the flags of the three nations.

His corporate creation, called **Canadian Pacific Kansas City**, or CPKC, operates a 20,000-mile network stretching from Canada's ports on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts through Midwest rail hubs such as Chicago and down to factories and seaports in Mexico.

The railroad is the ultimate bet on the promise of the free flow of goods and a key cog in an intricate supply chain that underpins North American trade. It is a bet that suddenly got a lot riskier. Donald Trump's election victory sparked a small selloff in CPKC's shares and the president-elect's threat last week to impose new 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada further spooked investors.

Creel and his executive team have spent recent weeks trying to reassure shareholders that the incoming Trump administration won't disrupt CPKC's business and that the logic of its network still holds. Hedge-fund manager Bill Ackman, a



Trains near the Canadian Pacific Kansas City terminal in Salinas Victoria, Mexico

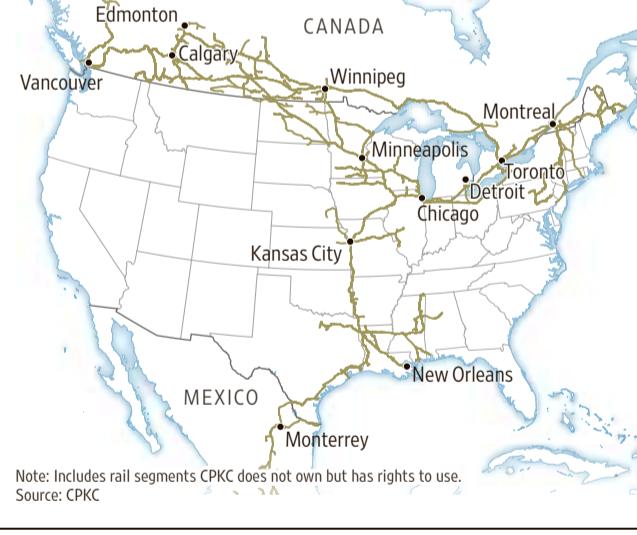
the company's freight revenue this past year.

Each of those steps, however, would get more expensive if Trump makes good on his promise to impose new tariffs on America's neighbors. And the movement of freight trains through the U.S.-Mexico border has also been cited by Trump as contributing to the flow of illegal immigration.

In 2023, the U.S. intermittently closed rail crossings at Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas, because of a migrant surge that overwhelmed officials at the Customs and Border Protection agency.

Jason Miller, a logistics professor at Michigan State

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Note: Includes rail segments CPKC does not own but has rights to use.
Source: CPKC

Judge Rejects Musk Tesla Pay Plan

By SEAN MC LAIN

A Delaware judge upheld her earlier ruling striking down Elon Musk's multibillion-dollar pay package, plunging Tesla's board into more uncertainty over how to compensate its superstar chief executive for a decade of work.

The court's decision follows a shareholder vote earlier this year approving the pay package for a second time. Tesla had argued that the vote addressed many of the court's criticisms that Musk's compensation deal had been flawed, partly because of insufficient disclosures to shareholders.

The judge, Chancellor Kathleen McCormick, had in January ordered the entire package be rescinded, saying directors were beholden to Musk and the approval process for the pay

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Whole Foods Courts Shoppers With New Minimarket Concept

By ROSHAN FERNANDEZ

Arthur Glauberman shops for groceries on Manhattan's Upper East Side almost daily.

Whole Foods Market wasn't among his stops until September, when the natural-foods retailer opened a minimarket less than a block away from his apartment. On a recent fall day, the 72-year-old residen-

tial salesperson was doing laundry in the basement of his building when he realized he needed some things from the grocery store.

With a few pairs of pressed pants tucked under his arm, he walked out the back door to the Daily Shop. "The idea of having a store down the block where you could go and get produce," Glauberman said, "I

was thrilled that they opened."

Whole Foods is crafting a growth strategy around shoppers like Glauberman, planning to open more smaller-scale, Daily Shop stores in dense urban neighborhoods and win over consumers who don't regularly visit one of the **Amazon.com**-owned chain's traditional stores.

The 9,100 square-foot Daily

Shop location is about a quarter the size of a regular Whole Foods, and sells items at comparable prices. "We're serving a previously unmet need in the neighborhood," said Nicole Davia, a Whole Foods senior vice president.

Whole Foods's Daily Shops

are the latest effort by grocery sellers including **Walmart**,

Sprouts Farmers Market,

Publix and others to squeeze supermarket operations into smaller spaces that cater to "fill-in" shoppers. Some supermarket chains have struggled to operate smaller locations as a result of slim profit

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Volkswagen workers go on strike across Germany to protest plant closings. B3



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Server maker Super Micro says a review finds no fraud relating to accounting issues. B4

Greystar Takes a Leap Into Modular Homes

By REBECCA PICCIOTTO

Modular housing development has long been a fringe part of the U.S. market, primarily limited to lower-budget or emergency housing.

The country's largest apartment operator is trying to change that.

Greystar Real Estate Partners on Monday is opening a six-building modular apartment complex, complete with a gym, amphitheater and bocce courts. It is Greystar's first U.S. project assembled using this alternative construction method, meant to combat the chronic delays of traditional developments.

The new complex, called "Ltd. Findlay," is in Coraopolis, Pa., about 16 miles west of Pittsburgh. It is offering leases for 312 apartments, making it one of the largest multifamily modular projects in the U.S.

Ltd. Findlay is the first property developed at Greystar's modular factory in

Knox, Pa. The developer has six more modular projects in its U.S. pipeline that will also be built at the Knox site.

Instead of being built on-site like conventional homes, modular homes are assembled in a factory, transported to the final building site and then stacked atop each other like jumbo Lego blocks. Proposers say this type of building can be completed faster using fewer workers and with materials that can be purchased at a bulk discount, which can reduce overall costs.

Even so, modular remains only a small portion of the overall construction market, reflecting a number of challenges, from the cost of transporting pieces to difficulties with financing and regulatory approval.

But its use is steadily growing. With the construction workforce shrinking and costs rising, the efficiency gains of modular are gaining traction with mainstream developers.

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Whole Foods's Daily Shop on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

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Stellantis Cost Cuts Hurt CEO

Continued from page B1
October, Tavares blamed the country's high production costs and a lack of consumer incentives for buying electric vehicles.

In France, Tavares previously came under political attack for his high pay, in an echo of the controversies that surrounded his disgraced former mentor Carlos Ghosn.

By the second half of November, it became clear to the board that it didn't share Tavares's view of how to fix Stellantis, the people familiar with the matter said.

Stellantis declined to comment further on the rationale for Tavares's departure. Tavares couldn't be reached.

The auto giant plans to appoint a permanent CEO sometime in the first half of 2025. Until then, the company has established an interim executive committee, led by Chairman John Elkann, to handle Tavares's duties.

Elkann runs Exor, the investment vehicle that is the largest shareholder of both Stellantis and Italian sports-car maker Ferrari. Elkann has flown to Michigan, where Stellantis is based in North America, for discussions this week about the company's future direction, people familiar with the situation said.

"The board believes the focus for our company and stakeholders needs to be on the long term," Elkann wrote Monday in an email to Stellantis employees.

The email was reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The CEO change comes as Stellantis contends with challenges in its two largest markets.

In the U.S., which contributes the bulk of its profit, Stellantis came under fire from dealers this year for "disastrous choices" that inflated inventories, such as a reluctance to lower prices as consumers became more cautious. There have been some early signs of success in turning the situation around, with market share inching higher in recent months, though it remains far below prepandemic levels.

Stellantis has also clashed with the United Auto Workers union, whose leader, Shawn Fain, welcomed Tavares's departure in a statement Monday.

Kevin Farrish, chairman of the automaker's U.S. dealer advisory council, said he met earlier Monday with Elkann and North American head Antonio Filosa.

"It was a huge sign of respect to the American dealers," he said. The company has helped dealers reduce inventory over the last few months and brought pricing on its models more in line with the overall market, he said.

Tavares was instrumental in the creation of Stellantis, which was forged by the merger of Peugeot owner PSA Group of France and the Italian-American company once known as Fiat Chrysler Automobiles.

