

BUSINESS

Find out what’s going on in the local business community **Page B2**

Perspective: The Coast Guard thrives in times of crisis because of the ability of its men and women to engage partners at the federal, state and the local level based on trust, writes retired Adm. Thad Allen as he looks back on the service’s response to Hurricane Katrina 15 years ago. **B3**



Cars line up for food at the Utah Food Bank’s mobile food pantry at the Maverik Center in West Valley City, Utah.

RICK BOWMER/AP PHOTO

The vanishing safety net

Millions of Americans falling back into crisis as stimulus funds dry up

By HANNAH DENHAM and TAYLOR TELFORD
The Washington Post

ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL elements of the government’s response to the coronavirus recession — protecting people on the margins from falling into poverty — is faltering as the safety net shrinks and federal benefits expire.

Major recessions are especially fraught for low-income earners, whose finances can veer from tenuous to dire with one missed paycheck. But as the economy cratered this spring, economists and poverty experts were mildly surprised to discover that the torrent of government support that

followed — particularly the \$600 a week in expanded unemployment benefits and one-time \$1,200 stimulus checks — likely lowered the overall poverty rate.

In fact, 17 million people would have dropped below the poverty line without the \$500 billion in direct intervention for American families, said Zach Parolin, a researcher at Columbia University.

Now, data shows, those gains are eroding as federal inaction deprives Americans on the financial margins of additional support. If the unemployment

SEE POVERTY PAGE B2



RICHARD VOGEL/AP PHOTO

Postal workers load packages at a post office in the Panorama City section of Los Angeles.

Five myths about the Postal Service

Misconceptions about the post office abound

By RICHARD R. JOHN
The Washington Post

The historic post office building across from New York’s Penn Station bears the inscription: “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.”

But that’s not the Postal Service’s official motto; it’s actually a reference to an ancient Persian messenger service remembered admiringly by Herodotus.

Misconceptions about the post office abound, especially as more Americans demand access to mail-in

voting for the presidential election.

Myth No. 1: Ben Franklin founded the Postal Service

“Benjamin Franklin creates the Post Office Department” reads a 2013 Philadelphia Inquirer headline on a today-in-history feature. In 2016, the Independent, a Rhode Island newspaper, referred to Franklin as “the father of America’s postal system.”

The Continental Congress made Franklin postmaster general in 1775, but he wasn’t the founder of the Postal Service as we know it today. He had been Philadelphia’s postmaster and America’s co-postmaster general under the British Crown, and in 1775 he inherited an existing organization that retained some of its colonial

trappings. A rate chart that Franklin issued after he took office, for instance, was substantially similar to one he had issued under colonial rule.

In 1788, the ratified Constitution gave Congress the power “To establish Post Offices and post Roads.” President George Washington sought a postal service that could logistically bind western territories with the Eastern Seaboard. In 1790, he urged Congress’s “establishment of the militia, of a mint, of standards of weights and measures, of the post office and post roads.”

James Madison, then a congressman, wanted to ensure the flow of information from citizens to their representatives. The result was a postal

SEE HERE’S PAGE B2

JEFF BEZOS BECOMES FIRST PERSON EVER TO HAVE NET WORTH OF MORE THAN \$200 BILLION

As the rest of society struggles with the economic fallout brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, Jeff Bezos continues to get richer.

Already the world’s wealthiest man, the Amazon founder’s net worth soared past \$202 billion on Wednesday, up about \$87 billion since January, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires index. He is the first person to achieve such a high valuation.

Bezos’ personal wealth climbed to staggering levels after Amazon stock prices surged to a record high of \$3,438 per share. His riches are also driven in part by his ownership of Blue Origin, the space travel

company he founded in 2000, and The Washington Post newspaper, which he acquired in 2013.

And he’s not the only tech giant to see his wealth balloon amid the worldwide health crisis.

Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg similarly saw his net wealth surge past \$100 billion this month and Tesla’s Elon Musk’s value jumped to \$96 billion after a spike in the price of his shares.

— Bloomberg



AP PHOTO

Pending home sales top forecasts, at highest level since 2005

U.S. pending home sales rose in July by more than forecast to the highest level since 2005, signaling the housing market’s sharp recovery will continue with borrowing costs to stay low for the foreseeable future.

The National Association of Realtors’ index of contract signings to purchase previously owned homes increased 5.9% from the prior month after a 15.8% jump in June. The median forecast of economists surveyed by Bloomberg called for a 2% gain. Compared with a year ago, pending sales were up 15.4% on an unadjusted basis.

The gauge’s rebound following an initial decline at the pandemic’s start shows that housing continues to be an area of strength for the recovering U.S. economy, in part because people are looking for more space while being stuck at home. That said, unemployment remains elevated and income uncertainty could slow demand for residential real estate.

— Bloomberg



DANIEL ACKER/BLOOMBERG

A prospective home buyer enters a house for sale in Peoria, Ill.