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That's been a familiar theme for lawmakers over the past few years. But the pressure is even higher following the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the rise in COVID vaccine misinformation and united Democratic control of Congress and the White House. The latter could make legislative action more likely, although it remains far from a sure thing.



As malicious conspiracy theories continue to spread, lawmakers are pounding the social media companies over their market dominance, harvesting of user data and practices that some believe actually encourage the spread of engaging but potentially harmful misinformation. Some Republicans have also alleged, without proof, censorship and political bias against conservatives as another reason to rein in the enormous firms.

There's increasing support in Congress for imposing new curbs on legal protections regarding speech posted on their platforms.

Both Republicans and Democrats — including President Joe Biden as a candidate — have called for stripping away some of the protections under so-called Section 230 of a 25-year-old telecommunications law that shields internet companies from liability for what users post.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Twitter chief
Jack Dorsey and Google CEO Sundar Pichai —
whose company owns YouTube — will testify in
a virtual hearing before the House Energy and
Commerce Committee. The session's title leaves
little doubt as to the majority Democrats' stance:
"Disinformation Nation: Social Media's Role in
Promoting Extremism and Misinformation."

These executives testified on the subject at several congressional hearings last year, sometimes under threat of subpoena. This time they face tougher dynamics and may be called to account for earlier promises. In a Senate hearing shortly after the election in November, for instance, Zuckerberg and Dorsey gave lawmakers assurances of vigorous action against disinformation.





Former President Donald Trump enjoyed special treatment on Facebook and Twitter until January, despite spreading misinformation, pushing false claims of voting fraud, and promulgating hate. Facebook banned Trump indefinitely a day after rioters egged on by Trump swarmed the Capitol. Twitter soon followed, permanently disabling Trump's favored bullhorn.

Banning a sitting president from social media was an unprecedented step. Of course, so was Trump's heavy use of Twitter to lambaste opponents, laud supporters and spread false claims to more than 80 million followers. He was also only the second president to have a social media presence while in office.

Facebook hasn't yet decided whether it will banish the former president permanently.

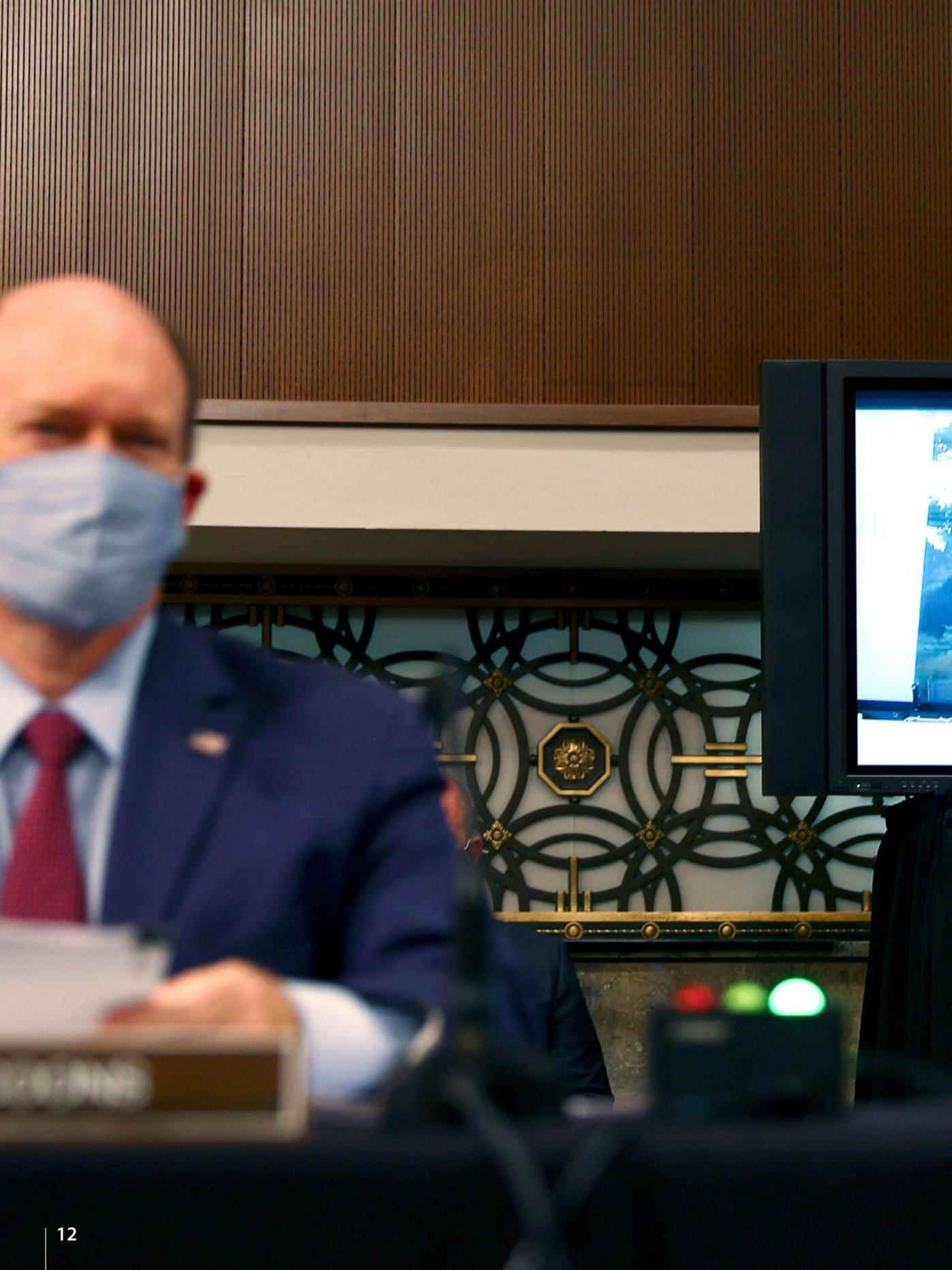
The company punted that decision to its quasi-independent Oversight Board — sort of a Supreme Court of Facebook enforcement — which is expected to rule on the matter next month.

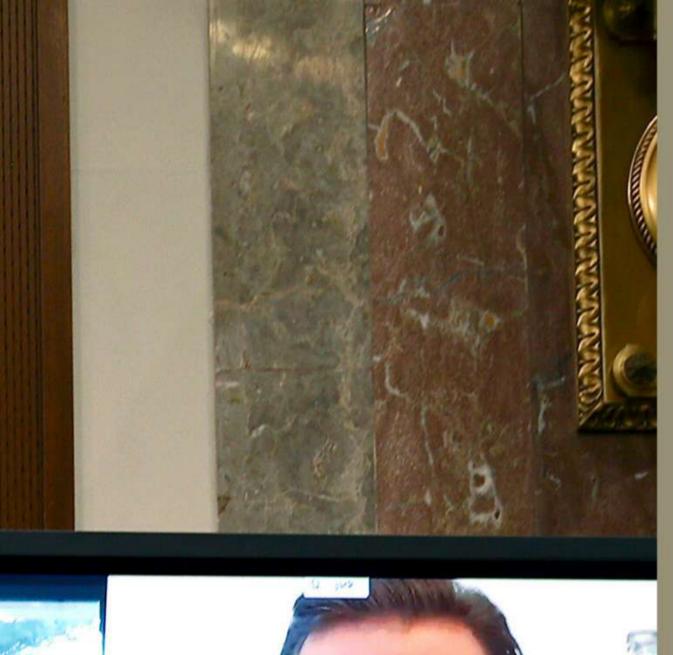
Republicans have stepped up their complaints of alleged censorship and anti-conservative bias at the social media platforms. Researchers say there's no evidence that the social media giants are biased against conservative news, posts or other material, or that they favor one side of political debate over another.

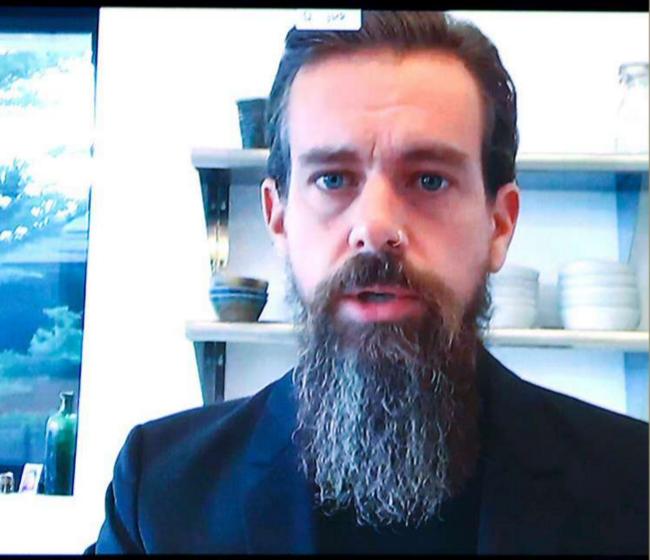
Democrats, meanwhile, are largely focused on hate speech and incitement that can spawn real-world violence. An outside report issued this week found that Facebook has allowed groups — many tied to QAnon, boogaloo and militia movements — to extol violence during the 2020













election and in the weeks leading up to the deadly riots on the Capitol.

The report from Avaaz, a nonprofit advocacy group that says it seeks to protect democracies from misinformation, identified several hundred pages and groups on Facebook that it says spread violence-glorifying material to a combined following of 32 million users. Facebook acknowledged that its policy enforcement "isn't perfect," but said the report distorts its work against violent extremism and misinformation.

The tech CEOs plan a spirited defense of the liability shield under Section 230, saying it has helped make the internet the forum of free expression that it is today. Zuckerberg, however, will also again urge Congress to update that law to ensure it's working as intended. He's adding a specific suggestion: Congress could require internet platforms to gain legal protection only by proving that their systems for identifying illegal content are up to snuff.

"Instead of being granted immunity, platforms should be required to demonstrate that they have systems in place for identifying unlawful content and removing it," Zuckerberg said in written testimony prepared for Thursday's hearing.

It's not clear lawmakers will buy that argument. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, charged that Zuckerberg's plan would entrench giant firms at the expense of smaller rivals. "Everyone working to address real issues online should be deeply wary about Mark Zuckerberg's proposals for new regulations," Wyden said in a statement.