The Portuguese executive had already garnered a reputation for cutting costs through business combinations.

—Christopher Ott contributed to this article



Modular units are assembled in a factory, then stacked on site. GREYSTAR

Greystar Embraces Modular

Continued from page B1

From 2015 to 2023, the annual market share of modular construction more than tripled to 6.6%, according to the Modular Building Institute, one of the industry's trade groups.

Developers such as Related and Amherst are among the major companies that have experimented with modular in the U.S. Marriott also has begun using modular to build some of its new hotels.

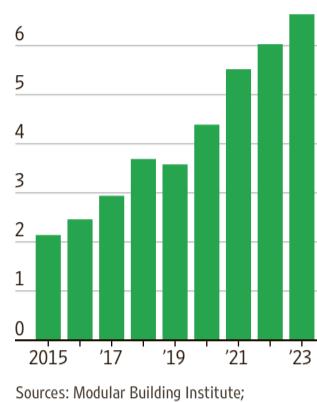
McKinsey projects that modular construction revenues globally could grow to as much as \$1.1 trillion by 2040 from \$180 billion in 2022.

With the cost of materials and labor rising, "modular emerges as a more viable alternative to traditional construction methods," said Jose Luis Blanco, a senior partner at McKinsey who leads the global engineering, construction and building-materials practice.

President-elect Donald Trump has proposed expanded tariffs and immigrant deportation, which could heat up material costs and further squeeze the construction workforce.

Though modular construction wouldn't be immune from

Annual market share of modular construction



Sources: Modular Building Institute; ConstructConnect

those shocks, industry analysts say it may be more insulated than traditional builders.

Greystar, based in Charleston, S.C., manages more than 954,000 units in North America. The company first found success with modular building in the U.K., said Andy Mest, the managing director of the company's modular business. He had worked on Greystar's London projects and wanted to replicate their outcomes domestically.

In 2020, the multifamily-building operator bought its Pennsylvania manufacturing facility and jump-started its U.S. modular operation, Modern Living Solutions.

Ltd. Findlay was built roughly 40% faster than Greystar's traditional projects, Mest said.

GM to Exit EV-Battery Plant

Continued from page B1

To recoup its investment in the project, GM shares were little changed following its announcement of the sale after the close of trading Monday. Its stock price is up 53% this year.

GM was among the first automakers to get into the battery business, through its initial joint venture with LG Energy, struck in 2019, named Ultium Cells. The Michigan facility was to be the third U.S. battery factory under that agreement.

Glauberman, who made three separate trips to the Daily Shop on a recent Saturday, said that timing matters. "If you go early, you can get your broccoli," he said.

The two other Ultium plants, in Warren, Ohio, and Spring Hill, Tenn., are operational and unaffected by the unwinding of the Michigan venture.

Executives from GM and other car companies have said they wanted to invest in battery production to secure future supplies after a burst of enthusiasm for EVs. Some pointed to forecasts of battery shortages that could hinder their production targets later this decade.

GM has said it has worked out earlier manufacturing kinks that bogged down some of its electric-vehicle rollouts.

"We believe we have the right cell and manufacturing capabilities in place to grow with the EV market in a capital-efficient manner," GM Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson said.

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Grocer Tries Small-Store Strategy

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margins and the smaller operations' sometimes-challenging logistics.

Fill-in shopping, where consumers make frequent trips but buy only a few items, is on the rise, according to Placer.ai, a data firm that tracks store visits. Consumers made 11% more trips to grocery stores in the 12 months ended in October compared with 2019, the firm said, while spending less time during a visit.

Promotions and discounts targeting increasingly price-conscious consumers have made shoppers more inclined to bargain-hunt, said R.J. Hotto, Placer.ai's head of analytical research.

The small-format stores can save operators money by focusing on core products, experts said. They can also be cheaper and quicker to open, allowing grocers to expand in urban areas where real estate or construction costs are high.

To make up for construction, setup, labor and operat-

ing costs, small-format stores need high inventory turnover—the speed at which goods are stocked and sold, said Bill Simon, the former chief executive of Walmart.

"If they're going to operate a bunch of small-fresh stores, the degree of difficulty is as high as you'll see in retail," Simon said of Whole Foods's endeavor.

Whole Foods said its first Daily Shop in Manhattan has exceeded sales projections every week since opening. The grocer has four more Daily Shop stores in New York City and will bring the format to Washington, D.C., in mid-2025, a spokesperson said.

The company said in October its sales had increased by more than 40% since its acquisition by Amazon in 2017, when Whole Foods reported fiscal year sales of about \$16 billion. This year, Whole Foods said, it doubled the number of promotions and lowered prices on 25% of items, helping lift its sales.

At Sprouts Farmers Market, the natural-foods retailer's visits to smaller-format stores significantly outpaced its own normal-size stores, as well as

grocery stores nationwide, between January 2022 and early 2024, according to Placer.ai. Sprouts declined to comment.

Other grocers, including Publix's GreenWise Markets, Ahold Delhaize's Bfresh concept, and Target, have backed away from their efforts to develop small-format stores in recent years, citing operational challenges.

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At Sprouts Farmers Market, the natural-foods retailer's visits to smaller-format stores significantly outpaced its own normal-size stores, as well as

prices at its traditional stores, the company said the price distinction between the two brands became less relevant. It said in 2019 it was ending the project.

Whole Foods said that it learned from the 365 effort, and that the Daily Shop concept is unique. The 365 stores were about 25,000 square feet, compared with 7,000 to 14,000 square feet for the Daily Shop. The 365 stores also focused primarily on value and private-label goods, while the Daily Shop's selection and pricing mimic that of a normal-size Whole Foods.

Hadrien Bessou said he has been to Whole Foods' Manhattan Daily Shop about five times. The self-checkout line, he said, winds through the store's narrow aisles and were particularly frustrating because he expected a quick, in-and-out experience.

Bessou said he has often been unable to find basics such as potatoes and onions. "You're kind of, like, going in with a list of 10 things, and you walk out and you only have five," he said. "All of a sudden, your recipe is starting to fall apart."

Glauberman, who made three separate trips to the Daily Shop on a recent Saturday, said that timing matters. "If you go early, you can get your broccoli," he said.

completed by 2030, would add container terminals that would double the port's capacity to 10 million containers annually by 2030. That expansion would propel Manzanillo to par with the Port of Los Angeles.

CPKC has been preparing to expand its main link into Mexico, which currently carries about 24 trains daily. It is building a second international railroad bridge across the Rio Grande at Laredo, Texas. The \$100 million bridge, whose construction started in 2022 and is expected to be finished this year, will boost capacity on the current single-track span.

CPKC says most of the goods that it moves from Mexico into the U.S. are produced in Mexico, rather than imported from another country. In 2023, CPKC moved 83,500 carloads imported through the Port of Lázaro Cárdenas, about 200 miles south of Manzanillo, making up 1.8% of its total carloads. Most of these loads remained in Mexico.

"While there was rhetoric and headlines, ultimately free trade in North America increased significantly during the first Trump term and a new free-trade agreement was established," said Patrick Waldron, a spokesman at CPKC.

—Liz Young and Costas Paris contributed to this article.

Tariffs Threaten Rail Vision

Continued from page B1
University, said he doesn't expect freight companies that have forged stronger cross-border connections to walk away over the uncertainty triggered by new tariffs. "If you're considering Mexico, you're doing so because of labor," Miller said. "A 25% tariff is not in any way, shape or form going to make the U.S. market where you decide to put that production."

Besides, Miller said, the threat of tariffs may simply be a negotiating tactic. "I quite frankly don't know how many people are really taking the president

BUSINESS NEWS

Volkswagen Workers Strike Across Germany

Auto giant wants to slash jobs, cut pay and close factories amid poor demand

By DOMINIC CHOPPING
AND SARAH SLOAT

Thousands of workers at Volkswagen sites across Germany participated in warning strikes on Monday as a conflict with management escalated over the carmaker's plans to slash jobs, cut pay and close factories.

