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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOW JONES | News Corp

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024 ~ VOL. CCLXXXIV NO. 96

WSJ.com

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OIL \$70.56 ▲ \$1.34

GOLD \$2,723.10 ▲ \$9.40

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YEN 150.84

What's News

Business & Finance

◆ Disney said it would name Chief Executive Bob Iger's successor in early 2026 and replace its board chairman, signaling to investors that the company is taking a fresh approach to succession after past turbulence. **A1**

◆ U.S. stocks ended mixed ahead of a slew of earnings reports this week, with the S&P 500 and Dow falling 0.2% and 0.8%, respectively, and the Nasdaq gaining 0.3%. Treasury yields rose. **B11**

◆ The Defense Department is considering asking senior tech professionals to accept high-ranking positions in the reserves, where they would help with cybersecurity, data analytics and other projects. **B1**

◆ Sanofi entered exclusive talks to sell a controlling stake in its Ospella consumer-healthcare unit to CD&R for the equivalent of about \$17.39 billion, including debt. **B3**

◆ Delta, United and American Airlines set their plans for the summer, increasing service to key spots in Europe and introducing flights to locales not previously on the board. **B1**

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World-Wide

◆ Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Ukraine, announcing \$400 million more in military assistance to Kyiv, but no agreement to allow its forces to use long-range missiles inside Russia. **A8**

◆ House investigators released an interim report detailing rampant security failings that led up to a gunman wounding Trump and killing a spectator at a rally in July. **A3**

◆ A month of Israeli military successes capped by the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar is boosting Netanyahu's popularity and strengthening his political hand. **A9**

◆ Trump's proposals would accelerate the date on which Social Security will run out of money to pay full benefits and would require larger benefit cuts unless Congress acts, a new estimate calculated. **A4**

◆ The Harris campaign raked in more than \$1 billion in contributions in the third quarter, more than twice as much as the giving reported by team Trump. **A4**

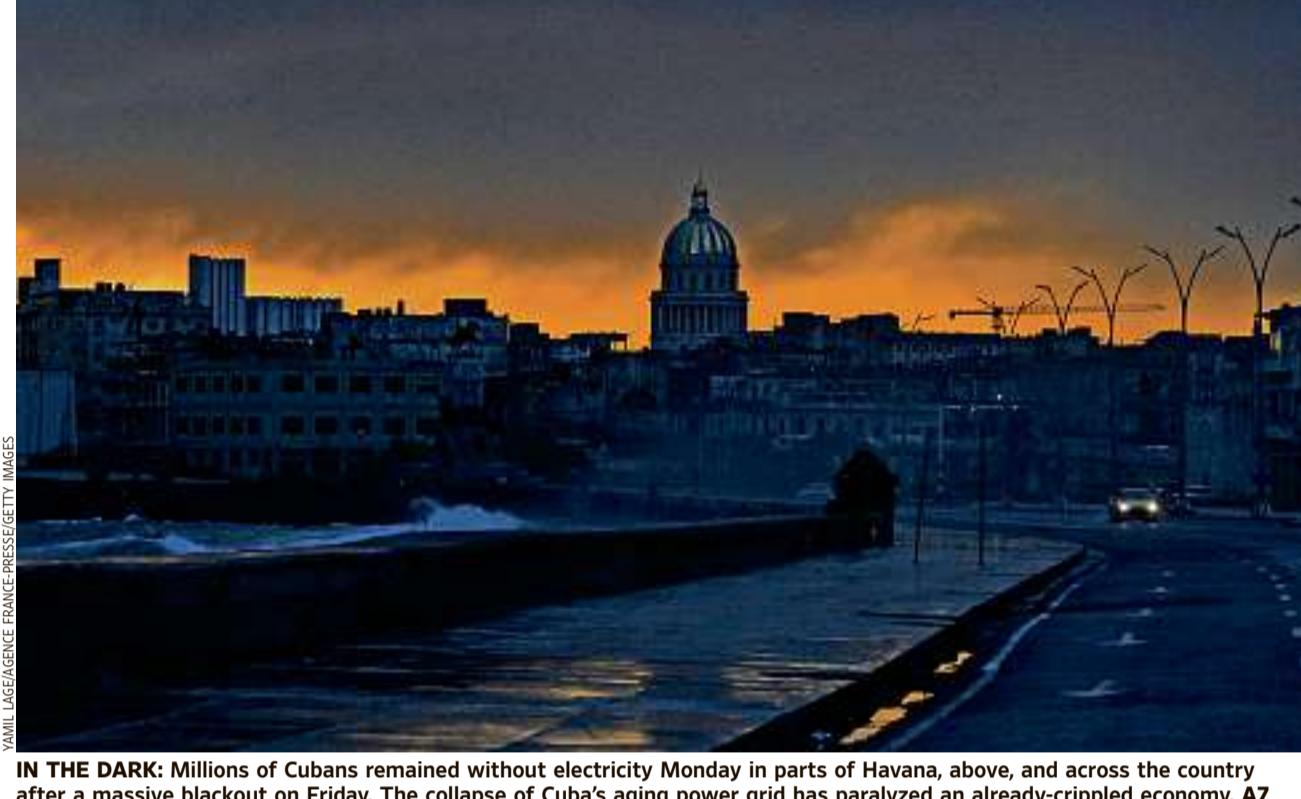
◆ Vietnam elected army general Luong Cuong as its new president, the fourth official to fill the role in 18 months. **A9**

◆ Four people aboard a helicopter were killed when it crashed into a radio tower in Houston and burst into flames, officials said. **A6**

◆ Died: Fethullah Gulen, 83, exiled Islamist cleric. **A7**

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Cuba Struggles to Restore Power After Blackout



IN THE DARK: Millions of Cubans remained without electricity Monday in parts of Havana, above, and across the country after a massive blackout on Friday. The collapse of Cuba's aging power grid has paralyzed an already-crippled economy. **A7**

With Armed Guards, Drones, Poll Workers Brace for Deniers

By JIM CARLTON
AND VERA BERGENGRUEN

PHOENIX—As Nov. 5 looms, the election headquarters in the most populous county in the crucial battleground state of Arizona has become a fortress.

"You'd have to be a psycho-

path to say you enjoy this," said Maricopa County's top election official for voting by mail, Stephen Richer, a Republican. The building has added metal detectors and armed guards. On Election Day, as workers tabulate ballots behind new fencing and concrete barriers, drones will patrol the

skies overhead, police snipers will perch on rooftops and mounted patrols will stand ready.

Across the state, election workers have gone through active-shooter drills and learned to barricade themselves or wield fire hoses to repel armed mobs. At the ready are trauma

kits containing tourniquets and bandages designed to pack chest wounds and stanch serious bleeding.

Arizona is one epicenter for threats against election offi-

Please turn to page A10

◆ Young people of color hold key in Georgia..... A4

Disney To Name Successor To Iger In 2026

Ex-Morgan Stanley CEO, who is heading leadership search, to become board chair

By ROBBIE WHELAN

Disney said it would name Chief Executive Bob Iger's successor in early 2026 and replace its board chairman, signaling to investors that the company is taking a fresh approach to succession after past turbulence.

The announcement on Monday marked the first time the company formally gave a time frame for when it aims to name Iger's successor, a decision that will shape the entertainment giant's next chapter.

Disney said former Morgan Stanley CEO James Gorman, chair of its succession committee, would become board chairman on Jan. 2, succeeding former Nike CEO Mark Parker, who plans to resign.

Monday's announcements indicate Disney is taking a more deliberative approach to finding a new CEO and could make it more likely that it takes a closer look at external candidates, while giving Iger's successor time to learn the ropes before his contract expires at the end of 2026. Some observ-

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INSIDE



JASON GAY

The night college football lost its mind at the Texas-Georgia game. **A14**



PERSONAL JOURNAL

Putting the AirPods Pro 2's hearing-aid capability to the test. **A11**

Empty Tables, High Costs Push Restaurants Into Bankruptcy

By HEATHER HADDON

Americans love fish tacos, but not enough to keep Rubio's Coastal Grill from joining one of 2024's biggest food trends: the bankrupt restaurant chain.

The California chain founded about 41 years ago by a surfer hung on through the Covid-19 pandemic, and sales had been improving. But business never came all the way

back, and as expenses climbed

and customers grew fed up with the rising cost of eating out, Rubio's filed for bankruptcy protection in June.

"You have locations that just aren't viable. You have the Covid hangover, labor costs. There's multiple problems," said Jeff Crivello, president of Trew Capital Management, an investment firm that bought Rubio's out of bankruptcy in August.

Restaurant chains and oper-

ators are on track this year to declare the most bankruptcies in decades outside of 2020, when the global pandemic upended the industry's operations, according to an analysis of BankruptcyData.com records.

The firm tracked chapter 11 filings of restaurants that are publicly traded, along

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◆ Cheesecake Factory urged to consider breakup..... B2

Hit Show

On Banking

Baffles Pros

* * *

'Industry' fans spot spreadsheet flaws, puzzling IPOs

BY ALEXANDER SAEEDY

The blockbuster TV show "Industry" is full of sex, drugs and high finance. But Wall Street types auditing this past season's plot found the details aren't quite adding up.

The HBO series has become a hit, with most fans tuning in for the personal drama between the 20-something protagonists. Finance nerds, who have spent hours toiling in the drudgery of banking, are more intrigued by the perplexing operations at the fictional bank Pierpoint & Co.

For instance, why would traders at Pierpoint be working on a company's initial public offering of stock—something that

Please turn to page A10

Behind Many Powerful Women on Wall Street: A Doting 'Househusband'

By MIRIAM GOTTFRIED

Suzanne Donohoe, a top executive at the private-equity firm EQT, started the month of September with a 10-day business trip through Asia and Europe. Back in New York, her husband, Matt Donohoe, was helping their three teenagers begin a new school year.

That was no simple task. Though the Donohoe children are close in age, each goes to a different school and has different extracurricular activities. Matt drove their 13-year-old to hockey practices in New Jersey and took all three children to Boston for a tournament. In between, there were groceries to buy, meals to prepare and homework to assist with.

It was all in a day's work for Matt, who quit his job in 2007 to help out at home. A former emerging-markets trader with degrees from

Georgetown and Columbia, he is part of a quiet but growing force of men who hold down the fort at home while their wives climb to the upper echelons of finance.

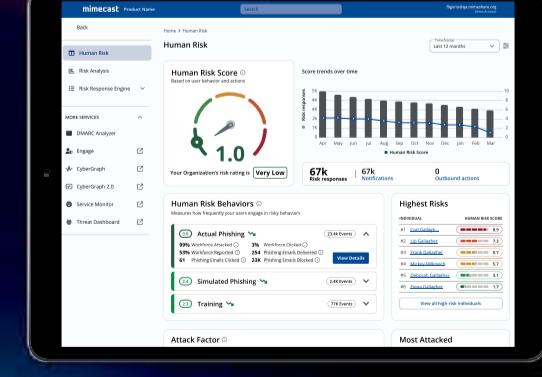
Wall Street has long struggled to elevate and retain women. A hotly competitive industry that demands long hours, frequent travel and the need to be on call constantly, it has been an unwelcoming environment for women, particularly those with children.

Women who have leadership roles in finance said that having a spouse who stays home—a househusband, if you will—can relieve that burden and allow them to rise. Even these privileged women, who have a spouse at home and often extra help beyond that, said maintaining the arrangements is a complex feat.

For the men, being a house-

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U.S. NEWS

In Amish Country, Millennials Prosper

By SCOTT CALVERT

MOUNT HOPE, Ohio—At age 32, Ryan Hershberger has achieved success far beyond his modest roots.

He launched a furniture business with two cousins a decade ago and now owns a company that distributes its solid-wood tables and chairs nationwide.

From a second-floor corner office, he presides over the 65,000-square-foot factory floor where dozens of workers assemble the pieces. One is his dad, Wyman Hershberger, 67, a carpenter who expresses pride over his son's rise.

"He's a go-getter," he said, "and that's what it takes."

It helps that Ryan Hershberger lives and works in Holmes County, Ohio, America's standout for economic mobility by one measure. Millennials there are doing better than the generation ahead of them.

Young people across the nation are contending with crushing housing costs and student-loan debt. Only recently have they seen a burst of financial stability after struggling to keep up with previous generations.

Something different has been happening in the rolling, green hills of Holmes County.

Between 2005 and 2019, average household income in Holmes County rose 24% for 27-year-olds raised in lower-income homes—from roughly \$36,000 to \$45,000 in inflation-adjusted 2023 dollars. That puts millennials who are in their early 30s far ahead of their Gen X counterparts when they were that age.

Big gains

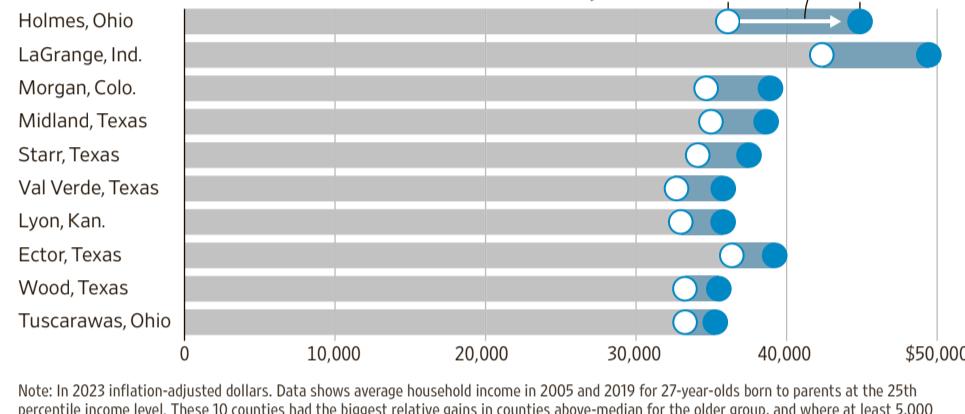
Holmes County had the biggest relative jump for any U.S. county where such 27-year-olds in 2005 already earned at least the median household income, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of data released this year by a team of Harvard University economists.

Younger millennials from middle- and high-income families here also notched big gains, according to the data.

Raj Chetty, a Harvard economist, and his fellow researchers used anonymized census and tax data to follow millions of Americans from childhood to adulthood. Their aim: to better understand economic mo-



The 10 U.S. counties with the highest percentage increase between 2005 and 2019 in average household income for 27-year-olds born to low-income parents



Note: In 2023 inflation-adjusted dollars. Data shows average household income in 2005 and 2019 for 27-year-olds born to parents at the 25th percentile income level. These 10 counties had the biggest relative gains in counties above-median for the older group, and where at least 5,000 children born in 1978-92 lived at least one year in a home with below-median parental income.

Source: Raj Chetty, Will Dobbie, Benjamin Goldman, Sonya Porter and Crystal Yang

PETER CHAMPELLI/WSJ



In Holmes County, Ohio, Wyman Hershberger, top, works at his son's furniture company; Crystal Bontrager, above left, owns a cafe; and Chris Keim, right, works at an outdoor-furniture business.

bility—the ability to move up the income ladder.

Holmes County isn't a wealthy place. Median household income is about \$73,000, near the roughly \$75,000 median for the U.S., census figures show. But its status as an economic mobility darling is

notable because by some standards it should be struggling.

It sits far from any interstate and lacks urban centers. Roughly half of its 44,000 residents are Amish, part of a Christian community that eschews varying degrees of modern technology. And because

Amish children typically stop school after eighth grade, the county's educational attainment among 25-year-olds ranks last in Ohio.

Economists and local business leaders believe much of the progress stems from entrepreneurial growth fueled by

Slower Economic Growth, Continued Uncertainty Seen

By JOSHUA KIRBY

The U.S. economy faces continued challenges, especially relating to future business conditions ahead of November's knife-edge presidential elections, according to a monthly series of indicators.

The leading economic index published Monday by research group the Conference Board fell 0.5% in September, furthering a decline booked the previous month and dropping a little faster than economists had expected.

Weakness in factory orders and consumers' outlook for the months ahead dragged the index lower, said Justyna Zabin-

Bankruptcy Hits More Restaurants

Continued from Page One
with companies holding more than \$10 million in liabilities.

Restaurants declaring bankruptcy this year include sit-down chains Red Lobster and Hawkers Asian Street Food, along with a string of fast-casual operations such as Tijuana Flats and Roti. More eateries on the edge are likely to file for bankruptcy in the coming year, restaurant executives, attorneys and lenders said.

Separately, an activist investor is pushing the operator of the Cheesecake Factory, with more than 300 locations, to spin off three of its smaller brands into a separate public company focused on faster growth.

Nearly five years since the pandemic hit the more than \$1 trillion U.S. restaurant industry, the sector's health has improved on many fronts. Hiring is robust, and an average of 3,700 new restaurants are opening monthly this year, according to market-research firm Datassential.

But some chains are still struggling because customers have pulled back on dining out, and high interest rates have hurt companies that gave priority to growth over profit.

Same-store sales traffic at U.S. restaurants was down by 3.3% this year through Oct. 6 versus the same period in 2023, according to market-research firm Black Box Intelligence. Visits to casual-dining restaurants fell 4.5%.

"These are things that have been bubbling under the surface for the last 15 years," said Brett Schulman, chief executive of fast-casual chain Cava. He said he has had more than a dozen distressed restaurant



Sit-down chain Red Lobster filed for chapter 11 this year.



Note: Chapter 11 filings of restaurant companies include those that are publicly traded and holding more than \$10 million in liabilities.

Source: BankruptcyData.com

companies pitched to him to buy or invest in the past year.

Chains with fewer than 50 locations that can't benefit from the scale advantages of bigger companies are considered the most vulnerable, industry officials said. Older sit-down chains struggling to cater to today's consumers are also in tough positions.

Chicago fast-casual chain Roti had grown to 42 locations across six cities by early 2020.

The company reached about \$55 million in annual sales serving hummus, falafel and other fare to downtown workers, but sales crumbled when the pandemic struck. Roti closed dozens of locations and

cooperation and innovation, all buttressed by tight family and community ties. Mark Partridge, an Ohio State University economist who has studied Holmes County, points to an "extreme networking effect," where companies—and cousins—routinely help each other out.

While other counties can't necessarily replicate this cocktail, they can draw on key ingredients, Partridge said. "There's no real strong reason you have to be Amish," he said. "You can have a tight social network with effective social organizations, chambers of commerce, business organizations, other kind of nonprofits."

Though rural areas are often hampered by young talent moving away for better job opportunities, many Holmes County natives remain, held in part by the Amish tradition of staying near one's community. Job growth helps, too. A third of workers employed in Holmes County commute from elsewhere, Partridge said.

Community bonds underpin Holmes County's economy. Steve Miller, 31, started Grand Design Roofing in his 20s with a partner. Their Covid-era boom is over, he said, but business is still robust enough to sometimes overextend him and his six workers.

"If we've got plenty of jobs, I just go to my competitor and I give him a couple jobs," said Miller, who is Amish. "I'm here so my employees can make a good, honest living.... I'm not here to collect all the wealth I can absolutely collect."

Leaving the farm

The county's rising prosperity is rooted in a broad shift from agriculture to small-scale manufacturing that began decades ago. As falling milk prices made dairy farming increasingly untenable, many families sought new ways to earn a living, said Marcus Yoder, who directs the local Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center.

"When they moved off of farms, many of them established small businesses that grew. And this cohort [in their early 30s] is riding the wave of that growth in a tremendous way," he said.

Chris Keim, 31, grew up poor on a 95-acre Holmes County dairy farm. His father

worked at a sawmill for extra income.

Keim, who is Amish, didn't see farming as viable and had a series of manual-labor jobs after leaving school after eighth grade. He spent most of his 20s in the furniture business.

A few years ago, an uncle hired him for sales and marketing at his outdoor furniture business, which began as a pumpkin stand and now mostly sells locally made items. The vast Kauffman Lawn Furniture showroom where Keim works today was until a few years ago a hayfield, one of many local fields paved over for commerce.

This year, Keim expects to make around \$120,000, more than double his 61-year-old father's current pay at a lumber company. Keim and his wife own five rental homes and recently sold several others to finance their second adoption, he said. "We believe that God has given us everything that we have, and we are going to make the most of every opportunity," he added.

Factories and a cafe

Since 2014, the Holmes County Economic Development Council, a public and private funded nonprofit, has supported 38 construction or expansion projects totaling more than \$160 million in capital investment, said Executive Director Mark Leininger. Those projects have yielded more than 1,100 new full-time jobs paying about \$54,000 on average.

During a tour in Leininger's pickup, he pointed out several factories that have sprouted up. "It's crazy how much growth has taken place in the last 10 years, mainly manufacturing," Leininger said.

His truck passed Cafe Chrysalis. Crystal Bontrager, 30, opened the homey cafe in 2022 and has expanded to 3,000 square feet and a staff of 17.

"Work ethic has been very much taught and kind of drilled into us at a young age," Bontrager said. One of her childhood chores: washing clothes with a hand-wringer.

Raised Amish and now part of a nondenominational church, she was influenced by entrepreneurs like her late father, who ran an excavating business. The cafe isn't making her rich, she said, but sales are steady.

sustain the ebbs and flows," Seamonds said.

With fewer private-equity firms willing to take bets on restaurants and banks more cautious on the sector, some chains will likely shrink or scale back the number of markets they serve, said Morgan McClure, managing director for Fortress Investment Group, which leads the ownership group that purchased recently bankrupt Red Lobster.

"There's going to be pain for a while," said McClure, who said he looked at nearly 100 restaurant companies this year and passed on most of them.

Investors who have bought chains out of bankruptcy said they believe they can turn the brands around by cutting costs, closing locations and boosting efficiency. At Red Lobster, executives are slimming down the menu to try to make the seafood chain simpler to operate, without cutting too deeply.

"It's a lot of hard work. There's no one easy cure," said McClure. In addition to Red Lobster, the firm owns Krystal Restaurants, Logan's Roadhouse and other brands it has bought out of bankruptcy since 2020.

At Rubio's, new owner Crivello said he is cutting costs by shifting the chain's human-resources function out of California, where labor rates are high. He is also planning to serve dishes from another chain he owns, Berry Divine Acai Bowls, at Rubio's to help build sales for both brands.

Crivello, former chief executive of barbecue chain Famous Dave's, earlier this year bought the debt for BurgerFi and Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza & Wings, both restaurant chains that have since declared bankruptcy. A bankruptcy court is expected to hold an auction for parent company BurgerFi International later this month, and Crivello could end up owning dozens of additional restaurants if competing bidders fall short.

CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

Analysts at Lazard Asset Management wrote in a recent report that "the possibility of import tariffs looms large." A U.S. News article on Monday about investors and November's election incorrectly used the word important instead of import.

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U.S. NEWS

Both Presidential Hopefuls Warm to Pot

Trump, Harris back easing cannabis rules and loosening weed's drug classification

By DEAN SEAL

America's politicians don't agree often—but cannabis is emerging as an exception in this election.

For the first time, marijuana reform has bipartisan support from presidential candidates, as both former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris have voiced support for easing restrictions around the drug and reclassifying it as a less dangerous substance.

Companies and investors welcome the support. The U.S. cannabis industry is expected to net \$32.3 billion in sales this year and reach \$45.4 billion in 2028, according to the cannabis data firm BDSA. Loosening pot's drug classification could drastically cut the tax burden of cannabis companies, open the door for more marijuana research and put pressure on Congress to provide the industry with wider banking access.

"Democrats want this, Republicans want this—both sides should be able to come together and have something reasonable happen," said George Archos, chief executive of **Verano Holdings**, one of the largest cannabis companies in the U.S. "No one is asking for anything unreasonable: Give us safe banking, let us operate as a normal business."

As of Aug. 31, 24 states and Washington, D.C., have legalized adult-use cannabis. Seven other states have decriminalized its recreational use. This November, legalization is on the ballot in Florida, North Dakota and South Dakota.

While pot seems to be on surer footing than ever, company executives are hesitant to celebrate. They say the industry has endured more than a decade of setbacks from Washington and hollow promises from politicians on both sides of the aisle, making it difficult to find and keep investors.

"Both the Republicans and

the Democrats have promised so many times that they'll do something...all these different things, and nothing's ever happened," said Boris Jordan, CEO of Curaleaf Holdings, the biggest U.S. cannabis company by revenue.

Cannabis has garnered majority support from voters since 2013 after recreational weed was legalized by a ballot initiative in Washington state and Colorado.

It took longer to gain backing from every voting group. Cannabis legalization didn't get support from a majority of Republicans until 2017 and received majority backing from self-identified conservatives for the first time in 2022, according to a Gallup report from 2023.

About 70% of adults in the U.S. are now in favor of cannabis legalization, according to Gallup. It gets a high level of support from younger adults, a cohort of voters that both campaigns will be courting.

Trump, who appointed a staunchly anti-cannabis attorney general when he took office in 2017, made the pivot to pot this year. "That tells you something about just how America is now viewing this product and this industry," said Bernstein analyst Nadine Sarwat.

In a Sept. 8 social-media post, Trump said he supported legalizing recreational cannabis in Florida, working with Congress to change banking regulations for cannabis companies and reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III drug, which would put it on par with substances such as ketamine and some anabolic steroids. Cannabis is currently classified federally as a Schedule I drug, alongside heroin and LSD.

The Trump campaign didn't respond to a request for more details.

Meanwhile, Democrats—under President Biden—have started the process to reschedule cannabis and pardoned low-level federal marijuana convictions. Harris's campaign has aligned with Biden's efforts and said on Oct. 14 that she intends to legalize marijuana nationally if elected.

During a September appear-



Marijuana samples are displayed at the Happy Days dispensary, which opened early this year in East Farmingdale, N.Y.

ance on "All the Smoke," a podcast hosted by retired NBA stars Matt Barnes and Stephen Jackson, Harris told the co-hosts that supporting federal legalization "is not a new position for me."

The vice president co-sponsored legislation to end the federal prohibition of marijuana and introduced a bill to expunge convictions when she was a California senator.

The Harris campaign declined to comment for this article but referred to her recent podcast appearance, legalization platform and previous statements around cannabis. A representative for the White House declined to comment.

Marijuana companies are welcoming the shift by Trump, including his post's call for cannabis to be federally rescheduled, easing investor fears that he might upend the Biden administration's effort to do so.

Trump laid out policy posi-

tions that the cannabis industry has championed, a reflection of his campaign's outreach to top pot companies and investors.

Before unveiling his support for legalization in the Sunshine State, Trump reportedly met with Kim Rivers, CEO of **Trulieve Cannabis**. The Florida pot heavyweight has since filed a lawsuit accusing the state's Republican Party of running deceptive advertisements to dissuade voters from supporting the legalization measure. Evan Power, the party's chairman, said in response that the advertisements are honest and that Trulieve is "trying to silence us."

The Journal didn't independently verify Trump's meeting with Trulieve, which didn't respond to a request for comment. Verano and Curaleaf said they have engaged with both the Harris and Trump camps in the lead-up to the election.

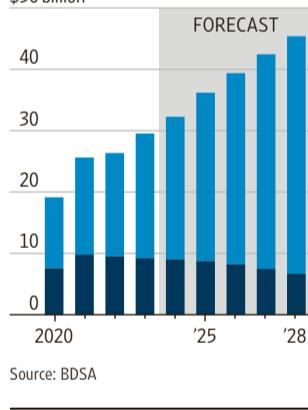
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Total U.S. cannabis sales



Cannabis Industry Wants Eased Banking Regulation

Industry executives and investors hope White House support and cannabis's reclassification would help prospects of the so-called Safer bill, which would allow marijuana businesses to work with traditional banking institutions in states where cannabis is legal and access financial services available to most other industries.

Cannabis executives said

Safer's passage could sway credit-card companies to let them start accepting card payments and become less reliant on cash, which has created safety risks for cannabis employees and logistical headaches for companies.

The Congressional Budget Office said in a recent analysis that passing the bill would increase insured bank deposits by \$1.5 billion in 2026, with that amount rising to \$2.9 billion by 2034.

lion in 2026, with that amount rising to \$2.9 billion by 2034.

The legislation has stalled in Congress, with Democrats saying they lack enough support from Republicans to pass it.

"Safer Banking remains a priority and we're working through Republican objections to get it done," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

Report Reveals Security Failings at Rally

By C. RYAN BARBER

The young man with long hair in a gray T-shirt had already raised suspicions with local police officers for lurking near Donald Trump's campaign rally in Butler, Pa., and showing little interest in the event. When the man's face wasn't in his phone, he appeared to be looking up at a window where local snipers were watching over the rally site on July 13.

Zooming in through binoculars, a local officer saw Thomas Matthew Crooks with a range finder looking toward the stage. "I was like, yeah, this is not right," the officer recalled to a House task force investigating the near assassination of the ex-president.

House investigators highlighted this moment in a 53-page interim report released Monday detailing rampant security failings that led up to Crooks firing eight shots, wounding Trump and killing a spectator. It painted a portrait of a casual planning process that created openings for confusion and misunderstanding.

On the day of the rally, there was no joint meeting between the Secret Service and state and local law enforcement, according to the report. Instead, the Butler County emergency services unit, Butler Township police and Secret Service all led separate briefings.

air conditioning. Meanwhile, the Secret Service's command post was invited to the agency's 10 a.m. briefing. But that trooper was later asked to leave the briefing by another Secret Service agent, according to the report.

The House report said the lack of a unified briefing "may have led to gaps in awareness among state and local law enforcement partners as to who was stationed where, spheres of responsibility, and expectations regarding communications during the day."

For instance, in the local command post, an official from the Butler County sheriff's office recalled struggling to hear anything but his radio channel against the din of the

there is no evidence the information was relayed to agents on Trump's detail. After spotting Crooks with a range finder, a local officer said he later saw Crooks grab a backpack and take off running before disappearing between buildings in the American Glass Research complex, which the Secret Service had left just outside the secure perimeter.

A Butler Township police officer saw him moving across roofs, but the officer told the House panel he didn't initially see a firearm—until he pursued Crooks to the rooftop, where he turned and pointed a rifle.

The officer immediately began alerting that the man was armed with an assault rifle. Moments later, Crooks unleashed eight shots before a Secret Service counter sniper fired back, fatally striking him with a bullet through the upper left lip.

A Secret Service spokesman said the agency fully cooperated with the House task force and is working with Congress to "ensure that our people have the resources they need to successfully carry out the mission."

"The weight of our mission is not lost on us and in this heightened threat environment, the U.S. Secret Service cannot fail," said Secret Service spokesman Anthony Guglielmi.



Former President Donald Trump is covered by Secret Service agents at the July 13 campaign rally in Butler, Pa.

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U.S. NEWS

Men Behind Women of Wall Street

Continued from Page One

husband can come with a stigma: Society often still assumes men will be the bigger earners and women the primary caregivers. But that is starting to change.

In 45% of U.S. opposite-sex marriages, the wife earns as much as or more than her husband, a share that has roughly tripled over the past 50 years, according to a 2023 report from Pew Research Center. Dads represented 18% of stay-at-home parents in 2021, up from 11% in 1989, another Pew study found.

There are now househusbands at the highest levels of power. Doug Emhoff, married to Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris, gave up his career—as an entertainment lawyer—to facilitate her political rise after she was elected vice president. On Wall Street, the list of women with husbands at home includes the chief executives of Citigroup and TIAA, the chief financial officer of the private-equity firm Vista Equity Partners, and the global co-head of Blackstone's real-estate business, among others.

Senior female executives whose partners also work said they have to manage an intense balancing act and admit to being envious at times of their peers whose husbands don't work.

"The prototype of the person you are competing with, the people in nearly all of the successful positions, have a stay-at-home partner," said Suzanne Donohoe, who was a partner at Goldman Sachs and KKR before joining EQT in 2022. "The disheartening part of the message is somehow you can't achieve if one parent isn't at home."

She said she doesn't think that is the case and knows and admires people in demanding jobs who make it work with neither spouse at home.

'Safety net'

Many couples said they started out with parallel professions but reached a point at which the woman's career accelerated. When one person needed to devote more time to parenting, it made more sense for it to be the man.

Chip Kelly was working in tech sales at an international startup in 2009 when his wife, Natalie Hyche Kelly, who is a Visa executive, gave birth to their first child. After the couple didn't move quickly enough to get a spot at the daycare they wanted, Chip volunteered to care for the baby and work while she slept.

He took calls while pushing



Chip Kelly's family relies on his being at home while his wife, Natalie Hyche Kelly, works.

their daughter in the stroller. When she went to sleep, he worked through dozens of emails. The couple had twins a few years later. Around that time, Natalie was promoted and started commuting to San Francisco four days a week from Charlotte, N.C., where the Kellys lived. Chip tried to work while caring for the twins and their older daughter when she wasn't in preschool.

After the family moved to San Francisco, Chip realized that he was neither doing his job nor parenting as well as he wanted to. He decided to devote himself full time to the latter. "It was kind of becoming a no-brainer because my wife's career was going so well," he said.

The Kellys are starting their third year in London, where Kathleen serves as the payments company's chief risk officer for Europe. Chip considered going back to work a few years ago, but so far has decided against that because his family relies on his being at home.

"I'm like the safety net for a trapeze artist," he said. "You don't think about it unless they take it away."

Kathleen McCarthy Baldwin, Blackstone's global head of real estate, was nursing her second child in 2015 when her husband, Matt Baldwin, left his job as the CFO of a research firm and decided to take some time off.

"The idea of him not working made me very anxious, mostly because of my fears about what it would do to our marriage," she said. "Would I be envious that he had more time with the children? Would he resent that I had this really exciting and demanding job?"

Matt told her he wasn't worried. After spending a summer with their daughters at the Jersey Shore while Kathleen mostly worked in the city, Matt decided to make the change permanent.

These days, he rises at 5:30 a.m., before the rest of the house is awake. He makes oatmeal for the family four morn-



ings a week, giving himself one morning off. On most days, Kathleen takes the girls to school while Matt goes indoor rock climbing.

After school, he and their nanny divide the responsibilities. Matt usually makes dinner.

Kathleen said her husband's decision to stay home created the flexibility for her to pursue other interests outside work.

"When I talk with other women in this position, we all say our husbands are a very special breed," she said. "They don't define themselves by their jobs."

Awkward moments

Not all men are as comfortable in the position.

One stay-at-home dad whose wife works in private wealth at an investment bank said he sometimes tells other men that he manages real estate—technically true because the family owns a few buildings. He said he can identify other men in his position at private-school functions when they say they "manage investments" or "run a boutique hedge fund."

"We're all out there, but we can't say anything about it," he said.

Paul Sullivan has been trying to change that. He founded a group called the Company of Dads after leaving his job as a columnist for the New York Times in 2021. Sullivan's wife runs an asset-management firm and became very busy with work after the

Covid-19 pandemic.

Sullivan already defined himself as what he dubs a "lead dad," the go-to parent for everything from playdates and doctors' appointments. But he found no support groups for men in his position. He reached out to senior female executives and asked them about the idea of creating one. They approved. Some said their husbands didn't help enough. Others said their husband's friends made fun of them.

"Two things can be true at once," Sullivan said. "Moms can be discriminated against in the workplace, and dads can be afraid to take a lead role at home."

Sullivan now organizes events for lead dads such as a Father's Day beer fest. He gives talks at workplaces and hosts a podcast on which he interviews therapists, parenting coaches and fatherhood advocates.

For the Donohoes, having Matt at home has meant that he has developed a close bond with his children. Suzanne said it has given her credibility with her colleagues when she needs to attend one of their sporting events.

There are still mix-ups. Schools often call Suzanne first if one of the children is sick or needs permission to do something even though Matt is listed first on contact forms. Once it happened when she was in London on business. She gently asked the school administrator to call her husband. He was at their apartment five minutes away.

Independent Candidate Stirs Nebraska Race

BY KRISTINA PETERSON AND ANTHONY DEBARROS

There isn't a Democratic candidate on the ballot for the seat.

LINCOLN, Neb.—Dan Osborn was campaigning for a U.S. Senate seat this month when he jumped onto the back of a white pickup parked outside a labor hall, a buck knife holstered on his hip and a tattoo sleeve running down his right arm.

What began as his long-shot bid to unseat two-term Republican Sen. Deb Fischer has become a tight race in deep-red Nebraska, a state that former President Donald Trump won by 19 percentage points in 2020.

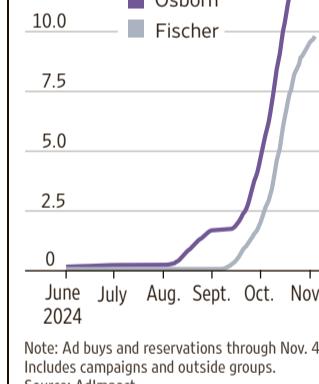
The 49-year-old former union leader and political independent reminisced to a crowd about his role running the 2021 strike at Kellogg's Omaha plant. Standing by his side was United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain, who led a historic strike that won auto workers large wage increases last year.

"I didn't see men or women or black or white or Republican or Democrat on the picket line," Osborn said. "I just saw people that wanted to go to work for a fair wage and some good benefits."

After polls showed the race narrowing, Republicans' ad spending surged in September. An Oct. 8 memo from the Senate Leadership Fund, a super political-action committee affiliated with Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell, said Nebraska "has emerged as a serious trouble-spot," and that the group was now polling "to assess whether intervention is necessary to protect the seat."

"It's, I think, closer than a lot of us thought it was going to be," said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the Senate GOP whip.

Cumulative ad spending in the U.S. Senate race in Nebraska



While surveys have shown a tight Senate race, little independent polling has been conducted for the contest. Nonpartisan analysts Cook Political Report and Inside Elections recently moved their ratings of the race to reflect a closer competition.

Osborn's most-talked-about campaign ad has depicted a stand-in for Fischer wearing a jacket with patches representing her corporate sponsors, in the style of Nascar race drivers. Osborn has declined to accept corporate donations.

Fischer dismissed the attack as a standard argument from Democrats. "Nebraskans know who I am," she said.

While Osborn hit the campaign trail with Fain, Fischer, 73, spoke just a few blocks away to volunteers gathered at her Lincoln office. "We've got some good momentum as Nebraskans learn who my opponent is and especially as they learn who's trying to buy this Senate seat," she said.

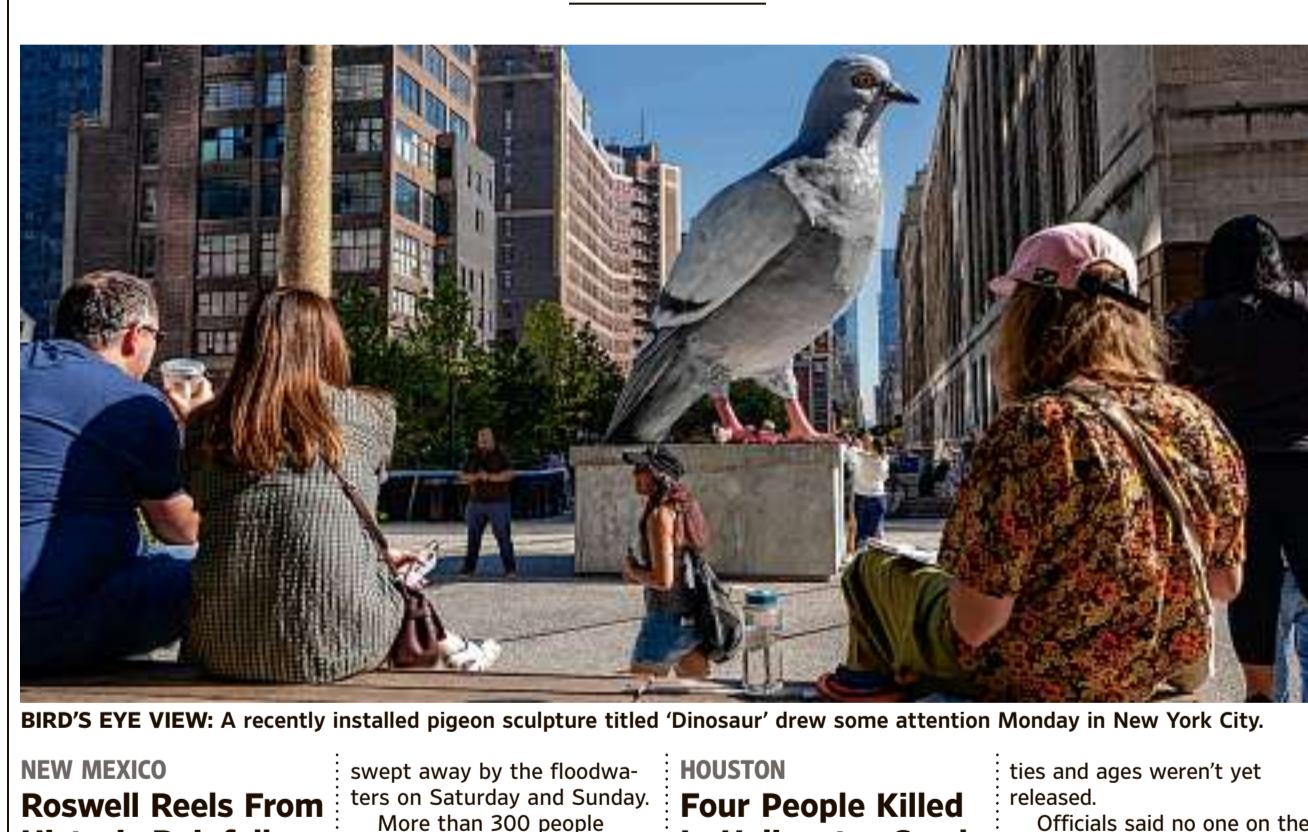
Republicans have tried to paint Osborn as a Democrat in disguise. Outside PACs supporting Osborn have been funded by Democratic groups including the Sixteen Thirty Fund, a liberal nonprofit.