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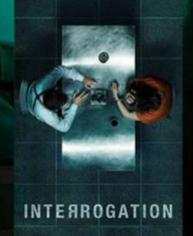
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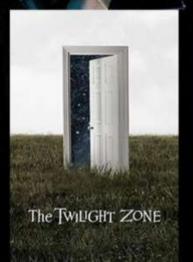














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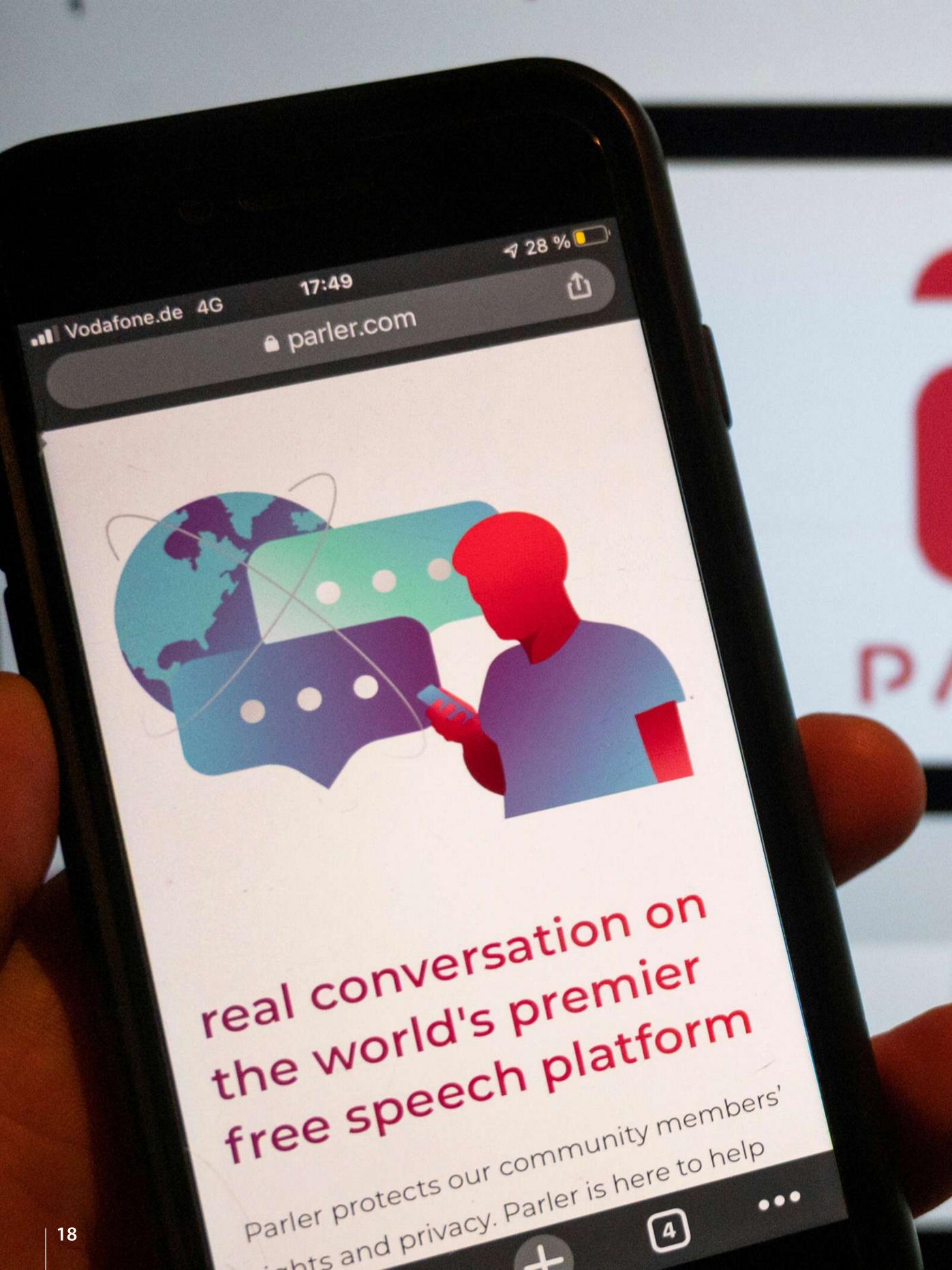


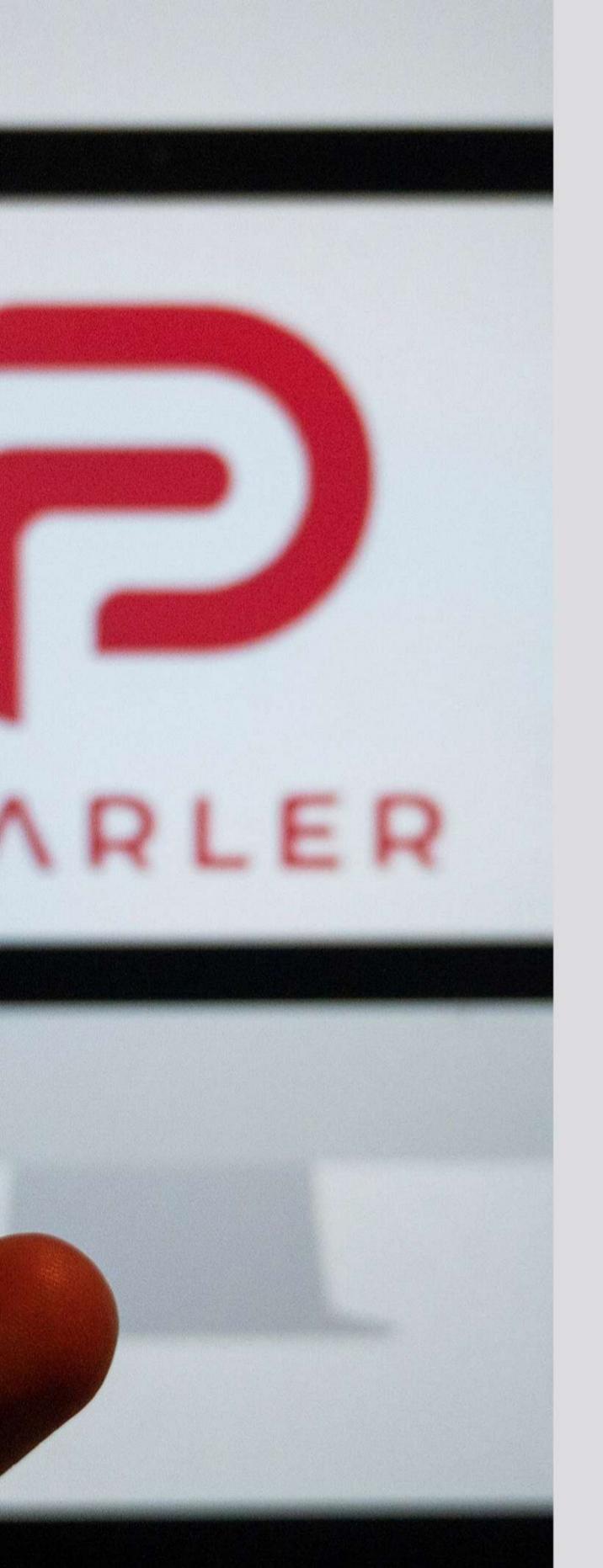
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PARLER NETWORK FOUNDER CLAIMS GOP DONOR, OTHERS DEFAMED HIM

The developer of the conservative social network Parler is alleging he was defamed and improperly ousted by a prominent Republican Party benefactor, two men who replaced him at the company and a political commentator known for his support for former President Donald Trump.

John Matze said in a lawsuit he was fired for trying to tone down extremism on the site. He said wealthy philanthropist Rebekah Mercer, website associates Jeffrey Wernick and Mark Meckler, and podcaster and television analyst Dan Bongino conspired to steal his 40% company share, leaving him with \$3.





Mercer, through the Heritage Foundation and a family foundation tax attorney, Wernick and Meckler at Parler, and Bongino at his newsletter did not immediately respond to telephone and email messages about the lawsuit filed in Nevada state court.

It casts Matze as a scapegoat in turmoil that arose after Parler became a go-to site for far-right extremist views before and after the Jan. 6 siege at the U.S. Capitol.

The site, based in suburban Henderson outside Las Vegas, grew in popularity after the violence, when Trump's social media were blocked as incitement by mainstream platforms Facebook and Twitter.

Parler was booted from the internet Jan. 11 after Apple suspended purchases of its smartphone app and Amazon Web Services quit hosting it on the internet cloud. The site returned in mid-February, without Matze.

Wernick was neither an officer nor owner of Parler but portrayed himself as its operating chief, the lawsuit said. He allegedly enlisted Bongino to "use his media presence … to promote Parler." Meckler became the company's chief executive.

After Matze proposed moderating posts and barring identifiable extremist groups like neo-Nazis and the right-wing conspiracy theory QAnon, his lawsuit said, he was accused of misconduct and fired Jan. 29.

"Simply put, Parler was ... hijacked to advance the personal political interests and personal advantages of defendants rather than serve as the free-expression platform as originally conceived," the lawsuit said. The court filing put the value of Parler at more than \$1 billion and declared that Matze is entitled to multiple millions of dollars in compensatory and punitive damages.

Matze's attorneys, James Pisanelli and Todd Bice, said in a brief statement the lawsuit aims to vindicate Matze's rights, correct his wrongful termination and address breaches of contract and good faith.

The document identifies Mercer, daughter of major Trump donor Robert Mercer and a benefactor for the conservative site Breitbart News, as the founding investor in Parler. It said Matze was the founding developer. It said the site name derives from the French word for "to speak."

It pointed to a post attributed to Mercer declaring Parler "a neutral platform for free speech" and "a beacon to all who value their liberty, free speech, and personal privacy."

"Rather than protect Parler," the lawsuit alleges,
"Mercer sought to co-opt it as a symbol or as the
'tip of the spear' for her brand of conservativism."









