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Publisher: Wea H. Lee
President: Catherine Lee
Editor: John Robbins, Jun Gai
Address: 11122 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072
E-mail: News@scdaily.com

Oil in the age of corona-virus: a U.S. shale bust like no other



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New York’s Cuomo warns against ‘blindly’ reopening states



People rest and enjoy the day at Central Park maintaining social distancing norms, during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Manhattan borough of New York City, U.S., May 2, 2020. REUTERS/Eduardo Munoz

NEW YORK (Reuters) - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo on Saturday pushed back against what he called premature demands that he reopen the state, saying he knew people were struggling without jobs but that more understanding of the new coronavirus was needed.

People rest and enjoy the day at Central Park maintaining social distancing norms, during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Manhattan borough of New York City, U.S., May 2, 2020. REUTERS/Eduardo Munoz

As governors in about half of the United States partially reopen their economies over this weekend, Cuomo said he needed much more information on what the pandemic was doing in his state, the hardest hit by the disease, before he loosens restrictions aimed at curbing its spread.

“Even when you are in uncharted waters, it doesn’t mean you proceed blindly,” he said. “Use information to determine action - not emotions, not politics, not what people think or feel, but what we know in terms of facts.”

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U.S. CDC reports 1,092,815 coronavirus cases, 64,283 deaths

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy echoed Cuomo’s slow-go restart approach, even as he reported “positive trends,” including a decline in the number of hospital patients with COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

While the number of deaths has trended lower in recent days, New Jersey’s toll, second only to New York’s, stood at 7,742, which Murphy cited as a key reason for maintaining his stay-at-home order.

“The family, friends and neighbors who we have lost are the reason why we cannot rush our restart,” he said at a news briefing. “We need to keep seeing these lines moving in these directions before we can put New Jersey on the road back, and before we’re able to responsibly restart our economy.”

An many U.S. eastern seaboard residents enjoyed a perfect spring day on Saturday, those in New Jersey had access to more outdoor space as Murphy allowed the state’s parks and golf courses to reopen for the first time in a month, warning they would be shut again if social distancing requirements were violated.

“Anecdotal and preliminary” reports suggest that the rules were being observed, he said.

ing of businesses that had been shuttered by the pandemic. Leaders in those and several other states where the coronavirus has had less of an impact are under pressure to allow people to return to work, as government data released this week showed 30 million Americans have sought unemployment benefits since March 21.

Cuomo pointed to the roughly 900 new coronavirus cases that hospitals in New York are still reporting daily and the fact that officials do not know where those infections are coming from, as reason enough to continue keeping the Empire State shut down.

The governor also released the preliminary results of a state-wide antibody survey of about 15,000 people showing that 12.3% had been previously infected with the virus.

It confirmed the results of another test with a smaller sample size released about 10 days ago showing that one in five New York City residents has had the virus, with the Bronx borough seeing the highest number positive for antibodies at 27.6%.

As of Saturday, the number of known infections nationwide had climbed to more than 1.1 million, including about 65,000 deaths, according to a Reuters tally.

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U.S. coronavirus stimulus went to some health-care providers facing criminal inquiries

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Eager to bolster the health-care system during the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. government last month sped \$30 billion in stimulus payments to most healthcare providers that billed Medicare last year.

FILE PHOTO: Oklahoma National Guardsmen wait to sanitize a residents room during a decontamination mission at a longterm care facility, amid the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in McAlester, Oklahoma, U.S. April 22, 2020. REUTERS/Nick Oxford

That speed resulted in taxpayers' money flowing to some companies and people facing civil or criminal fraud investigations, according to defense lawyers and others representing more than a dozen firms and people facing such inquiries.

The disclosures about such payments have prompted outrage among some congressional Democrats, who say they highlight the problems with how stimulus funds have been distributed.

"I have an enormous amount of frustration with the way the Trump administration is distributing these dollars, and examples like these magnify the consequences of the White House's efforts to limit transparency and stonewall oversight," Senator Ron Wyden, ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, told Reuters.

Henry Connelly, a spokesman for House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, added: "It is alarming to see the Trump administration giving precious taxpayer dollars to unscrupulous entities while so many hospitals and health care workers on the frontlines of the battle against coronavirus are desperate for resources."

The Department of Health and Human Services, which sent the payments, told Reuters it transmitted funds to all medical providers who submitted billings in 2019 to Medicare, the federal health insurance program for elderly

and disabled Americans, unless they had already been excluded from participating.

It declined to respond to the criticism from Wyden and Pelosi's office and did not respond to specific questions from Reuters about the payments.