Osborn's principal campaign committee pulled in \$3.3 million during the third quarter, well ahead of the Fischer campaign's \$1.2 million, according to federal filings this week.

—Maggie Sevens contributed to this article.

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BIRD'S EYE VIEW: A recently installed pigeon sculpture titled 'Dinosaur' drew some attention Monday in New York City.

NEW MEXICO

Roswell Reels From Historic Rainfall

A southeastern New Mexico community began to dry out Monday after historic rainfall over the weekend produced severe flooding that left at least two people dead and hundreds stranded on rooftops.

Waterlogged vehicles were still submerged along some city streets in Roswell, while others were seen smashed along bridge supports and tossed up against trees and power poles after being

swept away by the floodwaters on Saturday and Sunday.

More than 300 people were rescued by the New Mexico National Guard, with 38 of those taken to hospitals for treatment of undisclosed injuries.

Forecasters said 5.78 inches of rain fell on Roswell on Saturday, breaking the city's previous daily record of 5.65 inches set on Nov. 1, 1901. Some areas surrounding Roswell got about 9 inches of rain in a matter of hours, according to the National Weather Service.

—Associated Press

HOUSTON

Four People Killed In Helicopter Crash

Four people aboard a helicopter were killed when it crashed into a radio tower in Houston and burst into flames, officials said.

The helicopter went down just before 8 p.m. Sunday in a neighborhood east of downtown after taking off from Ellington Field, about 15 miles away, Mayor John Whitmire said.

Officials said the four people aboard the helicopter included a child, but their identi-

ties and ages weren't yet released.

Officials said no one on the ground was injured, and no nearby homes were damaged. The crash sparked a fire that burned about 100 to 200 yards of grass.

Firefighters at a nearby station heard the crash and responded, Whitmire said. He said it was a "terrible accident scene" and that the tower and helicopter were destroyed.

The National Transportation Safety Board said it was investigating the crash of the Robinson R44 II helicopter.

—Associated Press

WORLD NEWS

Cuba Struggles to Restore Electricity

Blackout paralyzes an already crippled economy, leading to severe shortages

BY SANTIAGO PÉREZ

Millions of Cubans have been without electricity for days as the government struggled to restore nationwide power services after a massive blackout plunged the country into darkness on Friday. Then Hurricane Oscar hit the eastern tip of the island on Sunday.

The collapse of Cuba's aging power grid has paralyzed an already-crippled economy, with rolling outages affecting everything from running water to the operation of banks, ATMs or debit-card terminals, sparking severe shortages of cash and halting distribution of basic goods and services, residents say.

Millions of Cubans are seeing their food spoil because of a lack of refrigeration, and



People walked down a dark street in Havana on Sunday amid a blackout that started Friday.

people can't use air conditioning, fans or electric stoves on the tropical island. Cooking gas also is scarce.

In some impoverished districts of the capital Havana,

residents are resorting to cooking with coal or firewood on streets. Driving is risky because traffic lights don't work, residents say. Public transport also has been affected because

of fuel shortages.

"It's just like a war economy," said Clemente Morgado, an Havana resident whose house was without electricity for more than 30 hours. Else-

where in the city, people have gone more than two days without power. At night, many of them have been banging pots in protest, residents say.

The government on Friday declared a state of emergency and halted all nonvital services. It ordered the closure of schools and universities, bars and nightclubs and nonessential workplaces. Hospitals and food-processing centers were permitted to operate, while most state workers were sent home. Authorities required the setup of worker brigades to protect government facilities and prevent looting.

The state power company said 56% of customers in Havana had electricity restored on Monday. It asked users not to run appliances to avoid straining the power grid.

Highlighting the nervousness of the communist leadership about the risks of unrest, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel donned a military uniform over the weekend. He warned Cubans that looting

and protests won't be tolerated. "We won't allow anyone to provoke vandalism or upset the tranquility of our people," said Díaz-Canel, who usually sports guayaberas, sport shirts and suits.

About 90% of Cuba's electricity generation relies on oil. Electricity prices are heavily subsidized by the country's communist government, which controls all economic activity and limits private business and investment.

Cubans had been suffering hourslong outages before Friday's total collapse of the grid, which Cuban Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy attributed to lack of fuel, state media reported. A partial recovery of power over the weekend was followed by another blackout Sunday afternoon.

Cuban government officials blame U.S. sanctions for the communist island's inability to secure fuel and spare parts for its power grid, where the newest generation units are at least 35 years old, De la O Levy said.

Exiled Cleric Drew Erdogan Ire

BY JARED MALSIN
AND ELVAN KIVILCIM

Fethullah Gulen, the reclusive Islamist cleric accused by Turkey of plotting a stunning but short-lived military coup

against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2016, has died at 83. He was in self-imposed exile in the U.S. where he lived for more than two decades.

A one-time ally turned fierce opponent of Erdogan, Gulen denied involvement in the armed insurrection that left some 250 people dead and thousands more detained in the resulting

government clampdown.

Gulen's death was confirmed by Turkish intelligence, the country's Foreign Ministry said Monday, and reported by media viewed as close to his organization. Gulen was once a towering figure in Turkish society, but his influence diminished in recent years, while Erdogan tightened his grip on power.

Turkey alleged that Gulen, while living in the U.S., orchestrated the plot in which a faction of the military attempted to overthrow Erdogan in a violent coup that involved tanks and F-16 jet fighters. The coup leaders bombarded Parliament.

The putsch lasted less than

24 hours before the Turkish government reasserted control through a clampdown against those involved and on Gulen's interests throughout Turkey.

Forces loyal to the president rescued the country's top military commander, Gen. Hulusi Akar, who was held captive, the president's office said at the time. Akar's refusal to back the coup likely was a key reason why the military takeover unraveled. Hours into the coup, it became clear that the military wasn't united.

Tens of thousands of people stood trial over alleged ties to Gulen's movement, which the government now labels a terrorist organization. The crackdown consolidated

power under Erdogan after Turkish authorities jailed his political opponents on what they said were terrorism and other charges.

Erdogan won presidential elections in 2018 and 2023.

Gulen, who lived in Pennsylvania where he died in the hospital, was once seen as wielding enormous power in Turkey through a network of schools, charities, media and other institutions belonging to his "Hizmet" movement, a Turkish word meaning "service."

"This organization has deceived thousands of young people into joining its ranks in the name of sacred values; It has turned these young people into a machine that betrays their



Fethullah Gulen, seen in 2017 in his Pennsylvania compound, lived in self-imposed exile for more than two decades.

homeland," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said.

Hizmet says it is dedicated to peaceful religious activity and interfaith dialogue.

Once a political ally of Erdogan and his Islamist Justice and Development Party, Gulen

and his movement ruptured ties with the ruling party following an investigation into alleged government corruption starting in 2013. Gulen-linked officials within the Turkish judiciary were seen as backing the probe.

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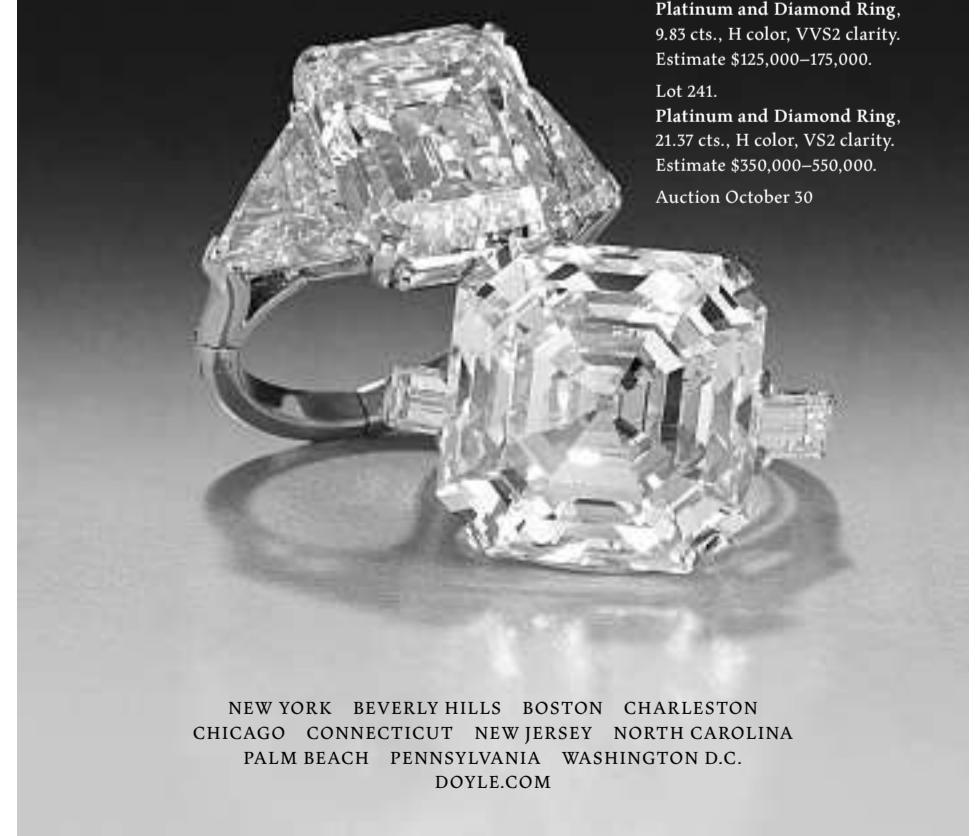
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WORLD NEWS

Moldova Says Russia Interfered in Election

Moldovan fugitive convicted in big heist led effort from Moscow, officials say

By MATTHEW LUXMOORE

CHISINAU, Moldova—In a storeroom here in the Moldovan capital, under police guard, sits a mound of pro-Russian propaganda.

Officials said the leaflets and newspapers—not marked as campaign-related, as election laws require—were churned out to derail this past Sunday's presidential election and a referendum meant to bring the former Soviet republic closer to joining the European Union.

Police called it part of a massive, Russian-backed effort spearheaded by Ilan Shor, a fugitive Moldovan businessman and politician who now lives in Moscow and openly campaigns to reject closer ties to the EU. Hundreds of Shor operatives brought suitcases of cash from Moscow, they said, inundated Moldovan smartphones with anti-EU messages, and helped transfer funds to some 130,000 residents in exchange for their pledge to vote against making joining the bloc part of the country's constitution.

Preliminary results on Monday showed 50.4% supporting the pro-EU constitutional changes versus 49.6% against. In the presidential race, pro-Western incumbent Maia Sandu was the leading vote-getter, but failed to win enough to avoid a runoff.

"Criminal groups, working together with foreign forces



ANDREW BARNETT/WSJ

hostile to our national interests, have attacked our country with tens of millions of euros, lies, and propaganda," Sandu said in a speech as late results came in, without naming Russia. Moscow has denied any attempts to interfere, but it has repeatedly described Sandu's government as a client state of the West.

"The real threat will come next year," said Moldova's police chief, Viorel Cernauteanu. Parliamentary elections will severely test the pro-Western government assembled by Sandu. Officials say the narrative backed by Russia resonates with many residents of a country where the average monthly wage is around \$750.

Russia's war in Ukraine has strained the economies of former Soviet states, forcing countries that once deftly played Moscow off against the West to choose sides. In Moldova, landlocked between Romania and

Ukraine, the strains came to the fore over the course of the referendum campaign.

Sandu was first elected in 2019 on a promise of steering closer to Europe. The Harvard graduate has positioned Moldova firmly on Ukraine's side in the war with Russia. The EU granted Moldova official candidate status, and last week pledged the equivalent of \$1.96 billion in economic support, a huge sum for a poor country of 2.5 million people.

But the country has been hit hard by the war. Russia slashed deliveries of natural gas. Fuel prices surged, driving inflation higher. There has been a massive influx of Ukrainian refugees.

"Moldova was by far the most affected country by Russian aggression, besides Ukraine itself," said Moldovan Foreign Minister Mihai Popsoi.

The referendum was Sandu's effort to cement sup-



DIMITRI DORU/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

The referendum was President Maia Sandu's effort to cement support for joining the EU.

port for the EU. Her government has blocked pro-Russian television channels and barred a number of Moscow-backed politicians from contesting elections, saying they had violated election laws or illegally received funds from abroad.

That left Shor to lead the charge for Russia from his new base in Moscow. Now 37 years old, he left Moldova after being convicted in absentia in 2017 over a heist that resulted in \$1 billion being taken out of the country. He has been sanctioned by the EU and U.S.

Shor, who didn't respond to a request for comment, has denied paying for votes. From exile, he pumps out a pro-Russian and anti-EU message.

"The dictatorship of the

pro-Western puppet regime, wars, gay parades—all of this will come to our land with the European Union, and all of this has been brought already by Sandu," he posted last week. He has promised free gas and electricity if Moldovans partner with Russia.

"People are used to a paternalistic state," said Eugenia Mustea, a 33-year-old doctor who on Sunday was visiting her native town of Orhei with her French husband and their 2-year-old daughter. Mustea, who lives in France—a member of Moldova's million-strong diaspora—voted in favor of the EU, but warned,

"It'll take time, and many generations, to change people's mindset and way of thinking."

She no longer talks politics with her parents, Russian speakers who look to Moscow.

Rumors abound in Orhei of locals being paid off by Shor, who served as mayor for four years and remains popular. Zinaida Muravskaya, a former accountant who now relies on a pension that she says barely covers her food and medication, rejected the pro-EU changes on the ballot she cast on Sunday.

Muravskaya said she qualifies for an extra pension payment. Shor promised ahead of the referendum to those who oppose EU membership, but it never arrived in her account.

"If we weren't this poor," she said as she picked through fruit at a market, "then we wouldn't be so easily bought."



ALEXANDER EROCHENKO/REUTERS

Russian authorities say the Azovstal steel mill is too damaged to be rebuilt and will be turned into an industrial zone.

Russia Plunders Mariupol Steel Mills

By BENOIT FAUCON AND OKSANA PYROZHOK

Mariupol became an emblem of Russia's destruction early in its full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago. Now the ruined port city is war-bountiful, enriching allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Moscow's forces crippled one of the city's two giant steel mills, Azovstal, while crushing some of Ukraine's fiercest resistance to the onslaught. Its crosstown peer, the Ilyich Iron and Steel Works, largely withstood the bombing and is now being scavenged and fenced by powerful Kremlin allies, according to the steelworks' current and former managers and Russian corporate records.

Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov and his associates are removing and selling off modern metallurgical equipment,

shipping scrap metal to Russia for use by its sanctions-cramped carmakers and hawking industrial gases to Moscow's space program, according to the managers and documents.

Kadyrov hails from Chechnya, where he has carved out a fiefdom inside the Russian Federation. Chechnya's ruling clan has long been a staunch Putin ally and now is receiving compensation, observers say.

In 2007, Kadyrov took over the presidency of the Caucasian republic that his father once ruled and wiped out the

remnants of an Islamist insurgency. The U.S. government in 2017 imposed sanctions on him for extrajudicial killings and other human-rights violations.

Over more than two decades in power, Putin has rewarded the loyalty of Kadyrov and other top lieutenants with protection and state largess. The conquest of new territories in Ukraine has offered up fresh spoils.

"The Kadyrov clan—the Kremlin gave them powers and awards," said Ukrainian lawmaker Serhiy Taruta, whose home in Mariupol was taken over by a Kadyrov commander the day the city fell. "What the Kremlin does not give, they take it anyway."

In numerous videos posted online, Chechen fighters in Mariupol, including Kadyrov's teenage sons, have staked a claim to large parts of the city, Russia analysts have said.

Kadyrov's favor with the Kremlin rose last year after his main rival, Evgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner mercenary force, criticized the Russian Army's high command and launched an abortive rebellion in June 2023. Prigozhin died in a plane crash two months later, apparently targeted by the Kremlin.

Prigozhin's equal partner in the new company was a military-connected Russian businessman named Yuri Murai. According to an official presentation of Murai's other company, freighter Alliance Service, he had transported cargo for the Ministry of Defense to occupied Crimea, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

Kadyrov, Geremeev, Korchagin, Murai and the Kremlin didn't return requests for comment.

The Chechen's loyalty was rewarded when he absorbed some of Wagner's fighters and redeployed his troops in Prigozhin's former stronghold of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine.

Kadyrov's biggest prize was the conquest of Mariupol, a prosperous port city of 431,000 people before Russia's invasion and a big industrial export hub on the Black Sea.

Kadyrov sent a trusted lieutenant, Vakhit Geremeev, to seize the Ilyich works, a sprawling complex where 1,000 Ukrainian marines had been hunting down. A lieutenant and a nephew of Geremeev, previously a Kadyrov police chief, were in-

vestigated in 2015 for the murder of Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, according to Russian state media and the U.S. government.

Before the war, taxes paid by Ilyich and Azovstal funded more than one-third of Mariupol's annual budget. "It fed the entire city," Geremeev later said, referring to Ilyich, the larger of the two plants.

Ilyich after the fighting was an apocalyptic cathedral of twisted steel but remained functional.

Russian authorities say

Azovstal is too damaged to be rebuilt and will be turned into an industrial zone. Kadyrov and Geremeev had bigger ambitions for Ilyich.

Since soon after Moscow's forces took control of Mariupol, a newly created local company, LLC Ilyich MMK, began exporting steel taken from the inoperative plant, according to Russian officials and plant managers quoted by Russian-controlled state media. The company was registered in August 2022 by two men, one of whom is listed as Valid Vakhitovich Korchagin, according to Russian corporate records.

Korchagin is Geremeev's 25-year-old son, according to Metinvest, Ilyich's legal Ukrainian owner. Korchagin's phone numbers and his social accounts are registered under the name Valid Geremeev.

BBC News Russian previously reported that Korchagin is Geremeev's son.

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Pentagon Chief Makes Surprise Ukraine Visit

By LARA SELIGMAN

KYIV—Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Kyiv with an announcement of \$400 million more in military assistance but no agreement to allow Ukrainians the use of long-range missiles inside Russia.

Austin, a former four-star Army general, has led the Western response to the conflict since the early days of the war, coordinating more than \$64 billion in U.S. military aid for Kyiv and tens of billions of dollars more from Europe.

But his visit on Monday to

Kyiv, an unannounced stop that will likely be his last to the Ukrainian capital as Pentagon chief, underscored continuing debate over whether the Biden administration—and Austin himself—has hobbled Ukraine's war effort with a cautious approach to providing American-made weapons and restrictions on how they can be used.

Austin unexpectedly announced the new \$400 million package, which includes additional munitions, armored vehicles and antitank weapons, during his meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky. It was one of the smaller aid packages the Biden administration has announced and included no new types of weapons systems.

The administration has refused to budge on Ukraine's two primary requests: allowing its forces to strike into Russia with U.S.-provided weapons, and NATO membership.

Austin's incremental approach has allowed Ukraine to survive but not to shift the war decisively, critics say. If Ukraine had had more of the weapons it asked for in the early days of the conflict, Kyiv wouldn't be losing ground today on the front lines—a claim Austin's defenders reject.

The Biden administration's overly cautious approach has often been too little, too late, said Heather Conley, senior adviser at the German Marshall Fund.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has typically argued for sending more equipment faster, the officials said. Biden has usually sided with Austin.

"There is no silver bullet. No single capability will turn the tide," Austin said on Monday in a speech at a training center for Ukrainian diplomats. "What matters is the way that Ukraine fights back."



Zelensky is trying to persuade Austin and the U.S. on his plan.

HENNADIY MINICHENKO/URINFORM/ZUMA PRESS

WORLD NEWS

Israeli Hit on Bank Marks Lebanon Shift

Attacks indicate a broader agenda to weaken Hezbollah over the longer term

BEIRUT—Israel's attack on branches of a Hezbollah-linked bank widened Israel's campaign to degrade the economic and social institutions that help the militant group maintain its grip on Lebanon.

By Jared Malsin, Adam Chamseddine and Anat Peled

The bombings on Sunday point to the potential for a campaign that goes far beyond Israel's original stated aims of returning its civilians to communities in northern Israel, to one that aims to weaken Hezbollah as a social and political movement over the long term.

The strikes hit several branches of the microlending bank Al-Qard Al-Hassan throughout the country, including one near the Beirut airport, after the Israeli military warned it would strike the bank. The Israeli military says the bank is central to Hezbollah's economic functioning and that its funds are used to pay salaries of Hezbollah operatives.

Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari on Monday said

Israel struck more than 20 financial targets linked to Hezbollah Sunday night, primarily in the Dahiyeh area, including an underground vault of cash and gold used by Al-Qard Al-Hassan.

Israel's government on Monday designated the bank a terrorist organization it said was used to finance arms purchases and store Hezbollah's funds. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said the designation was "part of a wider campaign led by Israel's defense establishment, targeting the economic resources of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations."

Lebanese finance and security experts say the bank is more important as a symbol of Hezbollah's influence among Shiite Muslims than as a significant source of funds for Hezbollah as a political and military organization.

"It's driving a wedge—it's attacking their support base more than disrupting their financing," said Dan Azzi, a prominent Lebanese economist.

The attacks follow a broad campaign by the Israeli military that has mainly affected Lebanon's Shiites, who make up the majority of Hezbollah's support base. The attacks have largely depopulated Beirut's Shiite-majority southern suburbs and the mainly Shiite towns of southern Lebanon. The Lebanese government



Documents of Al-Qard Al-Hassan bank were scattered after an Israeli airstrike on Sunday night in Beirut's southern suburbs.

says more than a million people have been uprooted from their homes since Israel escalated its attacks in September. More than 2,400 people have also been killed since the war between Israel and Hezbollah began last year, most of them since September, according to the Lebanese health ministry.

Al-Qard Al-Hassan, established in the 1980s, offers financial services to the Shiite community in Lebanon. It is under U.S. sanctions.

Registered as a nongovernmental group, Al-Qard Al-Hassan is a symbol of Hezbollah's network of social services and economic interests. Hezbollah is also a powerful political party in Lebanon that commands the world's most heavily armed nonstate militia.

In the aftermath of the bombings, Al-Qard Al-Hassan has sought to reassure its depositors. "In principle, all of the savings are safe," a person affiliated with the foundation said.

Al-Qard Al-Hassan gained importance following Lebanon's 2019 banking crisis, which wiped some 97% off the value of the local currency—as measured against the U.S. dollar—pushed half the country into poverty and left the financial system insolvent and illiquid. The bank's funds are made up largely of small deposits from people who pawn gold or family jewelry.

While Israel said its invasion of Lebanon was limited to a series of "targeted raids" in

the country's south, the campaign increasingly appears to be expanding in scope and intensity. A senior Israeli intelligence official on Sunday said the strikes on the bank branches were primarily aimed at severing the trust between Hezbollah and the Shiite community.

An Israeli security official said completely dismantling Hezbollah as a political and social movement isn't officially an Israeli war goal.

The attack on the bank branches "symbolizes that the campaign is aimed at weakening Hezbollah on all fronts. The economic part is central to this but not the only one," said Yoram Schweitzer, a senior research fellow at Israel's Insti-

tute for National Security Studies, a Tel Aviv-based think tank.

Attacks on Hezbollah's economic institutions could put pressure on the group in the future, when communities begin rebuilding. After the latest full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah, in 2006, the group's affiliated companies helped rebuild southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs.

This time, the challenge of reconstruction would be greater because Gulf Arab states aren't expected to supply funding. The states have refused to bail out Lebanon since its economic crisis, in part because of corruption and Iran's and Hezbollah's influence in the state.

Netanyahu Sees a Boost in Polling

BY MARCUS WALKER

A month of Israeli military successes, capped by the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, is boosting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's popularity and strengthening his political hand.

Netanyahu has once again shown incredible staying power as a politician, after his popularity suffered in the wake of last year's Oct. 7 attacks. More Israeli voters would choose Netanyahu to be prime minister over the main leaders of the centrist opposition, according to recent polls, which were conducted before Sinwar's killing.

His rising support among right-wing voters could improve his position as the U.S. makes a diplomatic push for a cease-fire, and Israel weighs a response to Iran's missile strikes on the country this month.

"The fact that he has gone from overseeing Israel's biggest security failure to being the preferred leader is a remarkable testament to his political survival skills," said Yaakov Katz, senior fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute, a think tank in Jerusalem.

The rising poll numbers don't mean Netanyahu's political troubles are over. Deep divisions in Israel, including about how to win the release of hostages, likely would make it difficult for him to forge a governing coalition if there were to be new elections, polls show.

New elections aren't due for another two years unless the government falls and no alter-



Protesters in Tel Aviv called Saturday for the hostages' return.

native majority can be found.

Days after Sinwar's killing, protesters were back on the streets of Tel Aviv, urging the government to give priority to a Gaza deal to bring home the roughly 100 hostages. Netanyahu has shown no new inclination to negotiate a truce since Sinwar's demise.

For months after the Oct. 7 attacks, most Israelis wanted him to resign. Likud party lawmakers discussed ousting him, but no strong challenger emerged. Even many longtime supporters were unhappy with his handling of the war in Gaza.

His fortunes began to turn in May, when Israeli forces moved on Rafah in southern Gaza. The decision pleased right-wing supporters who were frustrated by the government's perceived indecision.

Netanyahu then fended off pressure from the U.S., Israel's own military leadership and the

families of hostages for a truce. In avoiding a deal, he was helped by the equally hard-line negotiating stance of Sinwar, say people involved in the talks.

"What Netanyahu has done very smartly is not letting the war end," said Katz. "While the war is continuing, it makes a lot of people think this isn't the time for a change. And when something goes right, he takes credit for it, even if it didn't have much to do with him."

Netanyahu, whom colleagues and rivals alike describe as a master of creating political narratives, rallied his base by portraying the U.S. as well as Israel's security establishment as impediments to victory, for their advocacy of a hostage deal. But it was those security agencies that delivered devastating blows against Hezbollah, beginning with the detonation of the militia's pagers on Sept. 17, that helped

shift the focus from Gaza to Israel's northern front.

That has helped Netanyahu to win back supporters who were frustrated by the lack of decisive measures to deal with Hezbollah, which has been firing rockets at northern Israel since Oct. 8, 2023.

Yet, voter support for Netanyahu's coalition appears to have hit a ceiling. Some of Likud's recent gains have come at the expense of its own far-right partners. Meanwhile, some right-wing voters are keeping their distance from Netanyahu.

In September, he showed his talent for co-opting and dividing his rivals, persuading a small center-right party to defect from the opposition and join his government. The extra four seats in parliament made him less vulnerable to pressure from far-right coalition allies.

The premier's biggest asset is the lack of a convincing opposition leader, say many analysts. "There is no real opposition offering an alternative path in the current war, even though people have doubts that Israel can achieve its goals, let alone articulate an alternative future for Israel," said Dahlia Scheindlin, an Israeli political consultant and pollster.

Israel's military leaders have warned that achieving lasting security will require finding political arrangements.

Katz said Netanyahu "is afraid to outline a political resolution in either Gaza or southern Lebanon, because whatever the answer, there will be a political price."

The Missing Minister, Episode 2: The Affair

In June 2023, China's then-foreign minister, Qin Gang, suddenly disappeared.

Qin had been a rising star in Chinese politics and a protégé of China's strongman leader, Xi Jinping. What had gone wrong?

Later that summer, senior Chinese officials were told an internal Communist Party investigation found that Qin had engaged in an extramarital affair while he was China's ambassador in the U.S., people familiar with the matter said. They also were told that the matter had possible national-security implications.

The woman Qi had the affair with was a prominent Chinese TV host, Fu Xiaotian, below, the people familiar with the matter said. Like Qin, Fu was sharp and ambitious. She worked her way up the ranks at Phoenix TV, a network with ties to China's

Communist Party, where she interviewed politicians, diplomats and business leaders. But her high-flying career came to an abrupt halt.

After Qin was promoted to foreign minister in late 2022 and moved back to China, their relationship broke down, a person close to Fu said.

Later that year, Fu stopped hosting her show and, according to her social-media posts, she turned up in California with a baby.

In the spring of 2023, she posted on social media that she was heading back to China. And then like Qin, she also mysteriously disappeared.

Listen to a Podcast

Scan this code to listen to Episode 2 of 'The Missing Minister' series.



CHINA REUTERS

WORLD WATCH



A demonstrator throws a stone while protesting election results in Maputo, Mozambique.

MOZAMBIQUE

Police Tear-Gas Opposition Leader

Police fired tear gas at the leading opposition politician and supporters as he spoke with reporters on Monday, forcing them to run for cover. The nation remains on edge following a disputed election and the killing of two prominent opposition figures.

Venancio Mondlane, the main challenger to the decades-long governing party in the Oct. 9 presidential election, was giving interviews on a road in the capital, Maputo, near the spot where his lawyer and a senior opposition-party official were killed in their car by unidentified gunmen Friday night.

Police officers fired tear gas in Mondlane's direction, according to a video on his Facebook page. One journalist was injured, local media reported.

—Associated Press

VIETNAM

Military General Elected President

Vietnam elected Luong Cuong, a military general, as its new president Monday, the fourth official to fill the largely ceremonial role in 18 months.

The 67-year-old was elected by the National Assembly to succeed To Lam, who remained president even after he was formally appointed as the general secretary of the ruling Communist Party in August. The position of party general secretary is the most powerful in Vietnam, while the role of the president is mostly ceremonial and involves meeting foreign dignitaries.

Cuong, who has served in the army for more than four decades, has been a Politburo member since 2021. His appointment took place after months of uncharacteristic tumult in Vietnam's politics.

—Associated Press

PERU

Former President Gets Long Jail Term

Former Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo was sentenced to more than 20 years in prison after being convicted on Monday for taking a multi-million-dollar bribe in a case tied to one of Latin America's biggest corruption scandals.

Prosecutors said Toledo, 78 years old, has denied wrongdoing.

The charges emerged after Odebrecht admitted to paying almost \$800 million in bribes to officials across several countries in South America and the Caribbean to win large public-works contracts. Odebrecht is now known as Novonor.

—Ryan Dube

FROM PAGE ONE

Officials Prepare For Deniers

Continued from Page One

cials propelled by years of Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen, which he has told his supporters could happen again. Richer and his colleagues have endured intimidation and death threats for not heeding the call by Trump and others to reject the 2020 results. Some have been provided with added security protection.

Four years of baseless allegations of election fraud have created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation among election officials from Atlanta to rural Washington state, transforming the way workers in many parts of the country are approaching the most fundamental of civic duties.

"To be honest, it was easy in the beginning to say that it was just a 2020 thing—it's done, it's over," said Justin Smith, a retired Colorado sheriff who has been training law enforcement and election officials to prepare for Nov. 5 in dozens of states. "Well, since then we've proven that it's a trend that's moving forward."

In Colorado, death threats from election deniers have led some county clerks and election officials to have bullet-proof vests on hand. Nationwide, many election offices are stockpiling Narcan, a drug used to reverse opioid overdose, after some received ballot envelopes last November containing white powder with traces of fentanyl.

"I've spent my nights awake, thinking of every worst case scenario that could happen," said Tonya Wichman, director of the board of elections in Defiance, a county of 38,000 in northwestern Ohio. In that county, she said, every polling location will have a radio to keep in constant communication with law enforcement on Election Day. Police and sheriff's deputies will check in on polling sites every half-hour, she said, "to make sure they're OK."

Election officials worry that even inadvertent human error or routine actions by election workers on Nov. 5 might be misinterpreted and spread rapidly through a misinformation ecosystem that has grown more pervasive since 2020.

These days, a video of a poll worker crumpling up a piece of paper can quickly escalate, said Chris Harvey, who was Georgia's elections director from 2015 to 2021. This year, Georgia became the first state to require election-law training for police, and Harvey is leading it.

"People have had four years of just marinating in all sorts of different conspiracy theories, and we worry they'll come in looking for a problem," he said. "Then you got, 'Hey everyone come down to the polling place,' and mobs showing up, maybe armed, and it can really snowball very quickly."

"They get the vibes to a tee," said Tom Morgan, a 43-year-old who was a stockbroker for Merrill Lynch in London. "But the plot isn't always realistic."

Screaming matches on the trading floor, clueless new hires from silver spoon universities and the death of a young employee—all of which appear on "Industry"—are right on target for life on Wall Street. But the line between truth and fiction has been increasingly apparent in the blockbuster television series. Earlier seasons had been praised for financial accuracy. These days, the plot holes are the subject of debate on social-media sites.

Still, bankers say they love "Industry" for how it captures the dynamism of working on Wall Street, no matter the flubs.

"As the story built out, we decided that we were actually making a drama for HBO, not a documentary for PBS," Konrad



Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer, above, said threats caused 10 longtime staffers to resign for safety reasons. Ballot holding areas inside the county's Tabulation and Election Center, below, are secured by metal fencing.

want it as part of the Republican Party.

"I didn't mean it literally," said Busch in an interview with The Wall Street Journal. "It was hyperbole and meant in terms of political lynching...the point was to end his career."

Busch repeated unfounded conspiracy theories of fraudulent ballots infiltrating the system. "I mean, look, chain of custody, right?" she said from a county GOP office with a Trump cardboard cutout in the lobby.

Richer finds it ironic to be a target of such ire, as a lifelong conservative who voted for Trump in 2020. He attributes it to not supporting Trump's assertion he won Arizona. "You have to be 100% loyal," Richer said. "If you ever show any doubt, then they come for you."

Other Republicans who didn't support Trump's election-theft claim have been ostracized, too. "It's a civil war," said State Sen. Ken Bennett, a Republican who lost his primary challenge to an election denier, despite twice voting for Trump.

Richer lost his GOP primary in July, and his term as county recorder ends in January. During campaign visits to Republican groups, he was booed when he refused to say Trump won in 2020. "Stephen was a victim of it. I was a victim of it. They just believe entirely the four or five words out of his mouth that the election was stolen," Bennett said, referring to Trump.

At a voter mobilization rally for Trump in north Phoenix on Oct. 8, supporters who contend Trump was robbed in 2020 talked about how to prevent a recurrence. "There's no cavalry coming—we are the cavalry," Abraham Hemedeth, a candidate for a congressional seat, told the roomful of Republicans.

Nationally, nearly 40% of local election officials reported experiencing threats, harassment or abuse due to their jobs, according to a survey released in May by the Brennan Center, a nonprofit voter rights group.

Last November, election offices in five states received suspicious letters, some later found to contain fentanyl. One read "End elections now." Officials in 20 states received another round of suspicious packages last month, including one claiming to be from the United States Traitor Elimination Army.

'It's a civil war'

In Arizona, Richer's critics include Republican Shelby Busch, co-founder of We the People AZ Alliance, which was launched in late 2020 and has taken in nearly \$1 million, including from Mike Lindell, the MyPillow chief executive known for spreading stolen-election claims.

Busch, who was named volunteer of the year by the Maricopa County Republican Committee in January, made headlines in June when a video surfaced of her saying in an address at a GOP event: "If Stephen Richer were in this room, I would lynch him."

"This isn't healthy," Richer responded on X. "And it's not responsible. And we shouldn't



ment that these employees face are both alarming and pervasive," wrote Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Scott Blaney, who was appointed by a Republican governor, when ruling in August that the Maricopa County recorder's office needn't publicly disclose names of low-level election workers, as requested by a political-action committee called We the People Arizona Alliance. Blaney cited a 30-year Maricopa County employee who received some 50 threats and harassing messages accusing her of "stealing the 2020 election," and who "routinely needed to be escorted to her vehicle after work."

The Justice Department has charged three individuals for threats against Richer, including a Missouri man who allegedly called his cellphone and warned, "You need to do your f— job right" or "your ass will never make it to your next little board meeting."

Other threats against Maricopa officials, detailed in court filings, include menacing messages such as, "You're going to die, you piece of s—. We're going to hang you."

A Texas man accused of suggesting "a mass shooting for poll workers" and posting threats about Richer and Tom Liddy, a chief in Maricopa County, was sentenced to 3½ years in prison by a Trump-appointed judge in 2023.

Richer said threats caused 10 longtime members of his 140-person permanent staff to resign for safety reasons. An untold number of 3,000 temporary workers, he said, also were scared off, some after angry Trump supporters surrounded their cars, took photos and berated them as they left the downtown election center.

"The threats and harass-

I've spent my nights awake, thinking of every worst case scenario.'

Hit Show On Banking Baffles Pros

Continued from Page One

would so obviously be run by the equity capital markets syndicate. And how can the bank nearly fail because of a botched pivot to "ESG" investing?

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A scene from 'Industry,' a hit drama about young people working for a bank in London.

Kay, one of the show's two creators and a former salesman for Morgan Stanley in London, said in an interview. The show "feels truthful to us in a way that's far more interesting to us than the reality of whether it would happen or not."

"Industry" takes place in the London offices of Pierpoint & Co., an American investment bank that bears a resemblance to JPMorgan Chase. (The P in JPMorgan stands for Pierpont, the middle name of the firm's famously morose founder.) The show premiered in 2020 and has been growing in popularity ever since.

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were actually making a drama for HBO, not a documentary for PBS," Konrad

Much of the show focuses on the traders' personal lives, featuring copious amounts of boozing, cocaine and sex—although that's an area where many actual finance professionals say it misses the mark.

"Unfortunately, there was no gratuitous sex, at least in my experience," Morgan said.

The latest season started with Pierpoint struggling with an IPO for a renewable energy company. The character Robert Spearling, a salesman and one of the show's stars, frantically tries to save the deal and the company from failure.

There's just one problem:

someone like Robert normally wouldn't be working on an IPO, former bankers say. That's a job for a team of bankers meant to build a book of orders for stock sales, which are separately managed from a bank's sales and trading operations.

The discrepancy was a subject of multiple threads on Reddit about "wall-crossing"—finance jargon for when traders are given nonpublic information about a deal the investment bank is working on—a big no-no unless the bank's lawyers give their explicit signoff.

"It probably wouldn't have

happened that way in real life,"

said Sarah Juma, a former equity capital markets banker and current screenwriter based in Los Angeles. "The showrunners probably thought that viewers might be bored if they started trying to explain how this would actually work."

Turns out, the reditors were kind of right.

"That was a huge fudge," said Mickey Down, the show's other co-creator and a former employee at Rothschild & Co. The showrunners needed Robert to be a salesman and an investment banker to tell the story, even though he couldn't have both jobs at the same time, Down said.

The plot gets even weirder for Pierpoint when the botched IPO precipitates its financial crisis. The bank borrowed too much money to buy stakes in do-gooding companies—an attempt to "pivot to ESG"—something most banks would likely never do because of the regulatory scrutiny it would draw.

After the IPO deal goes south, markets lose confidence in the bank. The stakes in the companies they bought may be worthless, and a failure looms.

That's highly unlikely in the real world, according to people who have worked at nonficitonal banks. If giving bad advice could sink a bank, there'd be no banks left.

The anonymous financial influencer High Yield Harry has been sharing memes about "In-

dustry" to hundreds of thousands of followers on Instagram and other social media.

"The rapid failure of Pierpoint this season definitely isn't a realistic way a bank would go down," the person behind the account said in a message to The Wall Street Journal. "Finance guys are pretty boring, though, so I think a lot of people are fine with creative liberties that drive a more entertaining story line."

High Yield Harry posted a screenshot of a scene where Pierpoint executives share a printed out PowerPoint presentation with investors who might rescue the bank. Harry and others noticed there's a typo on one of the Excel columns, where Pierpoint's loan loss reserves are measured in "bps"—likely a misspelling of "bps," short for "basis points," or hundredths of a percentage point.

Denizens of Twitter couldn't agree whether the typo was a plot point, meant to show how inept the bank's junior employees were, or if the show had made a mistake.

The showrunners of "Industry" aren't quite sure either. "Let's just say it was intentional," said Kay.

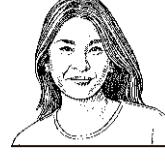
"The idea of people watching eight hours of TV and thinking, one of the things I'm going to take away from it was the for-matting on this page, is crazy," Kay said. "It's a huge compliment."