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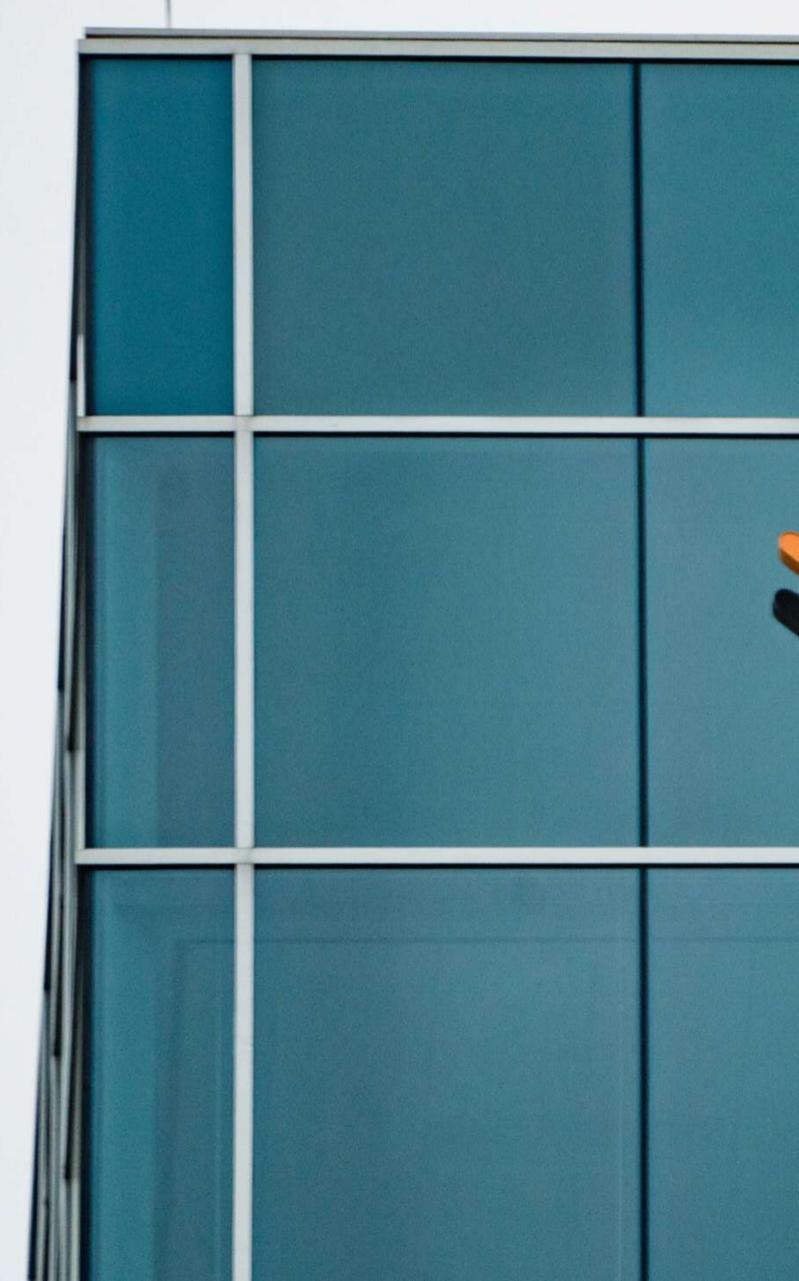
AMAZON BRINGS BACK FORMER EXECUTIVE TO RUN CLOUD BUSINESS

Amazon said that it's bringing back a former executive to run its cloud-computing unit, which has become the online shopping giant's most profitable business.

Adam Selipsky will return to Amazon in May, and then become the head of Amazon Web Services later this year. He's replacing Andy Jassy, who will become CEO of Amazon when founder Jeff Bezos steps down from that role and becomes executive chairman.

AWS, which powers video-streaming site Netflix and many other companies, accounted for more than 60% of Amazon's profits last year. AWS is also the No. 1 provider of cloudcomputing services, but it faces growing competition, especially from Microsoft, which has aggressively sought to sell big contracts to businesses and governments. Last year, Amazon lost a multi-billion dollar contract with the U.S. government to Microsoft. Amazon is fighting that decision in court.

Seattle-based Amazon said that Selipsky worked at AWS for 11 years before leaving in 2016 to run software company Tableau, which was later bought by cloud-based software company Salesforce.







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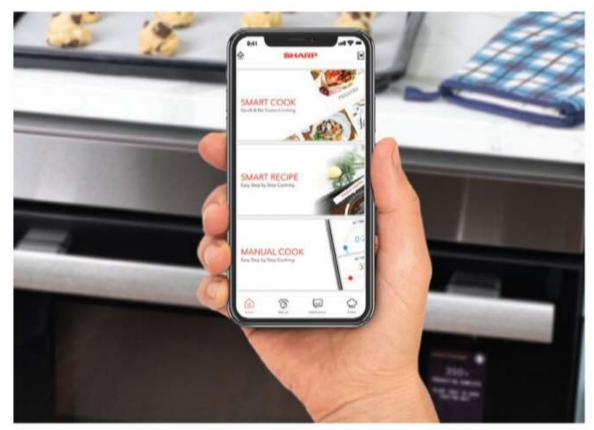


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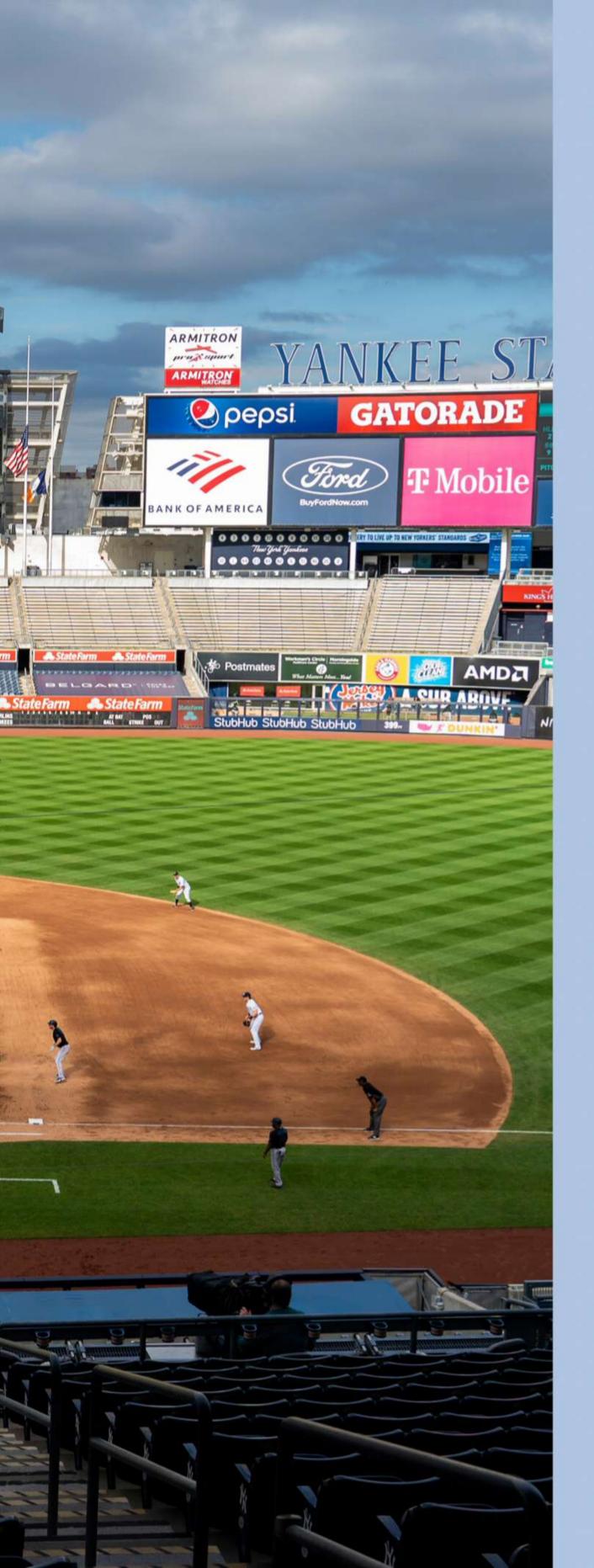


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PRIME VIDEO TO STREAM 21 YANKEES GAMES

Amazon Prime Video will stream 21 Yankees games to members in New York's broadcast market for the first season, a slate that starts with an April 18 matchup against Tampa Bay.

YES said that while it announced on March 3 last year that Amazon Prime Video would stream 21 games in 2020, the steams did not take place because of the shortened season caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The games are produced by the Yankees'YES Network and are all scheduled for broadcast on WPIX. YES said they will be available at no additional cost to Prime members in the Yankees' home market of New York state,

Connecticut, northeast Pennsylvania, and north and central New Jersey.

Broadcasts will include a 15-minute pregame show and streams viewed on Android, iOS mobile and Fire TV and will include an in-game statistics feed.

Major League Baseball owners voted in November 2019 to have digital streaming rights within a team's broadcast market revert to each club from Baseball Advanced Media starting with the 2020 season.







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MISSISSIPPI LAW WILL REQUIRE COMPUTER SCIENCE IN SCHOOLS

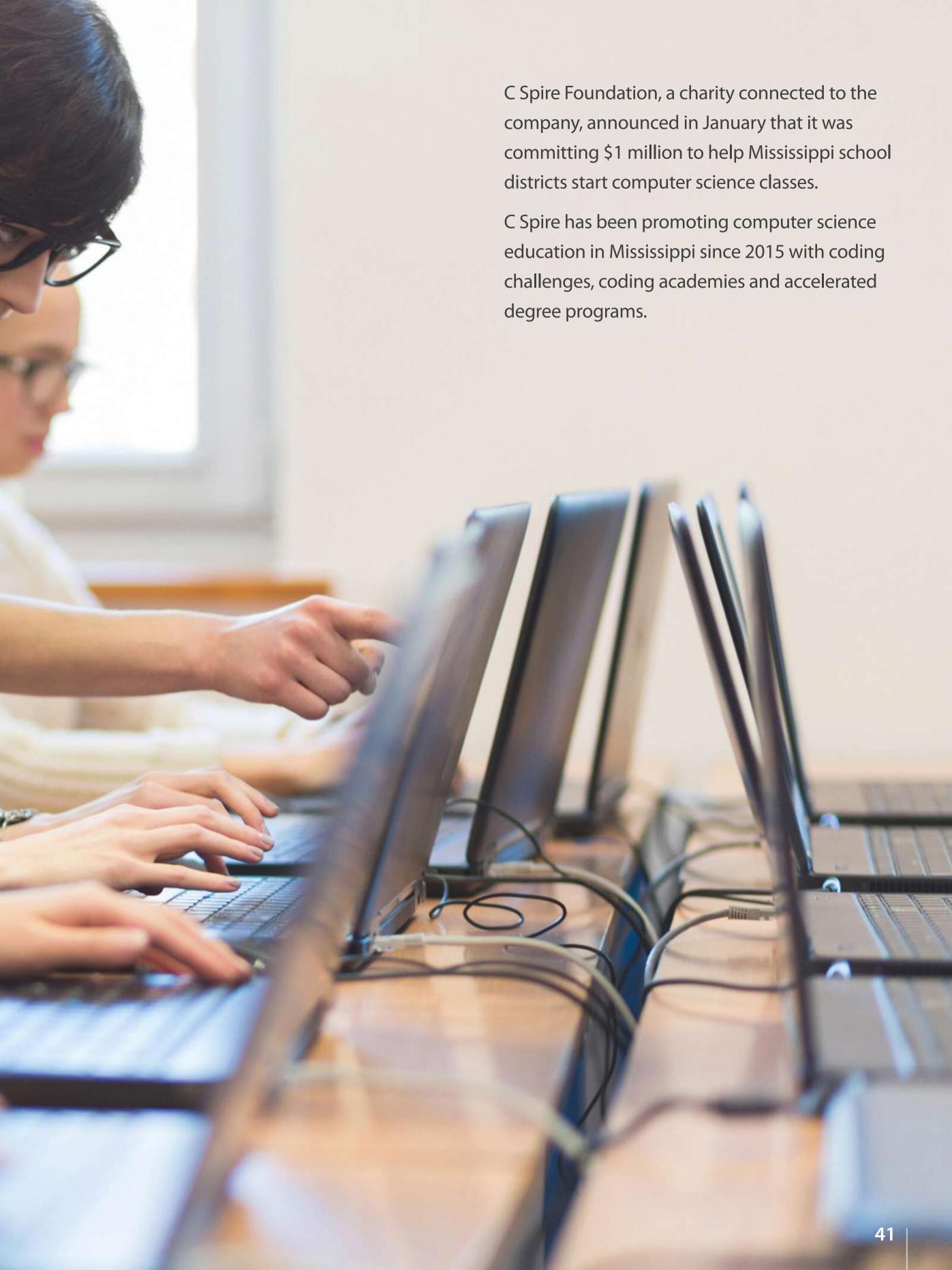
A new law will require the Mississippi Department of Education to set a computer science curriculum for K-12 schools by the 2024-25 academic year.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed House Bill 633 on Wednesday, and it will become law July 1.