Katherine Harris, a spokeswoman for the HHS Office of the Inspector General, said her office oversees the program but declined to comment on the specific distribution of funding.

"While we cannot comment specifically on any work other than what has been publicly announced, I can tell you that we regularly perform reviews of the department's administration of programs, including the distribution of funding," Harris said.

Reuters was unable to independently

determine what portion of the stimulus payments went to entities and individuals involved in civil and criminal actions with Medicare.

In an email to funding recipients seen by Reuters, HHS asked providers to sign a lengthy attestation that stipulates they have been or will be treating patients suffering from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus.

If providers do not respond within 30 days, HHS said it will assume they have accepted the government's terms and conditions. It said in a statement it "has mechanisms in place to recoup funds and address fraudulent activity."

The funds came from the \$2.3 trillion CARES Act passed by Congress to blunt the economic toll of the pandemic, which has killed more than 64,000 Americans and thrown at least 30 million people out of work.

Unlike the portions of that package intended to help small businesses, which required companies to apply for it, some of the healthcare funding was initiated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and showed up as a surprise in the bank accounts of many healthcare providers.

Reuters interviewed six defense lawyers and others representing more than a dozen healthcare providers facing civil or criminal inquiries who received the money, including a pain medicine doctor who recently settled a civil false claims case, and an operator of an assisted living facility who is planning to plead guilty to healthcare fraud.

"The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing," said Joel Hirschhorn, an attorney who represents the pain medicine doctor and the operator of the assisted living facility.



WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Eager to bolster the healthcare system during the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. government last month sped \$30 billion in stimulus payments to most healthcare providers that billed Medicare last year.

FILE PHOTO: Oklahoma National Guardsmen wait to sanitize a residents

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A Decade Of Job Gains Wiped Out U.S. Now Has 22 Million Unemployed



OVERVIEW

Last week, 5.2 million people filed unemployment claims, bringing the total to 22 million in the four weeks since President Trump declared a national emergency

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

More than 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment aid since President Trump declared a national emergency, a staggering loss of jobs that has wiped out a decade of employment gains and pushed families to line up at food banks as they await government help.

The United States has not seen this level of job loss since the Great Depression, and the government is struggling to respond fast enough to the deadly coronavirus health crisis and the widespread economic pain it has triggered.

Layoffs are mounting in nearly every sector as businesses have been forced to close in an effort to stem the spread of covid-19. Many companies that remain open report a huge drop-off in sales. New data show manufacturing production cratered in March by the most since 1946, and new home construction saw the biggest decline in nearly 40 years.

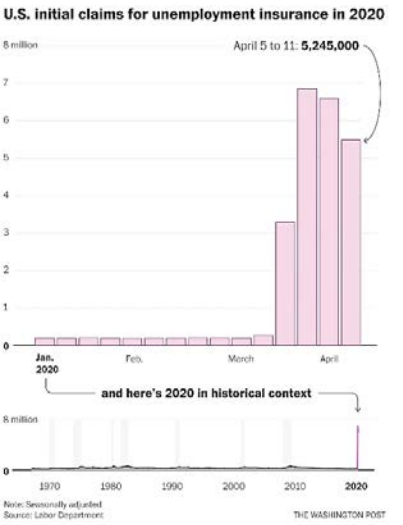
"We are going to go through a couple of quarters, at least, where things will be bad," said Patrick Harker, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. "I could see a [jobless] number hovering around or slightly below 20 percent, even."

Government aid has been slow to arrive for many Americans, exacerbating the downturn. The Small Business Administration stopped accepting loan applications on Thursday after it ran out of funds for a key program that is supposed to help businesses stay afloat and retain workers.

State unemployment offices are so overwhelmed that many people are still waiting for unemployment payments weeks later, and few states have done anything yet for the self-employed and gig workers who are desperate for aid. Even the federal government's relief payments — referred to by many as "stimulus checks" — have been held up by various glitches. About half of the payments have gone out so far.

Stocks were little changed in regular trading Thursday as Wall Street traders had already factored in major job losses. But in after-hours trading, futures for the Dow Jones industrial average soared after STAT news reported that a Chicago hospital treating severe coronavirus patients with Remdesivir, an antiviral medicine, saw encouraging results. The trial involved only 125 people and the pre-

liminary results were not peer reviewed, but the market reaction was a sign of the anticipation among investors for positive covid-19 treatment news.



Last week, 5.2 million people filed unemployment insurance claims, the Labor Department reported Thursday, making it among the biggest spikes ever, although smaller than the 6.6 million people who applied the week before and the record 6.9 million people who applied the week that ended on March 28.