As of Monday afternoon, the IG Metall union said about 66,000 employees at nine German plants had taken part in the strikes, halting production. At the company's main plant in Wolfsburg, about 35,000 workers joined the warning strikes, walkouts that usually last a few hours. The union said it would update

numbers on Tuesday to account for participation later in the day.

Volkswagen employs around 300,000 workers in Germany and operates 10 plants in the country.

The group and labor representatives have been at loggerheads for weeks as the company, one of Germany's biggest employers, seeks to implement domestic cost cuts amid sluggish electric-vehicle demand and competition from Chinese rivals.

The auto giant has warned that its struggles have been compounded by high costs of labor, energy and raw materials, and will require sweeping changes across its domestic operations to remain competitive. It has put forward plans to cut workers' pay by 10% and other proposals aimed at remaining competitive.

According to the head of Volkswagen's works council,

Daniela Cavallo, the company aims to shut at least three factories in Germany—the first domestic closures in the company's history—and lay off tens of thousands of staff.

In collective-bargaining talks leading up to Monday's strike, worker representatives had proposed that wage increases be temporarily paid into a fund to finance any drop in working hours while bonuses would be cut for two years—measures they said would save 1.5 billion euros, equivalent to \$1.58 billion, and avert factory closures and redundancies.

"Volkswagen has set fire to our collective agreements," IG Metall negotiator Thorsten Groger said. "How long and how intense this dispute must go on is a matter for Volkswagen to decide at the negotiating table."

Further negotiations are set for Dec. 9, and ahead of those



JENS SCHLUETER/AP/GTY IMAGES

The IG Metall union said about 66,000 employees had taken part in the warning strikes.

talks, Cavallo has demanded that shareholders contribute to cost-saving efforts through a change to the company dividend policy.

In a speech to striking workers outside the company's main Wolfsburg plant, Cavallo said Volkswagen had delivered high profits and dividends in recent times, but as the company's performance stutters, shareholders must now carry some of the burden.

"We demand that everyone makes their contribution. Including the executive board. And also the shareholders," she said.

Volkswagen's biggest shareholders include the **Porsche Automobil Holding** company, controlled by the Porsche and Piech families, and the German state of Lower Saxony. Cavallo said the head of Lower Saxony indicated that dividends aren't the top priority

and she expects other shareholders to adopt the same attitude.

Porsche declined to comment.

Volkswagen said on Sunday that it had taken measures to minimize any impact ahead of the strikes. The company said it respects workers' rights to participate in warning strikes and remains ready to engage in dialogue to find a sustainable solution.

Bowlero Rebrands as Lucky Strike as It Shifts Strategy

By DEAN SEAL

After Bowlero bought the Lucky Strike brand last year, Chief Executive Tom Shannon saw no more big bowling chains to acquire. Now, he wants to make Bowlero bigger than bowling with a new name and new strategy.

America's biggest bowling alley operator is formally rebranding to Lucky Strike Entertainment, adopting a moniker that Shannon said gets away from the "very bowling centric" Bowlero handle as it expands into family entertainment centers and water parks.

"I think people assume that [Bowlero] is a basic bowling alley," Shannon said in an interview. "That's good to an ex-

tent, but it's also limiting."

The rebranding is set to take effect Dec. 12 and will involve Bowlero's stock ticker on the New York Stock Exchange changing from BOWL to LUCK. More than 75 Bowlero centers around the country will become Lucky Strike locations in the next two years.

With the name change, Bowlero is staking its claim in the market for so-called location-based entertainment, a category that includes theme parks, arcades and escape rooms. Shannon says the total addressable market for location-based entertainment, which he pegs at about \$100 billion in the U.S., is roughly 25 times bigger than the bowling market that Bowlero al-

ready dominates.

The Richmond, Va., company, which also owns the AMF and Bowlmor Lanes chains, is no stranger to brand changes in the name of expansion. It was formed more than a decade ago as Bowlmor AMF when Bowlmor Lanes' parent company merged with the bankrupt AMF Bowling.

The company launched the upscale Bowlero chain a year later, around the same time that it acquired what used to be Brunswick Bowling & Billiards. Seeking to simplify, the company rebranded to Bowlero in 2018.

"We just sort of outgrew the series of names that we had all along," Shannon said.

The latest rebrand follows a

year of dealmaking. Bowlero turned heads in May when it acquired the Raging Waves Waterpark in Illinois, spurring a stock selloff.

Buying an asset outside of Bowlero's core competency would likely leave investors concerned about the long-term growth of the bowling industry, Stifel analysts said at the time, though they were ready to give management a pass based on its "outstanding track record" for M&A.

The bet paid off. Raging Waves outperformed expectations over the summer, quelling the Stifel analysts' initial skepticism.

The push into water and amusement parks is just beginning, Shannon said. Bowlero

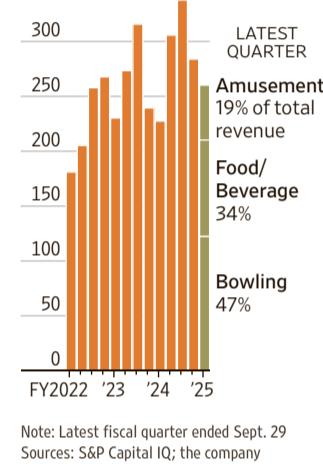
reported last month that it has acquired Boomers Parks, a chain of indoor and outdoor family entertainment centers in California and Florida.

After expanding rapidly during the past decade, Bowlero now has the size and scale to drive down variable costs at new entertainment ventures, particularly ones that have good fundamentals but are in need of capital, Shannon said.

The company will continue to add bowling locations around the country next year. Bowlero reported last month that bowling revenue, its largest top-line contributor at the moment, was up 5% in the latest completed quarter.

But some top-line gains are

Bowlero's quarterly revenue



Note: Latest fiscal quarter ended Sept. 29

Sources: S&P Capital IQ; the company

outside of bowling. Food and beverage sales jumped more than 17% in the latest completed quarter and made up about a third of Bowlero's \$260 million in quarterly revenue.

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TECHNOLOGY

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Super Micro Review Clears Management

Company says there was no evidence of fraud or misconduct and names new CFO

By DENNY JACOB

Super Micro Computer said a final review showed no evidence of fraud or misconduct by its management or board relating to accounting issues that have dragged on the stock in recent weeks.

The server maker also said on Monday that it would appoint a new chief financial officer, one of several recommendations that a special committee suggested to strengthen corporate governance and support the company's rapid growth.

Super Micro shares rose 29% to \$42.00 each. The stock is now up 47% this year.

The company earlier Monday disclosed details of the fi-



Ernst & Young, which in October resigned as the company's auditor, had expressed concerns about Super Micro's board independence from CEO Charles Liang, above, and management.

nal review by the special committee, backed by outside counsel, that was created in

response to concerns raised by its former auditor Ernst & Young.

The company in November said the preliminary investigation found the audit commit-

tee had acted independently and there was no evidence of fraud or misconduct by the management or board.

The committee said Ernst & Young's resignation and the conclusions raised in its resignation letter weren't supported by facts it examined.

Ernst & Young in October resigned as the auditor for Super Micro, saying it could no longer rely on management's representations. It also expressed concerns about Super Micro's board independence from Chief Executive Charles Liang and other members of management.

The company said it had begun a search for a new financial chief, and would accelerate its search for a chief compliance officer and general council. Current Financial Chief David Weigand is expected to stay in his role until a successor is named.

The company also named a chief accounting officer, per

the committee's recommendation, and will continue to expand and enhance training programs related to financial controls and compliance processes.

The accounting issue put Super Micro at risk of being delisted from the Nasdaq Capital Market. The company in November submitted a compliance plan with Nasdaq but soon after received a letter from Nasdaq saying it wasn't in compliance with the exchange's listing rules for missing deadlines for providing financial reports to investors.

Super Micro on Monday reiterated its belief that it will be able to complete its annual and quarterly reports and become current with its periodic reports within the discretionary period staff at Nasdaq are able to grant. It also reiterated that it doesn't anticipate any restatements of its quarterly reports for fiscal 2024 or for prior fiscal years.