The Mississippi-based telecommunications and technology company C Spire asked Mississippi legislators to make computer science classes available in all elementary schools, middle schools and high schools by 2024-25. A C Spire news release said 48% of Mississippi high schools currently teach computer science.

The release said that Mississippi employers have unfilled jobs because of a shortage of trained, qualified information technology and computing workers.











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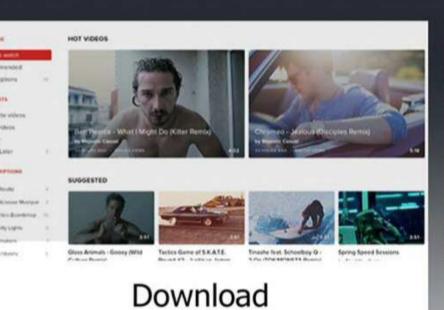




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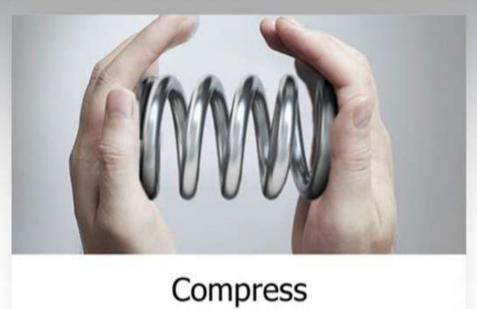
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FORMER GOOGLE CEO GIVES \$150M FOR RESEARCH IN BIOLOGY, AI

Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and his wife, Wendy, have given \$150 million to a research institute to establish a "new era of biology" aimed at battling diseases with a mix of data and life science studies.

The Massachusetts-based Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard will use the funds to build a new center that will bring together academia and industry to merge the two disciplines in an effort to make people healthier.

"Until now, these fields have largely developed in parallel," the Broad Institute said in a statement on Thursday. "Their convergence will create a new era of biology, one that is expected to yield a deep understanding of biological processes, with the ultimate aim of improving human health through more powerful disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment."





Experts say the initiative sets a precedent for building more research centers that mix the two disciplines.

"There is a huge need in the biology field to bring in computational and data science expertise," said Peng Qiu, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology who studies the subject, adding, the need for integrating the two fields "has been well recognized in the research community."

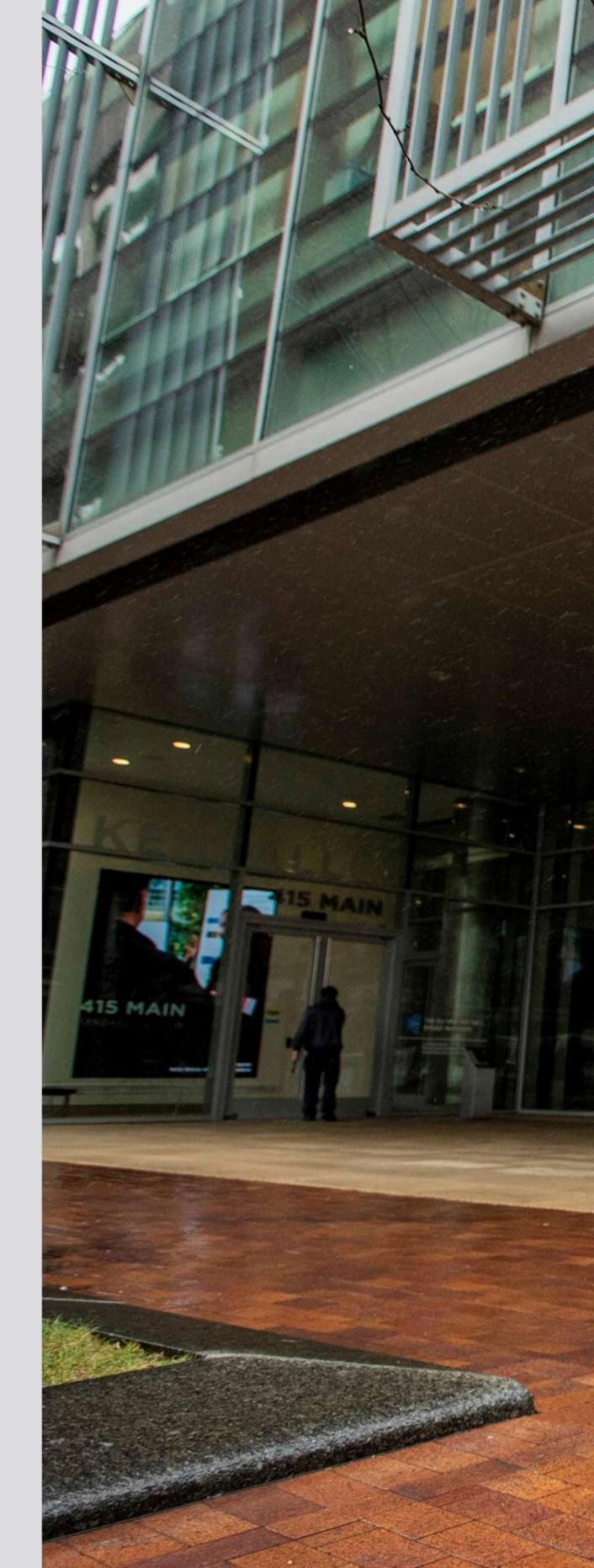
The endowment gift is the largest donation the couple has given through Schmidt Futures, their latest philanthropic initiative focusing on science and technology. The Schmidts have other philanthropic arms, including their family foundation, and are ranked as one of the top donors in the United States.

The institute said Thursday that it also received an additional \$150 million contribution from the Broad Foundation, the charity founded by philanthropists Eli and Edythe L. Broad. The couple helped create the institute in 2003, and their foundation has pledged more than \$1 billion to the research facility.

"Much like Eli and Edye Broad saw the potential in creating the Broad Institute, Wendy and I believe this center has the promise to create a new field of science that could benefit human health in ways we can't even begin to imagine," Eric Schmidt, a member of the institute's board, said in the announcement.

"The pandemic has shown us that prioritizing science, innovation, and research is one of the greatest investments we can make in our future," he added.

The center, which will be named after the Schmidts, will collaborate with experts from





numerous fields at companies ranging from Google, Microsoft and AstraZeneca, and learning institutions including Oxford University and the Mayo Clinic.

"Philanthropic gifts of this magnitude have the potential to be transformative in scientific discovery," said R. Patrick Bixler, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin's RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. He notes doing this work "through a network of cross-sector partners will undoubtedly lead to breakthroughs in internal medicine and public health."

Schmidt served as Google's CEO from 2001 to 2011, a time of rapid growth for the California-based technology company. He later became executive chairman for Google, and in 2015, for its new parent company, Alphabet, before resigning as chairman in 2018.







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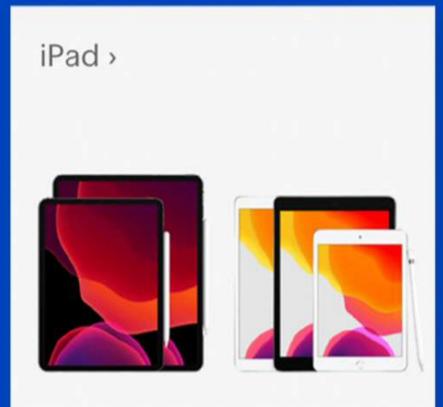


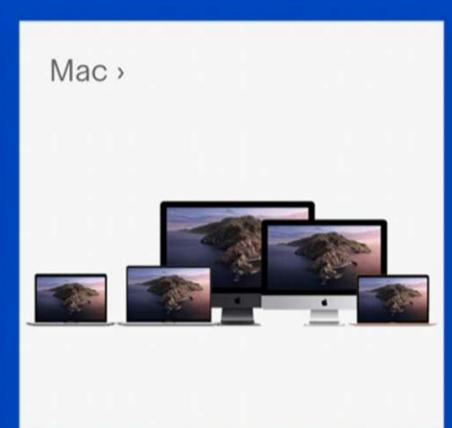
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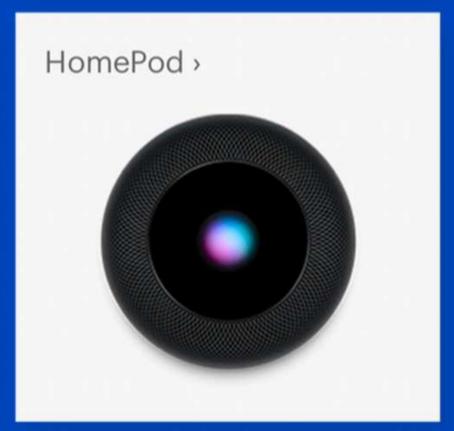












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911 NOW AN OPTION IN SOUTH DAKOTA

South Dakotans now have the option to text 911 when they're unable to make a 911 call.

The text, like a phone call, will be routed to a local dispatch center. The new texting option is part of the state's 9-1-1 Coordination Program.

"Text-to-9-1-1 should only be used in an emergency when you can't call 9-1-1," said Craig Price, cabinet secretary for the South Dakota Department of Public Safety. "The Text-to-9-1-1 option would be good to use if speaking out loud would put the caller in danger or if the caller is deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired."

Officials said texting should only be used when someone can't safely make a voice call, such as in situations involving an active shooter, domestic violence or a home invasion. Texting to 911 can also be used by people who lose the ability to speak because of a medical crisis.

The South Dakota Department of Public Safety issued some guidelines, including first texting location and type of emergency. Photo or video texts cannot be received by dispatchers.

Texting to 911 is not yet fully activated in Todd County.