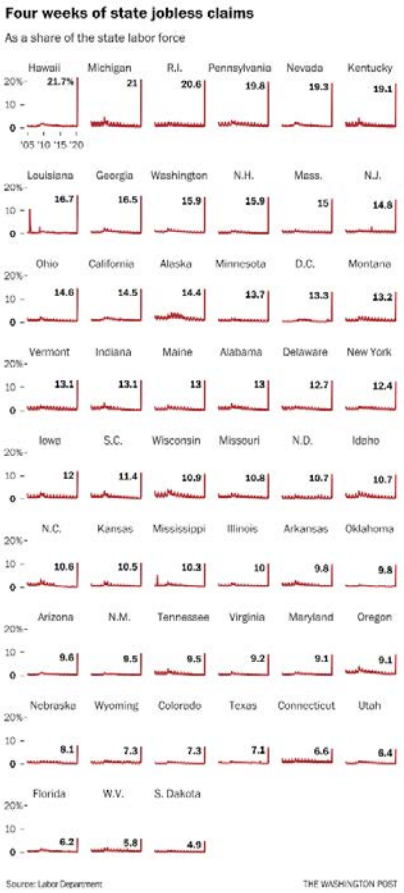
The eye-popping job losses in the past month have erased virtually all of the 22.8 million jobs gained since 2010 as the nation rebounded from the Great Recession.

Two economists say the U.S. unemployment rate is already over 20 percent, according to Alexander Bick of Arizona State University and Adam Blandin of Virginia Commonwealth University who are tracking the data in real time. It is expected remain close to 10 percent through the end of the year, meaning 1 in 10 people would still be out of work at the holidays, the National Association for Business Economics says.

Every state has experienced job losses, with several key swing states in the upcoming presidential election among those hardest hit with layoffs ranging from manufacturing to hospitality. In Michigan, a million workers, or 21 percent of the workforce, has already applied for unemployment over the past

month.

Pennsylvania has close to 20 percent of workers out of a job, and Ohio is near 15 percent. The worst state of all is Hawaii, with nearly 22 percent out of work since the tourism industry has been devastated. These crushing jobless numbers have played a key role in Trump's intensifying push to reopen the economy. The White House on Thursday released new guidelines putting those decisions in the hands of states, but Trump reiterated his optimism that the lockdowns will end soon.



"We must have a working economy and we want to get it back very very quickly, and that's what's going to happen. I believe it will boom," Trump said in a news conference.

Even after parts of the economy reopen, people are going to remain fearful of venturing out again to restaurants or offices unless there is widespread testing or a vaccine, many experts say.

In addition to health concerns, Ameri-

cans typically slash their spending when they see widespread job losses and pay cuts among their friends and family members, another issue likely to prevent a rapid recovery.

Here's what reopening the economy is likely to look like: More masks, fewer workers, high unease.

Tedeschi, a former Treasury Department official, said the psychological scars of so many job losses are likely to be long-lasting. He pointed to how millennials have been reluctant to buy homes, years after the Great Recession, because they are still spooked by seeing so many family and friends experience foreclosure or personal bankruptcy. (Courtesy www.washingtonpost.com)



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Editor's Choice



Women shop at a shopping mall after the Saudi government eased a curfew and allowed stores to open, following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Riyadh



A U.S. military personnel wearing face mask walks outside the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, which was converted into a hospital during the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in New York City, U.S. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid



formation of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds fly over the National Mall in Washington



Nuria Bravo, 38, shows to her neighbors her newborn son Jesus next to her husband Francisco Pimentel, 40, and their children Cristina, 8, and Daniel, 11, as they greet to the neighbors from the balcony of their house during a lockdown amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson chairs a meeting to update on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in the cabinet room of the 10 Downing Street in London, Britain



Nuria Bravo, 38, and her husband Francisco Pimentel, 40, pose for a photo with their newborn son Jesus as they arrive to their home from the hospital after she gave birth during a lockdown amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, in Ronda, southern Spain, . 2020. REUTERS/Jon



Protesters covering their faces attend a demonstration against the lockdown imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Berlin, Germany, May 2, 2020. REUTERS/Christian Mang TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Bolivian citizens, who were stranded in Chile after the border was closed as preventive measure, gather as they cross the border between Chile and Bolivia to get to their country, following the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Colchane,

“*The World’s Top Food Heroes*”

23 Organizations Worldwide Are Working To Eliminate FoodWaste During COVID-19



The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has upended nearly every aspect of modern society, but especially the food system. Farmers are being forced to discard unprecedented amounts of food surplus because of the closure of schools, restaurants, and hotels. And, because of the complex logistics of the food supply chain, diverting food supply away from whole-salers directly into the hands of consumers can be costly. Experts like Dana Gunders from ReFED are concerned that more food waste will be produced in 2020 than in previous years. Despite these challenges, organizations around the world are working to reduce food waste. **April 29th is Stop Food Waste Day**, founded by Compass Group, and in honor of it, Food Tank is highlighting 24 organizations and companies trying to eliminate pandemic-fueled food waste.