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

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PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY
NICOLE NGUYEN

Beth Yauman thought her car's turn signals had stopped making sounds years ago. They worked—she just couldn't hear them. With AirPods Pro now in her ears, the clicking is back.

I got early access to Apple's new clinical-grade hearing test and hearing-aid capability for AirPods Pro 2. Since I don't have hearing issues, I also got a pair for Yauman, who has mild hearing loss.

Apple will release the features next week through a free software update. They require the \$249 second-generation AirPods Pro and an iPhone or iPad running iOS or iPad OS 18.1.

The test can tell anyone if they should worry about hearing loss, and another feature can block loud noises. The software is a potential game-changer for millions of people who live with mild to moderate hearing loss, especially the people who already own a pair of AirPods Pro.

Only a quarter of the people who could benefit from hearing aids actually use them, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Prescription models typically cost thousands of dollars, and some people have to wait weeks or even months to see an audiologist to determine eligibility. Over-the-counter aids were supposed to solve that problem, but the most affordable options are being returned at high rates in part because of the lack of adequate customer service.

An existing pair of earbuds and a test you can take from your couch could address those issues—if you can figure out how to use them.

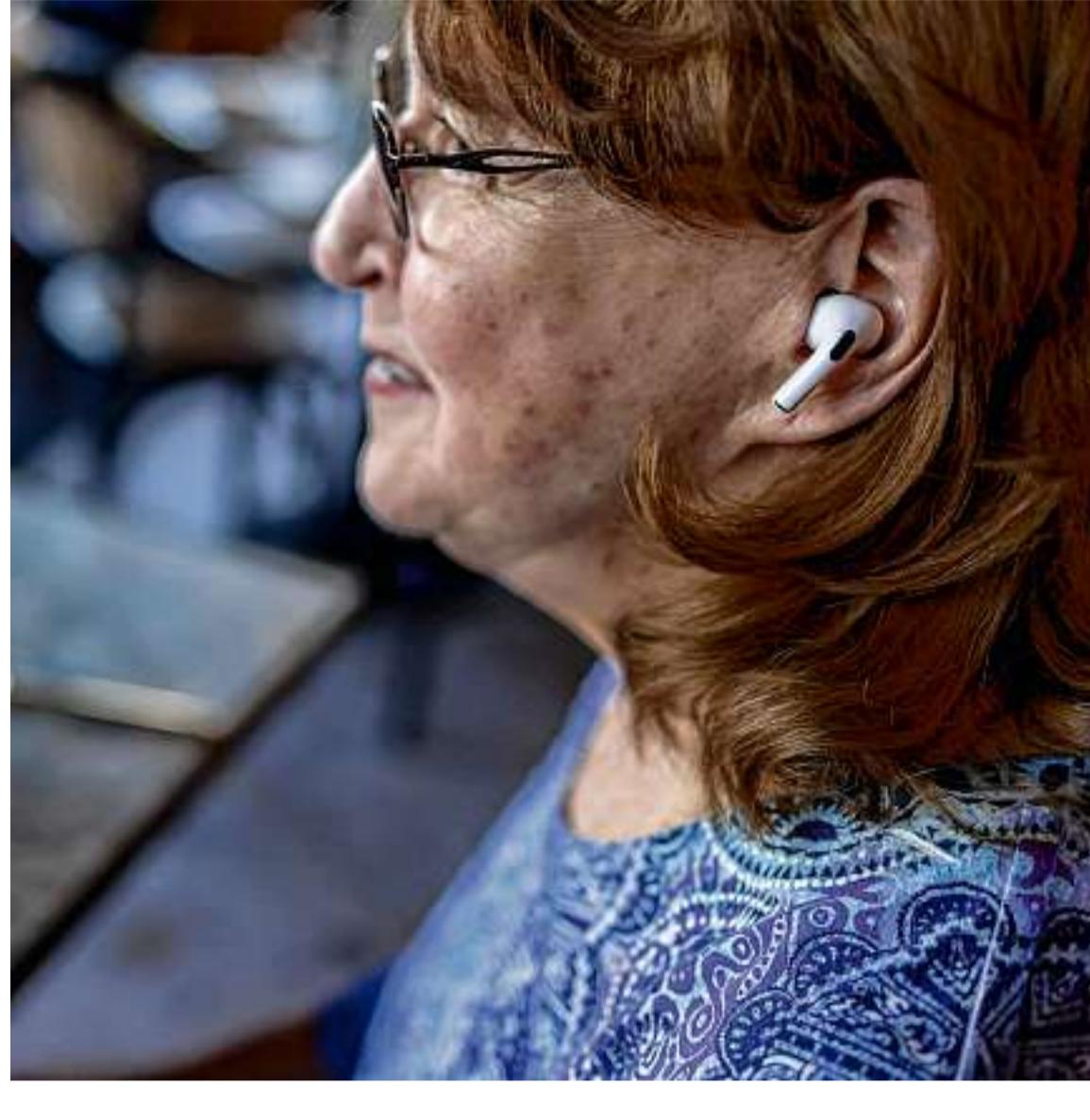
At-home hearing exam

Yauman, 74 years old, said her hearing began declining in her early 50s. While watching TV, she would often have to press rewind to understand a scene.

"It was most annoying for my kids. They got tired of me saying, 'What?'" said the Rossmoor, Calif., resident. After a stroke made it worse, she visited an audiologist. She is now waiting for her first prescription pair to arrive. The cost? \$1,650.

I visited Yauman at her home to try Apple's \$249 version, which doesn't require a prescription. First, she needed to take the hearing test in a quiet room.

After connecting the AirPods Pro to an iPhone, an AirPods menu appeared in the Settings app. That's where Apple's new features—called Hearing Test, Hearing Aid and Hearing Protection—live. She tapped "Take a Hearing Test." She confirmed she's an adult, hasn't been sick and hasn't recently been in a loud environment, all of which can affect results. (Neither the test nor the



Hearing Tests and Aids Coming for AirPod Pro

Apple's clinical-grade diagnostics, assistance are potential life changers

Hearing Aid feature are suitable for children.)

The software played several tones at different volumes and frequencies. Yauman tapped the screen when she heard the tones.

After about five minutes, Yauman got her results: mild hearing loss. The software offered the option to set up the AirPods as hearing aids, and warned her that it can take a few weeks to get used to the new sound. (You can also upload an audiogram from your doctor to tune the Hearing Aid feature.)

The iPhone's results were similar to Yauman's assessment from her doctor, Payal Anand, director of audiology at the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, said both charts showed "mild sloping to severe hearing loss," especially for higher frequencies.

Daniel Stern, father of my fellow columnist Joanna Stern, also took Apple's test. It found he could hear people speaking but said other sounds may be a challenge. It suggested using Media

► At a bustling restaurant, Yauman could hear those talking around the table clearly, but she was initially overwhelmed by all the background noise.

Assist, found in AirPods settings, which adds clarity to calls, videos and music.

For Joanna and me, testing indicated little to no hearing loss. Though the system only recommends Hearing Aid for people it detects as having mild to moderate hearing loss, anyone can turn it on.

A good start

Hearing is complex. It involves a system of soundwaves, canals and fluid that stimulate the nerve fibers sending signals to your brain. Apple tests a small part of that system.

Anand gave me a full diagnostic, which involved multiple tests, a soundproof room, huge over-ear headphones and special bone-conduction headphones.

"It's a complete test of hear-



ing," said Anand, adding that the exam is designed to tell you where in your ear the hearing loss is—and what's causing it. An at-home test can't determine either. Earwax buildup, for instance, could be cleared easily by a pro-

essional. Other hearing loss could indicate a tumor or other serious condition, she said.

Anand believes Apple's test will give people a rough sense of their hearing. "I'm excited that there's another screening tool, and I'm curious to see how it performs," she said.

The AirPods Hearing Protection feature, which reduces loud environmental noise, could have the biggest impact, Anand said. Loud concerts, jackhammers and other noise are significant threats to hearing, she said. More younger people are having hearing troubles.

In the wild

Yauman immediately heard a difference. For a real-world test, we headed to a trendy restaurant. She marveled at how "incredibly clear" the AirPods sounded. She noted the thwack from her son's flip-flops, the clang of dishes and the thumping background music.

She was a bit overwhelmed by the restaurant's cacophony. She turned down ambient noise in settings, which helped. It was still noisy, but Yauman could hear those of us talking around the table clearly.

The awkward part, for her, was wearing AirPods in a restaurant. People might assume she is on the phone or listening to music, not open for conversation.

Yauman had a hard time handling the earbuds and putting them in their case. She was also hoping for all-day battery life. Charging in the case every few hours is too often, she said.

The AirPods are fussier than traditional hearing aids and might not be the best option for people who've never worn them before. The Pros can last up to six hours.

Yauman's prescription hearing aids, Jabra's Enhance Pro 20, only need to be charged about every 30 hours—on par with competitors. AirPods and their case are small, so the wearer needs dexterity to be able to handle them. And the adjustments are buried in the iPhone's Settings app and only show up when AirPods are connected.

For those who don't know they have hearing loss—or have always wondered—Apple's new test can reveal potentially life-changing insights. Untreated hearing loss increases the risk of social isolation and dementia.

Yauman won't stick with AirPods hearing aids, but trying them made her more excited to improve her hearing.



used plastic that we toss. Today virgin plastic is both cheaper and better, so there's little incentive for companies to invest in recycling facilities.

What gets recycled

You know the numbers on plastic items ranging from one through seven? Just because something has a number doesn't make it recyclable. Two plastics, widely used in soda bottles, milk jugs and other popular containers, are most often recycled.

PET—polyethylene terephthalate, used for soda and other drink bottles—goes by number 1 and is the most highly recycled plastic in the U.S. As of 2022, about 29% of the PET bottles sold to consumers were purchased by reprocessors or exported for recycling, according to the National Association for PET Container Resources.

HDPE—high-density polyethylene, found in milk jugs and detergent containers—is number 2. About 27% of HDPE bottles and jugs were bought by reprocessors or exported for recycling in 2022, according to the Association of Plastic Recyclers.

PP—polypropylene, which bears the number 5 and is commonly used in yogurt and butter containers—hasn't been widely recycled in the U.S. In recent years, more recyclers have shown interest in processing the ma-

terial, but check your town's recycling guidelines to see if PP is accepted.

Most flexible packaging you bring home from the supermarket—bags, pouches, toothpaste tubes—isn't typically accepted in curbside recycling bins although you can drop some of it off at supermarkets, where it could be collected to become trash bags or building material. Rigid containers made from polyvinyl chloride (No. 3), polystyrene (No. 6) or multilayer plastics (No. 7) generally shouldn't go in blue bins either.

Your town might still tell you to put all your rigid plastic in the bin, numbers 1 through 7. That's usually to up the odds of collecting more 1s and 2s. The facility will sort out other plastic to be sent to a landfill or an incinerator.

"It was initially thought if you

► Over five decades after soda makers first turned to plastic bottles, America's PET bottle recycling rate stands at under 30%.

just said put all containers in the bin, it would minimize confusion," says Scott Saunders, head of recycling at KW Plastics, one of North America's largest recyclers. "Trying to train individual households to put in specific plastics was so difficult."

Why rates are so poor

The U.S. used to export recycling to China, but the country stopped taking most foreign waste in 2018. If American companies aren't interested in making new products from recycled plastic—which typically costs more than virgin plastic—there's no incentive to develop the infrastructure to collect, sort and

reprocess old packaging.

The variety of plastics on store shelves today compounds the challenge. Trays, clamshell food containers and other non-bottle or jar shapes are often tossed aside, even those made from PET and HDPE. Recycling itself degrades plastic, meaning it's usually only recycled a couple of times. Most food packaging isn't turned back into food packaging.

Sorting and cleaning a wide assortment of plastic containers is expensive. Collected plastic is often downcycled into trash bags, Frisbees or park benches, which can't be recycled again.

What you can do

If your town offers recycling, use it.

► Look out for number 1 (and 2). When sorting your trash, give priority to PET and HDPE bottles and jars. You don't have to clean them but make sure they're empty. To ensure the caps also get recycled, keep them on the bottles.

► Steer toward clear. Noncolored plastic containers are easier to recycle—and are less likely to be downcycled—so opt for brands that use clear containers (and ones made with recycled material).

► Don't gum up the works.

Throwing bags, six-pack rings and other flexible plastics into your blue bin could mess sorting machinery.

► Bag your bags. Look for plastic-bag drop-off programs at Walmart and Target or your local supermarket. Some other flexible items may be collected at these locations, too.

Plastic Recycling's Wasted Opportunity

By SAABIRA CHAUDHURI

Each week a garbage truck pulls up and workers collect the contents of your blue bin. Your mixed recycling contains lots of plastics—shampoo bottles, yogurt cups, milk jugs and more—but how much actually gets recycled?

The answer isn't what you want to hear. But knowing it will help you get smarter about sorting your trash.

Just 13.6% of waste plastic containers and packaging—what goes in blue bins as well as the trash—were sent to a recycling facility in 2018, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's most recent data. An additional 16.9% got incinerated. Nearly 70% went to landfills.

Compare that to waste paper and cardboard: The EPA says 81% of what we threw away in 2018 got recycled. The rate for glass containers was about 31%. For aluminum, including cans and foil, it was around 35%.

Recycling plastic is a challenge because of chemistry...and business.

There are seven categories of plastic resins—including a catchall called "other." Most types aren't even considered for curbside recycling. Meanwhile, businesses have touted their containers as recyclable as they look to keep consumers and regulators happy. Yet for recycling to work, there has to be demand for all the

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

Sandwich Generation Gets Squeezed

Millennials are stressed out, low on money and short on time as they care for babies and aging Boomer parents



BY VANESSA FUHRMANS
AND VERONICA DAGHER

At 34, Kait Giordano is juggling her job, a newborn and two parents with dementia.

Just over a month into motherhood, she tends to her infant son and her live-in parents in the morning and afternoon, some days with the help of a rotating cast of paid companions at their Tucker, Ga., home. In the evenings, her husband, Tamrin, takes over while she colors hair.

They had already delayed starting a family when Kait's father moved in a few years ago. Her mother moved in this year. "We chose to take this on," she says. "We didn't want to wait any longer."

More Americans shoulder a double load of caring for their children and at least one adult, often a parent. The "sandwich generation" has grown to at least 11 million in the U.S., according to one estimate, and shifts in demographics, costs and work are making it a longer and tougher slog.

People are having children later, and they are living longer, often with care-intensive conditions such as dementia. That means many are taking care of elderly parents when their own kids are still young and require more intensive parenting—and for longer stretches of their lives than

previous generations of sandwiched caregivers.

As the oldest millennials start to hit middle age—and baby boomers near their 80s—the number of Americans caring for older and younger family makes up a significant part of the electorate. Vice President Kamala Harris invoked the sandwich generation when she recently proposed expanding Medicare benefits to cover home healthcare.

"There are so many people in our country who are right in the middle," the Democratic presidential candidate said on ABC's "The View" this month. "It's just almost impossible to do it all, especially if they work."

Responding to the Harris proposal, former President Donald Trump's campaign said he would give priority to home-care benefits by shifting resources to at-home senior care and provide tax credits to support unpaid family caregivers.

The growing burden on this sandwich generation weakens careers and quality of life, and has ramifications for society at large. It is a drag on monthly budgets and long-term financial health.

A 40-something contributing \$1,500 a month over five years to support an aging parent stands to lose more than \$1 million in retirement savings, according to an analysis by Steph Wagner, national director of women and

▲ **Kait and Tamrin Giordano juggle caring for their newborn and for Kait's live-in parents, William and Valerie, who have dementia.**

wealth at Northern Trust Wealth Management.

"It's become incredibly expensive to manage the longevity that we've created," says Bradley Schurman, an author and demographic strategist, who says that the demands of caring for older generations could push more people in midlife to retreat from the workforce, particularly women.

Career goals on hold

Not too long ago, the typical sandwich caregiver was a woman in her late 40s with teenage kids and maybe a part-time job. Now, according to a 2023 AARP report, the average age of these caregivers is 44, and a growing share are men. Nearly a third are millennials and Gen Z. They are in the critical early-to-middle stages of their careers and three-quarters of them work full or part time.

Diana Fuller, 49, says being the go-to person for her 83-year-old mother's care for more than four years has been stressful, even with her mother now living in a nearby, \$10,000-a-month memory-care center in Charlotte, N.C. (Long-term-care insurance covers 75%; the rest is paid out of her mother's savings.)



▲ Liam Davitt, with his wife, says he worries about not being able to care for his son, 7, and mother, 84.

She has put on the back burner career goals such as ramping up the leg warmer business she started with her sister. She has missed moments such as her 9-year-old son's school holiday concert last year because of her mother's frequent hospital stays.

Her husband picks up a lot of the child care duties when her mom is in the hospital. Still, she

says, "it often feels like everything is about to implode."

The financial pressures are also growing for the sandwich generation. According to a Care.com survey of 2,000 parents, 60% of U.S. families spent 20% or more of their annual household income on child care last year, up from 51% of families in 2021. Meanwhile, the median cost of a home health aide climbed 10% last year to \$75,500, data from long-term-care insurer Genworth Financial show.

Caregivers often risk paying for such costs in their own old age, financial advisers say. More than half reported in a 2023 New York Life survey that they had made a sacrifice to their own financial security to provide care for their parents on top of their children.

Long-distance care

Many in the sandwich generation say they feel torn between the needs of their kids and parents. Liam Davitt, a public-relations professional, and his wife, Lisa Fels Davitt, recently moved from their Washington, D.C., condo to suburban New Jersey so that their 7-year-old son could be closer to cousins and go to a good public school. (They had previously paid for private school.)

That meant moving away from his 84-year-old mother in an independent living community. The long distance has made helping her even with little things more complicated. He recently enlisted a nearby fraternity brother to help her assemble a new walker.

An avid runner, he says he finds himself taking care of himself—avoiding potentially ankle-twisting mud runs and keeping up with his doctors' appointments, for example—out of fear he won't be able to care for his younger and older family. "If all of a sudden I'm less mobile, then I'm more of a burden on my own family" says Davitt. He is planning to move his mother closer by.

The Giordanos, in Georgia, have made adjustments, too. With their newborn keeping them busy, they installed cameras and door chimes to help monitor Kait's parents.

The parents enjoy pushing their grandson in the stroller around the house while supervised, she says. When Tamrin comes home from work, he gives his in-laws dinner and medications while holding the baby.

The couple isn't sure when they'll have another child, which would require paying for more help. "We may have to wait," Kait said. "We're very much living in the moment."



MY RIDE | BY A.J. BAIME

This Fiat 500's Trek To U.S. Took Amore

Davy Jones, 60, a former race-car driver who is the last American to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans overall, and is the owner of Fast One Consulting, a motor-sports consulting agency, and his wife, Rachel, 52, a Realtor, on their 1971 Fiat 500L, as told to A.J. Baime.

Davy: I was online surfing one day in 2018 when I came across a Fiat 500. Rachel is into cute little cars, and this one happened to be from her birth year. This was an auction on the website Bring a Trailer. I threw in a bid at the last minute of \$7,500, and we ended up getting this car. I made a career out of auto racing, and I drive exotic cars all the time. My wife's daily driver is a

Range Rover SVR, which has 575 horsepower. So to slow us both down, we bought a 1971 Fiat.

Rachel: It wasn't until we bought the car that we realized it was in Italy. So now we had to figure out how to get it over here. It took us several months to have it shipped. And, we were told, if the numbers didn't match—if everything wasn't as it said on the car's paperwork—the authorities in the U.S. could confiscate the car and even demolish it.

Davy: We were in Hawaii when the car arrived on a truck at our home just off Lake Tahoe in Gardnerville, Nev. It was quite humorous watching the transporter guy on our Ring

cameras unload this tiny car and tuck it behind our house in our barn.

Rachel: During my first attempt to register the car at the DMV, they looked at me and said, basically: What are we supposed to do with this? All this paperwork is in Italian. I had to hire a translator I found at a local community college. It took three trips to the DMV. We named the car "Carlotta," because she's a whole lotta car. But really, she is so tiny!

Davy: When you go to Italy, you see Fiat 500s. The car is an icon in Italy, and it's built to get around those little streets. [Fiat launched the

"Nuova 500," or Cinquecento, in 1957. The Italian company built 3,893,294 original 500s, until production ended in 1975.] In its day, it was the bomb. It's not an exotic car, not an expensive car, but it's very unique. Ours has been restored, so it looks original. When people see it on the road, they're yelling and taking photos.

Rachel: One of my favorite memories of this car is picking up our daughter, Carrera, at school. She got such a kick out of it, and so did all the other kids. They were, like, oh my God! Look at that car! When I took the car to my mom and dad's

▲ **Davy and Rachel Jones with their 1971 Fiat 500L, nicknamed 'Carlotta.'**

for the first time, some cousins were there and their high-school age son walked over, grabbed the car by the front bumper, and actually lifted it off the ground.

Davy: You have to be careful driving this car because it is such a small vehicle on the road. We have had it up to 110. But that's kilometers per hour.

Rachel: I have a lead foot, just like Davy. This car doesn't go very fast, and that's OK by us.

FROM TOP: KENDRICK BRINSON FOR WSJ; LIAM DAVITT

EMILY NAIERA FOR WSJ (2)

ARTS IN REVIEW

Why love, why live, if there isn't someone "out there in the dark" watching you? Or, better yet, thousands or even millions glued to their devices, screening your life as you live it?

That is the implicit and bleakly funny moral of the director Jamie Lloyd's radical reimagining of "Sunset Blvd.," the 1993 musical with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and book and lyrics by Don Black and Christopher Hampton. Without putting a single cellphone onstage, or altering the original libretto, Mr. Lloyd has transformed this period Hollywood satire, based on the Billy Wilder movie, into a pointed critique of contemporary culture, in which it seems everyone is as obsessed by fame as the show's deluded heroine, former silent-screen star Norma Desmond, played by Nicole Scherzinger, making the most dazzling Broadway debut in memory.

Mr. Lloyd, the British "it" director of the moment—he will bring two star-laden Shakespeare plays to London's vaunted Drury Lane Theatre beginning in December—strips away the period setting by putting the cast in black-and-white contemporary clothing and removing all sets and props. Extensive live video, and a credits sequence mimicking a movie, are also in black-and-white. This stylized approach, which includes sinuous choreography by Fabian Aloise, cleanly yanks the production from its familiar trappings. And while the palette evokes old movies, it is also akin to watching the musical through an Instagram filter.

Norma, a washed-up star desperate for a comeback, who traps the flailing screenwriter Joe Gillis (Tom Francis) into encouraging her obsessive delusions, here can be seen as a former influencer on social media who has lost her following, and thus herself. Another ex-screen-queen, she has been left behind by evolving technology, a Facebook poster who hasn't mastered the



THEATER REVIEW | CHARLES ISHERWOOD

A New Norma Desmond

Nicole Scherzinger makes a dazzling Broadway debut in 'Sunset Blvd.'

fine arts of Instagram and TikTok, and craves the comments and likes she once had. (With her olive skin, long black hair and shapely body, emphasized by her sole costume, a sheer black slip, Ms. Scherzinger resembles that avatar of influencer culture, Kim Kardashian.)

Once a member of the Pussycat Dolls girl group, the actor looks a good 10 years younger than her 46 years; her casting can be seen as a commentary on our increased obsession with fighting off the tides of time. But Ms. Scherzinger has not been cast for her age or beauty but because she is a bona fide musical-theater phenomenon, almost being born before our eyes. Her Norma—an amusingly first seen wearing look-

at-me-don't-look-at-me Anna Wintour sunglasses—sometimes speaks in the grandiloquent tones of prior Normas, but also drops the affectation and sounds like a millennial. Now commanding, now skittish, now pussycat-dollish, but also often desperate and contorted with fear, Ms. Scherzinger wears this potentially caricaturish role as easily as she does that sleek slip.

Most importantly, she sings the score with consummate beauty, confidence and skill. Although Norma's two soaring ballads—"With One Look" and "As If We Never Said Goodbye," both among Mr. Lloyd Webber's finest compositions—have been recorded by many great singers, Ms. Scherzinger is very much their equal if not their better. She can sing with exquisite, quiet delicacy that blooms into surging power carrying an emotional charge to send ghostly shivers down the spine.

For collectors of history-making Broadway performances, this is one not to be missed.

As Joe, the victim of Norma's vampiric neediness (her blood-thirstiness is eventually made literal), whom she sees as her life-line back to the glory days, Mr. Francis is likewise superb. He wears his hard-boiled, Hollywood-bred cynicism with flair, but also expresses Joe's now-occluded idealism, reigned by his friendship with Betty Schaefer (an affecting Grace Hodgett Young), who encourages him to keep writing a screenplay she believes in.

Mr. Lloyd employs live video with inspired intelligence; its extensive use here is a commentary on the world we live in, increasingly mediated by screens. It is only when we see Joe and Betty in separate closeups looming large at the back of the stage that we can read their aborning love. And

Jamie Lloyd stages a smartly contemporary version of the 1993 musical.

sion with fighting off the tides of time. But Ms. Scherzinger has not been cast for her age or beauty but because she is a bona fide musical-theater phenomenon, almost being born before our eyes. Her Norma—an amusingly first seen wearing look-

◀ Tom Francis and Ms. Scherzinger in the production.

while Joe's offstage strut along 44th Street and into Shubert Alley, with cameras capturing every move and projecting them onto onstage screens, might seem gimmicky, on the contrary, with Mr. Francis being trailed by security, and passersby kept at a distance gawking at the spectacle, it reinforces the theme of fame's allure: Who wouldn't want the chaos of navigating the Times Square area banished by celebrity's power?

While Mr. Lloyd's "Sunset Blvd." might be seen as an example of "regietheater," a production whose director firmly stamps his own, often controversial vision on extant material, his approach actually serves to highlight the score, which with the passing of years has grown in stature. Aside from its most famous anthems for Norma, Mr. Lloyd Webber's music for the scenes set among the aspiring strivers Joe parties with in Hollywood incorporates jazz influences effectively; with a couple of trivial songs wisely trimmed, there are no longueurs. In the important supporting role of Norma's one-time husband and director, now slavish protector of her faltering ego, David Thaxton sings with dark, resonant richness.

I could perhaps have done with a lower volume of billowing stage smoke (are we in California or London?), but Mr. Lloyd's production is otherwise impeccable. Even effects that might seem ham-fisted serve his entrancing vision of a contemporary world marked by disconnection and the need for the superficial attention it can inspire. During much of the show, the characters do not actually engage with one another, but deliver their lines staring blankly out into the audience. Why not? They are all waiting not so much for success or intimacy, but for that life-affirming, life-defining closeup. Everyone is Norma Desmond now.

Sunset Blvd.
St. James Theatre, 246 W. 44th St., New York, \$59-\$399, sunsetblvd-broadway.com, closes July 6, 2025

Mr. Isherwood is the Journal's theater critic.



ARTS CALENDAR

HAPPENINGS FOR THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 22

By WSJ ARTS IN REVIEW STAFF

Theater**"Left on Tenth"**

(James Earl Jones Theatre, New York, Oct. 23-Feb. 2, 2025)

Julianne Margulies and Peter Gallagher star in this new Broadway play based on Delia Ephron's memoir about meeting a man from her past and getting swept up in her own romcom.

"Romeo + Juliet"

(Circle in the Square Theatre, New York, Oct. 24-Feb. 16, 2025)

The Bard is back on Broadway with Sam Gold's staging of the story of star-

Opera**"Fidelio"**

(The Kennedy Center, Washington, Oct. 25-Nov. 4)

Francesca Zambello crafts a new production of Beethoven's only opera, which looks at love's enduring power in the face of tyranny.

Exhibitions**"Pets and the City"**

(New-York Historical Society, Oct. 25-April 20, 2025)

From cats lazing in brownstone windows to dogs scampering through Central Park, animal companions are omnipresent in New York. This show reveals through art, objects, photographs, documents and memorabilia the special relationship city dwellers have had with their pets across the centuries, from animals' roles in indigenous cultures to critters' place as part of the modern family.

Art**"Living With the Gods: Art, Beliefs and Peoples"**

(The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Oct. 27-Jan. 20, 2025)

Curated by British art historian Neil MacGregor and based on his popular BBC radio series and book, this exhibition is a 3,000-year-spanning examination of the role of faith and religion in people's lives around the globe.

Last Call**"Laurie Simmons: Deep Photos / In the Beginning"**

(56 Henry, 105 Henry St., New York, through Oct. 27)

The photographer offers a new twist on her work, using dioramas to study the domestic in this small show bursting with invention. Our critic called the new work a brilliant creative turn by an artist who has never had trouble crafting her own affecting worlds.

Music**Halsey, "The Great Impersonator"**

(Oct. 25)

The art-pop singer's fifth record explores her personality and the ways she resonates with eras from the 1970s to the present.

Soccer Mommy,**"Evergreen"**

(Oct. 25)

The indie rocker (born Sophie Allison) releases her fourth album, a confessional and vulnerable work created after a period of personal loss.



▲ A scene from 'Venom: The Last Dance.'

to 2021's "Venom: Let There Be Carnage." Tom Hardy returns in the title role as a journalist who plays host to an alien parasite.

TV**"Canary Black"**

(Prime Video, Oct. 24)

A CIA agent (Kate Beckinsale) is blackmailed by terrorists after her husband is kidnapped in this action thriller that also features Rupert Friend, Ray Stevenson and Saffron Burrows.

"Like a Dragon: Yakuza"

(Prime Video, Oct. 24)

Based on the hit videogame franchise, the live-action series follows a former Japanese gangster drawn into a massive conspiracy involving his friend and their clan.

crossed lovers, Kit Connor and Rachel Zegler star in a production with music by Jack Antonoff and movement direction and choreography by Sonya Tayeh.

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

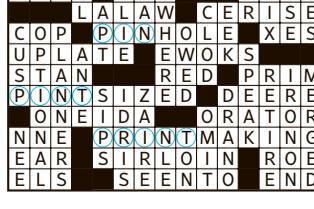
The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shenk



GOT THE TIME? | By Scott Hall

Across	32	Kerfuffles	58	"I'm doing this no matter what..." (and a hint to assembling pieces of 17-, 29-, 35- and 43-Across)	6	Elk's Shawnee name
1 Results of trauma, sometimes	34	One step at a time?	35	"Sorry, I can't help you"	7	Yank with 696 homers
6 Jeans measure	41	Brother, in Bruxelles	62	Breakfast burrito ingredient	8	Goddess of fertility
11 Org. based in Langley, Virginia	42	Ornamental succulents	63	City on the Missouri River	9	Hamlet, to Gertrude
14 Burning desire?	43	"We have to accept reality..."	64	Fabric fold	10	Blast letters
15 Clip— (some ties)	48	Lift on the slopes	65	Friend of Finn and Poe, in a popular film series	11	Start of a Descartes quote
16 Here's an example."	49	Shuck, as an ear of corn	66	University of Florida player	12	Soon, casually
17 Gangster's gun	50	Sun shade?	67	Market aids	13	Toward the rudder
20 Faux passes at the tavern?	52	Where R.N.s scrub in	68	Down	14	Must have
21 Widespread	53	Take a tumble	69	Junk bond rating	15	Fixed a card table mistake
22 Scottish denial	54	Missed the boat, so to speak	70	60 minutes	16	Words of denial
24 Still	55	Friend of Luke and Lando, in a popular film series	71	Some printer problems	17	Out-of-this-world visitors, in brief
25 Wobble	57	Curb your enthusiasm!"	72	4 Sailing	18	Easy run
27 Designer Cassini	58	In the Beginning" (and a hint to assembling pieces of 17-, 29-, 35- and 43-Across)	73	5 Like many punk hairstyles	19	Thurman of "Kill Bill"
29 "Curb your enthusiasm!"	59	Living With the Gods: Art, Beliefs and Peoples"	74	6 Yoga class essential	20	Doohickey

Previous Puzzle's Solution



Solve this puzzle online and discuss it at WSJ.com/Puzzles.

SPORTS



In college football, there is the right call, and the wrong call, and apparently, there is no need to be sportsmanlike about it anymore.

All you have to do is throw a fit and a few hundred water bottles—and eventually you'll get your way.

What other conclusion can be reached from Saturday's fiasco at the Texas-Georgia game, in which officials flagged the Longhorns for a critical pass interference penalty, only to reverse it minutes later, after grouchy Texas fans (many in the student section, *The Daily Texan* reported) rained a fusillade of single-use plastic bottles and other trash on to the gridiron?

What are we doing here, friends?

It's hard not to see Texas Football's Impromptu Recycling Night as another example of our cultural slide into Tantrum Nation, a depressingly self-interested society in which what matters most is who whines the loudest—and civility takes a back seat to classlessness.

"We've set a precedent," Georgia coach Kirby Smart said later. "If you throw a bunch of stuff on the field and endanger athletes, you've got a chance to get your call reversed."

Hard to argue with Visor Man Kirk there. What an embarrassment to Texas and the Southeastern Conference—not to mention an affront to the good, stainless steel folks of the reusable water bottle industry.

The SEC fined Texas \$250,000, a pittance barely enough to buy a third-string punter. Texas released a meek statement: *While we deeply appreciate the passion and loyalty of our fan base at the University of Texas at Austin, we do not condone the unsportsmanlike conduct that was exhibited by some individuals throwing objects onto the field during last night's game...*

While we deeply appreciate the passion and loyalty of our fan base...Who is Texas trying to placate here? People who threw water bottles and missed?

Now I know what you're thinking: *Jason, settle down, you old crab. The officials ultimately made the right call. That's the bottom line.*

To that I'll say this: I am an old

crab. And I agree it was a terrible call, really lousy, and might have meant something in a game that Texas wasn't being thoroughly handled in. (As it turned out, the No. 1 Longhorns scored shortly after the interception, but still wound up being thumped 30-15, dropping to No. 5 in the rankings.)

But what was very obvious to anyone watching was that the botle meltdown, uh, worked—the lengthy cleanup delay appeared to give the tormented officials

breathing room to consult each other and flip a controversial call.

Doesn't the water thrower think: Well, I did my job? (I won-

der: Is some enterprising student going to get a water bottle name, image, likeness deal?)

What message does this send for the future? Tantrums away? What happens in the upcoming 12-team playoff when mighty Indiana is playing undefeated Navy for the National Championship (don't laugh; it could happen) and the Hoosiers don't like a call on the field? Kroger bottle hailstorm?

If that is the bottom line, count me out.

Like most fiascos in sports, this has all been a long time coming.

The tiresome obsessiveness with

instant replay and slo-mo forensics has made too many fans think that

games should be immaculate events with no room for human interpretation or error.

This obstinate fussiness, routinely soft-pedaled as the pursuit of "fairness," has infected sports from the big time professionals all the way down to Pee-wee weekends.

It's why NFL games are constantly delayed by "challenges" of pinkie touches and out-of-bounds toes and you need at least three Ph.D.s to know what a catch is anymore.

It's why the final two minutes of too many NBA games have become borderline unwatchable. It's

why the mention of VAR makes a European soccer fan crawl under a

coffee table. It's why over-criticized youth sports referees and umpires are bailing by the busload.

This pursuit of "fairness"—a lot of it driven by ever-accessible gambling apps—sells a dubious idea: that sports, or life, will ever truly be fair. Setbacks aren't there to overcome—they're to be reviewed and overturned.

Don't like it? Don't put your head down and try harder.

Just throw a plastic bottle. Throw a spiral, you might even get recruited!

What a season for the WNBA. From the arena-filling arrival of college star Caitlin Clark to the increased enthusiasm for the entire enterprise, it's been a landmark season, as Rachel Bachman writes.

How appropriate, then, for the 2024 campaign to come down to an epic, rowdy, messy but undeniably thrilling final between the New York Liberty and the Minnesota Lynx.

This series had everything: packed rooms, crazed fans, epic comebacks, terrible chokes, close finishes, a near-half court buzzer beater, curious coaching decisions, missed free throws, clutch free throws, a truly

brick-tastic night from star Sabrina Ionescu (1-19 in the finale, eek) a few too many replay reviews and lastly, a staggering overtime home victory for Ionescu, Breanna Stewart and the Liberty (a first in franchise history) in the do-or-die decisive Game 5.

This is the way the WNBA wins: on the court, as an event. This year, the women's collegiate Final Four was a vastly better (and more watched) showcase than the men's Final Four. Same for the pro finals: Celtics-Mavericks was a snooze compared to Lynx-Liberty.

Numbers will render what 2024 meant for the business of women's game. As a pure entertainment product, it was hard to beat.

SARAH DUGGINS/REUTERS



Texas coach Steve Sarkisian encouraged fans to stop throwing items on to the field after a controversial call.

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This obstinate fussiness, routinely soft-pedaled as the pursuit of "fairness," has infected sports from the big time professionals all the way down to Pee-wee weekends.

It's why NFL games are constantly delayed by "challenges" of pinkie touches and out-of-bounds toes and you need at least three Ph.D.s to know what a catch is anymore.

It's why the final two minutes of too many NBA games have become borderline unwatchable. It's

why the mention of VAR makes a European soccer fan crawl under a



Patrick Mahomes now uses his abilities to dissect defenses rather than carve them up with one deep heave.

distance among qualified quarterbacks.

It's hard to blame all of this on

Mahomes. Since 2022, he hasn't had Hill, who the team dealt away to the Dolphins. At the same time,

Travis Kelce is no longer a weekly wrecking ball now that he's 35 years old. To make matters worse, No. 1 receiver Rashee Rice went down in September with a knee injury that will likely end his season.

For now, he's left trying to beat those defenses with a receiving corps featuring a combination of castoffs, retreads and unproven players. One potential bright spot

is rookie speedster Xavier Worthy,

whose average target depth entering Sunday was 9.7 yards and has already this season caught two

heaves for 54- and 35-yard touch-

downs.

On Sunday, Mahomes tried go-

ing down the field more often, but

it didn't go so well. It turned out

the biggest play he made was actu-

ally with his legs—a brilliant 33-

yard run that was a reminder of the

magic he can pull off.

The Data

The Minnesota Vikings entered Sunday with perhaps the NFL's best defense, giving up just 15.2 points per game. But they lost their undefeated record after they couldn't handle a red-hot Jared Goff and the Detroit Lions, who coughed up a lead but ultimately

came out on top 31-29 on a late field goal.

Goff's overall line was stellar,

completing 22-of-25 passes for

280 yards and two touchdowns.

But what was even more impres-

sive is how he performed against

Minnesota's scary pass rush: Goff

was pressured on 51.7% of his

dropbacks and completed 10-of-11

passes for 164 yards—and both of

his touchdown passes. It isn't an

anomaly for Goff who's averaging

11.6 yards per attempt under pres-

sure, and there isn't another quar-

terback in the league over even 9

yards per throw, according to the

NFL's player tracking.

In fact, Goff has been on a run

for the ages. Over his last three

games, which includes his historic

18-for-18 performance in Septem-

ber, he has recorded a passer rat-

ing of at least 140 in all three.

That puts Goff in elite company

with only three other quarter-

backs to do that: Aaron Rodgers, Kurt

Warner and Roger Staubach.

The Decision

There were two blockbuster

trades for wide receivers last

week: the Jets reunited Aaron

Rodgers with Davante Adams, his

former top target in Green Bay,

while the Bills added Amari Cooper.

Cooper quickly showed what he

can add to Buffalo's Super Bowl

aspirations, hauling in a touch-

down and 66 yards after hardly

being with the team. It went less well for Adams—he had three catches on nine targets for 30 yards in Sunday night's 37-15 loss to the Steelers.

Adams's acquisition was an especially bold move by the Jets, who are now 2-5. That means they likely have to finish the season 8-2 to have a good chance at the playoffs.

The Debate

The Deshaun Watson acquisition has been an utter disaster for the Cleveland Browns—and it somehow just got worse.

The quarterback who the team paid so much to acquire, and then gave an enormous guaranteed contract, suffered what appears to be a season-ending torn Achilles on Sunday.

For the Browns, there are simply no appealing options to solve this problem. Releasing Watson would present an even bigger financial mess for the team because of his contract and how it would hit the salary cap. No team figured to want to trade for him before the injury, and that is out of the question now.

But with a 1-6 record after Sunday's loss to the Bengals, Cleveland could end up in prime position to draft a quarterback—and might have to do it, even knowing they can't get out of the exorbitant money they already owe Watson.

JED JACOBSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

OPINION

Alvin Bragg's Latest Injustice

MAIN STREET
By William McGurn

Jury selection began this week in the Manhattan trial of Daniel Penny. A 25-year-old former Marine, Mr. Penny is charged with second-degree manslaughter and negligent homicide in the death of 30-year-old Jordan Neely on a New York subway. Two weeks from the presidential election, the case has become a metaphor for the

He prosecutes Daniel Penny, who defended subway riders from a threatening vagrant.

dysfunction of a justice system no longer capable of distinguishing the good guys from the threats.