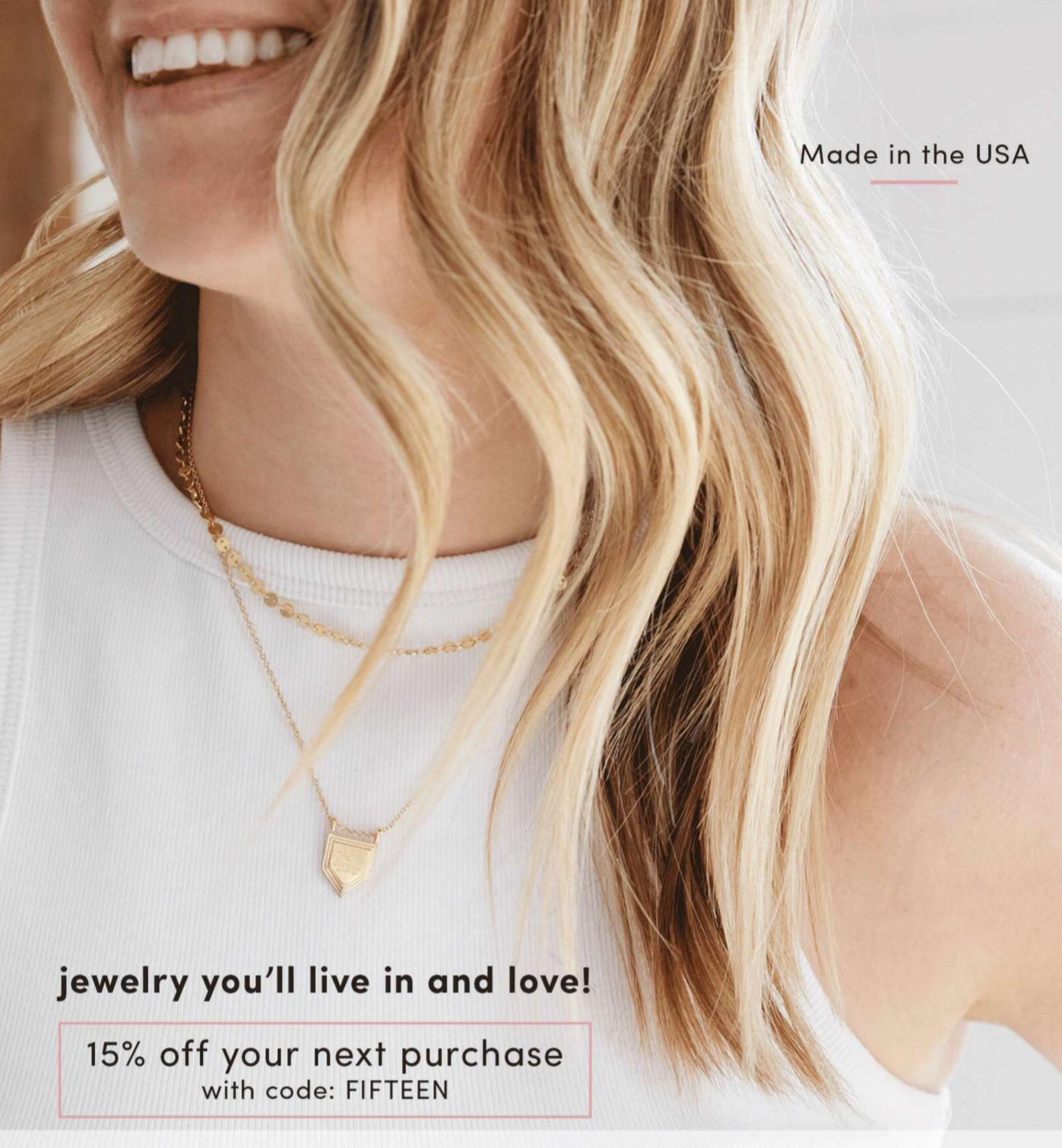




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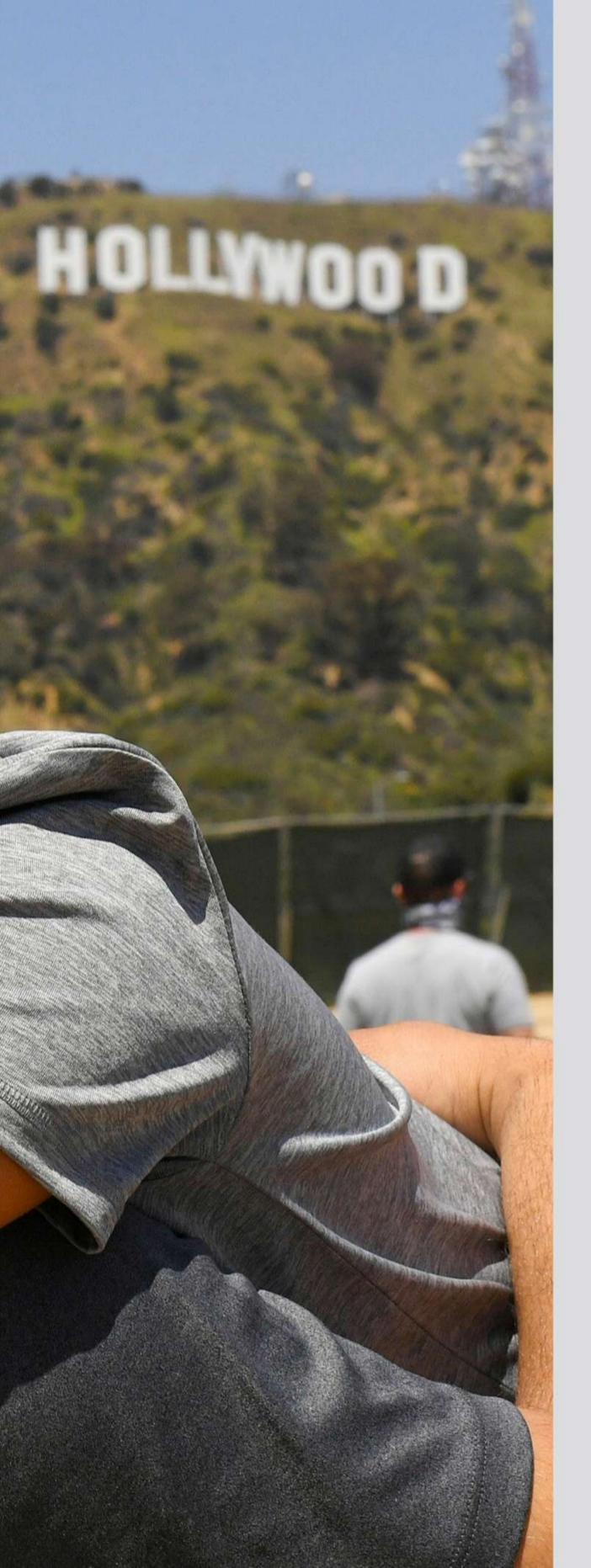




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WEANED ON HOLLY WOOD ENDINGS, AMERICANS NOW FACE A MESSY ONE

There will come a day — maybe even a day in the next few months — when Americans wake up, emerge from their homes, cast away their masks and resume their lives. On that day, the Great Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020-21 will be over.

Ridiculous, right? A consummation devoutly to be wished, but highly unlikely.

Here's the problem with anticipating the end of the pandemic: No one is sure just what that ending will look like or when it will arrive — or even if we'll know it when we see it.

Will it be when most of the country is vaccinated? When schools all reconvene safely? When hospitals' COVID beds are empty? When American ballparks are full for a summer baseball game? When Disneyland reopens? When wearing a mask seems weird again?

"I don't know that I see a specific ending," says Erica Rhodes, a comedian in Los Angeles who has found unique ways to perform through the pandemic. "I don't foresee a moment in time when I say, 'Oh, everything's exactly as it was.""

The kind of finish that the coronavirus has in store for weary Americans has no distinct ending. That's a hard pill to swallow for a nation long trained — in some cases quite literally — to expect well-defined and often optimistic conclusions to tortuous sagas.

"Finding light in the darkness is a very American thing to do," President Joe Biden said this month. "In fact," he said, "it may be the most American thing we do."

Trouble is, the actual world often doesn't comply. Sure, movies are free to be like "Independence Day," where a ragged band of Americans led by Will Smith vanquishes the invading enemy. Real life? More like the conclusion of "The Sopranos," when all goes black, forever unresolved as Journey sings that "the movie never ends, it goes on and on and on and on."

THE CLARITY OF ENDINGS

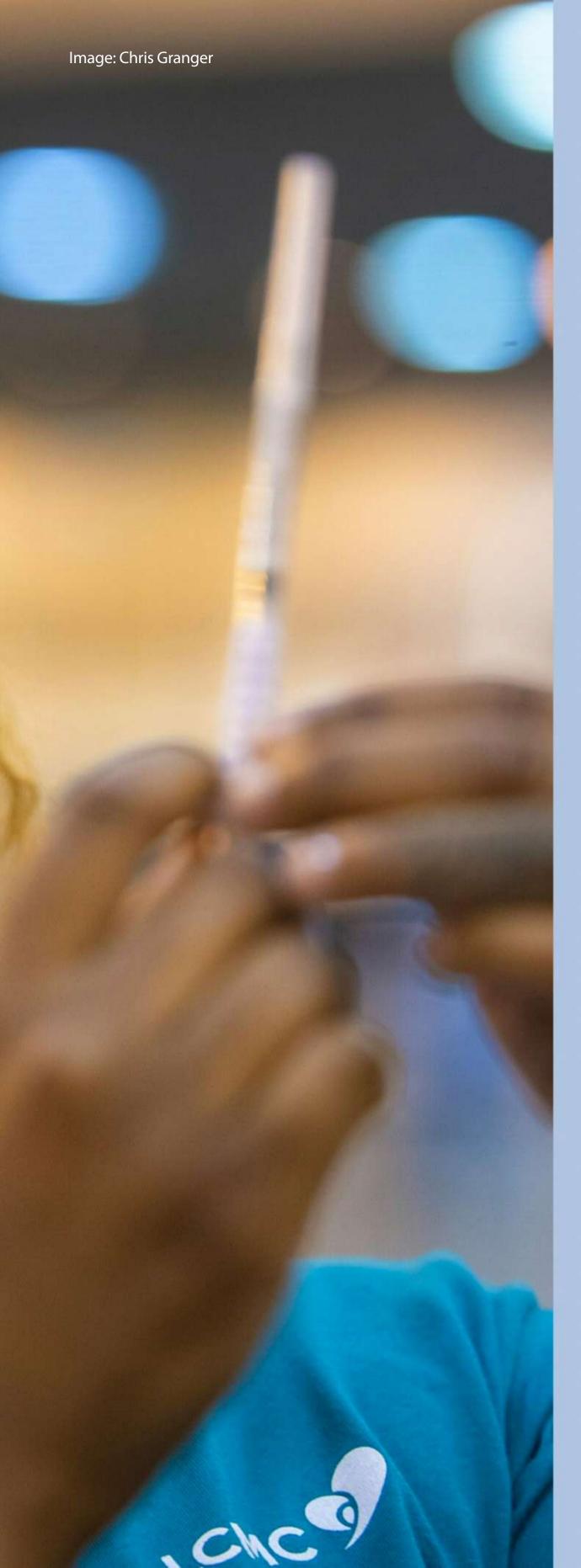
The American brand of ending — borrowed from Classical Greek storytelling, made industrial-strength over four generations by Hollywood and Madison Avenue — goes something like this: A story concludes with a specific resolution, usually after some action, good-guy heroics or big-time character development, and usually at a specific, discernible moment.