Amazon Web Services CEO Promises 'Needle-Moving' AI-Product Features

By BELLE LIN

Matt Garman, the new chief executive of Amazon's cloud unit, says artificial intelligence is a race without a finish line.

"It is such a foundational technology," Garman said. "It's just a thing that's going to happen forever."

Garman, who became CEO of Amazon Web Services in June, is about to headline his first re:Invent, the company's annual conference, which regularly attracts tens of thousands of attendees to Las Vegas.

Each year, it is tradition for the world's largest cloud provider to invite its chief executive to rattle off a slew of product updates in a keynote address. On Tuesday, Garman will be sharing new features and products in areas including AI and computing, which he described as "real, needle-moving changes."

The changes that Amazon unveils do need to be revolutionary, some analysts and customers say. The cloud giant has been perceived as falling behind its tech rivals in

the AI race, though it has continued to introduce new AI capabilities targeting business customers.

Even in overall cloud-computing, long Amazon's domain, its rivals are catching up. Amazon's share of the global public cloud-computing market fell to 39% in 2023 from 39.9% in 2022, according to research and consulting

firm Gartner. Microsoft has invested \$13.75 billion into OpenAI, with which News Corp., owner of The Wall Street Journal, has a content-licensing partnership.

"We thought it was a good investment, and wanted to keep investing in that," Garman said about Anthropic. "And then from a product point of view, they're also really leaning in with us on Trainium."

Trainium is Amazon's in-house AI chip, first launched in 2020, which the company has touted as the most "cost-effective" chip for training AI models. As part of its new investment, Anthropic will use Amazon's chips to train and run its future AI models, the companies said.

Amazon is also planning to spend more than \$100 billion over the next decade on data centers—devoting more investment money to its cloud computing and AI infrastructure than to its sprawling network of e-commerce warehouses.

AWS's custom chips are part of how the company is

The cloud giant has been perceived as falling behind its tech rivals.

AWS is aiming to be a bit of everything for everyone in AI models.

In late November, the company announced that it invested an additional \$4 billion in Anthropic—doubling its investment in the AI startup to \$8 billion. Google last year agreed to invest up to \$2 bil-

lion in Anthropic. Microsoft has invested \$13.75 billion into OpenAI, with which News Corp., owner of The Wall Street Journal, has a content-licensing partnership.

Lowering the cost of AI for clients, Garman said, along with making its services and hardware more capable.

The question of return on investment for AI initiatives has dogged chief information officers and other corporate technology leaders since at least this year, and analysts expect costs and value of AI to be a big part of the conversation at re:Invent this year.

There are also complaints that the cost of cloud has grown as companies use more of it for AI. Gartner forecasts

that each area of cloud spending is expected to grow by a double-digit percentage in 2025 as technology leaders prepare their information-technology infrastructure for AI.

"Almost every CEO or CIO that I talk to, they're basically saying, 'Look, my organization did 100, 200 proof of concepts,' " Garman said, referring to companies' AI experiments. "Then they say, 'How do I go find the one, two, five of those proof of concepts that are valuable, and that are delivering real ROI?'



Matt Garman calls AI 'such a foundational technology.'

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NOTICE OF SALE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that in accordance with applicable provisions of the Uniform Commercial Code as enacted in New York, by virtue of certain Event(s) of Default under that certain Partnership Interests Pledge and Security Agreement, dated as of December 23, 2021 (the "Pledge Agreement"), executed and delivered by 3480 MAIN HIGHWAY GP LLC and 3480 MAIN HIGHWAY LIMITED PARTNER LP (collectively, the "Pledgor") and the other parties to the Pledge Agreement (the "Collateral"), by virtue of possession of those certain Share Certificates held in accordance with Article 8 of the Uniform Commercial Code of the State of New York (the "Code"), and by virtue of those certain UCC-1 Filing Statement made in favor of Secured Party, all in accordance with Article 9 of the Code, Secured Party will offer for sale, at public auction, (i) all of Pledgor's rights, title, and interest in and to the following: 3480 Main Highway LP ("MHL"), 3480 Main Highway Lender, LLC ("Lender"), and 3480 Main Highway 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PAID ADVERTISEMENT

U.S. residents hit Jackpot with 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls

Up for grabs for the next 2-days: Casino Rolls loaded with rarely seen American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins just like the old Casino Slots paid out, all coins are decades old and never to be minted again by the U.S. Gov't

► **American Eagle Casino Roll Handout:** Strict limit of 6 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls per caller has been imposed



"It's like hitting the jackpot on an old Vegas Slot Machine decades ago" said Mary Ellen Withrow.

That's because for the next 2 days everyone can get these rarely seen 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls, but only those who beat the 2-day order deadline.

These full 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls are filled with historic American Eagle Ike Large Dollar coins like the ones from 1976 and earlier that were used decades ago in slot machines in the world famous Casinos.

It's amazing that these Old Vegas Casino Rolls are up for grabs. Just holding one in your hand reminds you of walking down the Vegas Strip in the glory days of Elvis, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford and Joey Bishop. It just makes you feel good.

"I'll tell you this, it's the best gift you could ever give someone. It's actually the perfect gift for any occasion. Everyone you give one of these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls to will never forget your generosity and they'll be the envy of all who see them," Withrow said.

"We're bracing for thousands of U.S. residents who will be calling to get these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls over the next 2 days. That's because these rolls are not torn, faded, ripped or beat up. They are in brand-new pristine collector condition. And here's the best part. These are full 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls loaded with the same American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins like the coins used to fill the world famous casino slot machines decades ago, and there can never be any more so there's no telling what they could one day be worth," Withrow explained.

Today's callers need to remember this. These are not ordinary rolls of coins you get at a bank or credit union. These 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls contain old American Eagle Ike Large Dollar coins commemorating the Rat Pack days of the early 1970's when Las Vegas Casinos were all the rage. These rolls are now being released from the private vaults at the Lincoln Treasury, each with 15 U.S. Gov't issued American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins dating back to 1976 and earlier.

We won't be surprised if thousands of people claim the six roll limit before they're gone. That's because after the rolls were sealed with these U.S. Gov't minted American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins, each verified to meet a minimum collector grade quality of very good or above, the dates and mint marks are unsearched to determine collector values and the rolls are now securely sealed. That means there's no telling what's in each roll.

"My advice, get as many as you can, stash

them away in a safe place to pass down from generation to generation," Withrow said.

"Just imagine how much these remaining 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls could be worth someday. The American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins alone are decades old and are never to be struck again by the U.S. Gov't," Withrow confirmed.

Withrow knows a thing or two about

► **How to get the 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls:**

The Call-In Hotlines open at 8:30am (EST) this morning. Callers who beat the 2-day Release deadline are guaranteed to get them for less than \$7 per coin that's only \$98 for the full 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls loaded with decades old American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins. That's the lowest price ever offered and a real steal for these one of a kind 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls. Important: if any remain after the 2-day deadline the price skyrockets to \$255 per roll.

CALL TOLL-FREE: 1-866-338-2833 and mention promo code: IKE205. Or you can order by mail by writing "Casino Rolls" on a piece of paper with your name and full address with your remittance of \$98 for a single roll (your choice of roll), or \$294 for three rolls (Las Vegas Sign, Show Girls, Slots), or \$588 for all six rolls and mail to: Lincoln Treasury, Promo Code: IKE205 PO Box 9971, Canton, OH 44711. You can also go online: LincolnTreasury.com/6 and use promo code: IKE205 at checkout to claim the discount.

LAST CHANCE: You've heard the old saying, "When they're gone, they're gone". That's why today's Public Release may be the best chance the public gets to own one of these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls. And here's the best part. The price is right, in fact it's a steal for callers lucky enough to beat the 2-day deadline and get the 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls for less than \$7 per coin.

**FREE US GOVERNMENT ISSUED
LADY LIBERTY
PRESIDENTIAL DOLLAR
COIN WITH EVERY CASINO ROLL**

With each Casino Roll, a US Gov't issued Lady Liberty Presidential Dollar Coin is included FREE. These coins will also never be minted again. Your free Dollar Coin will come in uncirculated condition and protected in a capsule ensuring its safety and protection. When you get the maximum number of Casino Rolls, you'll also get six of these beautiful presidential dollar coins while they last.