The story begins on May 1, 2023, when Neely, who was black, boarded an F train and delivered what one witness described as an "insanely threatening" rant, saying he was hungry, "fed up" and ready to go to jail and that "someone is going to die today." Mr. Penny, who is white, put Neely in a chokehold and restrained him for five to six minutes. The medical examiner said the chokehold caused Neely's death.

District Attorney Alvin Bragg has the discretion to choose which crimes to prosecute and which to let go. He

could have let Mr. Penny plead guilty to a lesser charge, even a misdemeanor. But Mr. Bragg doesn't have the stomach for the progressive blowback that would inevitably follow such a move.

The cops at the scene didn't arrest Mr. Penny. He wasn't taken into custody until 11 days later, after protesters likened Neely to George Floyd. Black Lives Matter tweeted that Mr. Penny's actions constituted "vigilante" justice. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez called Neely's death a "public murder." New York Democratic state Sen. Julie Salazar said it was "a lynching."

If convicted, Mr. Penny faces five to 15 years on the manslaughter charge and up to four years on the negligent homicide charge. Prosecutors hope to prove that he "recklessly" caused Neely's death. Mr. Penny will argue that he acted reasonably to subdue a man he thought would kill someone if he wasn't stopped.

Witness testimony will be crucial—and conflicting. Some people on that train say Mr. Penny saved them from a violent, deranged lunatic. But prosecutors say Mr. Penny continued the chokehold for almost a minute after Neely went limp. A eyewitness heard on a video made at the scene warns Mr. Penny to let go lest Neely die. As menacing as Neely was that day, he didn't attack anyone and wasn't carrying any weapons.

We've learned a great deal more about Neely since his death. Rolling Stone de-



Daniel Penny

Bragg knew it all and chose to indict Mr. Penny anyway.

Obtaining an indictment required Mr. Bragg to demonstrate only probable cause that Mr. Penny committed the crimes with which he is charged. Seeking one was a question of judgment. What ordinary Americans see here is a good man who served his country in uniform and stepped forward to protect others from a deranged person—and who is now being treated like he's the criminal. There's a reason an online fundraiser has pulled in \$3.1 million for Mr. Penny's legal defense.

None of this changes the sad reality that Jordan Neely's life was a tragedy. He was a heavy user of K2, a powerful synthetic cannabinoid that can lead to violent or suicidal behavior. He suffered from mental illness and was likely experiencing a psychotic incident when he boarded that train. Even the city recognized him as a person who desperately needed help.

With all this, his record shows he remained a threat to himself and others. And what we see from this case is that instead of taking erratic people off the streets and giving them the treatment they need, progressive city officials simply throw up their hands. Ordinary people are left to fend for themselves.

And when things go horribly wrong, as they are bound to do, all of it gets dumped on the Good Samaritans who dare to step into the breach.

Write to mcgurn@wsj.com.

BOOKSHELF | By Tunku Varadarajan

Dishing From Downing Street

Unleashed

By Boris Johnson
Harper, 784 pages, \$40

In December 2019, Britain's Conservative Party, led by Boris Johnson, won the general election by a landslide, scooping up a bigger chunk of the vote than any party since 1979 (when Margaret Thatcher was leader). This was an eye-popping improvement on the Conservatives' wretched performance two years earlier, when, captained by Theresa May, they lost their parliamentary majority and clung to power only as a much-derided minority government. Mr. Johnson, like his idol Maggie, is blessedly mononymous. Britons habitually refer to him by his first name alone. Under Boris—and, it must be said, largely because of Boris, whose political style and vocabulary were so much more appealing to voters than the plodding ways of Mrs. May—the party soared to a majority of 80 seats in the House of Commons.

Mr. Johnson writes about the 2019 election (and very much else) in "Unleashed," his shamelessly, deliciously self-serving memoir, whose title is more than a little absurd since he has rarely in his life been leashed. He is a law unto himself, truly boffo at both self-aggrandizement and self-deprecation, a master of the art of puffing himself up by belittling himself ever so slightly. He points out that, in 2019, British voters elected Tory members of Parliament from constituencies where the sight of a Conservative activist would have "triggered a lynch mob, or at least a hail of eggs."

The country, he says, "had undergone a conversion" and had "come out en masse for the party of Disraeli and Thatcher—or in this case, as I liked to imagine, a subtle combination of them both." This is classic Boris. Of course it is droll. He doesn't really expect you to buy into the idea that he's a blend of two of the finest Conservative prime ministers Britain has had. But he's inviting you to accept the idea—and how could you not?—that he's self-assured enough, and triumphant enough, to make a little joke at his own expense. Time and again he will remind you of his frailties and his foibles, tell you that he is "a prize gaffe-merchant," all to lull you into a sort of sly and amiable connection with him as a cheeky chap who may be of the elite but who isn't—by Jove!—at all elitist. "I am a proud member," he writes, "of the pushy bourgeoisie." (Mr. Johnson went to Eton, Britain's most exclusive private school, and Oxford.) Throughout his book he makes much of his pet slogan, "level up," which is his way of addressing socioeconomic inequality. Unlike the left, which aims to make everyone equal by taking away apparent advantage from the privileged, Mr. Johnson wants to "create ladders, springboards, trampolines, catapults" that will help the disadvantaged ascend to privilege.

"Unleashed" is a gargantuan book, sprawling across the stages and obsessions of Mr. Johnson's life. He has been, variously, a member of Parliament, the mayor of London, the foreign secretary (under Mrs. May) and prime minister, as well as a brilliantly contrarian journalist and a silver-tongued champion of Brexit. His language is a blend of arch echoes from the Beano (a British comic magazine)—locutions like "whoomph," "whoosh" and "thudderoo"—and

The former British prime minister has a talent for the acerbic put-down. The EU's Brexit negotiator is 'prickly, Cartesian and suspicious.'

lines that could have come from P.G. Wodehouse. (His party's chief whip has "enormous pheasant-strangling hands.") Mr. Johnson has a great gift for encapsulating a person's character in a small string of words, often acerbic. Michel Barnier, who was the European Union's chief Brexit negotiator and is today the prime minister of France, is "prickly, Cartesian and suspicious." Donald Trump, we are told, has a "giant inflatable personality." In 2019 the U.S. president signaled his enthusiastic approval of Mr. Johnson, which leads the author to observe: "In U.K. politics if you can survive the endorsement of Donald Trump then you can survive anything." (Well, almost anything.)

Mr. Johnson can be cruel even as he's funny. Mrs. May is "old grumpyknicker." Once, when she was making a speech, "she stood above me on her platform, waving her pale arms heavenward like some priestess from the pages of Rider Haggard." Her chancellor of the exchequer, Philip Hammond, is "dry as dust but with an excellent political brain." Of Michael Gove, a fellow Tory who played Brutus to Mr. Johnson's Caesar, he writes: "Incurably fond as I am of Michael, I think I speak for several Tory ex-PMs if I say it is always a good idea to watch him in the wing mirror."

Fact-checkers have, and will, come out in droves to dispute many assertions made by Mr. Johnson. But is there anyone who will read his book without a bag of salt on the side, from which to take a pinch whenever required? Some claims will leave readers gobsmacked. Did Benjamin Netanyahu really plant, as Mr. Johnson mischievously suggests, a listening device "in the thunderbox" when he asked to use Mr. Johnson's "entirely private" bathroom in the Foreign Office in London? We will never know, but I'd like to believe that he did.

The subject on which Mr. Johnson toots his own horn the least is the one for which he deserves our greatest thanks: Ukraine. Yes, he makes clear that he was the first Western leader to champion Volodymyr Zelensky, but he does it in a way that does not exceed the quantum of his contribution. He doesn't exaggerate, as he does in his narrative of Brexit, though he does persuade us that many "Remainers" were arrogant metropolitan chumps who scorned blue-collar Brits. He writes of Bob Geldof "flicking V-signs" at pro-Brexit fishermen: "The sight of the multi-millionaire rock star taunting and mocking these fishermen . . . was almost as big a boost for the Leave campaign . . . as Barack Obama's pledge that Brexit Britain would have to go to 'the back of the queue.'"

If any sphere of action confirms that—for all the scandals, including an absurdly British kerfuffle called Partygate that led to his eventual resignation—Mr. Johnson is a fundamentally decent mensch, it is his unflinching support for the Ukrainians and hatred for Vladimir Putin. In this war of Good versus Evil, it was essential to have Boris in the trenches.

Mr. Varadarajan, a Journal contributor, is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and at NYU Law School's Classical Liberal Institute.



Berlin

When German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier awarded Joe Biden the Grand Cross special class of the German Order of Merit in

Bellevue Palace here last week, it was a moment of vindication for the beleaguered American president. The only other American so honored was George H.W. Bush, who supported German reunification at the end of the Cold War against objections from Russia, Britain and France.

Mr. Biden believes that the U.S.-German partnership is the foundation of the trans-Atlantic alliance. As the West faces challenges from a newly energized and aggressive group of authoritarian and totalitarian revisionist powers, Mr. Biden thinks the U.S.-German partnership will stand at the heart of the alliance of democracies united in defense of the current world order.

The Trump administration, as Mr. Biden sees it, failed to grasp the centrality of this alliance, with devastating consequences around the world. Rebuilding Washington's alliance with Berlin was the core of Mr. Biden's strategy to reassert American leadership. His stance is appreciated in Germany, and Mr. Steinmeier spoke for millions of his fellow citizens when he told Mr.

But there's a fly in the ointment. Mr. Steinmeier went on to say, "And then, only a year later, came Putin's war. When Putin invaded Ukraine, he didn't just go after one country. He attacked the very principles of peace in Europe."

As Mr. Steinmeier conspicuously did not say but undoubtedly knows, some 32 months in, Russia is winning. Despite draconian sanctions, a hobbled economy, a corrupt state, and poorly trained officers and troops, Mr. Putin's forces are driving Ukraine's army back step by step while Russian air attacks cripple Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Meanwhile, pro-Russian parties are expanding across the former East Germany, and a chorus of American voices are demanding an end to U.S. support for Ukraine.

Team Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and their North Atlantic Treaty Organization counterparts deserve credit for rallying to Ukraine's defense and preventing its collapse in the opening months of the war. Without Western help, most if not all of Ukraine would likely now be occupied by the Russians. Even so, the NATO allies' inability to defeat a Russian invasion in their backyard broadcasts an unmistakable signal of weak-

ness around the world. China and North Korea are shedding their worries about Western threats and stepping up their support of Mr. Putin's invasion.

Early in the war, Washington and Berlin believed that Mr. Putin was headed for defeat. Sanctions would cripple his economy, and public discontent would inexorably mount as the war dragged on. Western technology would give Ukraine enough of an edge on the battlefield to block Russian offensives, and in the end Mr. Putin would come to the West looking for an off-ramp from a ruinous war.

Facing years of aid for a costly war, the West is now likely to seek, not offer, an off-ramp.

Those were the good old days. Most Western observers now believe Mr. Putin's hold on his country is rock solid. His economy has adjusted to a war footing, and deepening partnerships with North Korea, China and Iran keep him well-supplied with weapons, technology and reportedly even North Korean mercenary troops. Kyiv is trapped in a war of attrition against a larger foe. The West faces the prospect of years of increasingly expensive subsidies and military assistance for Ukraine.

These are hard truths that neither Team Biden nor Team Scholz wants to face—and to which they have no realistic response. Mr. Biden is welcome to his Order of Merit, but as he prepares to leave office, the partnership between Germany and the U.S. is failing its most important test since the presidency of George H.W. Bush.

What the Scholz and Biden teams now want is an off-ramp from Mr. Putin. A compromise peace in which Ukraine surrenders territory to Russia but gains NATO and European Union membership would, they hope in Washington and Berlin, be acceptable to Kyiv and bring a not-too-humiliating end to a costly and dangerous war.

Mr. Putin, unfortunately, isn't in the business of offering easy off-ramps. Sensing Western war-weariness and Ukrainian weakness, he will probably demand a high price for peace. His territorial demands will likely be large. And letting Ukraine join NATO is not on his to-do list.

There are three things Mr. Putin wants from the war: as much of Ukraine's territory and population as he can conquer, Russian vetoes over the foreign and economic policy of what is left of Ukraine after the war, and a substantial weakening of both NATO and the EU. Although the costs are high, every day of the war brings Mr. Putin closer to all three objectives.

These are hard truths that neither Team Biden nor Team Scholz wants to face—and to which they have no realistic response. Mr. Biden is welcome to his Order of Merit, but as he prepares to leave office, the partnership between Germany and the U.S. is failing its most important test since the presidency of George H.W. Bush.

Criminal Migrants Run Free in My District

By Tony Gonzales

My constituents live with immigration's effects every day. Texas' 23rd Congressional District, which encompasses several hundred miles of the southern border, is the largest border district in the nation. The approximately 11 million migrant "encounters" our country has endured since fiscal 2021 has spread violence and inflicted economic distress. Frequent high-speed chases between drug runners or human smugglers and law-enforcement agents endanger our residents.

On March 13, I sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security requesting the number of illegal immigrants on Immigration and Customs Enforcement's docket who had been convicted or charged with a crime.

On Sept. 25, the depart-

ment replied: "As of July 21, 2024, there were 662,566 noncitizens with criminal histories on ICE's national docket, which includes those detained by ICE, and on the agency's non-detained docket." This includes 435,719 "convicted criminals" and 226,847 with "pending criminal charges." Of the 662,566 illegal immigrants with criminal records, approximately 647,000 weren't detained. This number doesn't include those who evaded ICE's eye.

The department included a chart that listed all the charges against those who had been detected entering the country illegally. It reported that 207,697 illegal aliens convicted or charged with "assault," "dangerous drugs," "sexual assault" or "sex offenses" hadn't been detained.

Our communities were no-

ticeably safer thanks to such enforcement during Donald Trump's tenure. That ended

when the Biden-Harris administration almost immediately dismantled the hands of Customs and Border Protection agents by refusing to enforce immigration laws. People with ties to terrorist groups, transnational criminal organizations and other nefarious outfits have since entered our country unchecked.

My district endures this burden with nothing but lip service from Washington. As Americans go to the polls this November, my message is similar to what William Barret Travis conveyed in his famous 1836 letter from the Alamo: "I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all dispatch."

Mr. Gonzales, a Republican, represents Texas' 23rd Congressional District. Phil Gramm contributed to this article.

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Trump, Harris and McDonald's

Donald Trump on Sunday visited a McDonald's franchise in Pennsylvania where he strapped on an apron and served french fries to drive-through customers. It was a nice photo-op. But the fast-food aficionado missed a bigger opportunity to highlight how Kamala Harris's agenda endangers such jobs and franchise restaurants.

Ms. Harris says she once worked at a McDonald's, while Mr. Trump says she hasn't. We don't know who's right. But there's no doubt that fast-food jobs provide young people lessons in treating customers courteously, showing up on time, and taking and following orders, which can serve them well throughout their careers. So why does the Vice President want to make it harder to work there?

* * *

Start with the Biden National Labor Relations Board's joint-employer rule, which seeks to hold corporate parents responsible for the labor practices of franchisees. The agency's goal is to make it easier for unions to organize workers at franchises. The rule would reduce franchisee autonomy and increase their costs, resulting in fewer jobs.

The Senate and House this spring approved bipartisan resolutions to block the rule. Voting to keep the rule were Democratic Sens. Bob Casey (Pa.), Tammy Baldwin (Wis.), Sherrod Brown (Ohio), Jacky Rosen (Nevada.) and Michigan Rep. Elissa Slotkin. President Biden vetoed the resolution. The Pro Act, which Ms. Harris supports, would codify the rule.

Ms. Harris has also backed raising the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour, though she hasn't specified a level. The Administration has endorsed a \$15 federal minimum, and some on the left want to increase it to \$20. This is a recipe for more jobless teens.

A handful of states have increased their minimum wage to \$15 or more. A recent Beacon Economics study found that median unemployment was 3.1% in the 20 states that mimic the federal minimum wage, versus 4.2% in the 15 states with minimums between \$14 and \$17.

Higher minimum wages price teens out of the job market since they usually have the least experience and skills. Look no further than Ms. Harris's home state of California, where Demo-

Her policies would make it harder for young people to get jobs at fast-food franchises.

crats raised the minimum to \$16 an hour from \$12 in 2020. Over the past two years, unemployment among those ages 16 to 19 has soared to 19.2% from 10.8%, versus 11.9% from 10.5% nationwide. California's new \$20 minimum wage for fast-food workers has compounded the problem.

Like other restaurant chains, McDonald's has had to cope with a tight labor market and inflationary costs. This has contributed to higher prices. The average cost of a Big Mac meal nationwide has increased to \$9.29 from \$7.29 in 2019. A Hamburger Happy Meal has risen to \$4.69 from \$3.00.

Progressives accuse McDonald's of "price gouging," but its prices have increased in line with its cost of goods and labor. Yet Ms. Harris wants to give the Federal Trade Commission authority to punish alleged price gouging by the food industry—that is, fix prices. FTC Chair Lina Khan's agency would determine if McDonald's franchisees are charging too much for a happy meal.

Relatedly, the FTC last year sought public comment on franchise agreements including "the pervasiveness and rationale for franchisors marketing their franchises using languages other than English." Ms. Khan apparently doesn't like that McDonald's and other corporations are giving minorities opportunities to launch businesses.

The FTC wants to micromanage franchise relationships under the guise of protecting workers and franchisees. Ms. Khan is also seeking to collect information that she and her union friends can use to sue franchised businesses. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) says as much.

The franchise system has "legalized the use of myriad vertical restraints that allow franchisors" to avoid "the costs and liability that legal responsibility for those small businesses and their workers would entail," the SEIU wrote in a public comment. For this reason, franchise practices "may also be vulnerable to FTC challenge as unfair methods of competition."

Ms. Harris talks up her grants and loans for small businesses, but the local McDonald's and other franchisees are on her target list. That won't help low-income workers.

The Absent Government Workforce

Working from home every day is a fading memory for most Americans, but it's become a permanent perk of government work, leaving federal offices vacant. Some lawmakers want to give agencies two options: Call your staff back in or sell off wasted space.

Sens. Joni Ernst (R., Iowa) and Gary Peters (D., Mich.) are behind the ultimatum. Under their Telework Transparency Act, each federal agency would have to lay out its work-from-home policy and count how many people come into the office. That would give Congress the data it needs to crack down on laggards. The Senate Homeland Security Committee approved the bill by a 12-2 vote last month.

Congressional action is overdue since nearly every agency has let mass absence linger. Not one of the 24 largest agencies used even half of its office space during a three-month period last year, according to the Office of Personnel Management. The Social Security Administration was essentially a ghost town, with 7% of space occupied.

Mass government telework has been costly and sometimes crooked. At the Commerce Department, nearly a quarter of sampled employees continued to claim residence in Washington or other pricey cities after moving to less ex-

Fully remote work lives on in Washington, and it's costing taxpayers.

pensive places, which let them keep a higher pay level. Sen. Ernst has catalogued cases of federal employees golfing, taking bubble baths and even sitting in jail on Uncle Sam's time.

Yet the Biden Administration has stonewalled attempts to learn the scale of the problem. The nonprofit watchdog Open the Books requested location data for federal workers under the Freedom of Information Act. The Administration returned a document with 281,000 redactions, making it impossible to know how many workers even claim they're still in the capital.

The bright side is that once the numbers are gathered, an existing law will force agencies to act.

The Federal Property Management Reform Act mandates that the executive branch create and carry out annual plans to reduce unused space. Many agencies have dodged this by being vague about how much space they're wasting, but the Senate bill would shed light into their vacant cubicles.

Federal office space eats up about \$7 billion a year, including the cost of leasing, maintenance and operations. Selling even some of that would produce worthwhile savings, and perhaps force an agency or two into running more efficiently.

Arizona's Chance to Check Regulators

U.S. and state lawmakers often dodge political accountability by passing broad legislation that lets unelected regulators write the specific rules Americans are then obliged to follow. Arizona Republicans are trying to rein in a too-willful bureaucracy, but they'll need the help of voters.

A measure on the Nov. 5 ballot, Prop. 315, would require legislative approval for any regulation that the state Office of Economic Opportunity projects would impose costs of \$500,000 or more over a five-year period. Lawmakers or anyone subject to the proposed rule could request a cost estimate. If lawmakers failed to ratify the rule before the end of the legislative session, the promulgating state agency would have to issue a notice of termination.

Republicans hold a majority in the Arizona House and Senate and this year passed a bill to require legislative approval for costly regulations. Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs vetoed it, claiming such a check "would create an unnecessary burden on state agencies that would inhibit their ability to carry out duties in a timely manner."

But the issue isn't timeliness, or the burden on bureaucrats as if they are beleaguered souls. The issue is who decides—elected officials, or unelected regulators?

Opposition to Prop. 315 is mainly coming

Prop. 315 would require legislative approval for the costliest rules.

from the political left, which tells you what's really going on. Two Arizona Sierra Club chapters betray what opponents fear when they

claim Prop. 315 "undermines the autonomy of state agencies." Agencies aren't supposed to be autonomous. They are supposed to faithfully implement the law as passed, not impose their own

policy views.

The state's League of Women Voters calls the ballot measure "an attempt by corrupt politicians to enforce authoritarian rule by creating yet another obstructionist tool that they can use to block policies they don't agree with." Got that? It's now "authoritarian" to give democratically elected lawmakers a check over bureaucrats never chosen by voters.

Arizona lawmakers are able to put a proposal before voters with a simple majority that doesn't require the Governor's approval, as Republicans have done in putting Prop. 315 on the ballot. Voting yes would essentially override Ms. Hobbs's veto. Kansas lawmakers overrode a veto to adopt a similar law this year.

Arizona's Administrative Code contains

more than 65,800 commands, according to George Mason University's Mercatus Center.

That's fewer than many states, but Arizona's citizens and especially small businesses would benefit from the political accountability that

Prop. 315 would bring to government.

Opposition to Prop. 315 is mainly coming

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why the Air Force Can't Get Off the Ground

Sens. Roger Wicker and Eric Schmitt convincingly argue that the U.S. Air Force must have more manned combat aircraft even as it prepares for the transition to unmanned airpower ("How the U.S. Air Force Can Reclaim the Skies," op-ed, Oct. 14). But that requires an aviation industry capable of producing those aircraft—and the U.S. aviation industry has declined disastrously because of a fundamental error made by then-Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, which his successors failed to correct.

Knowing that the end of the Cold War would reduce demand for manned aircraft, he encouraged the aviation industry's "consolidation" to the point that we have only one fighter house for the U.S. Air Force, Navy, Marines and most of our allies (Lockheed Martin), one producer of large military aircraft of every category (Boeing) and one producer of stealth bombers (Northrop Grumman), each a perfect monopoly.

Unsurprisingly, they behave as monopolies always do, price-gouging the Pentagon, focusing on protecting

their monopolies by hiring hordes of retired officers, as well as lobbyists galore. They place lawyers and accountants far above engineers in their decision hierarchy.

The consequences were perfectly predictable. The U.S. Air Force tanker program, based on the conversion of the already outdated 767 passenger airliners—a straightforward job, done many times before—has repeatedly been delayed over the years by Boeing's somnolent management and demoralized engineers. The Air Force and U.S. allies like Israel now must still use 50-year-old tankers.

But the most elementary consequence of monopoly is to push up prices. Certainly Lockheed's inexcusable fighter monopoly has resulted in very high and rising prices for all types of F-35s, by now a rather old aircraft whose most innovative feature, the helmet-mounted display, wasn't developed by Lockheed.

EDWARD N. LUUTWAJK

Chevy Chase, Md.

Mr. Luutwak is author of "The Art of Military Innovation" and other books.

A Life Consumed by Hate Ends Amid Rubble

Not long after reading your editorial "Yahya Sinwar Dies as He Lived" (Oct. 18), I came across Al Jazeera's description of him: "Born in 1962 in a refugee camp in Khan Younis. His family was displaced by Zionist gangs during the 1948 Nakba."

That prompted me to reflect on my own life. I was born in 1961 in Milan, Italy, after my father fled Aleppo, Syria, in 1947 due to rising antisemitism and fear for his life. After his death in 2003, we discovered a letter from the United Nations rejecting his petition for refugee status. With his family scattered around the globe, my father became an Italian citizen, established a successful business and gave his daughters world-class educations. Despite losing everything, he carried no bitterness. When he spoke of Aleppo, it was with a smile, always focused on the future and determined to build a better tomorrow.

CLAUDIA HARARI BARSON

Miami

Having seen the Israel Defense Forces drone footage documenting Sinwar's final moments, I can only hope that, as he gazed at his own injured hand, the terrorist's last thoughts were of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, the slain Israeli-American who lost his dominant left arm as he tried courageously to protect fellow Israelis from the horrors Sinwar unleashed on Oct. 7, 2023.

DAVID FADDIS

Corvallis, Ore.

Why Do We Tolerate Beijing's Belligerence?

"Western Spy Agencies Sound Alarms on Chinese Espionage" (Page One, Oct. 15) lays bare the reality of China's economic model. The sheer volume of articles on this topic and related theft should make it clear that times have changed. What China once did quietly has now become loudly belligerent and anticompetitive. The Chinese Communist Party demands access to intellectual property just as it does for servers and security-camera feeds. Too many of our companies have meekly accepted this general subjugation to the Communist Party's new order.

For years we have seen China combine its command economy, blended civil-military sector, and leverage over Western companies to inflict significant damage on the U.S. and global economies. Why do we tolerate this situation and still view China as a viable option? Beijing's economic model is fundamentally at odds with the principles of competition and our liberal system.

Corporate leadership needs to act responsibly and prioritize shareholder value. From an investor perspective, we should price these risks into our investments and question whether submitting to Beijing's demands align with fiduciary responsibilities. The insurance industry should also consider whether underwriting operations in China is a viable option.

TOM LYONS

Washington

Savor the Free-Speech Win

Your editorial "The Colorado Cake Baker Wins Again" (Oct. 10) seems to underplay an important point. Jack Phillips's case concerns religious liberty, but it involves something at least as important: freedom of speech.

Mr. Phillips creates original works of art with food coloring and frosting instead of the more conventional canvas and paint. His creations are symbolic speech. No one should be compelled to create a work of art—be it in the form of a cake, painting, or song—that expresses an idea with which he strongly disagrees. A government that compels someone to do so is tyrannical, whether religion is involved or not.

MICHAEL ENDERS

East Haven, Conn.

A Brave Soul Visits Portland

Masada Siegel observes that "Arizona Lawn Signs Point Toward Trump" (op-ed, Oct. 17). That's the opposite of my experience in Portland, Ore., where I've yet to spot a single Trump lawn sign. There are, by contrast, at least a dozen Harris-Walz signs within a block of our home and thousands within the city. What else would you expect from a state that hasn't voted for a Republican president or governor in nearly four decades?

I did, however, recently spot my first Trump bumper sticker. The Tesla had Arizona plates.

REV. GERALD J. BEDNAR

Euclid, Ohio

Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"Why can't mediocre be my aspirational?"

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OPINION

Look Abroad, Presidential Candidates

By Dan Quayle

As is often the case in U.S. presidential elections, both candidates are treating foreign policy as a side issue in this campaign. That's a disservice to the American people. Kamala Harris and Donald Trump aren't running for economist in chief or sociologist in chief but commander in chief. While Congress spends most of its time on domestic policy, the president spends most of his or hers on foreign policy.

With wars raging in Europe and the Middle East and instability in the Pacific region, our next president will be working overtime on foreign policy. Four major geopolitical challenges today will likely determine the legacy of whoever wins the White House.

Foreign policy shouldn't be a side issue in the election. It will determine the legacy of whoever wins.

The first is an ambitious China lying in wait. If there ever were any moderates in the upper echelons of the Chinese Communist Party, none remain. The party is controlled by hawks with specific aims: to take Taiwan and to replace America as the world's pre-eminent superpower.

When I served as vice president, our administration missed this threat. We mistakenly believed China would be a good-faith partner to America and an honest participant in international institutions. Subsequent administrations operated under the same flawed assumption. Now, the hour is late, as we saw with China's aggressive military drills in the Taiwan Strait last week. The next president must deter China's global military agenda.

The second issue is a revanchist Russia controlled by Vladimir Putin. As tragic as the war in Ukraine is, it could one day be remembered as the opening salvo of a far deadlier conflict. Mr. Putin always wants more—a lesson we should have learned after he invaded Georgia in 2008 and annexed Crimea in 2014. A president who appears him now would be making a blunder of 1930s proportions.

The third issue is Middle East turmoil, which all traces back to Iran. True peace in the region is unlikely until there is regime change in Tehran. However the next president handles the mullahs and ayatollahs, we can be sure that it will determine more than just the fate of Israel.

The next president's fourth geopolitical issue is at home: the steady erosion of America's technological edge in defense and warfare. Our military uses ships and jets built decades ago. Meanwhile, China is outpacing our investments in autonomous, hypersonic, cyber and space weapons.

This challenge underlies the other three. If China eclipses America's military might, we'll complete the transition from a unipolar world dominated by America's benevolent strength to a bipolar world in which our enemies unite against us. China, Russia, Iran and North Korea share the same short-term goal: to take down America.

The next president must reassert strong leadership around the globe to prevent these threats from coalescing into a new anti-American axis. The specter of World War III has been tossed around carelessly, but we need serious strategies to prevent it from happening.

If our next president pulls back from global affairs or meets these challenges with weakness, the resulting threat will eclipse any domestic accomplishments. That's why, if our candidates were wise, they would close out their campaigns laser-focused on foreign policy. That's the job they are running for.

Mr. Quayle served as vice president of the United States, 1989-93.

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Ohio's Tale of Two Populisms

By Faith Bottum

Dorsey Hager phones me from the meeting hall of the Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 189 in Columbus, Ohio, minutes before Sen. Sherrod Brown takes the stage at a rally. "There are about 200 people here now," Mr. Hager shouts over the hubbub in the background. "They expect a lot more."

Mr. Hager, 53, helps lead 22 Central Ohio labor unions with about 18,000 members—plumbers, operating engineers, electricians, laborers, sheet metal workers, insulation installers. He wants those members to re-elect Mr. Brown, Ohio's Democratic senator for nearly 18 years. It could be a struggle in a state where Donald Trump leads by 7 points, according to the RealClearPolitics average. But "I think you are going to see Sherrod get a lot of Republican votes," Mr. Hager says. Working-class Ohioans "may not vote for Kamala Harris, but I know that they're going to vote for Sherrod Brown, because they can see how his policies are directly reflected in their paycheck."

"Populism worked for Trump, and populism worked for Brown," says Bradford Quade, 58, a retired teacher from Wadsworth, a suburb of Akron. Mr. Brown voted with the Biden administration 98% of the time, according to ABC News's 538. But he campaigns hard for higher tariffs, tough regulation of financial institutions, and support for labor unions.

Mr. Brown, 71, was born and reared in Mansfield, a city midway between Columbus and Cleveland that was once a tire-manufacturing center. He began his political career in 1975, won his Senate seat in 2006, and has been Ohio's only Democratic statewide elected official since 2011. In a 2019 speech, he thundered: "Trump has used his phony populism to divide Americans and to demonize immigrants." Now he faces a Republican challenger who is an immigrant.

Bernie Moreno, 57, was born in Bogotá, Colombia. His family moved to America when he was a boy, and



ASSOCIATED PRESS

he was naturalized at 18. He worked for General Motors before moving to Ohio in 2005 to run a chain of Mercedes-Benz dealerships. In 2019 he shifted focus to a blockchain-based technology company, Ownum.

While the shaggy, gray-haired Mr. Brown resembles a worn-down teddy bear, Mr. Moreno is tall and fit, with the generic polish of a successful entrepreneur. But he hasn't proved a smooth campaigner. Try-

Democrat Sherrod Brown needs split ballots to win in a state Donald Trump is expected to win easily.

ing to make an ironic point about identity politics at an April 2023 candidate forum, Mr. Moreno fumbled his way into suggesting reparations for white descendants of Civil War soldiers.

The Brown campaign has made hay of a campaign appearance last month, during which Mr. Moreno characterized suburban women's concern about abortion as "a little crazy" and said, "Especially for women that are like past 50—I'm thinking to myself, 'I don't think that's an issue for you.'" A Brown campaign ad features a succession of women mocking the comment and asserting that he favors "a national abortion ban" without excep-

tions for rape or incest. Mr. Moreno described himself in 2022 as "pro-life, no exceptions," but he said last month that he supports "common sense" restrictions after 15 weeks and thinks abortion should mostly be left to the states.

It's easy to see why the Brown campaign considers this as a promising line of attack. Last year, by 57% to 43%, Ohio voters approved a ballot initiative establishing a constitutional right to abortion. Abortion is "the only thing they've got," Mr. Moreno says in an interview. "It's kind of sad."

He is playing offense on another social issue, transgenderism. Republican ads accuse Sen. Brown of supporting legislation that would allow boys to play on girls' sports teams. Mr. Brown hasn't been questioned much by the press about the topic (and declined my interview request), but he released an ad last week saying he believes such decisions should be made by local sports leagues, not politicians.

In our interview, Mr. Moreno reprises a Trumpian litany of woes. "They can't win on the economy because they're a total and complete disaster," he says of the Democrats. "They can't win on the border because they've allowed an invasion in this country to happen at a scale that we've never seen before. . . . Our schools are a total and complete disaster. China's running roughshod over us on trade. We have a massive federal deficit that's

going to destroy anybody under the age of 40."

Factories and natural-gas fields are central to Ohio's economy. Manufacturing accounts for nearly 18% of the state's gross domestic product. In 2022 Ohio was the seventh most populous state but ranked third in total manufacturing employment. Ohio is the leading producer of engines, second in transmissions, third for automotive manufacturing and a leader in electric-vehicle investment. The state is the leading supplier to Airbus and Boeing. "If you took Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania," notes Jerry James, president of Artx Oil Co., based in the small Ohio River city of Marietta, "we would be the third largest natural-gas producer in the world."

Mr. Moreno ties it all together: "We became the rubber capital, the steel capital, the computing capital, the glass capital . . . because we had energy right here." Mr. Brown and Ms. Harris, he insists, "want to get rid of all that."

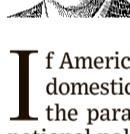
Ohio was once a national bellwether—it supported the winner in every presidential election from 1964 through 2016—but Mr. Trump carried it by more than 8 points in 2020. Mr. Brown leads Mr. Moreno in the RealClearPolitics average, but by only 0.6 point. The outcome of the Ohio Senate race may depend on Mr. Trump's victory margin.

Mr. Brown is a clever campaigner and expects his progressive populism to bring him another victory. He knows that economic appeals can make him sound like Mr. Trump, but he insisted on their differences in that 2019 speech: "Real populism isn't racist. Real populism isn't antisemitic. Real populists don't engage in hate speech and don't rip babies from families at the border. Real populists don't insult people's intelligence by lying."

On Nov. 5 we'll see if Mr. Brown's kind of populism can steal enough split-ballot voters from Mr. Trump's kind of populism to win re-election. Mr. Moreno is almost incidental to this calculation.

Ms. Bottum is an assistant editorial features editor at the Journal.

America Is Far Stronger Than Our Politicians Admit



FREE EXPRESSION
By Gerard Baker

If Americans look out beyond our domestic woes, we can better see the paradox at the heart of our national political debate.

We are two weeks away from an election in which the one thing that unites both parties is the absolute certainty that the country's condition is so fragile that victory for the other side will result in the end of America. We have an administration that pursues a foreign policy whose premise seems to be that we are so weak, we dare not provoke our adversaries—or let our allies do so.

We have a highbrow culture in our universities, theaters and museums and many of our corporate offices that disparages America for its bigotry, oppression and inequality.

We have a lowbrow culture that plays out on social media that thinks the U.S. is run by villains, who, among other things, can create hurricanes and direct their path for political gain.

But in the real world, the one that exists beyond the hysterical rhetoric of partisans and the fevered imaginings of conspiracy theorists, America is in a position of relative strength perhaps as great as it has been since the turn of the century.

This isn't an endorsement of either the Biden or Trump administration. One thing we desperately need to get away from is the silly idea that our country's greatness is a partisan achievement, one that can be evicted by a few thousand voters going the wrong way in a swing state next month. Merely to articulate the thought is to show how stupid it is.

It is rather a call for the next president, as well as focusing on our

problems and flaws, to acknowledge and exploit the remarkable opportunities our enduring greatness gives us.

Look at the axis of revisionist powers that has sought to demonstrate that America's own declinists are right. Russia has spent almost three years mired in a war against a country that before the conflict had a fourth of its population and less than a tenth of its defense budget. America hasn't lost a soldier in Ukraine but thanks to the fearless capability of our materiel and the bravery of the Ukrainians, it has helped fight the once-and-neveragain Eurasian superpower to a standstill.

Israel, our only real ally in a region in which Americans have experienced devastating setbacks over 40 years, its inestimable military girded with American weapons, is blowing over the paper tigers of the Islamic Republic of Iran's proxies and delivering body blows to Tehran's ambitions it hasn't received in more than three decades.

China, now warily watching the ill fortunes of war of its two good friends, has so far exercised a little more military restraint in its quest for hegemony, and may yet try to make good on its bellicose threats of revanchism.

What we can say with confidence is that the much-vaunted economic miracle that was supposed

to guarantee it surpassed the U.S. in the first half of this century, is, under the disastrous warmed-over Maoism of Xi Jinping, more of a mirage.

Look at Europe. It got no attention in our solipsistic election campaign but last month the European Union produced a report documenting in stark detail how far the old Continent has fallen behind the U.S. in

They exaggerate our woes for partisan reasons, threatening to squander a world of opportunities.

economic, technological and defense capability. The stagnancy is so bad that President Emmanuel Macron of France, a man who personifies his nation's innate superiority complex, thinks the EU is in "mortal" danger.

None of this is justification for complacency. That other countries—friends and foes alike—are in the mire doesn't magically dispel our own challenges. But it does suggest an unreality to so much of the debate we have, an almost infantile predilection to invoke imagined terror constantly.

Two main lessons of America's enduring superiority suggest themselves, whoever wins next month.

First, let's commit to preserving and strengthening it. This means reinvesting in the free economy that is the core of our success; restraining the growth of government of the sort that is killing Europe, while dealing with our fiscal mess; continuing to attract a strong flow of legal immigration, picking from the massive pool of the world's talented who want to be here is one of our greatest strengths while rigorously enforcing the border, and reaffirming our faith in the genius of the Constitution's arrangements rather than disparaging them.

Second, we need to project much more strategic self-confidence.

We have an administration that is afraid of America's shadow. The timidity that lay behind the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan has been reflected in its efforts to restrain Israel from winning its existential war and depriving Ukraine of what it needs for a real balance-of-power shift against Russia. Don't think Mr. Trump is that much better. He may have correctly reoriented American policy toward China, but his weird affection for the tyrant there and in Moscow projects a similar lack of faith in our system.

Here's an unpopular opinion: America will survive next month. But if we keep telling ourselves we won't, we'll miss a vital opportunity to keep us safer and freer.

A Lesson From Calvin Coolidge Jr.

By John Masko

In 1923, following his father's presidential inauguration, 15-year-old Calvin Coolidge Jr. received a letter from a teenage boy applauding him for becoming "First Boy in the land." Calvin Jr. declined the title. He explained that he hadn't earned it, and it was better suited to "some boy who had distinguished himself through his own actions." In the 1920s such a sentiment was a typical expression of a young striver's humility. A century later, it's hard to imagine hearing it from any teen, or even an adult.

I first noticed what I call titular inflation when I was in college and my classmates' email signatures begin to lengthen.

Freshman year, students stated their name, school and year. By senior year, they included "B.A./B.S. candidate," a list of every menial position in a student club and, often, an inspirational quote. Teachers' signatures likewise inflated into miniature CVs—professional-society memberships, fellowships, their assistant editorship of an obscure journal and their most re-

cent book (with Amazon link). But I noticed that the professors we respected the most for their acuity, character and kindness had the shortest signatures—sometimes only their initials.

We've reached peak title inflation. "Associates" or "assistants" have been promoted to "coordinator." "Physicians' assistants" have become "advanced practice providers." Inverting the Book of Matthew's injunction not to "sound a trumpet before thee" by touting our accomplishments, we now carry a whole brass band called LinkedIn, where we hoard endorsements and certifications and seek to be first to congratulate others for theirs.

In this environment, I found it refreshing to receive an email from a freshman at the small liberal-arts college where I teach, signed with the student's name and then the phrase "Holder of No Specific Titles." It was pointedly amusing, but in a way that also brought a palpable sense of relief. Thank God. A student who's just a student. A latter-day Calvin Jr.