Are we heading toward that with the pandemic? Almost certainly not. And the









gradual nature of things is gumming up the works, because it ain't over till it's over, and even then it might not be over.

"Not having that clarity, we are not accustomed to that," says Phil Johnston, an Oscar-nominated screenwriter and director who worked on "Wreck-It Ralph" and "Zootopia."

"I suppose everyone has made their own version of this `movie," he says, offering his own: "I could see a series of dissolves over a long period of time. A guy leaves his house. He takes off his mask. He sits at a restaurant. And then it's passage of time, this long montage and this guy sits and realizes, `Oh, this is life. Life is back to normal."

All kinds of momentous things that today's humans are enduring lack distinct endings.

Climate change. The "war on terror." Persisting racism and sexism and homophobia. Those stories ebb and flow, but since they're not considered specific "events," they're often seen differently.

Something like the pandemic, though, despite its protracted nature, falls squarely into the public's and media's bucket of "an event," and that comes with certain expectations. Among them is a discrete ending.

"We have this human tendency to structure our life events into plot points. It helps us create a world that's more interpretable and more predictable," says Kaitlin Fitzgerald, a doctoral candidate at the University at Buffalo, SUNY who studies the role emotion plays in how stories are consumed.

"But as we know in the real world, recovery is not a linear process and it doesn't have an





ending that's clearly defined," she says. "These popular media narratives, they portray it as happening over the course of minutes. That affects our expectations about how things should end. And when those expectations don't (match) reality, it's difficult."

Elaine Paravati Harrigan, Fitzgerald's research partner and a visiting assistant professor of psychology at Hamilton College, has dug into the same attitudes while teaching her "psychology in a pandemic" course this past year.

"Without some type of blueprint, we're just living life. And that can be confusing and overwhelming," she says. "If I can think there's some sort of arc, some sort of blueprint that can help me understand my journey, it helps me find meaning in my day to day."

NAVIGATING TOWARD THE END

Children have been a particular focus of this kind of attention over the past year as adults in their lives help them navigate toward a positive ending to the pandemic without offering false hope.

"Figuring out this endgame piece is really going to be a challenge for the adults in my opinion. And it's going to be a challenge not to build the kids' mindsets around it," says Chuck Herring, the director of diversity, equity and inclusion at South Fayette School District near Pittsburgh.

"People keep talking about when it ends, when it's 'going back to normal.' I tell them, it's not GOING back to normal. At least, not like a lot of people are thinking," Herring says.

Nevertheless, the notion of an ending exists for a reason: People need markers in their lives

to show that they've experienced things, that they're moving from one phase to another, that there's somehow meaning in what they endure.

That's why Jennifer Talarico, who studies how people remember personally experienced events, suggests that even if there's no actual moment when the pandemic ends, finding a way to mark it is important nonetheless.

"I think of V-E Day or V-J Day. That's clearly not the end of the war; it took longer than that. But we have these days where there was big communal celebration," says Talarico, a psychology professor at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania.

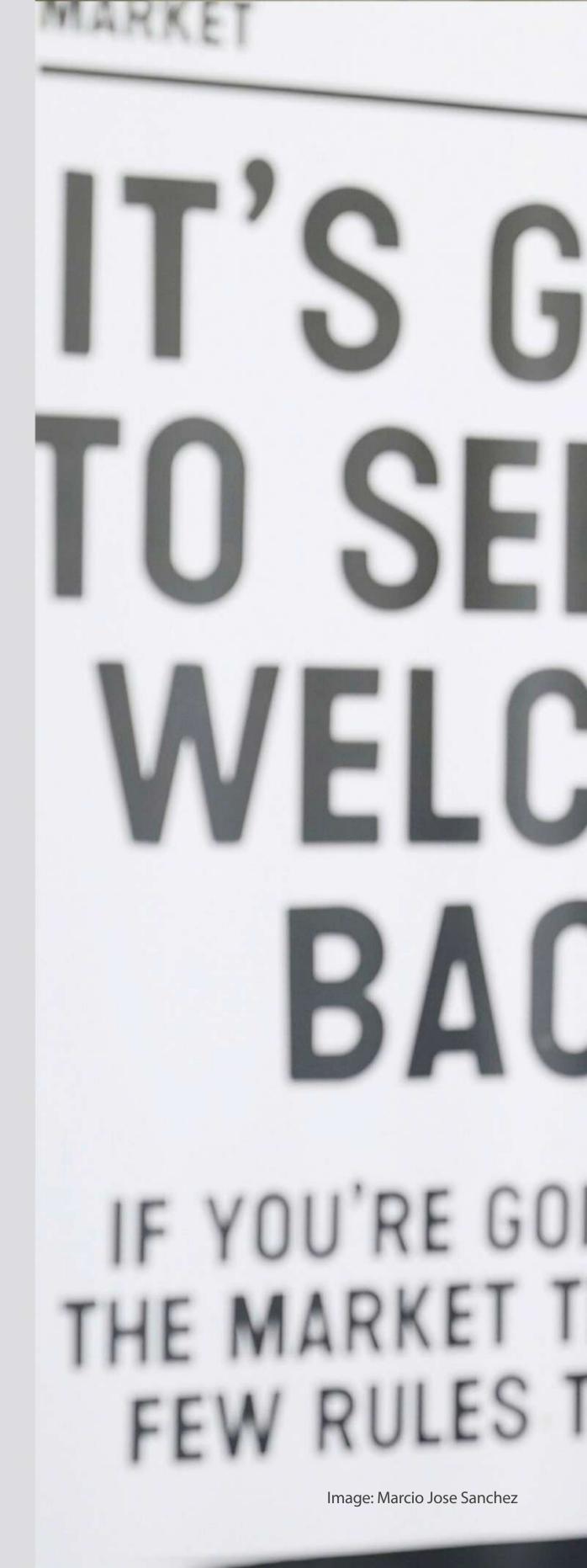
"We build relationships based on commonality even though your story and my story are unique and might not have been shared at the time. The sharing of the story becomes the way we know one another," she says. "So, 'Where did you go for remembrance day or Pandemicpalooza or whatever?', telling that story for younger generations years later can be a communal moment."

In the end, as it were, managing expectations of a pandemic conclusion is an exercise in deferral, in coping with day-to-day life without losing sight of the big things that might get better.

Remembering the lost. Anchoring yourself in the details, while not losing the larger plot. Creating meaning. A lot, one might say, like a movie.

We'll leave you, then, with two quotations, uttered a half-century years apart by two very different writers.

The first comes from the little narrator of "When the Pandemic Ends," a 2020 children's book by



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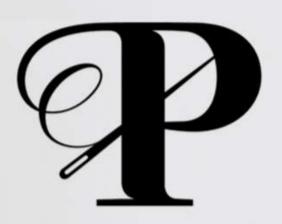






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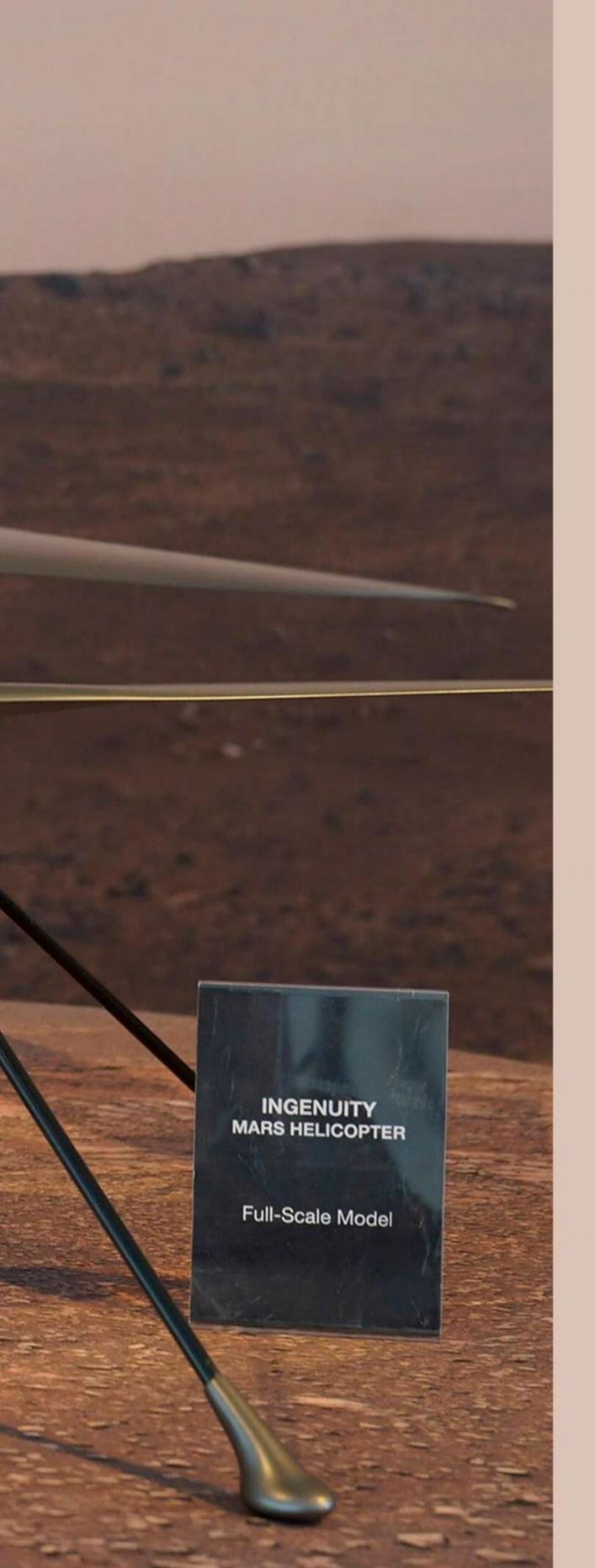
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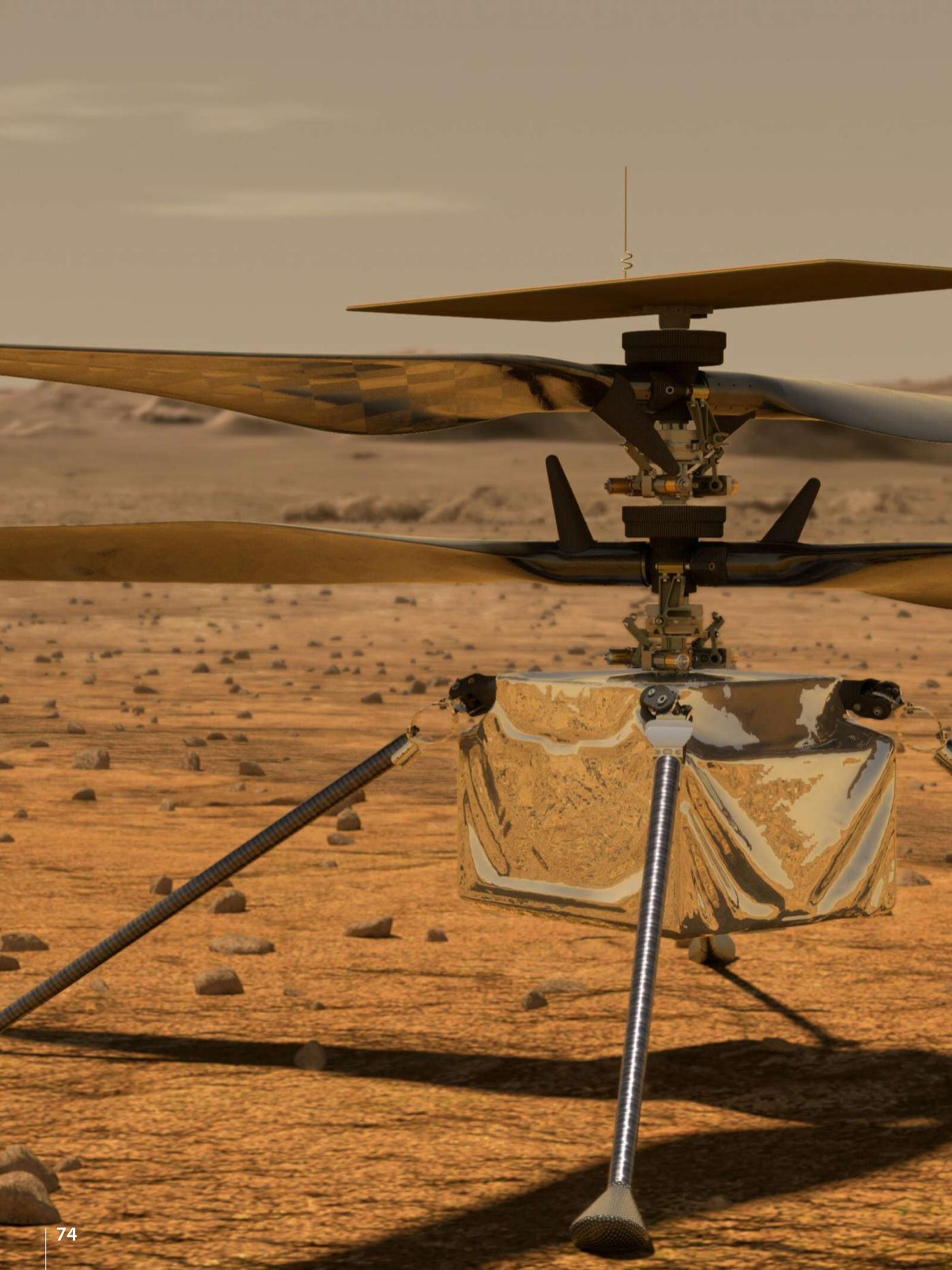