*Greetings
from
Las Vegas*



■ **VEGAS SLOTS:** Shown left is a post card from the famous Dunes Casino. The hotel opened on the strip in 1955. Over the years, millions have flocked to the world famous Las Vegas Casinos like the Dunes hoping to hit the jackpot. Of course many hit big time, and now for the next 2-days everyone who calls will feel like a winner too. That's because the last 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls filled with American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins like those that filled the "loose" Casino Slots decades ago are now actually being handed over to today's callers who beat the 2-day deadline.

the Hotline at 1-866-338-2833 and give the Promo Code IKE205 beginning at 8:30 am this morning.

The Toll-Free Hotlines are expected to be overwhelmed. That's why everyone hoping to get their hands on these 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls are being urged to call right away. If lines are busy keep calling. All calls will be answered over the next 2 days.



JACKPOT: It's like hitting 777 on an old Vegas "one armed bandit". That's because the dates and mint marks of the 15 American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins from decades ago are now sealed away in each roll exclusively by the Lincoln Treasury so you never know what you might find. Call this toll-free hotline: 1-866-338-2833 and use promo code: IKE205. Choose from one roll, three rolls, or the maximum of all six rolls.

American Eagle Ike Large Dollar



Minted in Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco featuring a majestic eagle swooping over the moon's surface commemorating the original Lunar Landing.



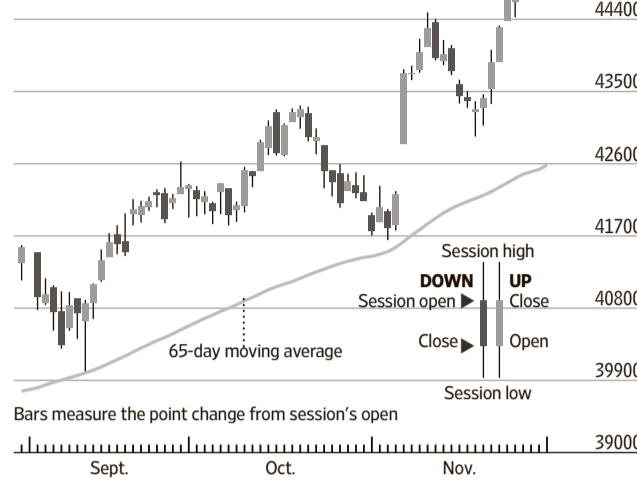
HOW MUCH ARE THE 'OLD VEGAS' CASINO ROLLS WORTH: There's no way to tell, but at less than \$7 per coin you better believe they're a real steal. That's because the dates and mint marks of the U.S. Gov't issued American Eagle Ike Large Dollar Coins are sealed away inside the 15 count 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls. Coin values always fluctuate and there are never any guarantees, but each 'Old Vegas' Casino Roll contains American Eagle Ike Large Dollar coins that are decades old. Any scarce coins, regardless of their value that you may find inside the sealed 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls are yours to keep. One thing that is known is these are the only 'Old Vegas' Casino Rolls known to exist and you can only get them by calling the toll-free line listed in today's announcement.

MARKETS DIGEST

EQUITIES

Dow Jones Industrial Average

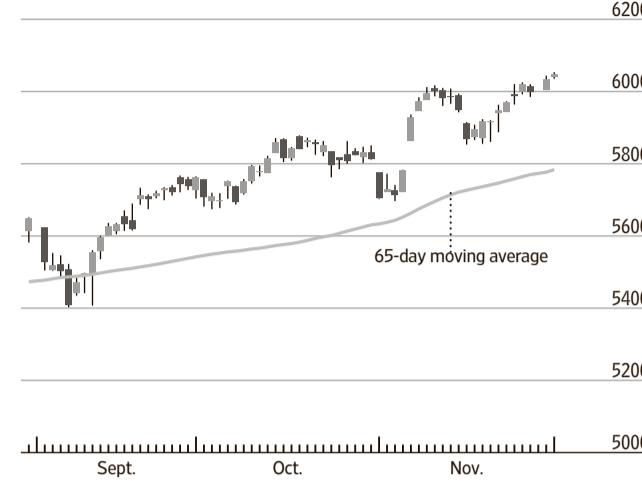
44782.00 ▼128.65, or 0.29%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.



Current divisor 0.16268413125742

S&P 500 Index

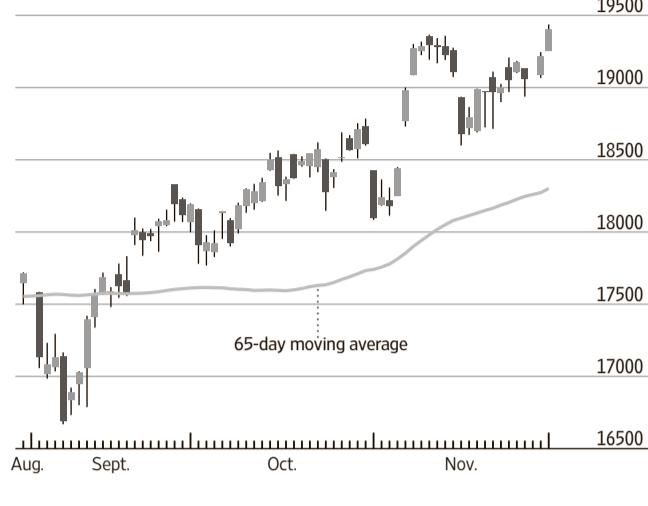
6047.15 ▲14.77, or 0.24%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.



Weeks P/E ratio based on as-reported earnings from Birinyi Associates Inc.; Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

Nasdaq Composite Index

19403.95 ▲185.78, or 0.97%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.



Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	High	52-Week Low	% chg	YTD % chg	3-yr.ann.
Dow Jones										
Industrial Average	45001.66	44710.16	44782.00	-128.65	-0.29	44910.65	36054.43	23.7	18.8	8.9
Transportation Avg	17636.75	17424.86	17544.90	-73.73	-0.42	17754.38	14781.56	13.0	10.4	3.2
Utility Average	1082.54	1056.60	1057.05	-21.90	-2.03	1079.88	829.38	20.8	19.9	5.3
Total Stock Market	60485.04	60288.95	60413.10	126.09	0.21	60413.10	45361.95	32.4	26.4	8.8
Baron's 400	1355.29	1345.85	1350.88	-2.64	-0.20	1356.99	999.02	33.5	26.0	8.0
Nasdaq Stock Market										
Nasdaq Composite	19436.92	19255.42	19403.95	185.78	0.97	19403.95	14146.71	36.8	29.3	8.1
Nasdaq-100	21201.03	20971.76	21164.60	234.23	1.12	21164.60	15788.05	33.6	25.8	9.8
S&P										
500 Index	6053.58	6035.33	6047.15	14.77	0.24	6047.15	4549.34	32.3	26.8	9.7
MidCap 400	3369.87	3347.56	3357.30	-8.88	-0.26	3390.26	2606.37	26.9	20.7	7.0
SmallCap 600	1541.93	1523.62	1537.44	4.83	0.32	1544.66	1199.20	26.0	16.6	4.2
Other Indexes										
Russell 2000	2442.61	2420.71	2434.14	-0.59	-0.02	2442.03	1852.05	29.3	20.1	3.3
NYSE Composite	20315.58	20158.43	20213.22	-58.82	-0.29	20272.04	16092.37	24.5	19.9	7.1
Value Line	656.04	651.15	655.05	1.33	0.20	656.04	553.87	16.7	10.3	0.3
NYSE Arca Biotech	6021.92	5962.49	6006.22	6.31	0.11	6154.34	4861.76	21.0	10.8	4.1
NYSE Arca Pharma	988.05	980.87	985.20	0.37	0.04	1140.17	880.78	10.5	8.2	9.0
KBW Bank	138.65	136.23	136.48	-1.68	-1.22	138.78	86.39	55.7	42.1	0.7
PHLX® Gold/Silver	149.66	147.33	147.88	-2.59	-1.72	175.74	102.94	20.8	17.7	5.7
PHLX® Oil Service	80.65	79.59	80.37	0.02	0.03	95.25	72.67	-2.5	-4.2	16.5
PHLX® Semiconductor	5084.31	4956.41	5055.32	128.76	2.61	5904.54	3645.82	36.9	21.1	9.9
Cboe Volatility	14.10	13.30	13.34	-0.17	-1.26	38.57	11.86	2.0	7.1	-21.9

\$Nasdaq PHLX

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Late Trading

Most-active and biggest movers among NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE Amer. and Nasdaq issues from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. ET as reported by electronic trading services, securities dealers and regional exchanges. Minimum share price of \$2 and minimum after-hours volume of 50,000 shares.