The dark side of America's title

obsession is that it has preoccupied us with acquiring the signals of knowledge—titles, citations and epaulettes—rather than the actual knowledge to back them up. It has robbed us of the joy of simply being a student. Socrates famously professed that he knew only that he knew nothing. Surely he would have qualified for a cushy government post had he sought an off-ramp from the life of a poor street epistemologist. But that would have meant subordinating his intellectual freedom to society's expectations of government ministers. It likely would have meant no "Phaedo," no "Symposium," no "Republic." Far better to reject the title and retain the radical freedom of the intellectually unfettered.

In the spirit of our nation of strivers, I offer my student's email signature to my fellow Americans as an example of humility. Even if I don't put it in writing, I imagine that all my correspondence ends: "John Masko, Holder of No Specific Titles." I recommend you do the same.

Mr. Masko is a freelance writer based in Boston.

Special Advertising Feature

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Sustainable Synergy: PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY AND PLANET

In an era marked by unprecedented and interconnected global challenges, how can businesses leverage their resources, expertise and influence to become a powerhouse for positive change?

The challenges we face today—climate change, biodiversity loss, social inequality and economic instability—are unprecedented in their scale and complexity. The United Nations warns that by 2025, half of the world's population could be living in regions facing water scarcity,¹ and by 2050, the global food system will need to produce 60% more food to feed our growing population.²

By effectively integrating technology into sustainable practices, companies can drive progress toward a paraconsistent society³—a vision championed by leading global technology company NTT. This approach views social and economic outcomes as being inextricably linked, enabling core business imperatives such as product development and new revenue streams.

Resilience THROUGH INNOVATION

In Japan, nearly 9.6 million people with disabilities represent an underutilized yet critical workforce.⁴ To bridge the gap in Oita prefecture, NTT West developed a digital work-style model that consolidates back-office operations across multiple businesses into a single entity, freeing up resources while creating jobs for people with disabilities. "We matched opportunities to the unique strengths of each worker," says Nobuhiro Sato, director of corporate business at NTT West Oita branch. "It's not just about the digital tools, but about building a culture that respects individual differences."

Meanwhile, as global fisheries suffer from overfishing, NTT Green & Food is adopting land-based aquaculture to stabilize supply. To offset production decline while minimizing environmental impact, the company utilizes controlled environments to raise seafood and cultivate algae with high CO₂ absorption rates. "We aim to promote a circular economy that revitalizes local communities and industries like seafood processing," says Yoshikazu Kusumi, president and CEO of NTT Green & Food. By leveraging new technologies, the company harnesses nature's gifts to nurture both the planet and its resources.

Essential in upholding cloud and AI capabilities, data centers are significant energy consumers, with their power consumption in the U.S. expected to reach 35GW by 2030. To balance these energy demands, the company is

implementing smart technologies to optimize energy use and monitor emissions across facilities: Innovations like Liquid Immersion Cooling, for instance, provide high-density computing while improving energy efficiency by nearly 30%. Transforming manual processes into automated platforms also allows NTT to uncover previously hidden insights, make continuous improvements and guide clients accordingly.

These strategies in responsible innovation showcase how technology can not only solve pressing challenges, but also construct a future where people, businesses and the environment can thrive in tandem.

“ ”

We believe that technology can create a society where differences fade away, allowing everyone to thrive without feeling different.

Nobuhiro Sato, Director, Corporate Business Department, NTT West Oita Branch

 To explore how NTT's technologies power sustainable progress, scan the QR code

¹ UNICEF. ² United Nations. ³ A paraconsistent society is one that accepts and manages contradictions without forcing them to be resolved or choosing one "truth" over another. This type of society focuses on embracing complexity and differences rather than trying to eliminate them. ⁴ Science Japan.

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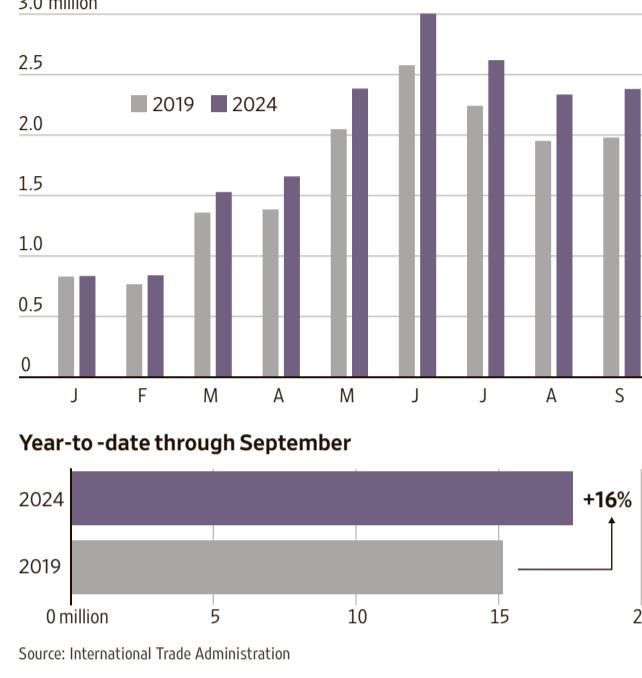
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Airlines Are Betting Big on Europe

U.S. citizens flying to Europe



More seats and new destinations are in carriers' flying plans for next summer

By ALISON SIDER
AND ROSHAN FERNANDEZ

Americans aren't getting sick of European vacations, and airlines are on the hunt for new places to take them.

Delta Air Lines, **United Airlines** and **American Airlines** set their flying plans for next summer, increasing flights to key destinations on the continent while also introducing flights to locales not previously served, such as Nuuk, Greenland, and Catania.

Through September, the number of Americans who flew to Europe this year was up 9% from a year earlier and up 16% from the same period in 2019,

before Covid-19 brought cross-border travel to a standstill, according to the International Trade Administration.

"The savvy traveler has been to Paris, Rome and Madrid. They're looking for something different," said Patrick Quayle, United's senior vice president of global network planning and alliances.

"They just don't want the crowds," said Margi Arnold, owner of Denver-based Creative Travel Adventures.

Some locals are also tired of the tourist throngs, complaining that the crush has overwhelmed popular destinations and that short-term rentals are driving up rents. Protests erupted in Athens and Barcelona this past summer.

Airlines are aware of the backlash but plan to offer close to 3% more seats on routes between the U.S. and Europe next summer than in

2024, according to early schedule data from Cirium, an aviation-data company.

"There's certain markets, there's been a little bit of push-back. The demand continues to stay quite strong," Delta Chief Executive Ed Bastian said.

Brian Znotins, senior vice president of network planning at American, said, "Honestly, I thought maybe that was a one-year deal, everybody would get their Italy and Greece fix and then move on to other destinations." That hasn't been the case.

Next summer, the airline will add a daily flight to Athens from its hub in Charlotte, N.C. Data showed that many travelers were still taking connecting flights to get there. The airline also plans to offer an Edinburgh route for the first time since 2019 in an attempt to attract more high-

Please return to page B2

Wanted: Weekend Warriors In Tech

By HEATHER SOMERVILLE

The Defense Department wants to bring Silicon Valley's top talent deeper into the folds of the military by offering technology executives positions as part-time military officers.

The department is considering asking chief technology officers and other senior tech professionals to take up high-ranking positions in the reserves. The tech reservists would be periodically summoned to help with short-term projects in cybersecurity, data analytics and other areas.

"We're creating this people industrial base that is going to help us solve our national-security problems and national-security challenges in the decades to come," said Brent Parmeter, the department's chief talent management officer.

The Marines and some states have created recruiting programs for civilians with cybersecurity skills, and the armed forces have reserve programs for medical and legal professionals. This latest initiative, however, would be the first time the armed forces bring in private-sector technology professionals as uniformed, paid reservists to leverage their know-how. The plans haven't been previously reported.

Parmeter, who is spearheading the effort, hopes to have an initial group of tech professionals in their military service roles by September. He aims to start with dozens of reservists and wants to expand the program to thousands over the next couple of years.

He said he is still sorting out the details, including identifying the right organizations within the military in which to place the reservists and how to determine their ranking once they join. He said he can't guarantee when the program would start, but he has the authority to launch it and the buy-in on the concept from his superiors.

It is another indication of the tech industry's deepening relationship with the Pentagon and Silicon Valley's about-face on the U.S. military. Once disdainful of defense work, tech startups and their financiers now often embrace national-security opportunities.

Parmeter has been canvassing Silicon Valley and other tech hot spots for possible recruits with help from Shyam Sankar, chief technology officer.

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Influencer Builds an Empire on Book Talk

By JEFFREY A. TRACHTENBERG

The bestselling author Colleen Hoover doesn't like to do interviews. But she made an exception recently to go on "Barely Famous," a podcast hosted by one-time MTV reality star Kaitlyn Lowry.

Lowry, known to millions from her long tenure on "Teen Mom 2," is angling to become a power player in the book world, two years after her show ended.

With some 11 million social-media followers, including 3.3 million on TikTok, she is already among the industry's elite influencers. Authors Jodi Picoult and T.J. Newman have also appeared on her program, which covers issues ranging from pop culture to hair tips to the challenges of raising children.

Lowry is the seventh-most-reviewed reviewer on Goodreads—despite only having joined in June 2023—and operates the Chapter 7 Book Club, where 2,600 members pay for access to group discussions and her latest recommendations.

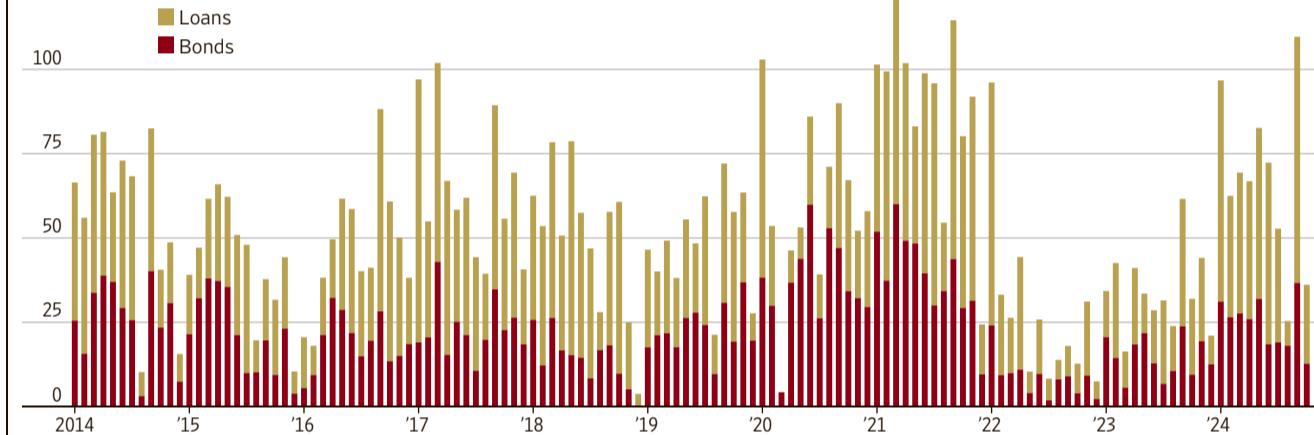
"I'd love to build a little book empire," Lowry, 32 years old, said in a recent interview.

Social-media influencers are collectively making an impact on book sales. There are thousands of video creators on TikTok, YouTube and Instagram pitching and analyzing new titles and reviving interest in books published years ago.

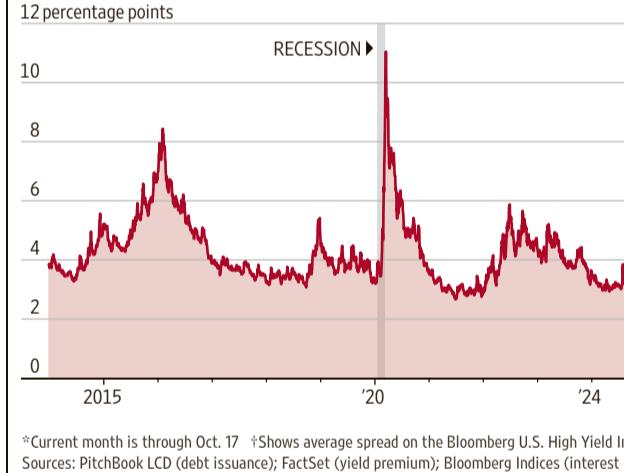
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Hot Bonds Drive Riskier Borrowing

Speculative-grade business debt issuance, monthly*



Yield premium, speculative-grade bonds versus Treasurys†



Average interest rate on speculative-grade corporate bonds outstanding



*Current month is through Oct. 17. †Shows average spread on the Bloomberg U.S. High Yield Index. Sources: PitchBook LCD (debt issuance); FactSet (yield premium); Bloomberg Indices (interest rate).

By SAM GOLDFARB
AND VICKY GE HUANG

Weaker businesses are rushing to take advantage of a red-hot credit market, issuing a deluge of bonds and loans to refinance older debt, strengthen their balance sheets and fund dividend payments to their owners.

In September alone, companies such as **US Foods** and **Royal Caribbean Cruises** borrowed a combined \$109.7 billion in junk-rated bonds and loans, according to PitchBook LCD data. That is the third-largest monthly total in records going back to 2005.

The extra yield that investors demand to hold specula-

tive-grade corporate bonds over U.S. Treasurys fell to 2.85 percentage points last week, just a touch higher than the 14-year lows reached in 2021, according to Bloomberg data. It is a sign investors have few concerns that the economy is on the verge of a slowdown that would spark bankruptcies and defaults among lower-

rated companies.

The chief cause of that optimism: two months of encouraging labor-market data, which have largely swept aside summer concerns about a possible recession. With stock indexes hitting record after record, the surge in corporate borrowing has added to

Please turn to page B2

College Students Outdo Boeing at Drone Warfare

By ALISTAIR MACDONALD |

In an antitrone technology competition earlier this year, **Boeing** showcased a futuristic laser weapon that can punch a hole straight through a hostile aerial threat.

The multinational—and several other defense giants—lost to four college students who knocked drones out of the sky using sound waves. The rookies' device was developed in the backyard of one of the student's parents, using an old car speaker.

The students' success in the technology competition, hosted by the Canadian military, highlights a shifting dynamic in one part of the defense industry. While giant companies have long dominated the weapons business, the advent of drone warfare is giving minnows more of a chance to compete.

Drones used in Ukraine and the Middle East, for example, are often made cheaply with off-the-shelf components by

smaller companies or even individuals. Huge demand is prompting governments to cast a wider net for new equipment.

In Ukraine, there are more than 200, mainly small, drone makers. The U.S. and its allies want to foster more companies that develop drones, and ways to defend against them.

The four University of Toronto engineering students spent around \$17,000 of their own money to develop their antitrone technology. Their speakerlike device blasts ultrasound waves that destabilize a drone's navigation systems, sending them off course or crashing to the ground.

Now comes the hard part: The newbies want to turn their prototype into battlefield-ready equipment. They need to raise funds, refine their technology and turn initial interest into orders.

"We are building from scratch, we had no reference whatsoever," said Anna Pole-

INSIDE



BUSINESS NEWS

An activist investor wants Cheesecake Factory to spin off three of its brands. B2



MARKETING

Tampons in an ice-cream tub are among new, eye-catching packaging methods. B6

Playboy Scion Offers to Buy The Brand for \$100 Million

By RYAN KNUTSON

The youngest son of late Playboy founder Hugh Hefner wants to buy back his father's storied franchise.

Cooper Hefner submitted an offer Monday along with a group of investors to buy the Playboy brand from Playboy Group for \$100 million, according to Hefner and a deal proposal viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Playboy Group, officially **PLBY Group**, also includes a social-media app and a lingerie manufacturer. It had a market value of just over \$50 million as of Friday. The company went public through a special-purpose acquisition company when such vehicles were all the rage in 2021, but its shares have fallen more than 90% since then.

"It's a great American company and a great American brand, outside of my personal connection to it," Hefner, 33 years old, said in an interview.

But it "has been managed to a state of potentially nonexistence."

Hefner aims to buy the Playboy brand and intellectual property and run the publication privately through his investment firm, Hefner Capital. The remaining parts of Playboy Group would continue as a separate company under a new name under his proposal. The remaining company would also receive a 10% equity stake in the reimagined Playboy.

Hefner said in addition to his own money, other investors include a hedge fund and one of Playboy's former licensing partners.

Please turn to page B10



Cooper Hefner and his father, the late Hugh Hefner, in 2014. The elder Hefner founded the famed magazine in 1953.

CHRISTOPHER POLK/GETTY IMAGES FOR PLAYBOY

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Hot Bonds Drive Up Debt Risk

Continued from page B1
the good mood on Wall Street, showing that even riskier businesses can access funding when they need it.

"Credit is a confidence game, and right now investors are exhibiting a lot of confidence," said Michael Anderson, head of U.S. credit strategy at Citigroup.

Businesses have accomplished a lot with their recent borrowing. In 2022, when the Fed was aggressively raising interest rates, many worried that lower-rated companies would have trouble raising new money to pay back older debt as it came due.

Now, however, just \$65 billion of junk-rated bonds and loans in the Morningstar U.S. High-Yield Bond Index and

Morningstar LSTA Leveraged Loan Index are still due to mature in 2025, according to PitchBook LCD. That is down from \$181 billion at the end of last year and \$347 billion at the end of 2022. The maturity wall has largely been pushed back to 2028 and beyond.

The latest surge in issuance has gone beyond just refinancings. Some \$22.1 billion of junk-rated loans issued in September were used by businesses to pay dividends to their owners, the largest monthly total in records going back to 2000 by a comfortable margin, according to PitchBook LCD.

The trend, investors and analysts say, is partly the result of higher rates. Those have made it harder for private-equity firms to sell their portfolio businesses, driving them to deliver cash to their

investors by other means. But it is also a classic sign of a frothy market. Investors are so eager to buy loans that they are willing to add debt to businesses that is used to reward equity holders rather than fund investments that could make the companies more profitable.

Belon International, a U.K.-based vehicle-glass-repair and replacement company, this month executed the largest dividend-funding junk-debt sale of all time, according to PitchBook LCD

data. The company raised the equivalent of \$9 billion in a loan-and-bond deal to refinance about €4.3 billion, or about \$4.7 billion, of outstanding term loans and fund a roughly €4.4 billion shareholder dividend.

Chobani last week issued \$650 million of bonds in a

rare deal that allows the yogurt company to either pay interest in cash or defer payments by issuing additional debt. Chobani said it intends to use proceeds to fund a dividend to its indirect parent and use the rest for general corporate purposes.

It was able to increase the size of the offering from \$500 million after demand for the deal exceeded its expectations.

The average coupon of bonds in the Bloomberg U.S. High Yield Index was recently 6.34%, up from around 5.7% in early 2022.

That, however, remains well below the average level that prevailed for much of the 2010s, and some analysts say they aren't too worried about the recent incremental increase.

"They are refinancing paper that was ridiculously cheap just because the Fed had rates at zero," said Citi-group's Anderson. "They are paying more, but it's not life-changing money. It's not balance-sheet-changing money."

up almost 15% from 2023, according to TikTok.

Those posts show the power of the oldest form of book marketing, word of mouth.

"One influencer talks about a book, others pick it up, readers buy it, and then retailers put out more copies," said Morgann Book, a 21-year old Canadian who recently launched a book club that now has 6,000 members. "A publisher will say all their books are good. Influencers give it to you straight."

Lowry hasn't hesitated to criticize popular books, which her fans appreciate. Holding up a copy of Liz Moore's successful thriller "The God of the Woods," Lowry said in a recent TikTok video that the novel had too many characters and too many timelines, and gave it two stars out of five.

"If I don't like them I won't lie," she said.

By the time she left reality TV in 2022, Lowry had already launched three podcasts. She introduced "Barely Famous," which she hosts by herself, in early 2022. The podcast's first episode was about misogyny, but she covers an array of topics, including the more recent focus on books.

"You don't necessarily think from teen mom to book influencer, but publishers will discover her," said Lauren Hesse, senior director of social media at Hachette Book Group's Little, Brown. "Readers watch reality TV, they want recommendations."

For Lowry, it is a challenge to balance what she needs to keep private with what she believes she owes to her fans. "Full transparency is really about trial and error," she said. "I'm more mindful of what my kids have access to, and what would embarrass them."

6.34%

Average coupon of bonds in Bloomberg U.S. High Yield Index, up from 5.7% in 2022

Influencer Builds Book Clout

Continued from page B1

Lowry's fan base—mainly 18-to-45-year-old women—is a key book-buying demographic for the adult fiction that she most often reviews. Many in her audience grew up watching her on television. Lowry is now the mother of seven.

"They like her, and they trust her," said writer and agent Shane Salerno. "If she recommends a great new book, and only 1% of her followers go out and buy it, the result is a major New York Times bestseller."

Sustaining an audience in the crowded book-influencer world won't be easy, and there are other major celebrities in the game. Reese Witherspoon's book club, for instance, has three million followers on Instagram.

Lowry, who grew up near Allentown, Pa., has been in the public eye since starring in a popular episode of "16 and Pregnant" in 2010.

In that show's opening narrative, Lowry told viewers her father left when she was six months old and she saw her mother only occasionally. Because she had nowhere to live, her boyfriend's family invited her to move in while she was pregnant. She took the SAT but had trouble focusing because she felt everyone was staring at her. Lowry pursued her education and has a college degree.

Lowry subsequently appeared on "Teen Mom 2" for 11 seasons, which chronicled

her life as she raised her children. The continuing drama of her personal life, including one marriage and divorce, provided compelling story lines.

"The goal, for myself, was to show how hard it was, to say, 'Don't put yourself in this position,'" she said, citing episodes when there were tears and money was tight. Lowry's memoir "Pride Over Pity" was a New York Times ebook best-seller in 2014.

Reading wasn't a major part of Lowry's life growing up. But several years ago she decided she was spending too much time "doom scrolling" on her phone or laptop. "I didn't have a lot of hobbies and realized I needed to be more productive," she said.

"I started reading books, and then posted about them, and it evolved from there," she said.

Her reach online has made her podcast an appealing destination. Hoover's appearance in early August was arranged by a talent booking agency and Sony

Pictures as part of a publicity campaign for the hit movie "It Ends With Us," based on Hoover's novel of the same name. After Hoover said she didn't do many interviews because she doesn't sleep well beforehand, she confided that she had been a fan of "Teen Mom 2."

Lowry's chatty demeanor and enthusiasm put her at ease, and soon Hoover was opening up about everything from her writing process to her thoughts on actress Blake Lively, who stars in "It Ends with Us."

The interview gave Lowry greater credibility in the book world. "After that interview aired, more authors were interested in coming on the podcast," Lowry said.

TikTok's literary community, known as BookTok, includes personalities such as morgannbook, who has 2.7 million followers, and maryam.and.books, with 1.9 million followers. Altogether, 16.6 million posts used the hashtag #BookTok between Jan. 1 and Oct. 1 of this year,



Before her social-media and podcasting career, Kailyn Lowry was a star of the MTV reality program 'Teen Mom 2.'

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Cheesecake Factory Should Weigh Breakup, Activist Says

BY LAUREN THOMAS

An activist investor has built a position in **Cheesecake Factory** and is urging the restaurant operator to spin off three of its smaller brands into a separate public company, according to people familiar with the matter.

Houston-based **JCP Investment Management**, which focuses on the restaurant industry, has a roughly 2% stake in Cheesecake Factory, the people said. A regulatory filing in August had revealed the firm's initial stake in the company.

Calabasas, Calif.-based Cheesecake Factory has a market value of about \$2.2 billion, with its stock price up more than 20% so far this year. The S&P 500 has risen about the same amount over that time.

Cheesecake Factory owns and operates more than 300 locations across the U.S. and Canada, including its namesake restaurants and others such as North Italia, according to its website.

JCP has privately argued to Cheesecake Factory executives that three of its restaurant brands in particular would be better off as a separate company focused on faster growth: North Italia, an Italian casual-dining concept; Flower Child, a



The activist, which has a 2% stake, urged Cheesecake Factory to spin off three of its brands.

health-focused fast-casual chain; and Culinary Dropout, a gastropub.

JCP has told Cheesecake Factory that it would be willing to inject capital into the spin-off entity to help with its growth, the people said. By breaking up the company, JCP argues that the separate management teams could better focus on hitting their respective financial targets.

JCP also has recommended that Cheesecake Factory implement a strategic review for

several other smaller concepts the activist thinks have struggled and could be of interest to buyers.

A spokesperson for Cheesecake Factory said the company is aware of JCP's investment. "We regularly engage with shareholders and consider their perspectives," the spokesperson said.

After going public in 1993, Cheesecake Factory continued growing same-store sales for years and achieved richer valuations than many of its casual-

dining peers. Its growth stalled in 2017, when same-store sales fell, and the company told investors it would do more to improve operations.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Cheesecake Factory went all-in on takeout and delivery, which helped lift the business and the stock price in 2021. More recently, though, its financial performance has trailed industry peers including Texas Roadhouse and Olive Garden parent **Darden Restaurants**.

gus will start flying between Dublin and Nashville, Tenn.

No U.S. airline offered nonstop flights to Sicily this year. Next year, United plans to start flying to Palermo, while Delta recently announced flights to Catania.

"I think everybody in the country has gone to Italy," said Joe Esposito, Delta's senior vice president of network planning. Data showed that more than 200 people a day made their way to Catania during the summer, but there were no nonstop flights from the U.S.

The pent-up appetite to travel abroad that was unleashed after the Covid-19 pandemic hasn't dropped off, Esposito said.

Take Kurt Obersteadt, a current Delta flier. The 48-year-old finished off trips to all 48 contiguous U.S. states last year. Now he is ready to travel internationally—and next year wants to head to Europe for the first time.

The Nashville-based Uber driver collects recommendations from his passengers to build itineraries for both mainstream European cities, like Barcelona, and less-popularized ones like Kraków, Poland.

"I don't have to do any research," Obersteadt said. "All the research has already been done for me."

Continued from page B1

leisure travelers—particularly golfers looking to play in Scotland, Znotins said.

Delta is piling into southern Europe, including boosting seats to Italy by 10%, while cutting a flight to Stuttgart, Germany.

United is also expanding to places like Nuuk;

Bilbao, Spain; and Madeira Island and Faro, in Portugal.

With more flights this past summer, fares have been lower—an indication that demand has leveled off some.

The cheapest flights from the U.S. to Europe averaged \$778 in July, down nearly \$100 from the same month in 2023,

according to Hopper, a booking app. This fall, a time of year when there is typically a lull, airfare is averaging \$645 for a ticket, down 9% from a year ago, Hopper said.

European airlines are now offering more flights to smaller U.S. cities. **Air France** added Phoenix to its route map this year. Next spring, Aer Lin-

Continued from page B1

BUSINESS NEWS

Sanofi, CD&R In Exclusive Talks On Opella Stake

BY ADRIÀ CALATAYUD
AND HELENA SMOLAK

Sanofi moved ahead with a plan to sell a controlling stake in its consumer-healthcare unit Opella to **Clayton Dubilier & Rice**, entering exclusive talks for a deal that values the business at €16 billion, or about \$17.39 billion, including debt.

The deal would allow Sanofi to focus on its more lucrative, but riskier, innovative drugs and vaccines, and CD&R to take a 50% controlling stake in a business that is home to brands such as Allegra, Dulcolax and IcyHot. French state investment bank Bpifrance plans to take a 2% stake in the business to address concerns raised by the French government.

Sanofi said on Monday that it entered into exclusive talks with CD&R, choosing an offer from the New York-based private-equity firm to make Opella a stand-alone business. Sanofi plans to retain the remaining 48% stake in the business.

The drugmaker laid out plans to split its consumer unit from its innovative medicines and vaccines businesses a year ago. However, the company's disclosure earlier this month that it had opened talks with CD&R sparked a political debate in its home country over the future of Opella, which sells over-the-counter medicines such as Doliprane, a popular painkiller in France.

The French government obtained guarantees that its demands over employment, production and investment would be respected for Doliprane and other essential medicines to France, Finance Minister Antoine Armand said on X on Sunday.

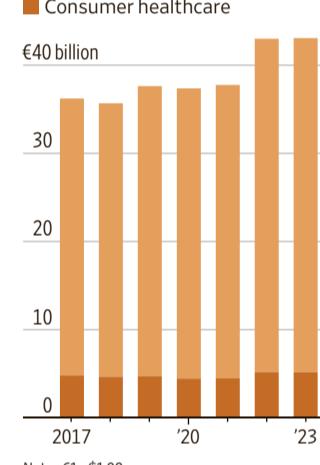
"Nothing changes on who

we are and where we are," Sanofi Chief Executive Paul Hudson said in a call with reporters.

Sanofi's move to unload its consumer operations comes after peers **Johnson & Johnson**, **Pfizer** and **GSK** took similar steps in recent years, as big pharma groups bet that a sharpened focus on prescription medicines will boost growth. The Paris-based company followed a different path, however, leaning toward a partial sale to a private-equity firm rather than a listing in its bid to shed the business.

The company said it expects this year's business earnings per share to grow by at least a low-single-digit percentage at constant currency excluding Opella. Sanofi's previous guidance including Opella estimated stable business earnings at constant currency, but would have been lifted even including Opella due to an expected strong performance in the third quarter, it said.

Sanofi expects to receive a cash payment of an undisclosed amount when the deal closes, it said.



Neuberger, EQT Form Group to Buy Nord Anglia



NEUBERGER BERMAN

Neuberger Berman Private Markets formed a consortium with Swedish buyout group EQT, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and other institutional investors to buy Nord Anglia Education in a deal that values the international schools operator at \$14.5 billion.

The Wall Street Journal reported in August that U.S.

asset manager Neuberger Berman was nearing an agreement to buy a minority stake in Nord Anglia.

EQT and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board are existing shareholders in the company and both will remain shareholders following Monday's agreement, with EQT making a new investment through its BPEA Pri-

vate Equity Fund VIII and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board reinvesting a portion of its stake.

Nord Anglia operates a network of more than 80 international day and boarding schools across 33 countries, educating more than 85,000 students from ages 2 to 18. Its schools offer multiple curricula, including the English

National Curriculum, the International Baccalaureate, the Swiss Maturité, and the American Curriculum.

EQT inherited Nord Anglia through its \$7.5 billion deal in 2022 to buy rival private-equity firm Baring Private Equity Asia. Baring and the Canadian pension fund acquired the business in 2017.

—Dominic Chopping

Wall Street Journal, New York Post Sue Perplexity

BY ALEXANDRA BRUELL

Wall Street Journal parent Dow Jones and the New York Post are suing generative AI search engine Perplexity for copyright infringement, the latest battle between news publishers and the new crop of artificial-intelligence firms that use their content.

The **News Corp**-owned publishers are accusing the AI startup of copying copyrighted news content and using it to generate responses to users' queries, siphoning away traffic that would otherwise go to publishers' websites.

"This suit is brought by news publishers who seek redress for Perplexity's brazen scheme to compete for readers

while simultaneously freeriding on the valuable content the publishers produce," the publishers said in the complaint, which was filed in New York's Southern District on Monday.

Representatives from Perplexity didn't immediately respond to a request to comment.

News Corp earlier this year struck a deal with another artificial-intelligence firm, **OpenAI**, that could be worth more than \$250 million over five years for the news conglomerate. The deal allows OpenAI to use content from News Corp's consumer-facing news publications, including archives, to answer users' queries and train its technology.

A number of news publish-

ers have sent Perplexity legal notices requesting that the search engine stop using their content. **The New York Times**, which is suing OpenAI, recently sent Perplexity a "cease and desist" notice.

In July, News Corp publishers also sent a letter to Perplexity addressing its "unauthorized use" of its copyrighted works and offering to discuss a potential licensing deal. Perplexity didn't respond, according to the complaint.

The legal clouds haven't deterred investors from Perplexity, which is in talks to raise more than \$500 million in its fourth funding round in a year, the Journal reported Sunday. The latest round would value the company at \$8 billion.

"Perplexity perpetrates an abuse of intellectual property that harms journalists, writers, publishers and News Corp," News Corp Chief Executive Robert Thomson said in a statement.

The suit alleges that Perplexity can serve up parts or all of publishers' articles in response to user queries, especially through its premium service, Perplexity Pro.

The publishers in the suit are asking the court to order Perplexity to stop using and copying their copyrighted content without authorization, destroy any databases that contain its material, and award damages of up to \$150,000 for each incident of copyright infringement.

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BUSINESS NEWS

Bed Bath & Beyond Stores to Return

Smaller-format locations will open in \$25 million deal with Kirkland's

By SABELA OJEA

Beyond and home-decor retailer **Kirkland's** have entered a partnership that will bring back physical Bed Bath & Beyond stores more than a year after the retailer filed for bankruptcy.

Midvale, Utah-based Beyond, which owns the Bed Bath & Beyond, Overstock and Zulily brands, will invest \$25 million in Kirkland's in a combined debt and equity transaction, in exchange of a licensee agreement for new, smaller-format Bed Bath & Beyond locations across the U.S., the companies said Monday. Kirkland's will become the exclusive bricks-and-mortar operator of Beyond while the companies work to cut costs and improve inventory management.

The agreement comes less than a week after Beyond said



A Bed Bath & Beyond store in Manhattan in 2022. The retailer filed for bankruptcy in 2023.

ANDREW KELLY/REUTERS

it was investing \$40 million in **The Container Store**, providing the struggling retail chain a financial lifeline while returning some Bed Bath & Beyond products back to retail locations.

As part of the deal, Beyond

will provide Kirkland's with a \$17 million term loan credit that would allow it to repay its existing loan with Gordon Brothers. Half of the loan will be convertible into Kirkland's shares.

Following the closing of a common-stock purchase, Beyond will have the right to nominate two independent directors to Kirkland's board, as long as it retains a 20% stake in Kirkland's. Beyond also will be

able to designate a board appointment if it owns at least 5% of Kirkland's common stock.

Beyond and Kirkland's also have entered into a seven-year collaboration agreement under which Beyond will earn a fee equal to 0.25% of Kirkland's quarterly retail and e-commerce revenue, starting in Kirkland's first fiscal quarter of fiscal 2025.

Beyond will receive an incentive fee equal to 1.5% of Kirkland's incremental growth in e-commerce revenue, and earn a store-royalty fee equal to 3% of net store sales generated under the Bed Bath & Beyond banner, with the rate increasing to 5% after the collaboration agreement has terminated, if the locations are still operating.

"An omnichannel approach to Bed Bath & Beyond is quintessential to its success," Beyond Executive Chairman Marcus Lemonis said.

Osmium Partners, which owns about 9% of Kirkland's shares outstanding, has agreed to support the transaction at the coming Kirkland's special meeting of shareholders.

Novo Nordisk Pill Trims Risk Of Heart Attacks

By DOMINIC CHOPPING

Novo Nordisk's once-daily pill to treat Type 2 diabetes has shown it cuts the risk of heart attacks and strokes in patients by up to 14%, according to a new trial.

Rybelsus is an oral form of semaglutide, the active ingredient in the company's blockbuster Ozempic and Wegovy diabetes and weight-loss drugs, and was tested in the trial on diabetic patients who also suffered from established cardiovascular disease and/or chronic kidney disease.

"Approximately one in three adults with Type 2 diabetes also have cardiovascular disease; therefore, it is crucial to have therapies that can address both conditions," said Martin Holst Lange, executive vice president and head of development at Novo Nordisk.

The company said the drug appeared to have a safe and well-tolerated profile in line with previous oral semaglutide trials and showed it reduces the risk of major cardiovascular events such as cardiovascular death, non-fatal myocardial infarction and non-fatal stroke.

Novo Nordisk expects to file for regulatory approval of a label expansion for Rybelsus in the U.S. and European Union around the turn of the year.

Novo Nordisk's other semaglutide-based drugs have already received backing from regulators for their extra health benefits. In Europe, Wegovy has been recommended to help lower the risk of heart failure in obese patients.

New York Magazine, Reporter Nuzzi Split

By ISABELLA SIMONETTI

A digital affair with a presidential candidate. An FBI complaint. A protective order.

Those would typically be ingredients for the sort of gossip-rich scandal New York Magazine thrives on. Instead, the publisher—and one of its star reporters—are the ones under the spotlight.

The magazine said Monday it is parting ways with political reporter Olivia Nuzzi, whose relationship with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. prompted an investigation into her work.

The investigation, conducted by the law firm Davis Wright Tremaine, found "no inaccuracies nor evidence of

bias," New York said in a statement published on its website.

"Nevertheless, the magazine and Nuzzi agreed that the best course forward is to part ways," the magazine said. "Nuzzi is a uniquely talented writer and we have been proud to publish her work over her nearly eight years as our Washington Correspondent. We wish her the best."

An attorney for Nuzzi said she was "gratified though not surprised that two different investigations have determined that her reporting on the 2024 campaign was sound," and she looks forward to the next chapter of her career.

Nuzzi's personal relationship with Kennedy became

public in late September. New York Magazine and its parent company, Vox Media, were thrown into the middle of a gossipy public-relations crisis as some of the details of the relationship have made their way into the public eye.

The magazine placed her on leave and conducted an internal review, then ordered the external investigation to look at her coverage.

Nuzzi wrote a profile of Kennedy for New York Magazine in November. She said her relationship with him was "never physical." When the newsletter Status reported on Kennedy's relationship with Nuzzi in September, a representative said he "only met Ol-

ivia Nuzzi once in his life for an interview she requested, which yielded a hit piece."

After the relationship was made public, Nuzzi accused her ex-fiancé, political journalist Ryan Lizza, of hacking her devices to collect materials with hopes of blackmailing her back into a relationship with him, according to a court filing in Washington, D.C. She said in a court filing that she is actively involved in an FBI investigation regarding the allegations.

Nuzzi was granted a temporary protection order against Lizza.

Lizza denied those allegations and said Nuzzi was staging a "coordinated defamation campaign." In a court filing, he

said she admitted to having a romantic affair with Kennedy and that she described the relationship as "toxic," "unhealthy," "psychotic" and "indefensible."

Lizza said Nuzzi told him that Kennedy wanted to "possess," "control" and "impregnate" her and that there was a "huge power disparity" between them.

In a statement, an attorney for Nuzzi said Lizza's filing was "full of salacious and irrelevant claims that we will not dignify with a response." The lawyer said Nuzzi is taking legal action "to ensure her safety and be left alone."

The judge set a trial date of Nov. 19.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Shipping Giant Maersk Raises Outlook

Container demand remains strong as Red Sea disruptions keep capacity tight

By ANDREA FIGUERAS

A.P. Moller-Maersk raised its annual financial outlook for the fourth time this year after posting a surge in third-quarter revenue and underlying earnings, amid strong freight demand and tight capacity driven by Red Sea disruptions.

The Danish container-shipping and logistics giant said it now expects underlying earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization between \$11 billion and \$11.5 billion this year, up from a previous forecast of \$9 billion to \$11 billion.

Underlying earnings before interest and taxes—a measure of operating profitability—is expected to range from \$5.2 billion to \$5.7 billion compared with \$3 billion to \$5 billion previously, Maersk said in a market update on Monday.

The company forecast free cash flow of at least \$3 billion this year, up from \$2 billion



Maersk, like other shipping companies, has rerouted vessels to avoid the Red Sea. Above, a ship at the Panama Canal.

previously.

The latest upgrade to guidance comes on the back of

what Maersk called strong third-quarter figures, combined with robust demand in

the container market as disruption in the Red Sea persists.

Like other shipping companies, Maersk has rerouted its vessels to avoid the Red Sea

following attacks on commercial ships from Yemen's Houthi rebels since the end of last year.

The diversion to longer routes, mostly around the Cape of Good Hope, has led to higher costs and fuel consumption.

It also has contributed to a shortage of vessels and higher freight rates.

Global container-shipping rates have tumbled this fall, but an index of pricing by U.K.-based Drewry Shipping Consultants shows that average global freight rates in the middle of October were more than double the level of a year ago.

Maersk now expects volumes in the global container market to grow roughly 6% this year, above a previous forecast of 4% to 6%, the company said.

Revenue in the third quarter climbed to \$15.8 billion from \$12.13 billion a year earlier, Maersk said. Underlying Ebitda surged to \$4.8 billion from \$1.91 billion, while underlying Ebit jumped to \$3.3 billion from \$450 million.

The group said it would publish its full third-quarter figures on Oct. 31.

Product Packages Take Turn Toward The Unexpected

By KATIE DEIGHTON

Companies are selling sunscreen in whipped-cream cans, water in tallboys better known for beer and tampons in ice-cream tubs as surprising packaging becomes a sharper tool for marketers.

"When we were designing the product, I said to my co-founder, 'We won't be able to afford a billboard for a while,'" said Susan Allen Augustin, co-founder of Flo, the menstrual-health company using ice-cream containers. "So I said, 'We have to make the product a billboard.'"

Marketing and venture-capital consultant Michael Miraflor calls the trend "chaos packaging." Other examples include **Ilva Saranno**'s Engine gin, which comes in motor-oil containers, and Moschino's Fresh Couture perfume, packaged in window-cleaner-like spray bottles.