Organizations around the world that are working to reduce food waste:

1. AgriMax (Europe) Funded by the European Union, AgriMax is a food waste recovery project that converts crop and food processing waste into organic compounds through biorefinery. These compounds can be used in food packaging, food ingredients, and agricultural chemicals. Additionally, AgriMax recently launched an online platform that connects crop producers to biorefineries in Spain and Italy to generate profits from waste. AgriMax also promotes educational webinars on the bioeconomy, and offers tips to help people recycle household food waste. **2. Binghamton Food Rescue (BFR) (United States)** Binghamton Food Rescue (BFR) collects perishable food waste and redistributes it as packaged meals and groceries to food-insecure communities in the city of Binghamton, New York. Over 21,319 kilograms (47,000 pounds) of food have been rescued since the organization’s inception. The organization is encouraging community members to report local food waste so they can pick up and re-purpose it. BFR also collects food donations and delivers them to around 100 households per week. **3. Brothers Produce (United States)** Brothers Produce is the largest Texas-based food and beverage distributor, supplying

goods to retailers in Texas and Louisiana. In response to the pandemic, Brothers Produce has developed a new business model where boxes of fresh produce are sold directly to customers instead of companies. **4. City Harvest (United States)** As the world’s first food rescue program, New York-based City Harvest is responding to COVID-19 by rescuing perishable produce. The organization aims to feed New York City’s food insecure communities by redistributing food waste and providing educational programming. Despite the closure of over 85 of its food programs, City Harvest is still committed to feeding those in need. The organization has opened seven emergency relief sites for New York’s food insecure communities, and 22 more relief sites are on their way. **5. Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) and Farmers Guild (United States)** Based in California, The Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) and Farmers Guild is a nonprofit striving to build a more sustainable food system. To do so, they engage in political advocacy and develop grassroots programs to empower farmers and local communities. To eliminate the food surplus in California’s food system, CAFF works with farmers to redirect their food supply away from their usual commercial customers and into the hands of consumers. **6. Compass Group (United Kingdom)** Operating in over 50 countries, Compass Group is the biggest food service company globally. In response to COVID-19, Compass Group UK partnered with food recovery organizations and food safety experts to create a plan to distribute food surplus to nonprofit organizations across the United Kingdom. Within 3 weeks of the plan’s inception, around 60,000 meals were donated to more than 30 national nonprofits and local relief organizations. **7. Divert (United States)** Divert is a technology company that uses data to inform solutions to minimize food waste from the retail supply chain. Divert currently partners with supermarket chain Giant to recycle perishable foods. Perishable food is removed from the supply chain and repurposed to generate clean energy. Divert also recycles all food waste that cannot go to food banks. **8. Edible York: The Abundance Project (United Kingdom)** Located in the United Kingdom, Edible York is an NGO that aims to build a healthier York community through edible gardening and horticultural workshops. The organization runs a program titled “Abundance” that collects surplus fruit

that would inevitably end up in a landfill. Volunteers then redistribute the fruit to the York community. Volunteers also rescue potatoes and deliver them to the most vulnerable people and families impacted by pandemic. **9. The Felix Project (United Kingdom)** Based in London, The Felix Project is a nonprofit that collects fresh food thrown away by wholesalers, and delivers it to charities and schools. As the pandemic creates a spike in the demand from food banks in London. The Felix Project is expanding their deliveries to emergency food hubs, homeless shelters, churches and hospitals. **10. Food Aid Foundation (Malaysia)** Malaysia-based food recovery nonprofit Food Aid Foundation distributes supply chain food surplus among the country’s most vulnerable populations. They have carried out emergency food relief efforts in Malaysian neighborhoods such as Alor, Setar, Ipoh, and Penang. The organization receives donations from renowned Asian chefs such as Alex Chong, and partners with major food conglomerates like Captain Oats and Indofood to fund their initiatives. **11. Food for Soul (Italy)** Based in Italy, Food for Soul is a self-proclaimed cultural project that recovers imperfect foods from landfills in countries ranging from France to Brazil, and repurposes them into meals for the homeless, refugees, and other vulnerable communities. Seeking creative ways to encourage food waste reduction, Founder and Italian chef Massimo Bottura hosts a family-friendly Instagram cooking show that teaches viewers how to repurpose household food waste into meals. **12. Food Recovery Network (FRN) (United States)** Food Recovery Network (FRN) is a nonprofit led by college students who collect campus food waste and donate it to local nonprofits, churches, and other community organizations. FRN operates on 230 college campuses across America. Despite mass college campus closures, over 30 student chapters continue to rescue food waste. And since the beginning of the pandemic, several companies have donated their food surplus left by business closures and event cancellations. **13. FruPro (United Kingdom)** Launched in response to the pandemic, FruPro is a London-based online platform that connects major foodservice and catering suppliers to independent retailers to eliminate losses in the food supply chain. Since FruPro’s launch, 36,741 packages of fresh produce have been delivered, feeding around 500,000 people. FruPro is also developing a plan to