Most-active issues in late trading

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	After Hours				
			Last	Net chg	% chg	High	Low
NVIDIA	NVDA	13,171.2	138.45	-0.18	-0.13	147.70	138.30
Transocean	RIG	12,048.5	4.34	-0.02	-0.46	4.39	4.32
Snap	SNAP	8,238.3	12.08	-0.03	-0.25	12.12	12.05
Intel	INTC	7,000.2	23.92	-0.01	-0.04	24.01	23.86
Lam Research	LRCX	6,555.7	78.54	0.03	0.04	78.87	78.07
iShares TIPS Bond ETF	TIP	5,742.7	108.51	...	unch.	108.54	108.46
Xtrkrz Harv CSI300 CnA	ASHR	5,524.8	27.44	0.17	0.63	27.45	27.06
SPDR S&P Biotech	XBI	5,509.5	99.48	0.17	0.17	99.60	99.19

Percentage gainers...

Janux Therapeutics	JANX	1,111.6	61.20	21.02	52.31	70.01	40.18
Serina Therapeutics	SER	128.4	7.10	2.35	49.47	8.25	4.60
Credo Tech Group	CRDO	924.1	63.00	15.20	31.80	65.60	46.00
Vir Biotechnology	VIR	379.2	9.80	1.65	20.24	10.74	7.95
Cabaletta Bio	CABA	167.3	4.46	0.33	7.96	4.51	4.12

...And losers

Logistic Prop Americas	LPA	290.3	11.79	-1.31	-10.00	15.69	11.02
TransMedics Group	TMDX	309.4	77.47	-7.67	-9.01	87.24	72.70
Zscaler	ZS	1,512.3	191.75	-16.76	-8.04	210.77	190.30
Maximus	MMS	121.3	70.46	-3.70	-4.99	74.16	70.46
XAI Octagon FR & Alt Incm	XFLT	53.7	6.80	-0.35	-4.88	7.15	6.79

*Primary market NYSE, NYSE American NYSE Arca only.
†CAGR A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand; above 1 indicates selling pressure.

Percentage Losers

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	% chg from 65-day avg	Latest Session Close	% chg	High	Low	% chg

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COMMODITIES

wsj.com/market-data/commodities

Futures Contracts

Metal & Petroleum Futures

	Contract		Contract			Open	
	Open	High	hilo	Low	Settle	Chg	interest
Copper-High (CMX) -25,000 lbs.; \$ per lb.							
Open	4,0725	4,0910	4,0320	4,0755	-0,0050	4,575	
Dec	4,1430	4,1475	4,0815	4,1305	-0,0095	130,199	
Gold (CMX) -100 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.							
Dec	2649,00	2649,80	2621,70	2634,90	-22,10	3,573	
Jan'25	2663,70	2663,90	2635,50	2645,50	-22,50	2,183	
Feb	2673,80	2678,50	2644,50	2658,50	-22,50	355,647	
April	2699,00	2699,00	2665,50	2679,30	-22,60	46,183	
June	2715,30	2718,10	2687,70	2701,00	-22,50	31,492	
Aug	2719,20	2738,40	2708,40	2721,30	-22,10	8,349	
Palladium (NYM) -50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.							
Dec	975,00	1004,50	975,00	991,90	1,70	28	
March'25	988,00	1006,00	974,50	995,20	-0,30	15,249	
Platinum (NYM) -50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.							
Dec	924,80	938,00	924,80	945,90	-3,60	4	
Jan'25	952,40	953,10	941,20	950,40	-3,70	74,967	
Silver (CMX) -5,000 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.							
Dec	30,510	30,670	30,170	30,449	-0,236	1,964	
March'25	31,120	31,135	30,510	30,864	-0,244	110,840	
Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM) -1,000 bbls.; \$ per bbl.							
Jan	68,00	69,11	67,71	68,10	0,10	331,100	
Feb	67,77	68,83	67,44	67,84	0,12	166,356	
March	67,56	68,56	67,22	67,60	0,12	166,739	
April	67,18	68,38	67,06	67,43	0,12	89,695	
June	67,18	68,10	66,78	67,13	0,10	153,096	
Dec	66,06	66,95	65,76	66,04	0,09	153,884	
NY Harbor ULSD (NYM) -42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.							
Jan	2,2039	2,2278	2,1722	2,1777	-0,0147	127,283	
Feb	2,2010	2,2257	2,1731	2,1781	-0,0121	71,612	
Gasoline-NY RBOB (NYM) -42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.							
Jan	1,9050	1,9324	1,8968	1,9172	0,0184	132,629	
Feb	1,9040	1,9398	1,9040	1,9233	0,0165	51,121	
Natural Gas (NYM) -10,000 MMbtu.; \$ per MMbtu.							
Jan	3,220	3,279	3,148	3,213	-0,150	296,113	
Feb	3,085	3,131	3,014	3,076	-0,128	137,415	
March	2,850	2,885	2,788	2,832	-0,111	261,482	
April	2,824	2,863	2,770	2,819	-0,088	113,490	
May	2,923	2,967	2,875	2,929	-0,076	102,477	
Oct	3,367	3,407	3,329	3,387	-0,046	99,743	

Agriculture Futures

Corn (CBT)	5,000 bu.; cents per bu.
Dec	423,00
March'25	433,00
Oats (CBT)	5,000 bu.; cents per bu.
Dec	343,50
March'25	358,25
Soybeans (CBT)	5,000 bu.; cents per bu.
Jan	898,50
Feb	900,50
March	906,75
April	904,50
May	929,19
Oct	3,367
Soybean Oil (CBT) -60,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	
Dec	41,36
Jan'25	41,64
Rough Rice (CBT) -2,000 cwt.; \$ per cwt.	
Jan	15,24
March	15,34
Wheat (CBT) -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	
Dec	536,25
March'25	548,00
Wheat (KC) -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	
Dec	522,25
Wheat (M) -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	
Dec	526,25
Wheat (W) -5,000 bu.; cents per bu.	
Dec	519,00
Soybean Meal (CBT) -100 tons; \$ per ton.	
Dec	288,40
Jan'25	292,20
Soybean Oil (CBT) -60,000 lbs.; cents per lb.	
Dec	41,36
Jan'25	41,75
Rough Rice (CBT) -2,000 cwt.; \$ per cwt.	
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Wheat (W	

BIGGEST 1,000 STOCKS

Tuesday, December 3, 2024 | B9

How to Read the Stock Tables

The following explanations apply to NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market listed securities. Prices are consolidated from trades reported by various market centers, including securities exchanges, Finra, electronic communications networks and other broker-dealers. The list comprises the 1,000 largest companies based on market capitalization.

Underlined quotations are those stocks with large changes in volume compared with the issue's average trading volume.

Boldfaced quotations highlight those issues whose price changed by 5% or more if their previous closing price was \$2 or higher.