Packages that cause some kind of cognitive dissonance are more likely to capture the attention of shoppers than traditional boxes, bottles and cans, Miraflor said.

That appeals to brands, particularly as advertising becomes more expensive, suppliers battle for shelf space and

the direct-to-consumer model popularized by startup brands in the 2010s begins to sag under the weight of logistics costs and consumers' desire for one-stop shopping.

Flo said its tampon packaging nods to the sugar-and-fat cravings that often descend upon women during their periods, but the company especially wanted to make sure its product caught shoppers' eyes on shelves packed with long-established brands.

"Our categories have a three-second dwell time, meaning that the average customer only looks at it for three seconds," Allen Augustin said. "They grab the product that they need, and then they leave with it, because there's so much shame and stigma that surrounds it, and so we were looking to extend that time with something that seemed fun and interesting."

Such unusual packaging has supercharged the growth of some new brands. **Liquid Death**, the drinks company known for selling water and other nonalcoholic beverages in beer-style cans rather than bottles, in March was valued at \$1.4 billion. And venture-backed olive-oil startup **Graza** became a millennial favorite



Some examples of 'chaos packaging' are Vacation sunscreen in a whipped-cream-like can and Flo tampons in an ice-cream tub.

primarily thanks to choosing squeezable-condiment-like bottles instead of traditional glass.

It is possible for packaging to prove a little too chaotic.

Cleaning brand Puracy last year started selling refills of soaps, stain removers and other products in cans designed to slot into reusable plastic spray bottles as a matter of sustainable design. Some users raised concerns that the brightly colored cans looked a little too much like sodas and could potentially tempt unsuspecting children to take a sip, prompting the company to pause selling refills in the cans.

Puracy in response redesigned the packaging, changing the lid from a soda-can-style to a tuna-can-style, according to Senior Brand

Manager Ryan Edward.

Flo now sells through large retailers including Whole Foods and **Amazon.com**. But in its early years on shelves in smaller stores, Flo's packaging caused a little more chaos than intended, said Allen Augustin.

"Sometimes people would accidentally place it in the freezer," she said.

Startups generally have more leeway when it comes to packaging innovation than established companies, which are often limited by standardized production lines and the risk of turning off existing customers by changing too much, said Craig Dubitsky, a former chief innovation strategist at Colgate-Palmolive who co-founded the coffee company Happy with actor Robert Downey Jr. earlier this

year.

Even—or especially—in uncertain times, entrenched brands use familiar packaging to convey consistency and reliability, branding experts say.

Happy, on the other hand, comes in bright white boxes that would look more at home in a pharmacy than a grocery store's coffee aisle.

Dubitsky is no stranger to packaging experimentation. In 2008 he co-founded EOS, a skincare company that packaged lip balm in spheres rather than sticks. When it came to coffee, he wanted to offer a reusable, recyclable box that would stand out from rivals' packages and branding, which he characterized as dark, masculine and in some cases "aggressive."

"Investing in design is even more important now that

other forms of storytelling and awareness-building have become not just expensive, but very crowded, so if the algorithm doesn't find you, you're in big trouble," Dubitsky said. "But the shelf is curated."

Creative packaging also can help generate free attention in social media.

"Classic Whip has done an extraordinary job for us in earned media," said Lach Hall, co-founder of sun-protection brand Vacation, which in 2022 began selling cans of sunscreen that could be mistaken for whipped cream. "We don't necessarily have to do any paid promotion for it—just by having this product out in the world, it generates around 5 million views a week on TikTok" during the summer months.

Stability in Freight Markets Revives Logistics Dealmaking

By PAUL BERGER

Mergers and acquisitions are making a comeback in the logistics sector as the roller-coaster earnings that defined the pandemic era come to an end.

More companies are scouting purchases or considering a sale, according to finance and logistics executives, signaling the end of a two-year period in which the once-bustling corner of the M&A industry slowed. Bankers, private-equity firms and consultants say a return to stability in transportation and logistics markets is key to the renewed activity.

The Covid-19 pandemic was a boon to freight companies but a barrier for logistics-sector sales. The health crisis drove huge cargo volumes that fed into bumper earnings, which in turn acted as a brake on M&A activity as buyers and sellers struggled to agree on prices based on lofty valuations.

Industry specialists say the past year of relatively weak but steady freight demand is providing the benchmarks

buyers and sellers need to reach a consensus on valuations.

Evan Armstrong, chief executive of research group Armstrong & Associates, said stable earnings are helping with sales this year, such as Danish forwarder **DSV**'s acquisition of **Deutsche Bahn**'s logistics arm, DB Schenker, for more than \$12 billion, the biggest logistics deal in recent years.

"A lot of the valuations were rationalized in the last year, which helped get this deal done," Armstrong said.

There have been several large logistics deals in the U.S. over the past year. **United Parcel Service** recently sold its freight-brokerage unit, Coyote Logistics, to rival midwestern **RXO** for just over \$1 billion. Trucking company **Forward Air** is exploring a sale amid activist pressure following a contentious recent takeover of Omni Logistics.

Greenwich, Conn.-based contract logistics provider **GXO**, which had revenue of \$9.8 billion last year, recently received an unsolicited bid and is now weighing "high-quality inbound offers," according to a person familiar with the process.

Logistics specialists say activity has slowed sharply on the hundreds of smaller deals that usually flow through the sector. There were just 872 mergers and acquisitions in the global transportation and logistics market last year, according to consulting firm KPMG, down 21% from 2021. The value of last year's deals totaled just under \$43 billion, a decline of 76%.

Now, that landscape is changing. Armstrong said his firm tracked 12 deals of more than \$100 million in the first six months of this year, up from nine such deals in all of 2023. He said his firm, which

advises on potential mergers and acquisitions, is seeing much more interest from companies of all sizes looking to sell.

Industry specialists say the recent pullback in interest rates is also helping spur activity. Some of the greatest potential M&A activity is in companies owned by private-equity firms, which usually buy and hold companies for about five years, they say. Some of those firms have had to wait to sell companies because of the pandemic-driven

volatility in the freight market.

"The floodgates are opening, especially on the private equity side from people that want to exit and haven't been able to," said John Anderson, an operating partner at private-equity firm Greenbriar Equity Group.

Private-equity firm **H.I.G. Capital** earlier this year sold Cardinal Logistics, a U.S. supply chain services provider, to **Ryder System** for an undisclosed sum, about five years after acquiring the company.

Dan Howard, a managing director and head of North America transport at Goldman Sachs, said the strong growth in freight demand early in the pandemic triggered a seller's market in which private-equity firms used low borrowing costs to outbid strategic investors.

"It's all buyer driven," Howard said. "Unsolicited knocks on doors and bilateral conversations."



The pandemic was a boon to freight companies but a barrier for logistics-sector sales.

CLARK HODGIN/BLOOMBERG NEWS

MARKETS DIGEST

EQUITIES

Dow Jones Industrial Average

42931.60 ▼344.31, or 0.80%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio 26.05 22.88
P/E estimate * 21.99 18.47
Dividend yield 2.02 2.22
All-time high 43275.91, 10/18/24

Current divisor 0.15221633137872

Last Year ago
Session high 42600
Session open ▶ 39400
Close ▶ 39400
Open 38600
Session low 38600

65-day moving average

Bars measure the point change from session's open

July Aug. Sept. Oct. 37800

*Weekly P/E data based on as-reported earnings from Birinyi Associates Inc.; Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

S&P 500 Index

5853.98 ▼10.69, or 0.18%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio * 25.10 20.14
P/E estimate * 24.15 19.48
Dividend yield * 1.26 1.68
All-time high 5864.67, 10/18/24

65-day moving average

5900
5750
5600
5450
5300
5150

65-day moving average

5000

July Aug. Sept. Oct.

Nasdaq Composite Index

18540.00 ▲50.45, or 0.27%
High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio * 32.12 29.89
P/E estimate * 30.27 26.52
Dividend yield * 0.77 0.87
All-time high 18647.45, 07/10/24

18500
18000
17500
17000
16500
16000
15500

65-day moving average

July Aug. Sept. Oct.

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	43310.87	42877.57	42931.60	-344.31	-0.80	43275.91	32417.59	30.3	13.9	6.4
Transportation Avg	16359.76	16140.66	16190.12	-193.01	-1.18	16562.66	13556.07	13.7	1.8	1.2
Utility Average	1071.41	1057.67	1061.03	-6.15	-0.58	1068.28	801.98	32.3	20.3	5.0
Total Stock Market	58151.07	57714.44	57982.81	-178.12	-0.31	58160.93	40847.04	38.6	21.3	7.1
Baron's 400	1262.42	1247.81	1249.06	-13.28	-1.05	1263.18	907.97	35.5	16.5	5.5

Nasdaq Stock Market

Nasdaq Composite	18543.58	18377.62	18540.00	50.45	0.27	18647.45	12595.61	42.4	23.5	6.8
Nasdaq-100	20386.68	20193.03	20361.47	37.43	0.18	20675.38	14109.57	39.4	21.0	9.5

S&P

500 Index	5866.92	5824.79	5853.98	-10.69	-0.18	5864.67	4117.37	38.8	22.7	8.8
MidCap 400	3196.04	3156.21	3160.23	-37.98	-1.19	3198.21	2326.82	33.3	13.6	4.2
SmallCap 600	1435.02	1409.98	1410.18	-24.98	-1.74	1442.34	1068.80	30.2	7.0	0.7

Other Indexes

Russell 2000	2275.60	2238.30	2239.71	-36.38	-1.60	2286.68	1636.94	34.4	10.5	-0.8
NYSE Composite	19884.81	19690.32	19720.32	-164.49	-0.83	19884.81	14675.78	31.9	17.0	4.9
Value Line	630.13	622.30	623.03	-7.10	-1.13	630.13	498.09	22.5	4.9	-2.7
NYSE Arca Biotech	5953.12	5859.72	5889.52	-63.60	-1.07	5953.12	4544.40	25.2	8.7	1.5
NYSE Arca Pharma	1079.47	1064.64	1065.32	-14.15	-1.31	1140.17	845.32	21.0	17.1	12.0
KBW Bank	122.52	120.20	120.35	-2.18	-1.78	122.91	71.71	65.9	25.3	-5.0
PHLX® Gold/Silver	175.06	171.61	172.17	0.86	0.50	172.17	102.94	48.9	37.0	8.8
PHLX® Oil Service	76.92	75.70	76.14	0.10	0.14	95.25	72.67	-18.0	-9.2	5.6
PHLX® Semiconductor	5222.93	5145.13	5215.21	6.59	0.13	5904.54	3185.18	58.1	24.9	15.2
Cboe Volatility	19.34	18.36	18.37	0.34	1.89	38.57	11.86	-9.8	47.6	7.0

\$ Nasdaq PHLX

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Net chg	Latest % chg	YTD % chg
World	MSCI ACWI	853.58	-3.13	-0.37	17.4
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	344.85	-2.35	-0.68	8.9
	MSCI World	3740.27	-12.77	-0.34	18.0
	MSCI Emerging Markets	1148.42	-6.70	-0.58	12.2
Americas	MSCI AC Americas	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Canada	S&P/TSX Comp	24723.33	-99.21	-0.40	18.0
Latin Amer.	MSCI EM Latin America	2169.42	-19.97	-0.91	-18.5
Brazil	Bovespa	130361.56	-137.70	-0.11	-2.8
Chile	S&P/IPS A	3612.35	13.81	0.38	4.2
Mexico	S&P/BMV IPC	52814.82	-212.60	-0.40	-8.0
EMEA	STOXX Europe 600	521.52	-3.47	-0.66	8.9
Eurozone	Euro STOXX	511.89	-4.55	-0.88	8.0
Belgium	Bel-20	4295.82	-28.17	-0.65	15.9
Denmark	OMX Copenhagen 20	2518.68	-0.34	-0.01	10.3
France	CAC 40	7536.23	-76.82	-1.01	-0.1
Germany	DAX	19461.19	-196.18	-1.00	16.2
Israel	Tel Aviv	2177.09	-3.58	-0.16	16.7
Italy	FTSE MIB	34955.95	-248.31	-0.71	15.2
Netherlands	AEX	898.33	-5.08	-0.56	14.2
Norway	Oslo Bors All-Share	1654.36	6.87	0.42	8.9
South Africa	FTSE/JSE All-Share	87076.55	-124.94	-0.14	13.2
Spain	IBEX 35	11841.10	-84.10	-0.71	17.2
Sweden	OMX Stockholm	987.96	-8.71	-0.87	9.4
Switzerland	Swiss Market	12261.87	-64.89	-0.53	10.1
Turkey	BIST 100	8654.39	-139.22	-1.58	15.9
U.K.	FTSE 100	8318.24	-40.01	-0.48	7.6
U.K.	FTSE 250	20906.60	-242.98	-1.15	6.2
Asia-Pacific	MSCI AC Asia Pacific	190.27	-1.12	-0.59	12.3
Australia	S&P/				

COMMODITIES

wsj.com/market-data/commodities

Futures Contracts

Metal & Petroleum Futures

	Contract		Open			
	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	interest
Copper-High (CMX)-25,000 lbs.; \$ per lb.						
Oct 4.3895 4.3515 4.3190 4.3230 -0.0230 703						
Dec 4.3895 4.4570 4.3475 4.3595 -0.0250 130,262						
Gold (CMX)-100 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.						
Oct 2721.90 2738.40 ▲ 2719.50 2723.10 9.40 74						
Nov 2724.30 2742.00 ▲ 2716.90 2726.80 8.80 1,438						
Dec 2736.30 2755.40 ▲ 2728.50 2738.90 8.90 451,795						
Feb'25 2760.20 2779.40 ▲ 2753.30 2763.40 9.10 65,248						
April 2780.20 2800.00 ▲ 2773.60 2783.90 9.10 26,616						
June 2801.20 2819.40 ▲ 2794.80 2804.60 9.30 14,035						
Palladium (NYM)-50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.						
Oct 1041.00 1049.50 1040.00 1048.40 -29.30 15						
Dec 1088.00 1096.00 1049.50 1055.60 -29.30 16,527						
Platinum (NYM)-50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.						
Oct 1010.70 1010.70 1010.70 1007.60 -7.50 12						
Jan'25 1025.50 1035.40 1014.00 1016.80 -7.70 70,526						
Silver (CMX)-5,000 oz.; \$ per troy oz.						
Oct 33.865 34.255 ▲ 33.855 33.869 0.837 31						
Dec 33.900 34.486 ▲ 33.660 34.078 0.844 125,651						
Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM)-1,000 bbls.; \$ per bbl.						
Nov 69.46 71.03 69.00 70.56 1.34 60,833						
Dec 68.94 70.39 68.46 70.04 1.35 338,184						
Jan'25 68.38 69.92 68.10 69.60 1.31 163,680						
March 67.90 69.32 67.62 68.99 1.22 116,264						
June 67.45 68.75 67.16 68.41 1.11 150,325						
Dec 66.69 67.71 66.36 67.42 0.92 154,273						
NY Harbor ULSD (NYM)-42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.						
Nov 2.1580 2.1935 2.1478 2.1833 0.0311 68,165						
Dec 2.1644 2.2030 2.1576 2.1948 0.0328 116,357						
Gasoline-NY RBOB (NYM)-42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.						
Nov 2.0055 2.0450 1.9964 2.0147 0.0127 59,515						
Dec 1.9750 2.0070 1.9604 1.9811 0.0170 121,598						
Natural Gas (NYM)-10,000 MMbtu; \$ per MMbtu						
Nov 2.220 2.369 ▼ 2.210 2.312 .054 107,284						
Dec 2.740 2.862 ▼ 2.712 2.807 .042 257,625						
Jan'25 3.028 3.137 ▼ 3.005 3.086 .032 254,953						
Feb 2.952 3.052 ▼ 2.933 3.003 .032 126,452						
March 2.704 2.799 ▼ 2.703 2.757 .020 212,575						
April 2.649 2.742 ▼ 2.639 2.702 .021 93,559						
Interest Rate Futures						
Ultra Treasury Bonds (CBT)-\$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%						
Dec 127.150 127.210 125.090 128-150 -2.06-0.0 1,733,966						
March'25 126-150 127-240 125-130 125-210 -2.07-0.7 325						
Treasury Bonds (CBT)-\$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%						
Dec 120-020 120-060 119-150 118-220 -1.18-0.0 1,771,787						
March'25 120-090 120-150 118-240 118-300 -1.18-0.0 2,285						
Treasury Notes (CBT)-\$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%						
Dec 112-055 112-070 111-140 111-165 -22.5 4,691,395						
March'25 112-140 112-155 111-220 111-250 -23.0 6,948						
5 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)-\$100,000; pts 32nds of 100%						
Dec 108-142 108-147 107-317 108-012 -13.5 6,206,267						
March'25 108-130 108-230 108-077 108-092 -13.7 598						
2 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT)-\$200,000; pts 32nds of 100%						
Dec 103-141 103-144 103-085 103-090 -5.2 4,540,625						
March'25 103-230 103-240 103-184 103-187 -5.2 119						
30 Day Federal Funds (CBT)-\$5,000,000; 100-day avg.						
Oct 95.1725 95.1725 95.1700 95.1700 770,191						
Nov 95.3550 95.3550 95.3300 95.3400 -0.100 488,111						
Three-Month SOFR (CME)-\$1,000,000; 100-day avg.						
Aug 94.9975 94.9975 94.9975 94.9950 -0.025 9,433						
Sept 95.2175 95.2200 95.2050 95.2125 -0.050 1,241,891						
Currency Futures						
Japanese Yen (CME)-\$125,000,000; \$ per 100Y						
Nov .6714 .6722 .6656 .6657 -.0050 426						
Dec .6711 .6728 .6657 .6659 -.0049 184,623						
Canadian Dollar (CME)-CAD 100,000; \$ per CAD						
Nov .7243 .7253 .7228 .7231 -.0017 406						
Dec .7257 .7259 .7233 .7237 -.0017 294,832						
British Pound (CME)-£6,250,000; \$ per £						
Nov 1.3047 1.3056 1.2978 1.2978 -.0067 65						
Dec 1.3050 1.3057 1.2976 1.2978 -.0067 230,687						
Swiss Franc (CME)-CHF 125,000; \$ per CHF						
Dec 1.1636 1.1654 1.1613 1.1615 -.0013 70,416						
Fats and Oils						
Beef,carcass equiv. index						
choice 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u 296.94						
select 1-3,600-900 lbs-u 272.59						
Broilers, National comp wtd. avg-u.w 1.2888						
Butter,AA Chicago-d 2.7300						
Cheddar cheese,bbq,Chicago-d 198.00						
Milk,fat dry,Chicago-bd 138.75						
Coffee,Brazilian,Comp-y 2.6053						
Coffee,Colombian,NY-y 2.8261						
Eggs,giant,large,Chicago-u 2.9450						
Flour,hard winter,KC-p 15.95						
Hams,17-20 lbs,MID-US fed-u 1.11						
Hogs,Iowa,So. Minnesota-u 81.10						
Pork bellies,12-14 lbs MID-US-u n.a.						
Pork loins,13-19 lbs MidUS-u 1.1044						
Steers,Tex.-Okla,Choice-u 188.00						
Steers,feeder,Okla,City-u 283.00						
Grains and Feeds						
Bran,wheat middlings,KC-u.w 119						
Corn,No. 2 yellow,Cont IL-bp,u 3.7100						
Corn gluten feed,Midwest-u.w 122.00						
Corn meal,Midwest-u.w 432.8						
Hominy feed,Cent IL-u.w 112						
Meat-bonemeal,50% pro Mnpls-u.w 318						
Oats,No.2 milling,Mnpls-u.w 4.1950						
Rice,Long Grain Milled, No. 2 AR-u.w 35.25						
Sorghum,(Milo) No.2 Gulf-u.w n.a.						
Soybean Meal,Cent IL,rail,ton40%-u.w 340.10						
Soybeans,No.1 yellw IL-bp.u 9.4400						
Wheat,Spring14% pro Mnpls-u.w 8.6400						
Wheat-No.2 soft,red,Louis St.Louis 5.0725						
Food						
Beef,carcass equiv. index						
choice 1-3,600-900 lbs.-u 296.94						
select 1-3,600-900 lbs-u 272.59						
Broilers, National comp wtd. avg-u.w 1.2888						
Butter,AA Chicago-d 2.7300						
Cheddar cheese,bbq,Chicago-d 198.00						
Milk,fat dry,Chicago-bd 138.75						

BIGGEST 1,000 STOCKS

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; t-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, October 21, 2024

Net Stock Sym Close Chg Net Stock Sym Close Chg

A B C

Bj'sWholesale BJ 80.31 -0.71 BP BL 31.47 0.14 CentralElecBRAZ CRL 67.3 0.04 CharlesRiverLabs CRL 195.04 -2.73

AAON AAON 109.81 0.47 AECOM ACM 107.49 -0.40 AES AES 17.21 -0.26 Afac AFL 112.75 -1.75 AGNC Invlt AGNC 10.38 -0.22 Ansys ANSS 327.46 0.06 APA APA 25.11 -0.05 ASE Tech ASX 10.31 -0.08 ASML ASML 714.10 -9.16 AT&T T 21.66 -0.19 AbbottLabs Abbott ABT 116.99 -2.40 AbbVie Abbott ABV 188.54 -2.32 Accenture ACN 376.03 -0.83 AcuityBrands AYK 302.63 -4.92 Adobe ADBE 497.71 2.81 AdvDrainageSys WMS 154.68 -2.63 AdvMicroDevices AMD 157.70 1.93 AirProducts APPD 331.56 -0.54 Alcoa AA 41.52 -0.19 Alcon ALC 94.34 -0.80 AlexandriaRIest ARE 119.52 -2.27 Alibaba BABA 100.91 -1.52 AlpinTech ALGN 216.56 -3.14 Allegion ALLEG 152.01 -1.35 AlliantEnergy LNT 61.36 -0.81 AllisonTransm ALSN 99.23 -1.37 Allstate ALL 192.64 -2.73 AllyFinancial ALLY 34.67 -0.34 AlynamPharm ALNY 292.01 -3.92 Alphabet GOOG 160.47 0.65 Alphabet C GOOG 165.80 0.75 AltairEngg ALTR 95.18 -0.48 Altira MO 49.06 -0.55 Amazon.com AMZN 189.07 0.08 Ambev ABEV 2.29 0.01 Amcor AMCR 11.12 -0.12 Amdocs DOX 90.28 -0.71 AmerSports AMS 18.88 -0.04 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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Angel Investing Isn't What It Used to Be

The value of such deals in the U.S. fell 64% to \$400 million in 2023 from 2015

By MARC VARTABEDIAN



Angel investor Dave Spector.

stream to invest at the earliest stages, which elbowed out angels who had trouble keeping up with the larger round sizes. Tech giants' willingness to pump billions into young startups has further raised the ante.

In addition to having larger coffers than many angels, venture firms had another advantage: They could offer startups access to in-house company-building services such as consulting and sales introductions.

Arnold said he made his final new angel investments in 2019, though he occasionally writes follow-on checks for some of his existing portfolio companies.

"It became difficult to get access to the best deals, and I was only chasing second- and third-rate deals," Arnold said. "It's completely different—angel investing became much less attractive."

Shifting dynamics

The rules of the game have changed.

"VC has simply become more institutional," said Kyle Stanford, the lead U.S. venture-capital research analyst at analytics firm PitchBook

Data. "Where direct dealmaking was easier in the past, the competitiveness in the early stages of VC is more than many angels are comfortable with."

New entrants to the asset class, such as hedge funds, have ratcheted up competition and valuations across all stages. More solo venture capitalists have raised money from institutional limited partners as opposed to investing their own money. Investors, wanting more bang for their buck, have started investing at venture's earliest stages. That has pushed some angels out of the game, Stanford said.

The value of angel dealmaking in the U.S. fell 64% from 2015 to \$400 million last year and is on pace to drop by one-third this year, according to the latest report from PitchBook Data and trade group National Venture Capital Association.

Many angels have opted to become limited partners and invest in venture funds to diversify their bets, Stanford added.

Collecting data on angel deals is challenging given the informal and limited nature of many of the deals. But even if

the data misses some deals, the long-term decline shows that the dynamics in the venture ecosystem have shifted.

High-risk option

To be sure, the well-connected tech elite can still get into today's hottest companies as angels. Venture capitalist Thiel helped get ChatGPT maker OpenAI off the ground with personal funding, and Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz contributed early capital to AI company Anthropic.

Angel investor Dave Spector said he doesn't feel squeezed.

The co-founder of biotech startup Nanotrace and a former partner at premier venture firm Sequoia Capital, he writes personal checks for startups, frequently between \$25,000 and \$50,000. While firms investing earlier may impact personal-check writers, he said he hasn't had trouble getting into elite startup rounds because of the operating experience he brings to the table.

"If you're a credible founder and prove to be value-add with your intros and ideas, most smart founders let these types

in," Spector said.

Serial entrepreneur and investor Ali Partovi wrote angel checks for 20 years, including ones to vacation property rental company Airbnb, ride-hailing service Uber Technologies and online file-sharing company Dropbox, where a \$50,000 investment he made with his brother in 2007 earned them \$40 million roughly a decade later when the company held an IPO. He said the angel landscape has become a different ballgame.

The emergence of accelerator programs after the turn of the century helped introduce institutional capital, he said. These accelerators have since upped the amount they award participants, reducing their dependence on angels, Partovi said.

Above all, Partovi said, there is a premium on being a well-known entity with a platform.

"If somebody is just writing a check and doesn't bring any sort of name recognition or advice or network to the table, they might be less likely to get allocation," Partovi said. "Getting elbowed out is becoming more common for an angel investor, and for funds as well."

Texas Schools Pension to Buy Stake in Sports Investor

By CHRIS CUMMING

The Texas Permanent School Fund is making a long-term bet that private equity can thrive in the booming sports market.

The \$56 billion pension system, which manages money on behalf of the state's school-teachers and other beneficiaries, plans to take a stake in Velocity Capital Management, a firm founded in 2021 that invests in sports, media and entertainment companies.

The Texas Permanent fund has made an anchor commitment to Velocity Capital's debut fund, which hasn't yet closed, and has secured an agreement to negotiate a minority stake in the New York firm, the pension system said. It also will earmark more capital for co-investments, credit and real-estate deals within Velocity's areas of expertise. The pension's anchor fund commitment totaled \$200 million, ac-

cording to Velocity.

Robert Borden, the chief executive and chief investment officer of Texas Permanent, says sports and entertainment is a promising and still relatively untapped sector, and he believes the partnership with Velocity Capital will allow the pension system to deploy long-term capital in a growing market.

"What I see is a space ripe for institutionalization," Borden said. "It's very fragmented, but with the advent of streaming content and certain leagues opening up the possibility of commercial ownership, there is a tremendous amount of opportunity."

It is relatively unusual for U.S. pension managers to seed young private-equity firms or buy stakes in them, although the broader market for investment in alternative-asset managers is growing quickly. There were 89 investments in alter-



Velocity Capital's David Abrams, in dark jacket, and Arne Rees

native asset managers this year through Aug. 1, totaling \$21.3 billion and surpassing the sum for all of last year, according to data firm PitchBook.

Borden, who took the top position at Texas Permanent late last year, has a long record of taking direct stakes in com-

panies, going back to his time managing capital for the South Carolina Investment Commission. He believes that pension funds can take advantage of the investment expertise of the firms they work with via partnerships that allow for more co-investment and direct deals.

In May, Texas Permanent announced a partnership with quantitative equity manager Intech.

But Borden sees a particularly bright opportunity in sports and entertainment. Sports investment has surged in recent years due to professionalization of college athletics, the legalization of gambling and the proliferation of streaming services, among other factors. In August, the National Football League, the country's most-lucrative sports league, approved a new policy to allow investors such as private equity to own stakes in teams.

Globally, private-equity firms have invested \$11.8 billion in sports deals this year through Oct. 18, compared with \$9 billion all of last year, PitchBook said.

Velocity Capital was formed by longtime sports investors David Abrams and Arne Rees. Abrams previously was a part-

ner with Apollo Global Management and also a CIO of Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment. Rees previously served as U.S. CEO of Sportradar Group and as an executive at sports-broadcasting network ESPN, among other roles.

Abrams says Velocity Capital's objective is broader than most private-equity investors in the sports sector. The firm doesn't invest in teams, but wants to find companies where they can work with operators and expand over years, and eventually to create a multi-strategy platform where we are domain experts in the ecosystem," Abrams said.

Velocity has five portfolio companies, including Parella Motorsports Holdings, which hosts racing events, and Elevate, a marketing consulting firm for sports and entertainment companies. It also backs Camp, a location-based entertainment company.

Playboy Scion Offers To Buy It

Continued from page B1

partners. Hefner would run the new Playboy and become its chief executive.

Playboy Chairman Suhail Rizvi and representatives for the company didn't respond to requests for comment.

Hefner was Playboy's chief creative officer for three years until 2019. Should his bid be successful, he said he has identified new licensing opportunities and media partnerships, such as documentaries, that could increase revenue and make the brand more relevant again.

"You could have all the money in the world and it would be difficult to build the type of brand recognition that Playboy has," he said.

Hugh Hefner died in 2017, leaving behind three other children in addition to Cooper. The company stopped publishing a regular print magazine in 2020. Cooper Hefner and the rest of the family have since sold their remaining stakes.

Playboy as it exists today doesn't look much like the publication the elder Hefner founded in 1953. Back then, it was targeted at a sophisticated male audience, and was known almost as well for its in-depth journalism by famous authors as it was for its nude images. Over the years, it moved into video production, merchandise sales and at one point had a limousine service. The company went public in 1971 and reached a peak market cap of \$671 million in 1999.

Since then, however, the company has suffered steady declines. Like the rest of the magazine industry, it lost advertising revenue and struggled to find its place in an era of proliferating online pornography.

By 2011, the magazine was

losing around \$1 million an issue. That year, Hugh Hefner worked with the private-equity firm Rizvi Traverse Management LLC to take the company private, in a deal that valued the company at \$207 million.

In 2021, Playboy went public via a special-purpose acquisition company and its market value spiked within a few months to more than \$2 billion. Its market value had shrunk to around \$53 million through Friday and its shares were down more than 99% since their peak, trading for less than \$1 apiece.

The company has focused more on licensing the logo and selling lingerie and other merchandise. In 2021, it purchased Australia-based lingerie manufacturer Honey Birdette for more than \$330 million. Later that year, it acquired the content creator platform Dream for \$30 million and folded it into a service called Centerfold, which is meant to compete with the adult-oriented social-media platform OnlyFans.

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By 2011, the magazine was

paying down some of its debt. Hefner said Playboy's acquisitions were ill-advised and have been poorly managed.

"It's Playboy entering businesses that they've never operated before," he said, and the

products are "not resonating at all with consumers or customers or fans. And the business's decline and the brand's relevance—in terms of being hardly spoken about today—are a direct reflection of that."

Mutual Funds

Data provided by LSEG

Top 250 mutual-funds listings for Nasdaq-published share classes by net assets.

E-Ex-distribution. **F**-Previous day's quotation. **G**-Footnotes x and s apply. **J**-Footnotes e and s apply. **K**-Recalculated by LSEG, using updated data. **P**-Distribution costs apply, 12b-1. **R**-Redemption charge may apply. **S**-Stock split or dividend. **T**-Footnotes p and r apply. **V**-Footnotes x and e apply. **X**-Ex-dividend. **Z**-Footnote x, e and s apply. **NA**-Not available due to incomplete price, performance or cost data. **NE**-Not released by LSEG; data under review. **NN**-Fund not tracked. **NS**-Fund didn't exist at start of period.

Monday, October 21, 2024

Fund	Net NAV	YTD Chg %	Net NAV	YTD Chg %	Fund	Net NAV	YTD Chg %	Fund	Net NAV	YTD Chg %	Fund	Net NAV	YTD Chg %	Fund	Net NAV	YTD Chg %			
AB Funds	11.37	-0.03	NA		Artisan Funds	38.86	-0.32	NA	21.09	+0.11	28.3	Eqlinc	26.37	-0.28	16.4	Growth	108.68	+0.49	
MunIncmShare	45.03	-0.20	25.3		OTC	25.22	-0.07	18.3	EqnGow	78.75	+0.19	30.9	LgCapGow	84.16	+0.31	21.1	TgtRet2060	53.12	-0.28
AB Funds - ADV	114.64	+0.03	NA		Purith	33.06	+0.13	33.9	JPMorgan R Class	110.19	-0.07	10.1	MulgAdm	13.70	-0.03	2.1	TgtRet2055	57.65	-0.31
LgCapGrAdv	11.37	-0.03	NA		SAUSMinVollndF	22.78	-0.10	22.0	R2030	26.92	-0.13	12.4	MulgAdm	10.96	-0.03	2.4	TgtRetInc	13.71	-0.07
American Century Inv	10.21	-0.07	3.3		SAUSQyldF	22.02	+0.01	25.3	CorpPlusBd	10.33	-0.06	3.3	TgtRetBd	9.01	-0.01	2.8	WellInv	46.57	-0.14
Ultra	93.41	+0.40	25.3		SAUSQyldF	22.78	-0.07	11.3	LordAbbott I	7.27	-0.05	3.8	PutLargCap	181.72	-1.46	16.2	WellsR	49.51	-0.38
American Funds CI A	45.03	-0.20	20.4		SAUSQyldF	23.41	-0.07	8.2	MFS Funds Class A	37.46	-0.36	NA	PrmcPAdm	135.45	-2.76	11.4	VANGUARD INDEX FUNDS	347.58	-4.00
AmcapA	57.76	-0.40	18.6		SAUSQyldF	23.41	-0.07	8.2	PutLargCap	37.47	-0.36	NA	RealEstAdm	114.72	-1.45	13.4	ExtndlStPl	347.58	-4.00
AMutlA	36.44	-0.17	15.0		SAUSQyldF	23.41	-0.07	8.2	SAUSQyldF	22.02	-0.07	25.3	MidCapAdm	95.39	-0.81	12.7	IdxInt	20.32	-0.18
BalA	11.36	-0.07	2.7		SAUSQyldF	23.41	-0.07	8.2	ShDurInv	22.02	-0.07	33.0	MidCapAdm	107.70	-0.5	14.5	MidCapAdm	20.32	-0.18
BondA	73.41	-0.61	13.0		SAUSQyldF	23.41	-0.07	8.2	TREDFPlan	NA	...	NA	MidCapAdm	10.20	-0.02	3.7	MidCapAdm	87.59	-0.78

MARKETS

S&P 500 and Dow Industrials Slip

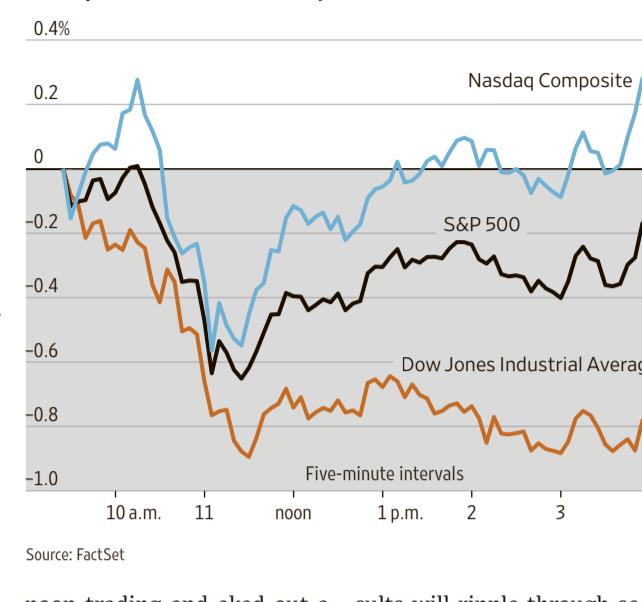
All eyes are on corporate earnings this week.

More than 110 S&P 500 companies, including seven members of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, are scheduled to report quarterly results, according to FactSet. Tesla, Coca-Cola and International Business Machines will be among the highlights of the week.

MONDAY'S MARKETS So far, roughly 80% of S&P 500 companies that have reported their results have topped expectations, and earnings are expected to rise for the fifth consecutive quarter.

Stocks kicked off the week with declines after a banner stretch that sent the S&P 500 up for six consecutive weeks, the longest winning streak of the year.

The S&P 500 declined 0.2%, or 11 points, to 5853.98. The Dow industrials dropped 0.8%, or 344 points, to 42931.60. The technology-heavy Nasdaq Composite edged up in after-



Source: FactSet

noon trading and eked out a slim gain of 0.3%, or roughly 50 points, to close the day at 18540.00.

Traders have been glued to election polling alongside earnings, with some placing their bets on who will win the White House and how the re-

sults will ripple through sectors such as banks or clean-energy stocks.

Elsewhere:

◆ The 10-year Treasury yield rose to 4.180% after settling at 4.074% Friday.

◆ Overseas stocks were mixed. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index dropped 1.6%, despite China cutting key lending rates.

◆ Gold prices continued to increase. October futures contracts for the precious metal settled at a record of \$2,723.10 a troy ounce.

◆ Crude-oil prices also gained. Brent crude futures, the international benchmark, climbed 1.7% to \$74.29 a barrel, after a sharp swoon last week.

—Patricia Kowsmann and Gunjan Banerji

AUCTION RESULTS

Here are the results of Monday's Treasury auctions. All bids are awarded at a single price at the market-clearing yield. Rates are determined by the difference between that price and the face value.

	13-Week	26-Week
Applications	\$252,953,504,400	\$214,619,123,500
Accepted bids	\$85,557,241,900	\$76,050,267,500
* noncomp	\$2,176,827,700	\$1,470,726,800
* foreign noncomp	\$200,000,000	\$250,000,000
Auction price (rate)	98.859972	97.821056
Bids at clearing yield accepted	(4.510%)	(4.310%)
	4.62%	4.46%
	36.75%	33.41%
	912797JR/C7	912797N/C7

Both issues are dated Oct. 24, 2024. The 13-week bills mature on Jan. 23, 2025; the 26-week bills mature on April 24, 2025.

Boeing
The plane maker and the leaders of its machinists union reached a tentative deal that could end the strike that halted most of its production. Shares rose 3.1%.

Spirit Airlines
Shares of the budget carrier jumped 53%—their biggest one-day percentage increase on record—after it received a debt-refinancing extension.

Nvidia
The chip maker's shares rose 4.1%, closing with a market value of more than \$3.5 trillion for the first time.

United Parcel Service
The package-delivery company's stock fell 3.4% after Barclays downgraded it to "underweight" from "equal weight."

Kenvue
Activist investor Starboard Value took a sizable stake in the consumer-products company and wants changes to boost the stock price. Shares of Kenvue, which was

spun out of J&J last year, jumped 5.5%.

Cigna Group
Shares sold off 4.7% after Bloomberg reported the health insurer revived efforts to buy rival Humana.

PLBY
Hugh Hefner's son and an investor group offered to buy the Playboy brand from Playboy Group for \$100 million. Shares of PLBY, as the company is officially known, gained 15%.

TUESDAY'S EVENTS:
The annual BRICS summit of emerging economies starts in Russia and continues until Thursday.

EXPECTED EARNINGS:
GE Aerospace
3M
General Motors
RTX
Lockheed Martin
Verizon

U.S. Gasoline Prices Tied to Geopolitics, Not Country's Election

By ANTHONY HARRUP

At a time when many things cost more, Americans have been enjoying relatively low gas prices, despite geopolitical tensions and the coming U.S. election. Barring a major escalation in the Middle East, consumers could see further relief at the pump in 2025, regardless of who wins the White House.

With average U.S. gasoline prices a little over \$3 a gallon, energy issues—from former President Donald Trump's "drill, baby, drill" slogan, to Vice President Kamala Harris's focus on clean energy—are not looming large ahead of the November election.

"I don't think gasoline is going to be that big of a deal in

this election, barring some massive catastrophe in the Middle East," said Shon Hiatt, director of the Business of Energy Transition initiative at USC Marshall.

However, risks remain.

"I'm mindful that the situation could quickly turn around if there is suddenly new violence in the Middle East," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy. "But for now it does look like with oil prices sliding again there is more potential that we will get to multiyear lows when it comes to gas prices just in time for the election."

Oil prices rose sharply in the first week of October after an Iranian missile attack on Israel, prompting concerns that Israel's response could in-

clude strikes on oil infrastructure, taking barrels off the market.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries could replace those barrels with its spare

capacity, but an escalation of the conflict leading to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes, could push oil prices into triple digits, Hiatt said.

Crude benchmarks gave back gains last week when U.S. officials said Israel as-

focus on military targets and not oil or nuclear facilities.

U.S. officials went to lengths to discourage Israel from hitting Iranian oil and nuclear facilities, which could have caused oil and gas prices to spike.