distribute food to local nonprofits and food banks. **14. The Harvard Law School Food Law And Policy Clinic (FLPC) (United States)** Directed by Emily Broad Lieb, Harvard Law Schools’ Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC) is leading an emergency COVID-19 response effort to inform the public the pandemic’s impact on food systems. The response includes informational resources analyzing opportunities for low-cost home food delivery. It also includes policy briefings urging Congress and the USDA to take legislative action to mitigate the pandemic’s burden on the food system and its workers. **15. Imperfect Foods (United States)** Operating in 43 states, the San-Francisco based company, Imperfect Foods, aims to eliminate food waste by collecting blemished food rejected by grocery stores. They then redistribute it in customizable boxes to customers. As a result of COVID-19, delivery services face delays due to an increase in demand and a decrease in staff. **16. Mesa Brasil SESC (Brazil)** Mesa Brasil SESC is a Brazilian food bank network whose objective is to reduce national food waste by redistributing food surplus to food insecure Brazilian communities. Mesa Brasil’s network contains over 1100 companies that include supermarkets, restaurants, and food service distributors. According to their Facebook page, “Mesa Brazil is acting with full force to combat the effects of the pandemic among the most vulnerable populations.” As of April 1st, they had donated over 23,500 kilograms (52,000 pounds) of food to 148 charity organizations across the country. **17. Move for Hunger (United States)** If food is discarded during one’s relocation process, Move for Hunger is available to collect and donate it to food banks. The organization connects people who are moving with a moving company to coordinate a pick up time for non-perishable food items. The service operates across the United States and parts of Canada. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Move for Hunger has expanded its operational efforts, delivering food to food banks faster than ever before. **18. Planet Food: The Real Junk Food Project York (United Kingdom)** Based in the United Kingdom, Planet Food York is a nonprofit that recovers food that would end up in a landfill. The food is then sold at their “pay-as-you-feel” food store. In the face of COVID-19, Planet Food York is partnering with local churches and food banks to deliver bags of food to

the community. **19. ReFED (United States)** ReFED is a U.S.- based consortium that seeks to discover policy solutions to end food waste. The organization has published numerous educational resources on the ways people can get involved to combat food waste. ReFED also hosts a weekly interactive webinar series titled, “Better Together: Food System Best Practices for Navigating COVID-19” every Wednesday at 3PM EST which focuses on specific food system challenges and potential solutions. **20. Replate (United States)** Operating in more than 300 U.S. cities, Replate is a nonprofit comprised of professional drivers known as “food rescuers” who collect surplus meals from businesses and distribute them to vulnerable communities. By partnering with Beyond Meat and DoorDash during the pandemic, Replate is able to provide fresh, nutritious meals to frontline workers and food insecure communities. **21. Rock and Wrap It Up (United States)** Rock and Wrap It Up is a New York-based anti-poverty organization that works to divert excess food from stadiums, companies, and other commercial enterprises towards food banks and veterans. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Rock and Wrap it Up has collected thousands of pounds worth of food from Madison Square Garden and MetLife Stadium. As of early April, film and TV partners have donated over 2,000 additional pounds of food. **22. Second Harvest (Canada)** Second Harvest is Canada’s largest food rescue organization. Second Harvest recently committed CAD\$4.5 million dollars (USD \$3.2 million) towards local charities and nonprofits that distribute surplus food to food insecure Canadians. The organization currently accepts food donations from companies such as Loblaw, Starbucks, and Sysco, and is working to partner with farms and smaller community stores **23. Winnow (United Kingdom)** Winnow is a technology company that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce food waste in commercial kitchens. Winnow’s Waste Monitor System, a food waste tracker, is used by chefs in more than 40 countries. Additionally, Winnow Vision is a system of cameras pointed at garbage bins that collects data on food waste. Through AI, Winnow has saved over USD \$42 million dollars in food purchasing costs. (Courtesy <https://foodtank.com/news>)



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