PART OF WRIGHT BROTHERS' 1ST AIRPLANE ON NASA'S MARS CHOPPER

A piece of the Wright brothers' first airplane is on Mars.

NASA's experimental Martian helicopter holds a small swatch of fabric from the 1903 Wright Flyer, the space agency revealed this week. The helicopter, named Ingenuity, hitched a ride to the red planet with the Perseverance rover, arriving last month.

Ingenuity will attempt the first powered, controlled flight on another planet no sooner than April 8. It will mark a "Wright





brothers' moment," noted Bobby Braun, director for planetary science at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The Carillon Historical Park in Dayton, Ohio, the Wrights' hometown, donated the postage-size piece of muslin from the plane's bottom left wing, at NASA's request.

The swatch made the 300 million-mile journey to Mars with the blessing of the Wright brothers' great-grandniece and great-grandnephew, said park curator Steve Lucht.

"Wilbur and Orville Wright would be pleased to know that a little piece of their 1903 Wright Flyer I, the machine that launched the Space Age by barely one quarter of a mile, is going to soar into history again on Mars!" Amanda Wright Lane and Stephen Wright said in a statement provided by the park.

Orville Wright was on board for the world's first powered, controlled flight on Dec. 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The brothers took turns, making four flights that day.

A fragment of Wright Flyer wood and fabric flew to the moon with Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong in 1969. A swatch also accompanied John Glenn into orbit aboard space shuttle Discovery in 1998. Both astronauts were from Ohio.

NASA's 4-pound (1.8-kilogram) helicopter will attempt to rise 10 feet (3 meters) into the extremely thin Martian air on its first hop. Up to five increasingly higher and longer flights are planned over the course of a month.

The material is taped to a cable beneath the helicopter's solar panel, which is perched on top like a graduate's mortarboard.

For now, Ingenuity remains attached to the rover's belly. A protective shield dropped away over the weekend, exposing the spindly, longlegged chopper.

The helicopter airfield is right next to the rover's landing site in Jezero Crater. The rover will observe the test flights from a distant perch, before driving away to pursue its own mission: hunting for signs of ancient Martian life. Rock samples will be set aside for eventual return to Earth.









ANNOUNCES ARIZONA EXPANSION AS CHIPMAKER SEEKS FOOTING

Intel announced this week it will build two new factories in Arizona and outsource more of its production as a new CEO looks to turnaround the struggling chipmaker.

The California-based company says the Arizona expansion will cost about \$20 billion and create 3,000 permanent jobs as Intel builds a foundry business to provide chips for other firms. More construction in the United States, Europe and elsewhere could be announced over the next year, CEO Pat Gelsinger said in a video outlining his vision for the company's transformation.

"The unprecedented demand for technology has created even more need for the innovative products Intel creates," Keyvan Esfarjani, Intel's senior vice president of manufacturing and operations, told reporters outside the company's plant in Chandler, Arizona.

Intel dominated chipmaking for decades but has stumbled lately with delays in its development of a next-generation chip-making process already in use by a major Taiwan supplier, TSMC. It has struggled to adapt to the shift from personal computers to mobile devices since Apple released its game-changing iPhone more than a decade ago. Although the company has remained profitable, its heyday during the PC era was long ago.

Intel weathered another blow last year when Apple, also based in California, announced it







would rely on its own chips to power its Mac computers instead of Intel's.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey called Intel's growth plan the largest private-sector investment in state history and a victory for U.S. manufacturing.

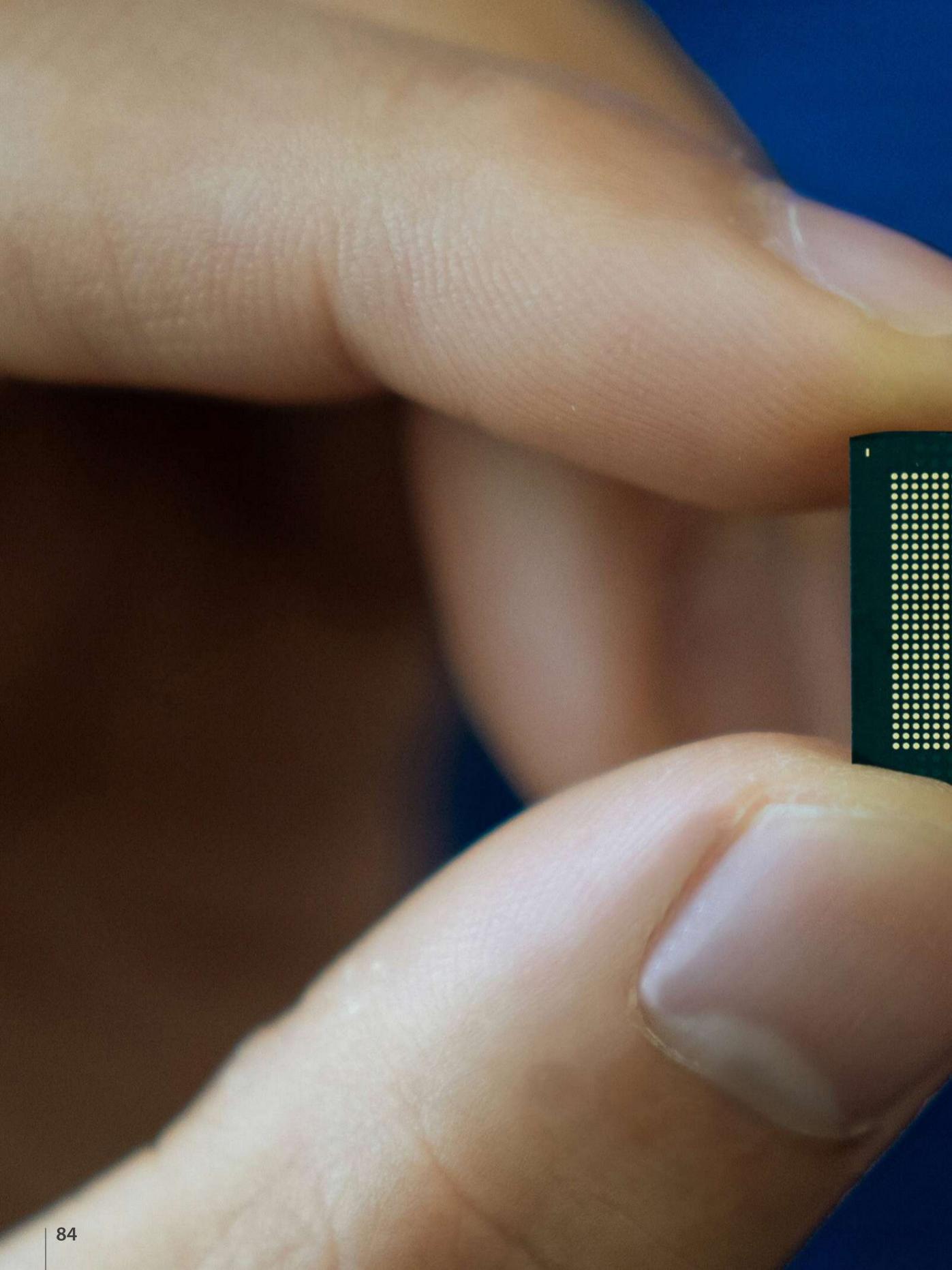
"Let's bring semiconductor manufacturing back to the United States," Ducey said. "And while we're at it, let's bring it back to Arizona."