"We have an energy landscape that's fragile, and an event that's going on that is very real, probably one of the most serious in quite some

time that can shock energy prices," said Matt Willer, managing director of Phoenix Capital Group.

The Trump campaign has

pledged to ease regulations and increase oil and gas leasing to raise production.

Harris has abandoned her earlier support for a fracking ban, while stressing a focus on climate change and clean energy.

Both candidates say they would lower household energy costs.

"In the near term I don't see either party's policies being particularly impactful on gasoline or diesel prices," said Matt Muenster, chief economist at transport management technology firm Breakthrough. "I think market fundamentals will really drive it the next calendar year."

While U.S. demand has been robust, global market fundamentals are seen weak-

ening on lower Chinese demand and prospects of increased supply, with OPEC and its allies planning to begin unwinding output cuts in December and non-OPEC countries including the U.S. raising production.

Average gasoline prices are likely to move lower as the holiday season approaches,

"In the near term I don't see either party's policies being particularly impactful on gasoline or diesel prices," said Matt Muenster, chief economist at transport management technology firm Breakthrough. "I think market fundamentals will really drive it the next calendar year."

The U.S. Energy Information Administration, in its latest Short Term Energy Outlook, which it updates monthly, estimated that national gasoline prices will average \$3.20 a gallon in 2025, down from \$3.30 this year and \$3.50 in 2023.

The Wall Street Journal CMO Network Summit

November 12–13, 2024 | New York City

SPEAKERS

Sophie Bambuck
Former CMO
North Face

Mark Barrocas
CEO
SharkNinja

Emily Essner
CMO
Saks

Soyoung Kang
Chief Marketing and Innovation Officer
eos Products

Philippe Krakowsky
CEO
Interpublic

Deborah Lehr
CEO, Baslinna; Executive Director
The Paulson Institute

Arthur Sadoun
CEO
Publicis Groupe

Andrew Springate
CMO
Keurig Dr Pepper

Marty St. George
President
Jetblue

Vanessa Wallace
CMO
Savage x Fenty

OVERVIEW

The Wall Street Journal's CMO Network Summit will convene on November 12 and 13, bringing together leading CMOs, CEOs and other experts to explore the challenges brands face in a constantly changing business landscape.

The event will focus on the resilience and agility marketers need to capitalize on the disruption in today's marketplace from the rise of AI to shifting economic headwinds and consumer behavior.

The CMO Network will also discuss how a new administration will impact the marketing industry, from privacy regulation to antitrust cases against tech giants and the effect potential tax reform could have on advertising.

Membership is by invitation: CMONetwork@wsj.com.

Founding Sponsor

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HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

How to Make the Most of Buying Bonds

With deposit rates starting to slide below 4% and 10-year Treasury yields rising above that rate for the first time in two months, you may want to shift from cash to fixed income before it is too late.

Thanks to traders becoming more realistic about interest-rate cuts, Treasurys are now offering a return that is clearly above the Federal Reserve's long-run interest-rate expectations. This may be enough for income-minded investors, but there isn't a huge scope for capital gains.

It may be time for less-obvious strategies.

Look further down the Treasury curve

Many balk at the thought of buying a 20- or 30-year Treasury, which yields only 0.3 percentage point more than 10-year paper but carries greater risk of price fluctuations. Indeed, long-term debt has lost investors money since the Fed ended its tightening cycle in July of last year as long-term rates have drifted higher.

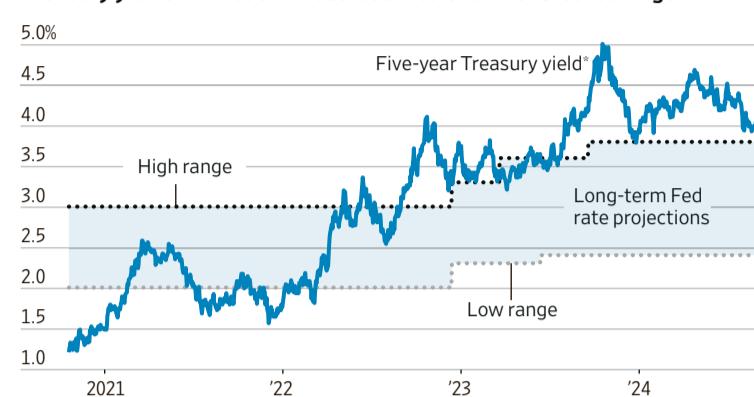
But the current experience isn't typical: Between 1980 and 2020, monetary-easing cycles did lead to steeper yield curves, but in almost every case long-term yields fell—it is just that short-term ones fell more.

During these rallies, 30-year Treasurys delivered higher returns than either two-year or 10-year debt in every single case. This includes 1995, which featured economic conditions similar to today's. As the Fed keeps cutting, history may yet repeat itself.

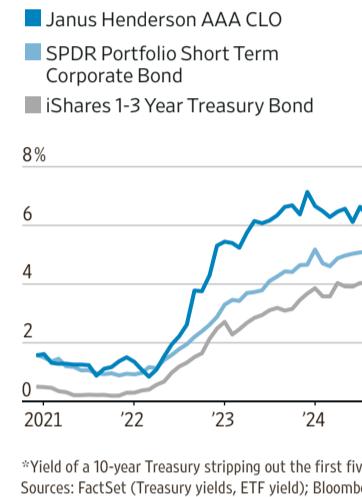
Corporate debt has been bid up, but opportunities remain

Investors have gobbled up the investment-grade debt of blue-chip companies this year as it offers a 0.8-percentage-point pickup over Treasurys. But this spread is at a near-record low, compared with a median of 1.3 percentage points over the past 15 years.

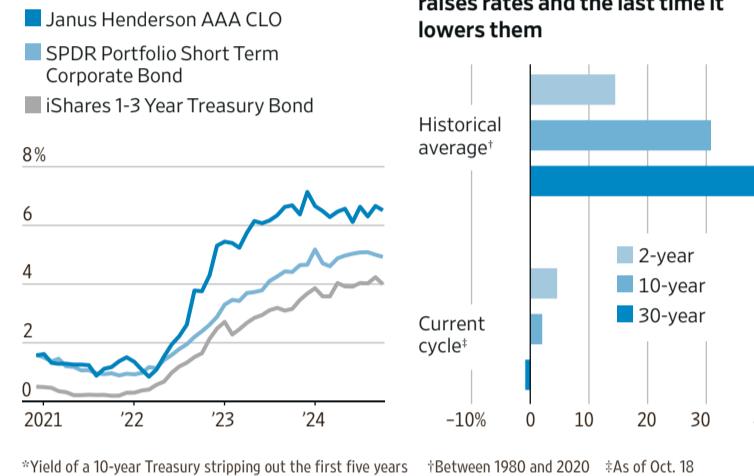
To be sure, the median spread was 0.9 percentage point before 2008. Even if corporate-bond fund managers believe this is too tight,



Selected low-duration ETFs, annualized distribution yield



Total return on Treasurys between the last time the Federal Reserve raises rates and the last time it lowers them



*Yield of a 10-year Treasury stripping out the first five years

†Between 1980 and 2020 ‡As of Oct. 18

Sources: FactSet (Treasury yields, ETF yield); Bloomberg Indexes via FactSet (spread); Federal Reserve (rates); WSJ analysis of LSEG data (Treasury returns based on Fed rates)

periods of high yields drive many investors to just keep giving them money, which needs to be deployed. This is what is happening right now.

Companies also have massively reduced their net debt since the 2008-09 financial crisis, and default rates have remained relatively low despite higher borrowing costs.

Still, investors have been particularly negative about "junk-rated" issuers in the consumer noncyclical sector, which trade at a discount to usually riskier cyclical companies such as hotel chains. This is a rare phenomenon and may spell opportunity since "defensive" industries usually do well in rate-cutting cycles.

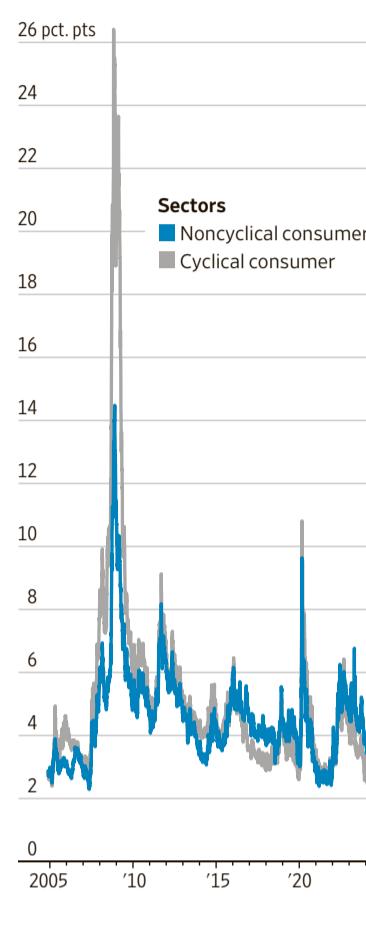
The BondBloxx USD High Yield Bond Consumer Non-Cyclicals Sector ETF, for example, has a yield of 6.3% and owns companies such as drug retailer Walgreens Boots Alliance and KFC owner Yum Brands.

Play the acronym game

Whenever rates are coming down, eschewing floating-rate instruments such as collateralized loan obligations or CLOs—bundles of leveraged corporate loans—seems like a natural choice.

But, as always, price is everything. Right now, their discount relative to short-maturity investment-grade debt has widened considerably, and even AAA-rated, safer CLO investments offer yields

U.S. high-yield bonds, option-adjusted spread over Treasurys



the median of the past decade has been 0.3 percentage point.

Don't forget to shop abroad

Emerging-market debt is another great beneficiary of Fed rate cuts, but hard-currency bonds are trading at their priciest relative to U.S. debt since 2018, which in turn was a record outside of the "Brics mania" of the 2000s.

Bonds issued in local currencies have become a deeper, more-resilient market in recent years, and currently offer yields of 16%. The catch here is the exchange-rate risk: For 15 years, investors have consistently suffered from these currencies depreciating against an ever-stronger U.S. dollar. But the greenback now looks historically expensive, and most of these nations are expected to keep rates high in the foreseeable future. This could create a window of opportunity.

Or investors could just go to Britain, where bonds offer similar yields as in the U.S. The difference is that the economy there is likely to grow at a slower pace, which should eventually force the Bank of England to stop being so hawkish. Yet sterling will probably remain supported by the many international investors who are returning to the U.K. after years of shunning the country following Brexit.

What about bond proxies?

If bonds are looking too stretched for comfort, investors can always get their income through dividend-paying equities. Rather than just picking companies with the largest payouts, however, the best approach has historically been to screen for stocks with both high dividends and low volatility. Over the past two decades, this strategy has generated returns on par with the technology-fueled S&P 500 with a risk profile that is somewhat closer to that of bonds.

Investors dumped these stocks after the pandemic, shocked that so many companies scrapped dividends, but they have jumped back in since the summer.

—Jon Sindreu

their historical averages.

The selloff in SLB does seem overdone, particularly given its higher international exposure and record of expanding profitability. Its adjusted margin in terms of earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization has risen year over year for the past 16 quarters. For now, SLB notes that industrywide equipment availability remains tight. Slowing activity could bring pricing pressures, but SLB has a strong digital solutions business—one that allows customers to mine data during exploration or production—that helps it charge high prices. Cash flows also look healthy: SLB generated \$1.8 billion of free cash flow last quarter, 36% higher than analysts expected. The company is on track to return more than \$3 billion of cash to shareholders through buybacks and dividends this year and expects to return \$4 billion next year.

Prospects for oil and gas don't look very bright at the moment, but that shouldn't dim investors' views of all oil-field-service companies.

—Jinjoo Lee

Coming in 2025: Even More Restraint on the Oil Field

Executives at companies providing picks and shovels for the oil-and-gas industry are sounding a lot less bullish today than they were earlier this year. But shares of some might have been unduly punished.

Oil-field-service giant **SLB**—formerly known as Schlumberger—on Friday reported slightly worse-than-expected results, with revenue increasing 10% in its third quarter compared with a year earlier, below Wall Street expectations of 11% growth. Net income was up 6%, below analyst projections for an 11% rise.

Chief Executive Olivier Le Peuch said on a Friday conference call that customers were more cautious about spending in the quarter.

For 2025, the company said international upstream spending could grow by a low-to-middle single-digit percentage, while spending in North America is expected to remain flat or decline slightly. "From where we were a year ago, there's definitely a reduced expectation of spending growth," said Roger Read, an equity analyst at Wells Fargo.

It isn't hard to see why: Oil prices are down about 3.6% in the year to date and 20% over the past 12 months, something SLB's Le Peuch attributed to strong non-OPEC production, uncertainty around OPEC+ supply releases, weaker demand from China and softer economic growth in the U.S. and Europe. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries this month reduced its oil-demand growth forecast for the third consecutive time, but the broader group, OPEC+, said it would step up oil production in December.

Meanwhile, weak natural-gas pricing damped output from U.S. natural-gas producers.

Spending on short-cycle resources such as U.S. shale has been more pressured because those tend to respond more quickly to short-term commodity prices, while investment in long-cycle resources look more resilient, according to SLB. This is a relative advantage for SLB, which has higher exposure to long-cycle weighted international customers. The company also derives about 40% of its revenue from offshore upstream spending, according to a

report from Morgan Stanley. Every \$10-a-barrel decline in oil prices causes a reduction of roughly 5% to 10% in capital expenditures for short-cycle production, while the same move causes just a 1% to 2% fall in spending for long-cycle resources, according to Morgan Stanley.

The outlook is therefore tougher for North America-focused service firms such as **Liberty Energy**. The company said in an earnings call on Thursday that slowing activity has pressured pricing for its services and that it plans to temporarily reduce its de-

ployed fleets by roughly 5%. Its shares fell 8.9% following the call. Liberty Energy said some smaller service companies are falling into insolvency and their investment in equipment is below attrition levels, implying that industrywide capacity is shrinking.

What hasn't helped equipment providers is the continuing pro-

ductivity gains among producers from improving technology and sector consolidation. Liberty Energy said industrywide fracking efficiency is at its highest levels, noting that lateral wells are getting longer. Consolidation among producers also has meant the combined companies could run fewer rigs among contiguous areas, leading to better productivity. U.S. oil production per rig rose 13% last year and is expected to expand by another 15% this year, according to estimates from Wells Fargo.

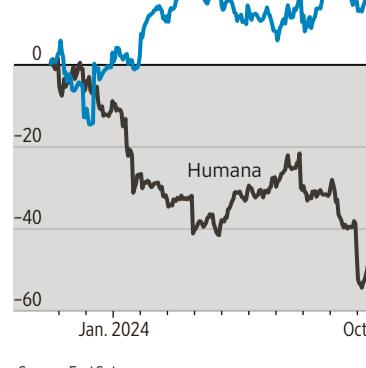
Oil-field-service company stocks have taken a much bigger hit than commodity prices or their oil-and-gas producer customers.

While oil prices are down about 3.6% and a basket of producers is down about 2% in the year to date, shares of SLB and competitor **Halliburton** are down 18% and 22%, respectively. As a multiple of earnings, both companies' shares also trade at substantial discounts to

10%

Increase in quarterly revenue reported by oil-field-service giant SLB

Stock-price performance over the past year



When The Wall Street Journal reported that **Cigna** was in talks with **Humana** for a healthcare merger late last year, investors weren't entirely surprised, given the strategic merits of such a deal.

Cigna has a huge pharmacy-benefit-management business and a large presence in the commercial insurance space. Humana is a pure-play Medicare Advantage business. Together, they could create a healthcare powerhouse to go toe to toe with **UnitedHealth**.

But there were two key problems: For starters, Cigna shareholders balked at a deal that would likely be dilutive to them. And many wondered if the regulatory risk was worth the attempt,

given FTC Chair Lina Khan's opposition to megadeals.

So in December, Cigna called off the talks, choosing to buy back stock instead. It later agreed to sell its Medicare business.

The decision to walk away made Cigna executives look like geniuses. Months later, the Medicare Advantage business went into a spiral, sending Humana and much of the industry's shares plunging. Meanwhile, Cigna stock has outperformed.

Now those two hurdles could be abating. Humana's stock is down nearly 50% for the year, making a deal financially more appealing for Cigna. And an election is around the corner. If Donald Trump wins,

Khan would almost certainly be on her way out. Even a Kamala Harris victory doesn't assure Khan will remain, given how many Democratic donors want her out.

If, as Bloomberg reports, Cigna is dipping its toe back into the water, it might be doing so with one eye on the election results. If Trump wins, the chances of such a deal moving forward would grow. But the price would also go up.

That is because Republicans aren't nearly as tough on Medicare Advantage as Democrats, so Humana will independently be worth more to Wall Street.

Judging by the market's reaction Monday, neither side was too excited about the rumors, with

Cigna stock ending 4.7% lower and Humana shares falling 2.5%. No matter the price of such a deal, it faces significant hurdles.

A very fair question is why Humana would want to sell at such depressed levels. One educated guess might be that it doesn't think the Medicare business has bottomed. In recent earnings, Humana's peers unveiled significant cost pressures in the Medicare business. Plus, Cigna is very much aware of the long-term danger to its highly profitable PBM business. In the short term, Medicare Advantage looks like a mess, but it would help Cigna diversify its business.

—David Wainer

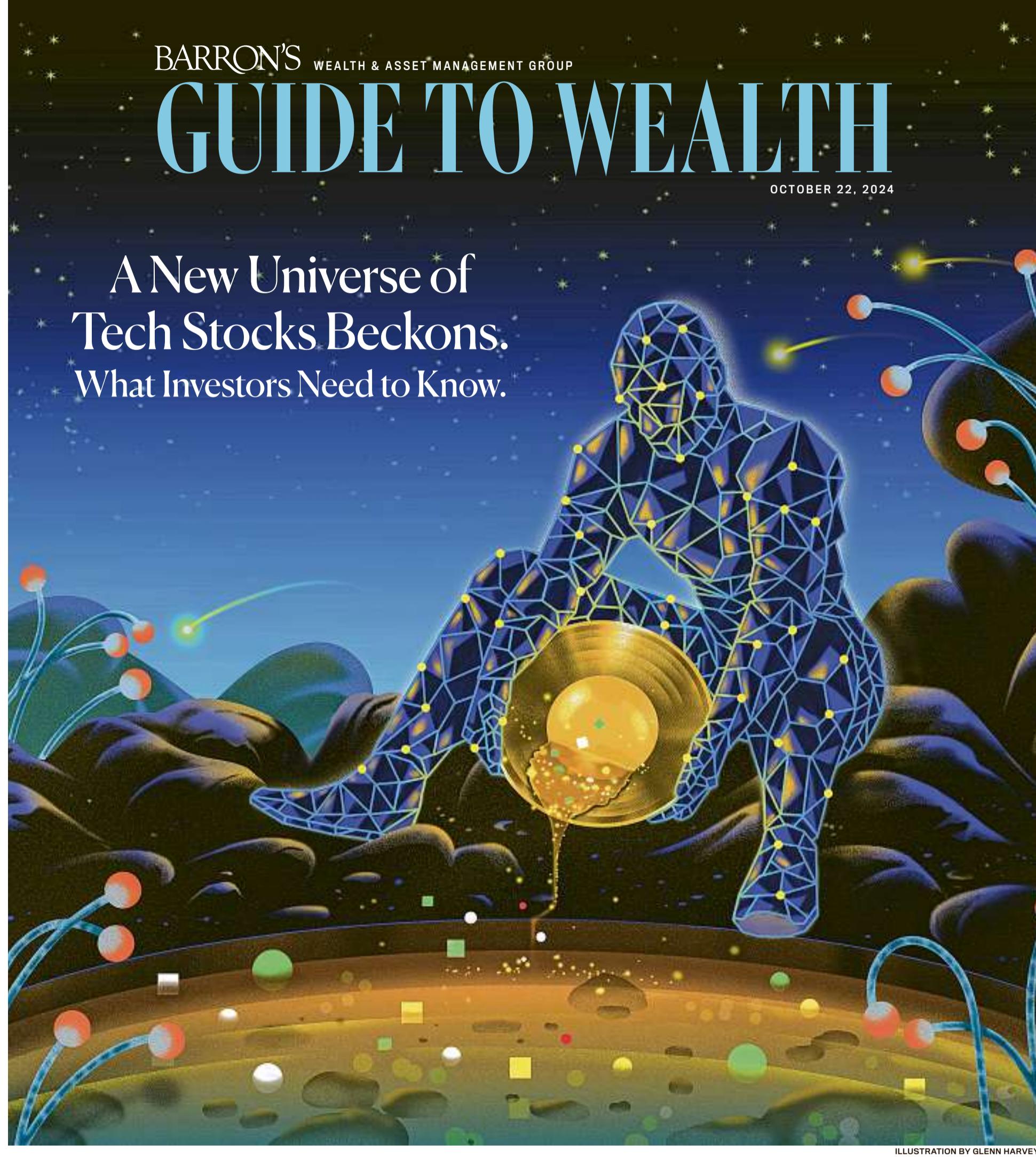
A special report by *Barron's* magazine, a Dow Jones publication

ILLUSTRATION BY GLENN HARVEY

There are several ways for intrepid investors to trade shares of hot tech start-ups that don't trade publicly—but know the risks before jumping in.

BY ANDY SEWER

It's a classic entrepreneur's origin story: Guy encounters a knotty problem—and starts a company to fix it.

Back in 2012, Atish Davda wanted to buy an engagement ring for his fiancée but didn't have the cash because a significant chunk of his wealth was tied up in shares of a private company. "I tried selling my private stock," he says. "It was incredibly difficult, with hundreds of pages of legal documents."

That headache became an epiphany, and a year later Davda founded EquityZen, a broker-dealer connecting buyers and sellers of private-company stock—in particular, shares of hot tech start-ups, some of which are unicorns, or private companies worth more than \$1 billion. EquityZen is one of a number of such companies operating in a burgeoning market for these transactions.

If this sounds like the beginning of a great American success story, well, maybe it will be. EquityZen, Forge (its bigger competitor), Nasdaq Private Market, and others are scaling up, breaking down barriers, and processing thousands of transactions. The growth of these firms stems from a transition in equity markets in which many fast-growing tech companies are staying private longer, receiving cash infusions from venture capital funds, and amassing huge valuations. For tech investors who want to expand beyond

the so-called Magnificent Seven stocks that have dominated the S&P 500 index in recent years, trading platforms that buy and sell private shares have created an opportunity to invest in leading tech companies that have remained private.

Forge has recently created the Private Magnificent 7 index (SpaceX, OpenAI, Stripe, Databricks, Fanatics, Scale AI, and Rippling), which the company says has outperformed its publicly traded relative over the past year, 74% versus 43%.

Big Wall Street firms are gearing up, too. "It's early days," says Michael Gaviser, head of private markets at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management. "But the dollar volume and number of trades, number of advisors who've been trained on the process, and number of clients who've engaged are all multiples of two years ago."

Yes, it's increasingly possible for wealthy investors to buy shares of private technology companies, and yes, financial middlemen are working feverishly to facilitate these trades. But don't think it's as easy to buy 1,000 shares of OpenAI as it is to buy **Nvidia**. Trading in private-company shares is still far from a friction-free, mature marketplace.

Let us count the ways.

"The fundamental feature of private markets is information asymmetry," says Tom Callahan, CEO of NPM, which was founded in 2013 as part of the Nasdaq Stock Market and spun off three years ago. "There basically are no requirements that private companies disclose

financials, past history, forward-looking statements, or even their shareholder structure. You're really flying blind. How do you make an investment decision on an asset when you know nothing about it?"

Callahan wants to mitigate those concerns. But in the meantime, can you say "caveat emptor"?

I'll get into navigating that terrain, but first, a few notes on what has been driving the growth of private-market investing. For one thing, marquee tech companies are going public later because they can raise plenty of money privately. Enticed by billion-dollar returns from the likes of Google, Facebook, and WhatsApp when they were private, investors have poured money into the venture capital business, which provides much of the tech sector's pre-IPO funding.

Over the past 15 years, VC investment in private companies has climbed from \$37.3 billion funding 4,923 deals in 2008, to \$170.6 billion funding 13,608 deals last year, according to the National

Venture Capital Association. (The 2023 figures pale in comparison with 2021, a red-hot year for venture, when \$348 billion went into 19,025 deals.)

Another impetus for staying private: Some start-up CEOs and venture capitalists look askance at public markets, considering them fraught with regulation and risk.

VC potentate Marc Andreessen, for example, has lamented regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley and Regulation Fair Disclosure, as well as what he has seen as other troublesome factors, including hedge funds, short sellers, and sometimes journalists. He has even declared the initial public offering market to be dead.

Hyperbole, yes, but Andreessen isn't completely wrong about IPOs and public markets, which I wrote about last year. The number of U.S. public companies now stands at 5,515, according to the World Federation of Exchanges. That's 423 fewer than 2023, and down 32% from a peak of 8,156 in 1997.

Bottom line: Successful companies

Continued on the following page

SpaceX is one of the companies in Forge's Private Magnificent 7 index. That group has significantly outperformed the public Magnificent Seven names in the past year, Forge says.



MIGUEL J. RODRIGUEZ CARRILLO / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

GUIDE TO WEALTH 2024

Continued from the previous page

don't need to, or maybe don't want to, go public as much as in the past. That means fewer opportunities for ordinary investors—and more upside for the Marc Andreessens of the world. That is a contrast with how the tech investing ecosystem used to work.

Two Paths to Public

Consider **Amazon.com** versus **Airbnb** in their first 12 years of existence. Amazon was founded in 1995 and went public two years later at a valuation of \$438 million. A decade later, the company hit a peak market cap of nearly \$42 billion. Airbnb, on the other hand, was founded in 2008 but didn't go public until 2020. At that point, it had a market cap of \$47 billion, meaning the sweet spot of Amazon's growth was available to public market investors, while in the case of Airbnb, much more of it went to the crowd on Sand Hill Road—the Silicon Valley boulevard where top venture capital firms are located.

Yes, Amazon and Airbnb are different companies. But it's worth noting that Amazon recently had a market cap of \$2 trillion, while Airbnb is currently worth \$128 billion—so, to date at least, most of Amazon's upside has been while it was public, which hasn't been the case for Airbnb. It demonstrates perhaps that for public sector investors, going public earlier is better.

Today, there's a whole crop of potentially compelling private tech companies, even beyond Forge's Private Magnificent 7. Chime, Epic Games, Kraken, Neuralink, Plaid, Ripple, and Zipline are huge in terms of valuation, growth potential, and risk. Take OpenAI, which, even with its ceaseless management drama, just raised \$6.6 billion at a \$157 billion valuation, giving it a slightly larger valuation than Goldman Sachs Group and in the same neighborhood as SpaceX—the most valuable tech unicorn ever.

Speaking of unicorns, that herd is now estimated to number 568, according to Kelly Rodrigues, CEO of Forge, making these beasts not as rare as unicorns—perhaps thoroughbreds or mustangs.

Pony Up?

Generally speaking, you must be an accredited investor to buy stock of a private company. According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, that means having a "net worth over \$1 million, ex-



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cluding primary residence (individually or with spouse or partner), or have income over \$200,000 (individually) or \$300,000 (with spouse or partner) in each of the prior two years."

If you meet the standards, you can ask your broker to help or create an account at Forge, EquityZen, Nasdaq Private Market, or one of the other firms in this business: InvestX, Rainmaker, Linqto, Hiive, Equity Bee, Collective Liquidity, ClearList, MicroVentures, or Zanbato.

Here's where things get tricky. "The public markets are bilateral," says NPM's Callahan. "You are the seller, I'm the buyer. The private markets are trilateral. You're the seller, I'm the buyer, but the chief financial officer of the company needs to approve every single trade. And there really are no criteria or guidelines here."

Even if you have a deal to buy a slug of Anthropic stock (the hot AI start-up), companies often have a 90-day right of first refusal, or ROFR (rhymes with "loafer"), window to vet the trade.

"It's a mess," says institutional trader Tiger Williams, founder and managing member of Williams Trading. "The company can buy the block back themselves or sell to some institution. The failure rate on these trades is incredibly high." Williams notes that, sometimes, unscrupulous brokers mislead buyers or sellers about having stock for sale, or use a company's private information about shareholders to find potential new investors—as allegedly happened at Carta, which provides software to manage companies' investor holdings and had ventured into a private-stock trading platform business, as well.

ABCs of SPVs

On Forge's and EquityZen's websites, you can see stock of private companies available. What's up with that? Those are often shares available through what are known as special purpose vehicles, or SPVs, which is stock owned by these platforms and wrapped into securities. SPVs, naturally, can come with transaction fees, management fees, and even carried-interest charges of 20% on any upside.

These platforms also have thematic SPV bundles of these securities, sort of like an exchange-traded fund. Rodrigues of Forge points to the Private Shares Fund, which holds a basket of private companies and has a minimum of \$2,500 and a sales load of up to 5.75%, and net annual expenses of up to 2.93%. EquityZen has funds for artificial intelligence, blockchain, healthy living, and other themes.

Private-market brokers say these investments outperform or at least match publicly traded stocks and funds. But there are so many opaque variables—never mind cherry-picking time periods—that drawing hard and fast conclusions is difficult. As the Nobel Prize-winning economist Ronald Coase famously said, "If you torture the data long enough, it will confess to anything."

For instance, the Forge Private Market Index (a basket of 75 of the most liquid unicorns) rose 388% versus 136% for the Nasdaq Composite from 2019 through 2021, but from 2019 through this September, the index is up 124% versus 174% for the Nasdaq.

Another option is to buy into a venture fund or ETF that owns private companies such as Fundrise, which has stakes in Anthropic and Databricks, or ARK Venture fund, which, according to its most recent filing, is 12.8% invested in SpaceX, 7% in Epic Games, 4.7% in Anthropic, and 4% in OpenAI. Sounds great, but the fund has returned 16.1% since inception two years ago, trailing the S&P 500's 24.7% in that time.

Another proxy might be Forge itself, which is publicly traded—though that may be a cautionary tale, too. The company IPOed as a special purpose acquisition company, or SPAC, in 2021 at \$10, and now trades for \$1.31, suggesting perhaps that the story of retail investors buying private-company stocks is still being written. ■

Hunting for Value Among Forgotten Tech Stocks

There are some great buys among large-cap tech names that aren't as big as the Magnificent Seven. We make a case for seven that investors should be considering now.

BY TIERNAN RAY

The universe of investible technology companies includes hundreds that are well established, highly profitable, and have great promise—but often receive scant attention in financial publications.

Call it the valley of the forgotten subtrillion-dollar market-capitalization stocks. These are names that don't come up often because the market fixates on the Magnificent Seven: **Apple**, **Microsoft**, **Nvidia**, Google parent **Alphabet**, **Amazon.com**, Facebook parent **Meta Platforms**, and **Tesla**.

There are some great deals in the subtrillion-dollar group that have relatively modest valuations as well as outsize potential for revenue and earnings growth. For deep value, your first stop below \$1 trillion should be the semiconductor group, both chip makers and the companies that supply the equipment to make the chips.

Chip makers are by no means unknown to investors. Given the obsession with artificial intelligence, however, Wall Street has focused on just a couple of names to the exclusion of the rest. One stock towers above all others, of course: Nvidia. If investors look lower down the market-cap ladder, they tend to consider the next-biggest chip maker, **Broadcom**, at \$805 billion in value. Both are superb companies but are substantially more expensive than they have been in the recent past.

Instead, there are three prominent names currently out of favor that deserve your attention: **ASML**, **Micron Technology**, and **Lam Research**. All three stocks are cheaper now than they were six months ago. Their stock prices reflect a host of worries.

One is the U.S.'s continuing trade war with China, which is leading to more

restrictions on semiconductor and chip-equipment exports to the Asian nation. The U.S. is steadily increasing the scope of restrictions, which reduces the opportunity for ASML and others in a huge chip market. But that threat has been going on since the Trump administration, and chip companies have proved adept at dealing with it. Frankly, it's old news.

The greater worry is that the semiconductor "cycle" of growth is nearing an end. The Street thinks that in a couple of quarters, the market will turn south as growth cools in AI chips, the hottest part of the market.

Time and again, however, it has been good to buy good chip stocks when such cyclical worries are at their peak because, not long afterward, the stock market starts to focus on the inevitable upturn. By the time that happens, it may already be too late to buy their shares.

Moreover, fixating on the cyclicity of the industry misses important long-term developments that are making all three chip makers very valuable.

Micron is entering a golden age for its dynamic random access memory, or DRAM, chips, which are used to store the most recently used data in a computer. AI demands more memory to work, which is pressuring DRAM makers to produce faster and more capacious chips. It's also forcing them to reinvent the chips so they connect more intelligently to a computer's main central processing unit, or CPU.

This shift means that before too long, Micron will be designing its cutting-edge DRAM, called "high-bandwidth memory," in close collaboration with Nvidia and other processor makers, making Micron a much bigger player.

Lam Research, which specializes in developing the machines that etch silicon and deposit layers of chemicals onto chips, has a particular focus on memory-chip making, so the reinvention of DRAM is good for Lam.

ASML, which makes laser light sources

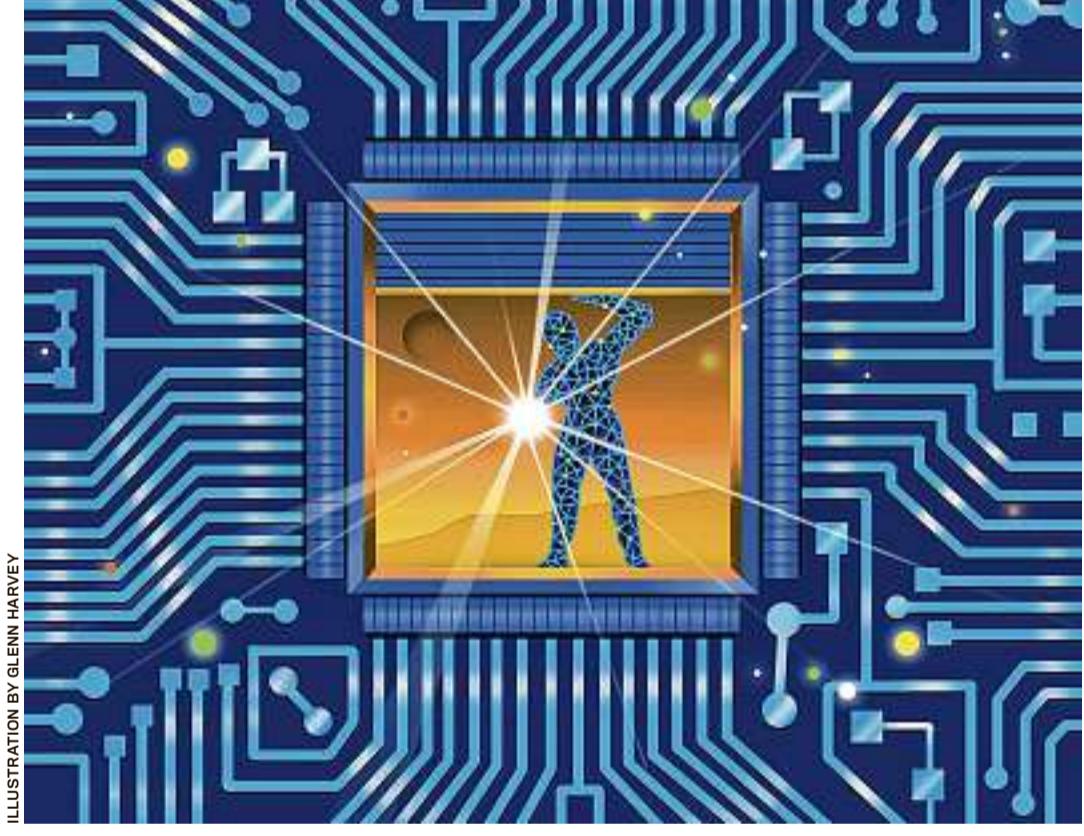


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that are required in the formation of ever-smaller circuits, is also tied into that increasing sophistication in memory.

Beyond the semiconductor names, the best place to look for overlooked growth stocks is among smaller software companies.

Information-technology tools maker **Datadog** has among the best growth profiles in all of software. While this year's expected revenue growth of 27% could cool to 23% next year, that is still strong in a market where many software firms struggle to grow faster than the teens.

Datadog's valuation is best measured by looking at its market cap divided by its expected sales over the next 12 months, a measure known as the price-to-sales ratio. On that score, it is pricier than many stocks, at 12.6 times, but that is 16% less than what the stock traded for six months ago.

Another excellent software name that has fallen out of favor recently is **Snowflake**, a data-analysis software firm. Its growth is comparable to that of Datadog. With its stock down 42% this year, its price-to-sales ratio has collapsed from 14 to just 8.6. This is a fire-sale price for a company with substantial growth and a very healthy free cash flow margin.

The realm of cybersecurity is a special niche in software worth considering

because it is almost always at the top of the list of priorities for corporate budgets. Among the best names is **Zscaler**, a young cybersecurity outfit with excellent management and projected sales growth of 20% or better.

Right now, it is one of the best tech names on sale, as its price-to-sales ratio—nearly 10% to 20% lower than what it was in the past six months to a year.

Sometimes, one has to look past discounting to future potential. The final name to consider is more or less a household name, but one with a new profile: **Oracle**. You have to hand it to 80-year-old Chairman and Chief Technologist Larry Ellison, who is operating quarter by quarter with the vim and vigor of a 20-something.

Oracle makes database software but also hardware to run databases and applications that use databases, including AI applications. The big picture is that Oracle's sales growth may double over the next several years because its cloud-computing infrastructure has gained enough capability to be a strong alternative to the Big Three cloud operators for the first time.

For a company that languished for a long time, it seems Ellison may finally have hit his stride in turning solid technology into a growth opportunity. ■

BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

How Investment Pros Are Playing The Magnificent 7 Now

Most of these megacap tech names are chasing their July peaks. Here's how investment advisors are positioned in the names.

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN

How long will the success story of the Magnificent Seven stocks last? All but **Tesla** hit new highs in July before declining. Now they are back on the ascent. Facebook parent **Meta Platforms** recently topped its July high, while Google parent **Alphabet**, **Microsoft**, **Nvidia**, **Apple**, and **Amazon.com** have been working their way back toward their peaks.

Third-quarter earnings reports, due in the next couple of weeks, will offer valuable clues into the stocks' futures. Meanwhile, we checked in with investment advisors to see how they have been playing the Magnificent Seven names. The consensus: Many of the companies have sustainable strengths, but the stocks aren't cheap—which is a big reason that volatility probably lies ahead.

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Jason Britton
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Reflection Asset Management

AI's Next Beneficiaries



Max Wasserman
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Bullish on Microsoft



Douglas Evans
Chief investment officer,
Callan Family Office

Holding Apple and Microsoft

We've owned five of the seven on an individual stock basis. We did rebalance Microsoft, Amazon, and Google in August. But these are some of the best companies in the world right now, with probably the exception of Tesla. Anytime you have a move higher, you will definitely be due for a pause. And a pause can last awhile. But in the grand scheme of things, you want to own these names for the long term. You take some profit when prices get crazy, but other than that, these are the names you want to have in your portfolio somewhere.

And if AI is really going to work, then someone is going to have to deploy it. The business software companies are currently seen as being disrupted, but stocks like **Salesforce**, **Cognizant**, **Accenture**—they're the ones that are going to actually have to make AI work. And former highfliers like **Zoom Communications** and **Docusign** are adding AI features to their products, and they've now significantly corrected from their Covid-period highs. So, there's some appeal there, too, as far as out-of-favor names to take advantage of. We've added all of them.

We own Microsoft, Alphabet, Nvidia, Apple, Tesla, and Amazon because they all fit nicely into three themes within our private-client accounts: AI, the resurgence of the consumer post-Covid, and clean energy. We mitigate risk in those concentrated portfolios by using something called a percentage trailing stop. [The strategy provides downside protection by automatically adjusting the stop price as the security's value increases, potentially locking in profits while limiting losses.]

Going into the coming earnings season, you're going to see real challenges for these companies to make those year-over-year earnings-growth numbers like they did last year. So, I think there's going to be continued volatility. We're going to buy on the dips.

We're also now seeing the second and third derivative of the AI trade. If AI continues to be successful, certain fields are going to naturally benefit. One is insurance. It's one of the most paperwork-intensive, inefficient industries there is. I think artificial intelligence will help with processing claims, with record-keeping, with predicting things like illnesses and weather events. I think it's going to make insurers better at underwriting. I also like pharmaceuticals. I think a lot of the work that's done through trial and error and through complex model simulations can go from days and weeks to hopefully hours, minutes, and seconds. I think drug companies are going to find new compounds and new treatments faster as a result of using AI.