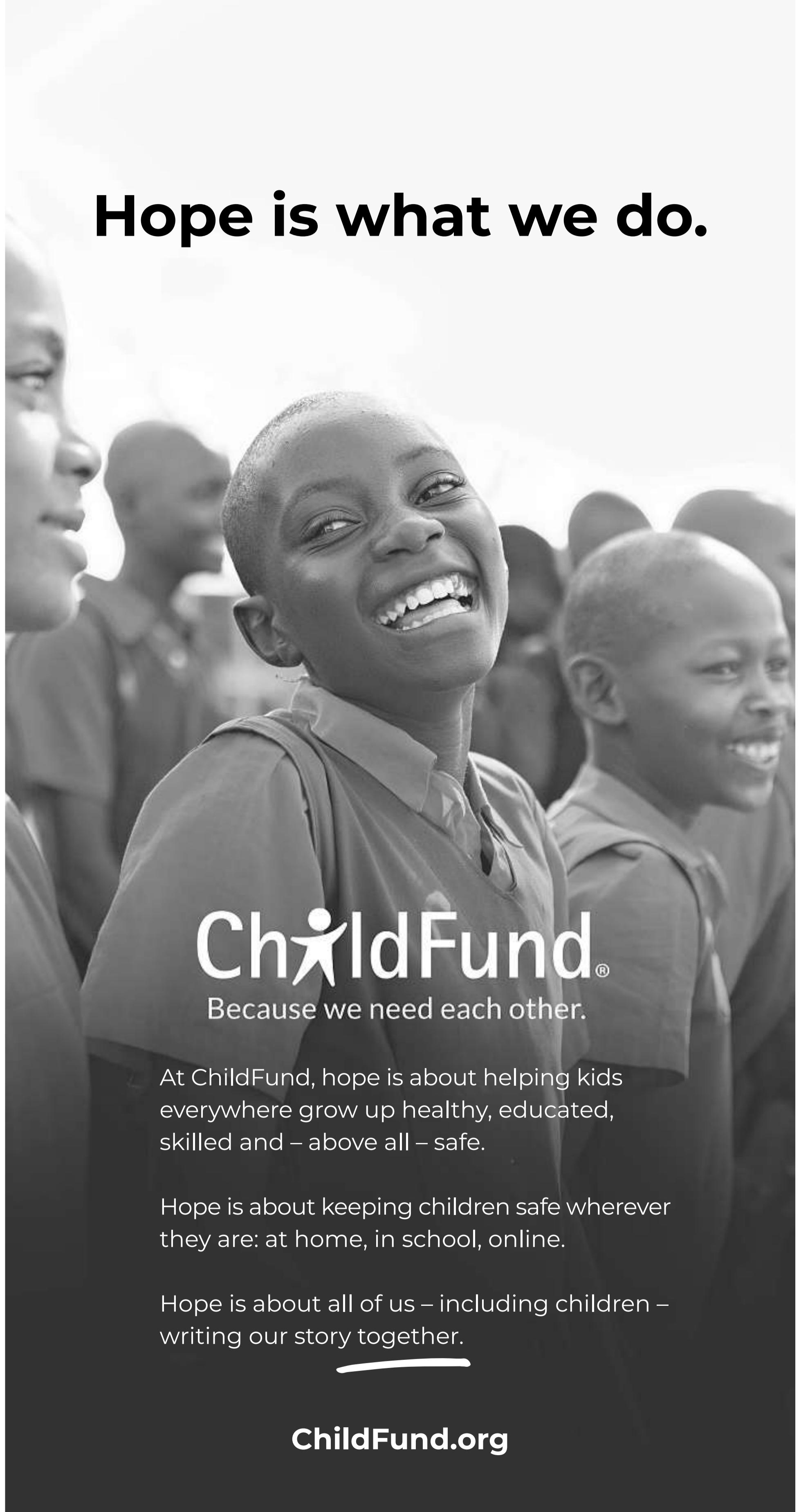
Footnotes: i-New 52-week high; 1-New 52-week low; dd-Indicates loss in the most recent four quarters.

Stock tables reflect composite regular trading as of 4 p.m. ET and changes in the official closing prices from 4 p.m. ET the previous day.

Monday, December 2, 2024

Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg	Stock	Sym	Close	Net Chg
AACN	AACN	132.29	-4.05	AutoZone	AZO	319.79	9.98
AECOM	AECM	115.94	-1.03	AvalonBay	ABY	230.80	-4.55
AES	AES	13.01	-0.03	Avangrid	AGR	35.71	0.05
Aflac	AFL	111.40	-2.60	Avantor	AVT	21.10	0.04
AGNC Inv	AGNC	9.60	-0.06	AxialCoating	AXTA	40.15	-0.19
Ansys	ANSS	350.51	-0.59	AxonEnterprise	AXN	339.39	-10.57
APA	APA	22.34	-0.31	BCE	BCE	27.04	0.01
AQSE Tech	ASX	10.01	0.29	Becta	BCT	52.85	-0.20
ASML	ASML	711.74	-2.47	BellRock	BRS	24.07	-0.20
ATT&T	T	22.70	-0.46	Bentley	BNTY	129.13	-1.72
ATVI	ATVI	59.70	-0.47	BHP	BXP	80.88	-1.11
AbbottLabs	ABBV	168.11	-1.96	Birdie	BUD	86.52	1.47
AbleVie	ABRV	181.77	-1.16	BakerHughes	BHK	43.69	-0.26
Accenture	ACN	361.38	-0.99	BlackBerry	BBB	89.52	-0.70
AcuityBrands	AYI	322.07	-1.21	BBVA	BBVA	9.43	-0.02
Adobe	ADBE	516.20	-0.27	BankCloud	BCH	22.94	0.14
AdvantageSys	WMS	134.00	-1.13	Barclays	BCS	13.36	-0.12
AdvMindOvices	ADM	142.06	-4.88	Barclaycard	BCL	421.03	-0.19
Aegon	AEG	6.34	-0.15	BarclaysGen	BCT	402.51	-3.60
AeroCar	AER	98.38	-0.98	BarclaysPlat	CAT	21.42	-0.36
Affarma	AFFRM	68.39	-1.62	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AigentTechs	AIGT	13.98	-1.61	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AgileCognitines	AGC	82.87	-1.55	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AirProducts	APD	335.62	-1.26	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Airbnb	ABNB	137.49	1.38	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AkamaiTech	AKAM	97.93	-1.39	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Albemarle	ALB	111.30	3.60	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Albertsons	ACI	19.45	-0.40	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Alcoa	AA	45.70	-0.73	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Alcon	ALCO	88.23	-0.26	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AlexandriaEast	AIR	109.70	-0.53	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AllyFinancial	ALLY	39.20	-0.78	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Almavision	ALMV	253.01	-0.06	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Alphabets	GOOG	171.49	2.54	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Alphabets	GOOG	179.29	0.53	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AltaIRng	ALTR	105.70	0.22	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AltisTransm	ALMN	116.75	-1.75	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Allstate	ALL	204.39	-3.00	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AlyyFinancial	ALLY	39.20	-0.78	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AlmondB	ADM	111.30	-0.20	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AIC	AIC	76.01	-0.87	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmerTowerR	ATMR	207.33	-1.67	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmetWaterW	AWK	135.60	-1.40	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmericaP	APM	56.57	-8.66	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmericaAirlines	AAIR	14.61	-0.09	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AEP	AEP	98.22	-1.64	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmerCap	ACI	19.58	-1.61	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
ArgoCap	ARGC	173.95	-2.78	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Argent	ARGX	617.49	0.94	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
ArtistNetworks	ART10	41.00	4.28	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
Armdocs	DOX	87.69	0.79	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmerSports	AS	25.13	-0.20	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
America	AEE	92.88	-1.51	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmericaMovil	AMX	14.82	-0.01	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
AmericaAirlines	AAIR	57.18	-0.33	BarclaysPlat	CAT	49.47	-0.16
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Hope is what we do.



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At ChildFund, hope is about helping kids everywhere grow up healthy, educated, skilled and – above all – safe.

Hope is about keeping children safe wherever they are: at home, in school, online.

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HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

Best Home Deals Are on Builders' Lots

The premium that buyers usually have to pay for a brand-new house is disappearing

In sad news for romantics, the economics of buying a charming old home and fixing it up look terrible at the moment. If it is possible to find value for money in today's red-hot housing market, it is most likely to be down on the builder's lot.

A newly built house normally costs more than an old one, but the higher upfront cost is offset by lower maintenance bills in the early years of ownership. The roof is new, the decking is freshly laid and the appliances are all at the start of their useful lifespan. Many builders offer a warranty to fix structural problems that arise in the first year or two. Cons of buying a new home are that they tend to be less centrally located and their cookie-cutter looks.

The new-home premium bounces around but has been 16% on average since 1968, based on data from UBS housing analyst John Lavello. It has withered away since the pandemic-era housing boom. This year through October, buyers paid a 3% premium on average for a new home. The last time the figure was so low was in the early 1980s, when housing also was very unaffordable.

Prices are converging because new homes are getting smaller and simpler. To keep them affordable, builders are swapping out touches such as marble countertops for less fancy materials and shrinking the floor size. New single-family homes were 2,384 square feet on average in the third quarter of 2024, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 6% smaller than three years ago.

Home builders are more pragmatic about prices than existing owners, who tend to hold out for what their neighbors got. Many large builders want homes sold within around two years of breaking ground to minimize the cost of holding them on their books, so they will offer discounts.

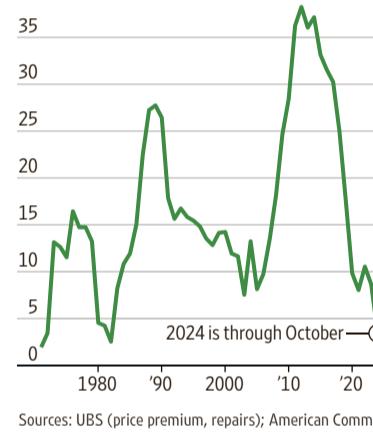
Low supply of existing homes for sale, with many homeowners reluctant to give up their low-rate mortgages, is fueling the strange price dynamics between brand new and old properties. In October, there were 4.2 months of existing-home inventory, which is below historic norms. By comparison, the supply of newly built homes in October was 9.5 months. Normally, home builders would bring construction to an abrupt halt at these levels, but they are continuing to build to fill the void in the resale market. This steady flow of new homes is putting some pressure on prices.



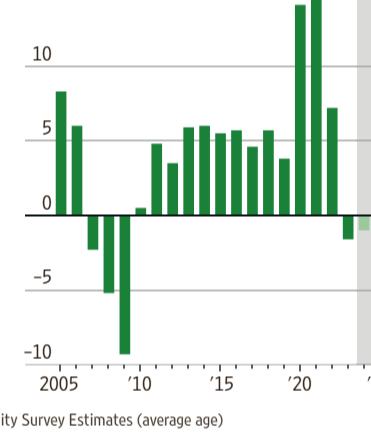
JORDAN VONDERHAR/BLOOMBERG NEWS

Low supply of existing homes for sale is fueling the strange price dynamics between brand new and old properties.

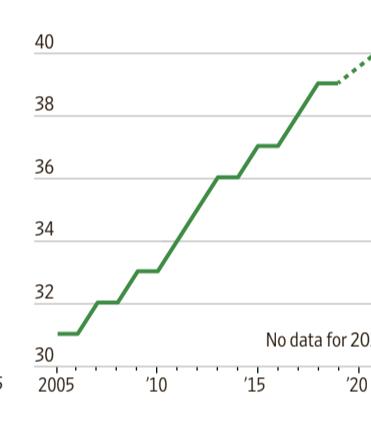
Price premium for newly built homes vs. existing homes, annual average



Change in spending on home repairs and renovations



Average age of U.S. housing



ing homes tend to be more expensive to keep warm and to insure. Old electrical wiring can increase fire risk and building techniques may no longer meet modern standards designed to protect homes from extreme weather events such as hail and storms.

In a healthy housing market, properties tend to lose value as they age if they aren't renovated. This process, known as downward filtering, helped lower-income buyers get on the property ladder between 2005 and 2013, according to a study by Jonathan Spader, national mortgage database manager at the Federal Housing Finance Agency. The process was disrupted over the past decade when rock-bottom interest rates and tight supply made all housing costlier. Today, buyers have the worst of both worlds: America's aging housing stock needs patching up but is commanding record prices.

Buying a home off a builder's assembly line isn't as exciting as hunting down a dream fixer upper, but it has rarely looked as smart financially.

—Carol Ryan

But buyers may be so desperate to move that they no longer consider the cost of fixing up an older home. Once a property reaches 25 years of age, major components and systems are likely to need replacing. According to an analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, homeowners in properties built between 1970 and 1999 spend 26% more on annual main-

tenance than homes built after 2000. The costs to maintain a pre-1970 property are higher. Repair costs are especially relevant because America's housing stock is older than ever. As construction collapsed after the 2008-09 financial crisis, the average age of U.S. homes crept up to 41 years from 32 years on the eve of the 2008 crash.

Granted, there was a renovation boom during the pandemic, when people used excess savings and stimulus checks to fix up their homes. But the aging housing stock needs a lot of investment. High interest rates slowed repair activity; major projects are usually financed with home-equity loans, which are prohibitively expensive now. Add to this the fact that exist-

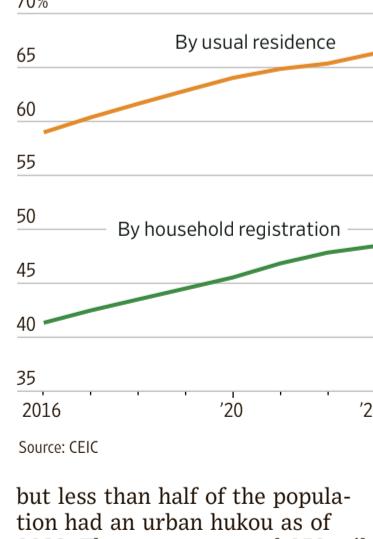
China Studies Overhaul in Response To Property Crisis

In China's sluggish property market, the latest sales pitch isn't marble countertops, but residency papers.

In a bid to support the real-estate market, more than a dozen Chinese cities rolled out plans that would give something akin to permanent residency to home buyers. The southern economic hub of Guangzhou recently joined the list, making it the first of China's biggest, tier-one cities—which include Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen—to do so. Under China's *hukou*, or household registration system, migrants to cities traditionally had limited access to social benefits including healthcare and education. So access to a big-city *hukou* has great appeal.

This change alone isn't likely to revive the market. For one, the housing market in the biggest cities has been relatively more resilient—a lot of the overbuilding happened in the smaller cities, leaving a pile of unsold apartments. Generally, consumption sentiment remains weak as the economy is facing deflationary pressure.

But apart from selling apartments, the policies offer a window into one of China's fundamental economic constraints: a household registration system that has long segregated rural and urban populations. Around two-thirds of people in China live in urban areas,



but less than half of the population had an urban *hukou* as of 2023. That means around 250 million urban residents don't enjoy full social benefits in the place where they live. Many are laborers without the means to buy a home in a big city, but urban residents without registration benefits also include successful entrepreneurs and homeowners.

This has profound economic implications. Those migrant residents don't feel financially secure enough to spend freely, so the system has effectively depressed household consumption. Many often leave family behind in the



QILAI SHEN/BLOOMBERG NEWS

countryside while they work in cities.

The government in recent months laid out a five-year urbanization plan to overhaul the *hukou* system, signaling a recognition of this systemic drag. But meaningful change won't come cheap. Absorbing millions of rural migrants into urban social infrastructure requires increased spending on healthcare and other welfare programs.

This helps explain why a *hukou* overhaul, which has been on the wish lists of academics and think tanks for decades, has been delayed for so long. But the prop-

erty downturn has now become a more pressing fiscal issue for local governments. While using registration benefits as a lure for housing purchases suddenly makes a lot more sense, the central government in Beijing would still probably need to increase its spending on social infrastructure if it wants fundamental change of the system.

There have been high hopes that Beijing will launch a large-scale stimulus to boost the economy. So far, the government has announced plans to alleviate the debt burden of local governments, but hopes for Western-style direct

consumer handouts appear unrealistic.

Instead, more-promising, long-term policies—such as easing household registration restrictions and enhancing social-welfare systems—could potentially unlock significant consumer spending potential.

Investors should pay close attention: If the *hukou* overhaul succeeds, expands to more cities and is paired with funding for better social benefits for rural migrants, it would be one of the most positive economic-policy initiatives out of Beijing in years.

—Jacky Wong