We're dividend-growth investors, so when we look for technology investments, we're looking for companies that have strong balance sheets, good markets, and pay dividends. We own about 30 stocks in the portfolio, and our biggest tech positions—which have become our largest ones—include Microsoft, Apple, and Google. We also own **Broadcom** and **Texas Instruments**.

We think optimism is pulling valuations forward too much, so we aren't chasing here. We've been trimming into this big run; if we get a pullback in the market, we may go back in. The only stock we haven't trimmed is Microsoft. We've been active buyers on any drawdown of Microsoft. It's in all the areas we like. We like the Activision acquisition. Its cloud growth has been tremendous. And then there's its partnership with OpenAI.

In addition, we just started buying Alphabet. We'd been looking at the company, which recently started paying a dividend. We started acquiring it after it sold off from the low-\$190 range this summer. We've been trimming Apple along the way and bringing Alphabet into the portfolio.

The reason we've been trimming Apple is that while it has a tremendous amount of cash, the growth isn't there. It has been overly reliant on the product-refresh cycle. We don't like the valuation at 31times earnings for basically flat growth when we can get, say, 10% growth in Alphabet, paying 20 times earnings. Our big chip exposure has been in Broadcom rather than Nvidia. Broadcom has a stronger dividend, and the fact that it acquired VMware will lead to less cyclical.

We've had exposure to the Mag Seven in several ways, one of which is a proprietary global concentrated portfolio that we run. At one point, we had five of the stocks in that portfolio. We now have Microsoft and Apple, and we've been trading around Alphabet. It can be tough to make an active sell decision because it unleashes a lot of unrealized gains, and we endeavor to be a long-term, low-turnover investor. Our basis in Apple and Microsoft is very low. But it's concerning when you see Microsoft trading at 14 times sales, for example. That feels frothy, and it isn't a comforting feeling considering that the stock was at five times sales 15 years ago. But I also don't want to see the position get cut in half because market sentiment reverses.

On a forward [price/earnings] basis, Apple is at 32 or 33, depending on whose number you use. That's not too far out of line for a company that continues to innovate and change the world.

None of these stocks are cheap, but they're not supposed to be—they're high earnings growers, and they also have quite enviable fortress balance sheets. We're still constructive on what can happen longer term with these companies, but you're not going to see me declare any of them to be inexpensive, because they're not. ■



Richard Saperstein
Chief investment officer,
Treasury Partners

Banking on Cash-Flow Growth



Ali Flynn Phillips
President, Obermeyer Wood
Investment Counsel

Steering Clear of Tesla

Going into summer, the only Mag Seven stocks we didn't hold were Tesla and Nvidia. We held all those securities through the ups and downs through that period. We had previously sold Nvidia, but we actually reinitiated the position at the depths of that early-August time frame when it came back down to \$100. We felt the market panicked there, and we were opportunistic. Nvidia continues to evolve and is at the nexus of everything that's happening with AI and chips. We do have it underweight versus the [S&P 500 index]. On Tesla, we haven't been comfortable with its valuation metrics for a while—particularly with increased competition in the electric-vehicle space. Also, we have had concerns about management focus and its focus on increasing shareholder value.

We have also been trying to do the diversified approach, investing in things along the technology/AI continuum. It's the chip designers, the manufacturers, the networking companies, the hyperscalers. One security we added recently was [enterprise software producer] **SAP**. And then there are the traditional companies that are using technology to improve their operations. **Walmart**, for instance, is using multiple large language models to improve its catalog. It highlighted that without this technology, completing that task would have required 100 times the head count. So, we're trying to make sure to not think just of the chip manufacturers, but also some of those more traditional companies.

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\$55m Typical Account Size

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How are advisors ranked?

Advisors who wish to be ranked fill out a comprehensive application about their practice. We verify that data with the advisors' firms and with regulatory databases and then we apply our rankings formula to the data to generate a ranking. The formula features three major categories of calculations: assets,

revenue and quality of practice. In each of those categories we do multiple subcalculations. We have spent more than 15 years perfecting the balance of these factors to create a consistent and clear benchmark that accounts for the wide range of practice models in the wealth management industry. This benchmark minimizes bias and human error in our process.

How do I find an advisor?

Barron's rankings are meant as a starting point for clients looking for an advisor—a first-pass vetting that can help investors narrow a search. Every advisor will have his or her own approach to investing, financial planning and other services. Clients are encouraged to approach the search for an advisor the way they would a search for a doctor—interviewing multiple professionals and getting opinions from multiple third parties.



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\$7m Typical Account Size



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\$45m Typical Account Size



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\$20m Typical Account Size



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\$8m Typical Account Size



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\$10m Typical Account Size



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\$4m Typical Account Size



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\$5m Typical Account Size



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\$7m Typical Account Size

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\$45m Typical Account Size

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\$49m Typical Account Size

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\$4m Typical Account Size

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\$5m Typical Account Size

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\$7m Typical Account Size

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\$7m Typical Account Size

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\$3m Typical Account Size

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\$10m Typical Account Size

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\$10m Typical Account Size

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\$50m Typical Account Size

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\$10m Typical Account Size

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\$6,084m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size

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\$5,840m Total Assets
\$30m Typical Account Size

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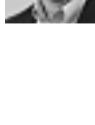
 **Aimee Cogan**
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Sarasota, FL
aimee.cogan@morganstanley.com
941-363-8513
advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-bellwether-group
\$1,636m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

 **Don d'Adesky**
Raymond James
Boca Raton, FL
don.dadesky@raymondjames.com
561-981-3690
raymondjames.com/theamericasgroup
\$6,084m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size

 **Mark Donohue**
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
mark.donohue@jpmorgan.com
561-694-5601
jpmorgan.com/donohuegroup
\$1,191m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

 **Erick Ellsweig**
Merrill Wealth Management
West Palm Beach, FL
erick_ellsweig@ml.com
561-514-4832
fa.ml.com/kmandassociatespb
\$2,423m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

 **Trevor Fried**
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Fort Lauderdale, FL
trevor.fried@ms.com
954-713-8436
advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-las-olas-group
\$1,375m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

 **Randy Hallier**
Creative Planning
St. Petersburg, FL
randy.hallier@creativeplanning.com
(913) 269-3151
creativeplanning.com/team/randy-
hallier/
\$1,300m Total Assets
\$2.1m Typical Account Size

 **William Merriam**
Merrill Wealth Management
Jacksonville, FL
william.h.merriam@ml.com
904-218-5931
fa.ml.com/bill_merriam
\$1,442m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **Thomas Moran**
Moran Wealth Management
Naples, FL
thomas.moran@moranwm.com
239-920-4440
moranwm.com
\$4,800m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

 **Jeremy Paul**
Perigon Wealth Management
Boca Raton, FL
jpaul@perigonwealth.com
561-899-0808
perigonwealth.com/team-member/
jeremy-paul
\$3,686m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **Scott Siegel**
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Boca Raton, FL
scott.siegel@morganstanley.com
212-296-6211
advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-continuum-group
\$9,400m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size

 **Michael Silver**
Baron Silver Stevens Financial
Advisors
Boca Raton, FL
msilver@bssfa.com
561-447-1997
bssfa.com
\$905m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **Kurt Sylvia**
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
kurt.sylvia@jpmorgan.com
561-694-5652
jpmorgan.com/
sylviawealthmanagement
\$1,215m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size

 **Andrew Vahab**
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Boca Raton, FL
andrewvahab@jpmorgan.com
917-345-4265
jpmorgan.com/vahabgroup
\$3,872m Total Assets
\$13m Typical Account Size

GEORGIA

 **Michael Hines**
Consolidated Planning Corporation
Atlanta, GA
mhines@pcadvisors.com
404-892-1995
pcadvisors.com
\$1,446m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

 **Brian Jenkins**
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Atlanta, GA
brian.jenkins@jpmorgan.com
404-842-4320
jpmorgan.com/
jenkinspoolkulskialisonesop
advisorygroup
\$3,708m Total Assets
\$30m Typical Account Size

ILLINOIS

 **Brad DeHond**
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth
Management
Chicago, IL
brad.dehond@morganstanleypwm.com
312-453-9111
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morarity-dehond-mulka
\$3,313m Total Assets
\$45m Typical Account Size

 **Daniel Fries**
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Chicago, IL
daniel.fries@ml.com
312-696-2121
fa.ml.com/officeofdanielfries
\$1,738m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

 **Kathleen Roeser**
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Chicago, IL
kathy.roeser@morganstanley.com
312-443-6500
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the-roeser-barbanente-group
\$1,930m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

 **David Wright**
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Chicago, IL
dave_wright@ml.com
312-325-2620
pwa.ml.com/wrighthudakzabel
\$3,124m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size

INDIANA

 **Brian Cooke**
Cooke Financial Group
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brian.cooke@cookefg.com
317-814-7808
cookefg.com
\$2,425m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

 **Chris Cooke**
Cooke Financial Group
Indianapolis, IN
chris.cooke@cookefg.com
317-814-7810
cookefg.com
\$2,425m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

IOWA

 **Matt Fryar**
Fryar Private Wealth
West Des Moines, IA
matt@fryarpw.com
(515) 809-3172
fryarprivatewealth.com
\$1,032m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

KANSAS

 **Trey Barnes**
Mariner
Overland Park, KS
trey.barnes@
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913-387-2734
marinerwealthadvisors.com/our-team/
trey-barnes
\$3,658m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

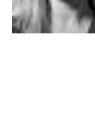
 **Jay Beebe**
Creative Planning
Overland Park, KS
jay.beebe@creativeplanning.com
(913) 742-7244
creativeplanning.com/team/jay-beebe/
\$2,200m Total Assets
\$4.6m Typical Account Size

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 **Jessica Culpepper**
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jessica.culpepper@
creativeplanning.com
(913) 742-7203
creativeplanning.com/team/jessica-
culpepper/
\$3,100m Total Assets
\$40m Typical Account Size

 **James Hise**
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Kansas City, MO
james_hise@ml.com
816-932-9008
advisor.ml.com/sites/mo/
kansas-citymo/hiselowry
\$1,800m Total Assets
\$16m Typical Account Size

 **Jake Kern**
Mariner
Overland Park, KS
jacob.kern@
marinerwealthadvisors.com
913-647-9768
marinerwealthadvisors.com/
our-team/jake-kern
\$3,658m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **Brenna Saunders**
Creative Planning
Overland Park, KS
brenna.saunders@
creativeplanning.com
(913) 754-1371
creativeplanning.com/team/brenna-
saunders/
\$3,300m Total Assets
\$40.5m Typical Account Size

 **Tim Sutton**
Creative Planning
Overland Park, KS
tim.sutton@
creativeplanning.com
(913) 742-7215
creativeplanning.com/team/
tim-sutton/
\$1,800m Total Assets
\$2.9m Typical Account Size

 **Pamela Thompson**
Mariner
Louisville, KY
pamela.thompson@
marinerwealthadvisors.com
502-236-2079
marinerwealthadvisors.com/
our-team/pamela-f-thompson
\$660m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

LOUISIANA

 **Curtis Eustis**
Merrill Private Wealth Management
New Orleans, LA
curtis_eustis@ml.com
504-586-7787
pwa.ml.com/eustisgroup
\$1,795m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

MARYLAND

 **Kent Pearce**
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Towson, MD
kent.pearce@ml.com
410-321-4340
fa.ml.com/pearce_group
\$2,883m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size

MASSACHUSETTS

 **Charles S. Bean III**
Heritage Financial Services
Westwood, MA
cbean@heritagefinancial.net
781-255-0214
heritagefinancial.net
\$2,396m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

 **Debra Brede**
D.K. Brede Investment Management
Co., GW & Wade, LLC Co.
Needham, MA
brede@bredeinvestment.com
781-444-9367
bredeinvestment.com
\$1,458m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

 **Kevin Grimes**
Grimes & Company
Westborough, MA
kevin@grimesco.com
508-366-3883
grimesco.com
\$4,489m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

 **Susan Kaplan**
Kaplan Financial Services
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617-527-1557
kaplan-financial.com
\$2,898m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

 **Peter Noonan**
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
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peter.noonan@jpmorgan.com
617-654-2318
jpmorgan.com/noonangroup
\$2,442m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size

 **Peter Princi**
Morgan Stanley | Graystone Consulting
Boston, MA
peter.b.princi@msggraystone.com
617-589-3229
fa.morganstanley.com/theprincigroup/
index.htm
\$9,460m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

 **Ira Rapaport**
New England Private Wealth Advisors
Wellesley, MA
ira.rapaport@nepwealth.com
781-416-1700
nepwealth.com
\$2,481m Total Assets
\$7m Typical Account Size

 **Raj Sharma**
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Boston, MA
raj.sharma@ml.com
617-946-8030
pwa.ml.com/sharma_group
\$6,318m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size

 **Jason Klein**
Ameriprise Financial
Portage, MI
jason.m.klein@ampf.com
269-321-5002
ameripriseadvisors.com/jason.m.klein
\$1,013m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

 **James Kruzan**
Kaydan Wealth Management
Fenton, MI
jim.kruzan@kaydanwealth.com
810-593-1624
kaydanwealthmanagement.com
\$693m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **David Kudla**
Mainstay Capital Management
Grand Blanc, MI
david.kudla@mainstaycapital.com
866-444-6246
mainstaycapital.com
\$3,515m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **Melissa Spickler**
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Bloomfield Hills, MI
melissa.spickler@ml.com
248-645-7126
fa.ml.com/spicklergroup
\$1,604m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

 **Charles C. Zhang**
Zhang Financial
Portage, MI
charles.zhang@zhangfinancial.com
269-385-5888
zhangfinancial.com
\$5,531m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

 **Travis Bezella**
Creative Planning
Bloomington, MN
travis.bezella@creativeplanning.com
(612) 240-7248
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bezella/
\$1,200m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

 **Richard S. Brown**
JNBA Financial Advisors
Bloomington, MN
richard.brown@jnba.com
952-844-0995
jnba.com
\$2,100m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

 **David A. Olson**
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
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david.a.olson@morganstanley.com
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fa.morganstanley.com/
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\$892m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

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MISSOURI

Diane Compardo
Moneta Group
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monetagroup.com/cwjc
\$2,605m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size

James Hise
Merrill Private Wealth Management
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816-932-9908
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kansas-citymo/hiselowry
\$1,800m Total Assets
\$16m Typical Account Size

Michael Moeller
Moeller Investment Group
Chesterfield, MO
mike.moeller@
moellerinvestmentgroup.com
636-735-3025
moellerinvestmentgroup.com
\$2,490m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

Kathleen Youngerman
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth
Management
St Louis, MO
kathleen.lyoungerman@
morganstanleypwm.com
314-889-4862
advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-harmony-family-office
\$537m Total Assets
\$40m Typical Account Size

NEBRASKA

Tim Harrison
Northwestern Mutual
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hfs.nm.com
\$906m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Jim Siemonsma
Mariner
Omaha, NE
jim.siemonsma@
marinerwealthadvisors.com
402-829-3650
marinerwealthadvisors.com/
our-team/jim-siemonsma
\$2,378m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Ryan Swartz
Creative Planning
Omaha, NE
ryan.swartz@creativeplanning.com
(402) 343-2554
creativeplanning.com/team/ryan-
swartz/
\$4,000m Total Assets
\$4.5m Typical Account Size

NEVADA

Randy Garcia
The Investment Counsel Company
Las Vegas, NV
randy@iccnv.com
702-871-8510
iccnv.com
\$1,615m Total Assets
\$6m Typical Account Size

NEW JERSEY

Michael Axelrod
Bleakley Financial Group
Fairfield, NJ
mike.axelrod@bleakley.com
973-244-4223
bleakley.com
\$760m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

David Briegs
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Bridgewater, NJ
david_briegs@ml.com
908-685-3203
fa.ml.com/kugelbriegs
\$2,274m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

Jack Cooney
Bleakley Financial Group
Fairfield, NJ
jack.cooney@bleakley.com
973-244-4206
bleakley.com/cooneyteam
\$732m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

Yash Dalal
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
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yash.v.dalal@morganstanley.com
201-967-6356
advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-dalal-group
\$1,097m Total Assets
\$6m Typical Account Size



Ken Schapiro
Condor Capital Wealth Management
Martinsville, NJ
ken@condorcapital.com
732-356-7323
condorcapital.com
\$1,548m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size



Andy Schwartz
Bleakley Financial Group
Fairfield, NJ
andy.schwartz@bleakley.com
973-244-4202
bleakley.com
\$1,812m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

NEW MEXICO



Jon Bull
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Santa Fe, NM
jon.bull@jpmorgan.com
(805) 879-5415
jpmorgan.com/altagroup
\$626m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

NEW YORK



Lewis Altfest
Altfest Personal Wealth Management
New York, NY
laltfest@altfest.com
212-406-0850
altfest.com
\$1,514m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size



Jason Babb
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
New York, NY
jason.babb@jpmorgan.com
212-259-5944
jpmorgan.com/degenaarsbabbgroup
\$5,129m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size



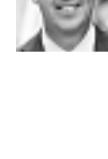
Dennis Cutrone
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth
Management
New York, NY
dennis.cutrone@
morganstanleypwm.com
212-692-2829
advisor.morganstanley.com/the-
bluestone-group-family-office-services
\$3,643m Total Assets
\$35m Typical Account Size



Glenn Degenraas
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
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212-259-5918
jpmorgan.com/degenaarsbabbgroup
\$5,395m Total Assets
\$35m Typical Account Size



Jason Katz
UBS Private Wealth Management
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jason.m.katz@ubs.com
212-713-9201
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\$5,091m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size



Gerard Klingman
Klingman & Associates
New York, NY
gklingman@klingmanria.com
212-867-7647
klingmanria.com
\$3,696m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size



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Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
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516-336-0875
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the-preserve-group
\$3,237m Total Assets
\$8m Typical Account Size



Frank Marzano
GM Advisory Group
Melville, NY
fmarzano@gmadvisorygroup.com
631-227-3900
gmadvisorygroup.com
\$6,397m Total Assets
\$20m Typical Account Size



Leo Marzen
Bridgewater Advisors
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lmarzen@bridgewateradv.com
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\$1,750m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size



Jordan Mayer
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
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jordan.mayer@jpmorgan.com
212-272-2736
jpmorgan.com/maybachpartners
\$8,374m Total Assets
\$32m Typical Account Size



Justin McCarthy
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\$5,210m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size



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212-272-0280
jpmorgan.com/ocallaghanthomas
\$5,385m Total Assets
\$35m Typical Account Size



R. Neil Stikeleather
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\$581m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size



Jack Taylor
Truist Investment Services
Raleigh, NC
jtaylor@truist.com
919-571-1893
truist.com/stkgroup
\$1,700m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

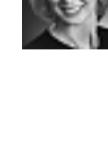
OHIO



Daniel O'Connell
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Garden City, NY
daniel.oconnell@ml.com
516-877-8316
fa.ml.com/new-york/garden-city/
the-oconnell-group
\$2,371m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size



Michael Poppo
UBS Wealth Management
New York, NY
michael.poppo@ubs.com
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ubs.com/team/thepoppogroup
\$1,632m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size



Richard Saperstein
Treasury Partners
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917-286-2777
treasurypartners.com
\$24,307m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size



Evan Steinberg
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth
Management
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evan.steinberg@
morganstanleypwm.com
212-893-7501
advisor.morganstanley.com/steinberg-
forman-group
\$6,205m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size



Robert Stolar
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Management
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robert.stolar@morganstanley.com
212-761-8138
advisor.morganstanley.com/
family-wealth-group
\$5,021m Total Assets
\$75m Typical Account Size



Ron Vinder
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Management
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ron.vinder@morganstanleypwm.com
212-503-2365
advisor.morganstanley.com/
the-vinder-group
\$12,990m Total Assets
\$100m Typical Account Size



Elizabeth Weikes
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
New York, NY
elizabeth.weikes@jpmorgan.com
212-272-9214
jpmorgan.com/wsgroup
\$5,056m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size



Scott Wilson
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Management
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scott.c.wilson@morganstanleypwm.com
212-603-6234
advisor.morganstanley.com/atlas-group
\$9,328m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size



Christopher Wimpfheimer
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
New York, NY
christopher.wimpfheimer@
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212-272-7737
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\$7,917m Total Assets
\$50m Typical Account Size



Jeffrey Yandle
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Portland, OR
jeffrey.yandle@jpmorgan.com
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\$2,193m Total Assets
\$7m Typical Account Size



Patti Brennan
Key Financial
West Chester, PA
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610-429-9050
keyfinancialinc.com
\$1,849m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size



Carl Gordinier
Merrill Wealth Management
Wayne, PA
carl.gordinier@ml.com
610-687-7572
fa.ml.com/pennsylvania/wayne/mlwma
\$1,768m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

NORTH CAROLINA

Mike Absher
Absher Wealth Management
Chapel Hill, NC
mike@absherwealth.com
919-234-0040
absherwealth.com
\$785m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

PENNSYLVANIA

Jordan Mayer
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jordan.mayer@jpmorgan.com
212-272-2736
jpmorgan.com/maybachpartners
\$8,374m Total Assets
\$32m Typical Account Size

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J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
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jack.hafner@jpmorgan.com
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\$1,559m Total Assets
\$40m Typical Account Size

Michael Hirthler
Jacobi Capital Management
Pittston, PA
mhirthler@jacobicapital.com
jacobicapital.com
\$2,158m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

Barbara Hudock
Hudock Capital Group
Williamsport, PA
bhudock@hudockcapital.com
570-326-9500
hudockcapital.com
\$716m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

Peter Sargent
Janney Montgomery Scott
Yardley, PA
psargent@janney.com
267-685-4205
sargentwealthmanagement.com
\$1,039m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

Thomas Seiler
The Seiler Group of Raymond James
Newtown, PA
tom.seiler@raymondjames.com
855-473-4537
raymondjames.com/theseilergroup
\$1,240m Total Assets
\$25m Typical Account Size

Samuel Spanos
Raymond James
Beaver, PA
sam.spanos@raymondjames.com
412-389-4874
spanosgrp.com
\$1,056m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

Rob Thomas
Mariner
State College, PA
rob.thomas@
marinerwealthadvisors.com
814-867-2050
marinerwealthadvisors.com/our-team/
rob-thomas/
\$2,928m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

RHODE ISLAND

Malcolm Makin
Raymond James
Weston, RI
mmakin@ppgadvisors.com
401-596-2800
ppgadvisors.com
\$1,592m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Matthew Young
Richard C. Young & Co.
Newport, RI
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800-843-7273
younginvestments.com
\$1,382m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

SOUTH CAROLINA

Rick Migliore
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Columbia, SC
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803-733-2126
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\$9,282m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

TEXAS

Bonner Barnes
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713-439-0665
cordamanagement.com
\$1,449m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Bradley Bruce
mFORCE Capital
Fort Worth, TX
bbruce@mforcecapital.com
817-710-1839
mforcecapital.com
\$1,484m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

Ira Kravitz
UBS Private Wealth Management
Plano, TX
ira.kravitz@ubs.com
469-440-0547
financialservicesinc.ubs.com/team/
kravitzgroup
\$1,205m Total Assets
\$6m Typical Account Size

Tommy McBride
Merrill Lynch Wealth Management
Dallas, TX
thomas_mcbride@ml.com
214-750-2004
fa.ml.com/mcbride
\$1,531m Total Assets
\$5m Typical Account Size

Maxwell Pearl
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Dallas, TX
max.pearl@jpmorgan.com
214-979-7881
jpmorgan.com/teamburnstrooppearl
\$8,624m Total Assets
\$8m Typical Account Size

Scott Tirras
Ameriprise Financial
Houston, TX
scott.b.tirras@ampf.com
713-332-4400
tiraswealth.com
\$1,501m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

Evan Troop
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Dallas, TX
evan.troop@jpmorgan.com
214-979-7526
jpmorgan.com/teamburnstrooppearl
\$8,624m Total Assets
\$100m Typical Account Size

VIRGINIA

Stephan Cassaday
Cassaday & Company
McLean, VA
steve@cassaday.com
703-506-8200
cassaday.com
\$5,243m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Scott Garnett
UBS Wealth Management
Richmond, VA
scott.garnett@ubs.com
804-775-1514
ubs.com/team/scottgarnett
\$796m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

Simon Hamilton
Raymond James
Reston, VA
simon.hamilton@raymondjames.com
571-430-7200
raymondjames.com/
thewiseinvestorgroup
\$2,732m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

Susan Kim
Ameriprise Financial
Vienna, VA
soo.m.kim@ampf.com
703-226-2300
ameripriseadvisors.com/soo.m.kim
\$1,811m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Joseph Montgomery
The Optimal Service Group
of Wells Fargo Advisors
Williamsburg, VA
joe.montgomery@
wellsfargoadvisors.com
757-220-1782
optimalservicegroup.com
\$10,175m Total Assets
\$8m Typical Account Size

Gregory Smith
Raymond James
Reston, VA
gregory.s.smith@raymondjames.com
571-430-7200
raymondjames.com/
thewiseinvestorgroup
\$2,732m Total Assets
\$3m Typical Account Size

WASHINGTON

Michael Hershey
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Bellevue, WA
michael.hershey@jpmorgan.com
425-462-6810
jpmorgan.com/hhhgroup
\$1,438m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

Randall Linde
Ameriprise Financial
Renton, WA
randall.s.linde@ampf.com
800-563-1636
agpwealthadvisors.com
\$6,425m Total Assets
\$2m Typical Account Size

Carlos Lopez
Creative Planning
Bellevue, WA
carlos.lopez@creativeplanning.com
(425) 247-6474
creativeplanning.com/team/carlos-
lopez/
\$1,100m Total Assets
\$2.6m Typical Account Size

Michael Matthews
UBS Private Wealth Management
Bellevue, WA
m.matthews@ubs.com
425-451-2350
ubs.com/thematthewsgroup
\$2,387m Total Assets
\$15m Typical Account Size

Erin Scannell
Ameriprise Financial
Mercer Island, WA
erin.j.scannell@ampf.com
425-709-2345
heritage-wealth.com
\$8,219m Total Assets
\$4m Typical Account Size

Phil Scott
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Bellevue, WA
phil.scott@jpmorgan.com
425-519-8901
jpmorgan.com/phillscottgroup
\$2,830m Total Assets
\$10m Typical Account Size

WISCONSIN

Michael Smith
Ameriprise Financial
Stevens Point, WI
michael.e.smith@ampf.com
715-341-6657
ameripriseadvisors.com/team/
michael-smith-associates
\$766m Total Assets
\$1m Typical Account Size

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1919 Investment Counsel Baltimore, MD info@1919ic.com 410-454-5719 1919ic.com 58 Advisors 8 Offices \$21.3b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	Creative Planning Overland Park, KS clientservices@creativeplanning.com 833-416-4702 creativeplanning.com 556 Advisors 97 Offices \$175.3b Total Assets \$100k Account Minimum	Homrich Berg Atlanta, GA info@homrichberg.com 404-264-1400 homrichberg.com 99 Advisors 7 Offices \$15.2b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	Pathstone Englewood, NJ contact@pathstone.com 888-750-7284 pathstone.com 69 Advisors 19 Offices \$48.3b Total Assets \$10m Account Minimum
Beacon Pointe Advisors Newport Beach, CA info@beaconpointe.com 949-718-1600 beaconpointe.com 193 Advisors 56 Offices \$31.3b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	Cresset Chicago, IL info@cressetcapital.com 312-429-2456 cressetcapital.com 130 Advisors 19 Offices \$52.5b Total Assets No Account Minimum	IEQ Capital Foster City, CA info@ieqcapital.com 650-581-9807 ieqcapital.com 22 Advisors 4 Offices \$23.6b Total Assets \$10m Account Minimum	Private Advisor Group Morristown, NJ joinus@privateadvisorgroup.com 973-538-7010 privateadvisorgroup.com 806 Advisors 359 Offices \$31.5b Total Assets No Account Minimum
Bradley, Foster & Sargent, Inc. Hartford, CT info@bfsinvest.com 860-241-4636 bfsinvest.com 17 Advisors 7 Offices \$7.3b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	Exencial Wealth Advisors Oklahoma City, OK info@exencialwealth.com 469-825-4938 exencialwealth.com 29 Advisors 13 Offices \$5b Total Assets \$250k Account Minimum	Laird Norton Wetherby San Francisco CA hello@lnwadvisors.com 415-399-9159 lnwadvisors.com 28 Advisors 4 Offices \$7.3b Total Assets \$10m Account Minimum	Savant Wealth Management Rockford, IL info@savantwealth.com 815-227-0300 savantwealth.com 149 Advisors 40 Offices \$26.3b Total Assets No Account Minimum
Cary Street Partners Richmond, VA info@carystreetpartners.com 804-340-8100 carystreetpartners.com 67 Advisors 18 Offices \$7b Total Assets No Account Minimum	Ferguson Wellman Capital Management Portland, OR info@ferguswell.com 503-226-1444 ferguswellman.com 26 Advisors 2 Offices \$8.4b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	MAI Capital Management Cleveland, OH info@mai.capital 216-920-4800 mai.capital 171 Advisors 28 Offices \$19.7b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	Signature Estate & Investment Advisors Los Angeles, CA gliska@seia.com 310-712-2323 seia.com 75 Advisors 23 Offices \$19.1b Total Assets No Account Minimum
Chevy Chase Trust Bethesda, MD info@chevychasetrust.com 240-497-5008 chevychasetrust.com 39 Advisors 2 Offices \$36b Total Assets \$3m Account Minimum	HBKs Wealth Advisors Erie, PA info@hbkswealth.com 866-536-5776 hbkswealth.com 59 Advisors 13 Offices \$5.6b Total Assets No Account Minimum	Mariner Overland Park, KS 913-647-9700 marinerwealthadvisors.com 731 Advisors 116 Offices \$81.1b Total Assets No Account Minimum	Snowden Lane Partners New York, NY info@snowdenlane.com 646-218-9763 snowdenlane.com 88 Advisors 16 Offices \$5.9b Total Assets No Account Minimum
Churchill Management Group Los Angeles, CA info@churchillmanagement.com 877-937-7110 churchillmanagement.com 38 Advisors 53 Offices \$8.2b Total Assets \$500k Account Minimum	Hightower Chicago, IL businessdevelopment@hightoweradvisors.com 301-641-6788 hightoweradvisors.com 1200 Advisors 131 Offices \$130.2b Total Assets No Account Minimum	Mercer Advisors Denver CO (888) 565-1681 merceraadvisors.com 307 Advisors 95 Offices \$45.4b Total Assets No Account Minimum	Steward Partners Investment Advisory LLC New York, NY stewardpartners@stewardpartners.com 202-930-6008 stewardpartners.com 250 Advisors 60 Offices \$20.4b Total Assets No Account Minimum
CIBC Private Wealth Atlanta, GA inquiry@cibc.com 770-617-0591 wealth.us.cibc.com 156 Advisors 21 Offices \$57.3b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	NewEdge Capital Group Pittsburgh, PA info@newedgecg.com 800-693-7800 newedgecapitalgroup.com 205 Advisors 179 Offices \$27b Total Assets \$2m Account Minimum	Continuity Group Wells Fargo Advisors Eugene, OR <i>Team:</i> Jerry Rouleau, Justin Buell, Dominic Corleto, Richard "Scott" Smith, Tracy Maltby, Lucas Widoff, Haley Thomas, Tyler Bevens, Thomas Birk, Richard Driessnack, James Osborne, David Aichele, Cody Calabrese, Frederick Sernatinger (541) 684-9508 continuitygroup.com \$4.2b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	

**BARRON'S
ADVISOR****TOP ADVISORY TEAMS**

Below is a reprint of select teams from Barron's Top 100 Private Wealth Management Teams ranking. For more information, visit barrons.com/advisorfinder.

The Babrick Team J.P. Morgan Wealth Management Los Angeles, CA <i>Team:</i> Matthew Babrick, Jeff Kuhlman, Ethan Leff, Michael Mavredakis matthew.babrick@jmpmorgan.com 310-788-3739 jmpmorgan.com/babrickteam \$4.7b Total Assets \$10m Account Minimum	The Cafaro Group Merrill Lynch Wealth Management Newton, MA <i>Team:</i> Carl Cafaro, Jon Greer, Erik Morland thecafarogroup@ml.com 617-243-8058 fa.ml.com/cafarogroup \$5.7b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	CEK & Associates Merrill Private Wealth Management Dallas, TX <i>Team:</i> William Corbellini, Dwight Emanuel, Raj Kalyandurg, Sami Abboud, Tara Walters sami.abboud@ml.com 214-303-5818 pwa.ml.com/ce_group \$5.5b Total Assets \$5m Account Minimum	Continuity Group Wells Fargo Advisors Eugene, OR <i>Team:</i> Jerry Rouleau, Justin Buell, Dominic Corleto, Richard "Scott" Smith, Tracy Maltby, Lucas Widoff, Haley Thomas, Tyler Bevens, Thomas Birk, Richard Driessnack, James Osborne, David Aichele, Cody Calabrese, Frederick Sernatinger (541) 684-9508 continuitygroup.com \$4.2b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum
Bermont Carlin Wealth Management Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management Coral Gables, FL <i>Team:</i> Adam Carlin adam.e.carlin@morganstanleyppwm.com 305-476-3302 morganstanley.com/ adam.e.carlin \$5.8b Total Assets \$15m Account Minimum	The Capitol Wealth Management Group Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management Washington, DC <i>Team:</i> Marvin McIntyre, A.J. Fechter, David Gray, Don Metzger, Steve Comiskey, Joey McLister, Arnie Koonin, Paul Capodanno cwmg@morganstanleyppwm.com 202-778-1381 advisor.morganstanley.com/the-capitol-wealth-management-group \$6.38b Total Assets \$5m Account Minimum	Clarity Wealth Wells Fargo Advisors Financial Network Naples, FL <i>Team:</i> Keith Jacoby, Michael McCain, Don Nealon info.claritywealth@wfafinet.com 239-254-2252 clarity-wealth.com \$5.2b Total Assets \$1m Account Minimum	Degenaars-Babb Group J.P. Morgan Wealth Management New York, NY <i>Team:</i> Glenn Degenaars, Jason Babb, Kristin Ashman, Paul Emata glenndegenaars@jpmorgan.com 212-259-5918 jpmorgan.com/degenaarsbabbgroup \$5.4b Total Assets \$5m Account Minimum

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The Desser Group
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Los Angeles CA
Team: Bill Desser,
Ryan Stewart, Kyle Kazmer
desser_all@jpmorgan.com
310-201-7893
jpmorgan.com/dessergroup
\$2.6b Total Assets
\$1m Account Minimum



The Hetherington Group
Merrill Private Wealth Management
New Canaan, CT
Team: Brian Hetherington
brian_hetherington@ml.com
203-972-2523
pwa.ml.com/
hetheringtongroup
\$4.8b Total Assets
\$5m Account Minimum



The O'Callaghan Thomas Group
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
New York, NY
Team: Colleen O'Callaghan, Norm
Thomas
ot_team@jpmorgan.com
212-272-0280
jpmorgan.com/
ocallaghanthomas
\$5.4b Total Assets
\$25m Account Minimum



The Sharma Group
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Boston, MA
Team: Raj Sharma, Christian Kemp
sharma_group@ml.com
617-946-8030
pwa.ml.com/sharma_group
\$6.3b Total Assets
\$10m Account Minimum

Ellison Kibler
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Charlotte NC | Columbia SC
Team: Rick Migliore,
John McCardell, Gordon Whittaker,
Ronald Dennis, John DaWalt, Jessica
Miles, Andrew Ellison, Thomas Kibler
cathy_hinson@ml.com
803-733-2164
fa.ml.com/elk
\$9.8b Total Assets
\$5m Account Minimum



Jones Zafari Group
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Los Angeles, CA
Team: Richard Jones, Reza Zafari, Tom
Tournat, Jerry Klein, Dave Niehaus,
Eleni Mavromati, Audney
DePaulo, Cheryl Smith,
Victoria Santoro, Wil Byers
richardb.jones@ml.com
310-407-4925
pwa.ml.com/joneszafarigroup
\$28.2b Total Assets
\$10m Account Minimum



The OCB Group
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
San Francisco, CA
Team: Greg Onken, Drew Corradini,
Brian Brocious
ocb_group@jpmorgan.com
415-772-3123
jpmorgan.com/ocbgroup
\$5.5b Total Assets
\$5m Account Minimum



Touchstone Wealth Partners
UBS Wealth Management
Bonita Springs, FL & Sylvania, OH
Team: Kenneth Wise, Stefan J.
Contorno, Kenneth Wise II, Mitchel
Wise, Spencer Stone, Brad Tyo, Michael
McCollough, Rick Cocke, Justin Henck
touchstonefl@ubs.com
(239) 949-7507
Advisors.ubs.com/touchstone
\$2.5b Total Assets
\$500k Account Minimum

The Evelo | Singer | Sullivan | Bruegge Group
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Cincinnati, OH
Team: David Singer, Linnell Sullivan,
Kevin Bruegge, Jamie Morgan, Tom
Hurley, Braden Martini
david.singer@ml.com
513-579-3889
pwa.ml.com/
evelosingersullivan
\$7.8b Total Assets
\$5m Account Minimum



The Malkin Group
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth
Management
New York, NY
Team: Joshua Malkin, Dan Bello,
Michael Kane
joshua.d.malkin@
morganstanleypwm.com
(212) 893-6530
advisor.morganstanley.com/the-
malkin-group
\$3.2b Total Assets
\$10m Account Minimum



**The Polk Wealth Management
Group**
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth
Management
New York, NY
Team: Lyon Polk, Deborah Montaperto,
Edmund Agresta, Sandeep Belani, Tallie
Taylor
mercy.sierra.short@
morganstanleypwm.com
212-761-0867
advisor.morganstanley.com/the-polk-
wealth-management-
group
\$44.2b Total Assets
\$50m Account Minimum



**Trailhead Retirement Planning
Group**
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Chicago, IL
Team: William Easom, Dan Hoffmann,
Sean Lannan, Anthony Severino, Erin
Haley, Michael Haynes, William
Kramer, Kenneth Robson
trailhead@morganstanley.com
312-648-3471
advisor.morganstanley.com/trailhead
\$4.1b Total Assets
\$1m Account Minimum

**Global Corporate & Institutional
Advisory Services**
Merrill Wealth Management
Atlanta, GA
Team: Erik Bjerke, Jeff Crowell, Emily
Fletcher, Brittany Hartnett, Kevin
Higginbotham, Jim Kaufman, David
Mack, Jeff Neumeyer, Chad Pigg-Fife,
Steve Prediletto, Joe Sacco, Michael
Sontag, Elizabeth White
michael.sontag@ml.com
404-231-7777
local.ml.com/050701
\$114.7b Total Assets
\$0 Account Minimum



Maybach Partners
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
New York, NY
Team: Jordan Mayer, Jennifer Mayer
maybach.partners@
jpmorgan.com
212-272-2736
jpmorgan.com/
maybachpartners
\$8.4b Total Assets
\$5m Account Minimum



The Ricca Group
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Florham Park, NJ
Team: Michael Ricca, Mary Guza, Diana
Chaney
thericca@
morganstanley.com
973-236-3530
advisor.morganstanley.com/the-ricca-
group
\$6.0b Total Assets
\$2m Account Minimum



The Vahab Group
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Boca Raton, FL
Team: Andrew Vahab, David Guthrie,
Vincent Zappola, Robert Nicastro,
Michael Kantor, Evan Soff
vahab_group@jpmorgan.com
561-549-2418
jpmorgan.com/vahabgroup
\$4.1b Total Assets
\$3m Account Minimum

Heritage Wealth Advisors
Ameriprise Financial
Mercer Island, WA
Team: Erin Scannell, Colin Sands, Amy
Schwab
kara.kelly@ampf.com
425-709-2345
ameripriseadvisors.com/team/heritage-
wealth-
advisors
\$8.2b Total Assets
\$1 Account Minimum



The Meyers Group
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
San Francisco, CA
Team: Elaine Meyers, Anna Ochoa
meyers_team_cas@
jpmorgan.com
415-315-7801
jpmorgan.com/meyersgroup
\$6.7b Total Assets
\$25m Account Minimum



The Scott Team
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Bellevue, WA
Team: Phil Scott,
Matthew MacMichael,
Tanya Anderson
phil.scott@jpmorgan.com
425-519-8910
jpmorgan.com/phillscottgroup
\$2.8b Total Assets
\$10m Account Minimum



The Wise Investor Group
Wilde Wealth Management Group
Reston, VA
Team: Simon Hamilton, Gregory Smith,
Chris Aime, Matthew Anderson,
Chase Hinderstein, David Mount,
Ann Summerson
thewiseinvestorgroup@
RaymondJames.com
202-492-3244
raymondjames.com/
thewiseinvestorgroup
\$3.0b Total Assets
\$1m Account Minimum

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