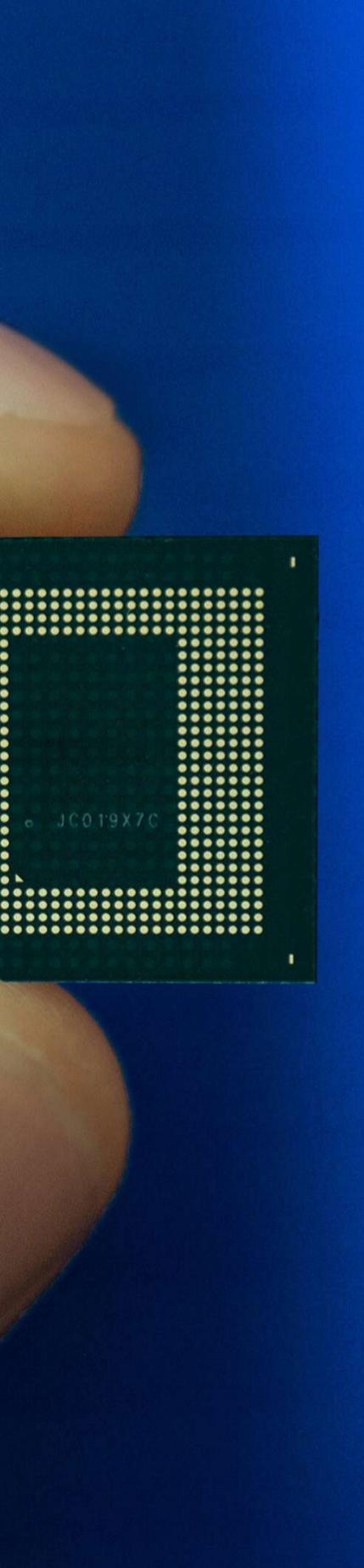
Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company is also planning a large factory in North Phoenix.

Intel has a history of making splashy announcements that don't immediately pan out. A decade ago, the company announced plans to build a new multibillion-dollar factory in Chandler while President Barack Obama visited Intel's plant in Hillsboro, Oregon. That facility, known as Fab 42, was put on ice for years, was announced again alongside President Donald Trump in 2017 and finally opened late last year.

The company, which earned nearly \$21 billion last year on revenue of \$78 billion, is eligible for up to \$90 million in state tax credits if it fulfils the job and investment commitments it made, said Sandra Watson, head of the Arizona Commerce Authority, the state's economic development agency. State lawmakers rushed through legislation to boost the funding available for the program from \$70 million to \$125 million a year, which Ducey signed into law hours before Intel's announcement.

Intel began operations in Arizona in 1980, when it established its facility in West Chandler. It later expanded to a second campus several miles away in the sprawling suburb's Ocotillo region.





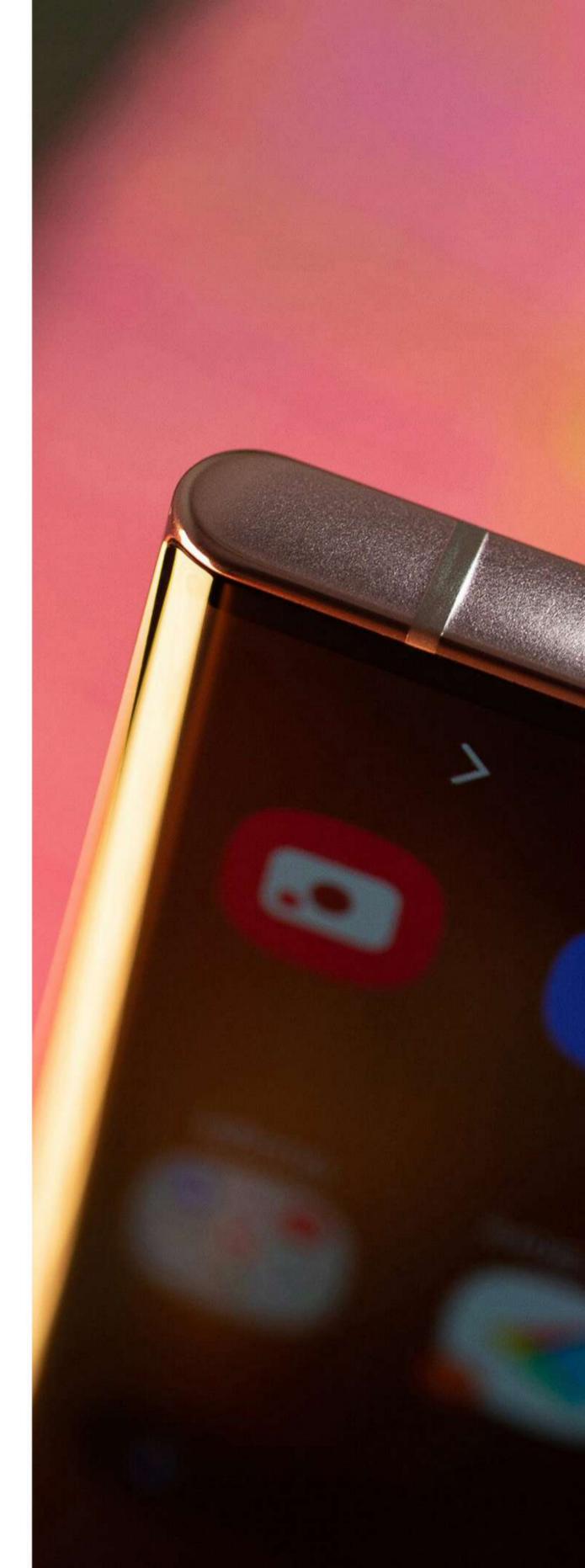
CHIPS AWAY: SEMICONDUCTOR SHORTAGE WREAKING HAVOC IN TECH

As Samsung Electronics warns that it's grappling with the fallout of a "serious imbalance" in semiconductors, the technology world could be about to enter its own 'lockdown'. From the PlayStation 5 to the new Tesla Model S, virtually every device maker could be forced to temporarily halt production, caught off guard and causing delays to 2021 product pipelines.

THE GREAT 2021 CHIP SHORTAGE

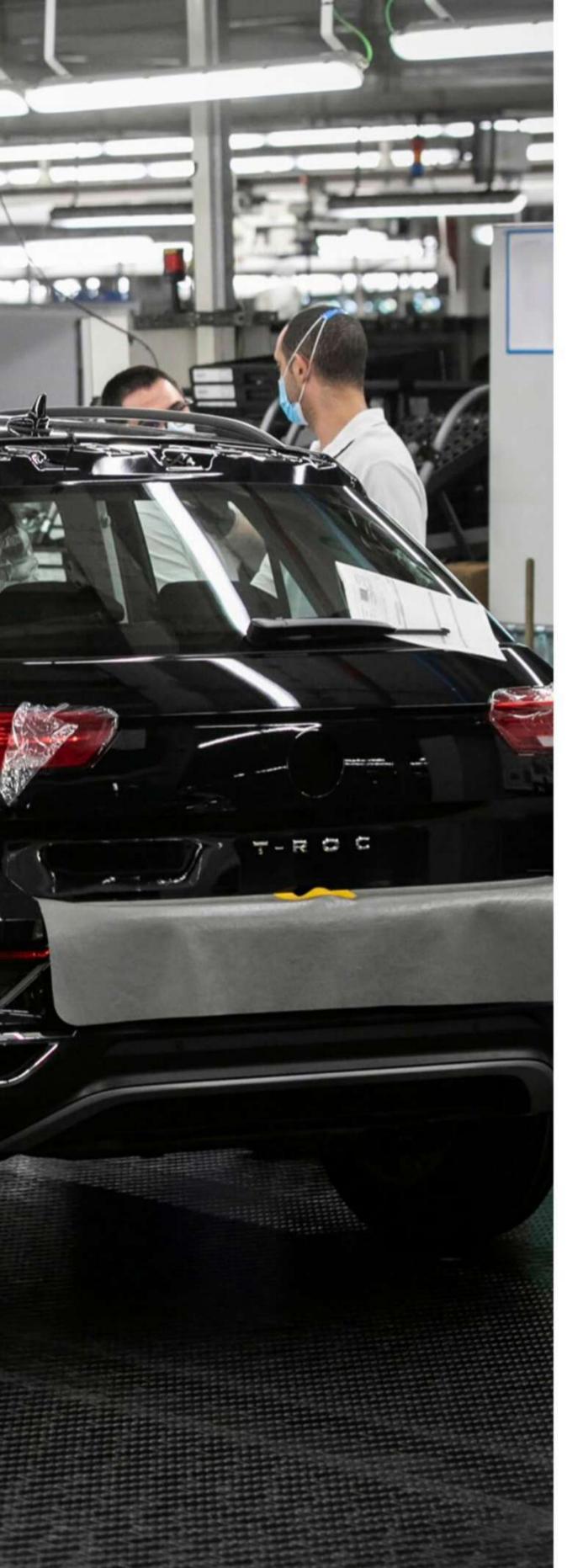
Though Samsung might be one of the world's largest makers of chips and consumer electronics, the company was the latest to voice concerns in its latest business quarter update, where co-Chief Executive Officer Koh Dong-jin revealed that the company was even contemplating skipping the release of its Samsung Galaxy Note to streamline its lineup. Some of the biggest players in semiconductors, including Continental AG and Renesas Electronics Corp, have recently warned of longer-than-usual delays due to growing demand for electronics in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As consumers spend more time indoors, more are upgrading their devices, replacing their TVs, and considering new automobiles to spend their cash in lieu of vacations and experiences. It is true that pursestrings have been tightened, but companies such as Apple reported record growth in 2020; in the quarter to June 2020, Apple posted revenues of \$59.7 billion, up by more than 11% from the year-ago quarter; its iPhone 12 proved incredibly successful, too.

But as chip supplies run dry, there's a genuine risk that companies struggle to fulfill demand and we see a backlog of products entering the









market, impacting virtually every sector. Even auto manufacturers such as Volkswagen AG are impacted, with the company claiming it's **lost production on over 100,000 cars worldwide** as a result of semiconductor shortages.

In the United States, the silicon shortage combined with extreme weather has led to a drop in production for Toyota Motor Corp and Honda Motor Co, with the companies now confident that the shortage will disrupt the much larger electronics industry. Speaking to Bloomberg, Samsung's -Chief Executive Officer Koh Dong said that there's a "serious imbalance in supply and demand of chips in the IT sector globally," adding that, "Despite the difficult environment, our business leaders are meeting partners overseas to solve these problems. It's hard to say the shortage issue has been solved 100%," with some estimating several months of disruption. MS Hwang, an analyst at Samsung Securities, added that tightened supply is affecting everyone except Apple right now, and revealed PCs will be hit because of the short supply of display driver ICs. The profitability of the TV sector will also be affected by soaring LCD prices, which will have a knock-on effect on pricing and consumer inflation.

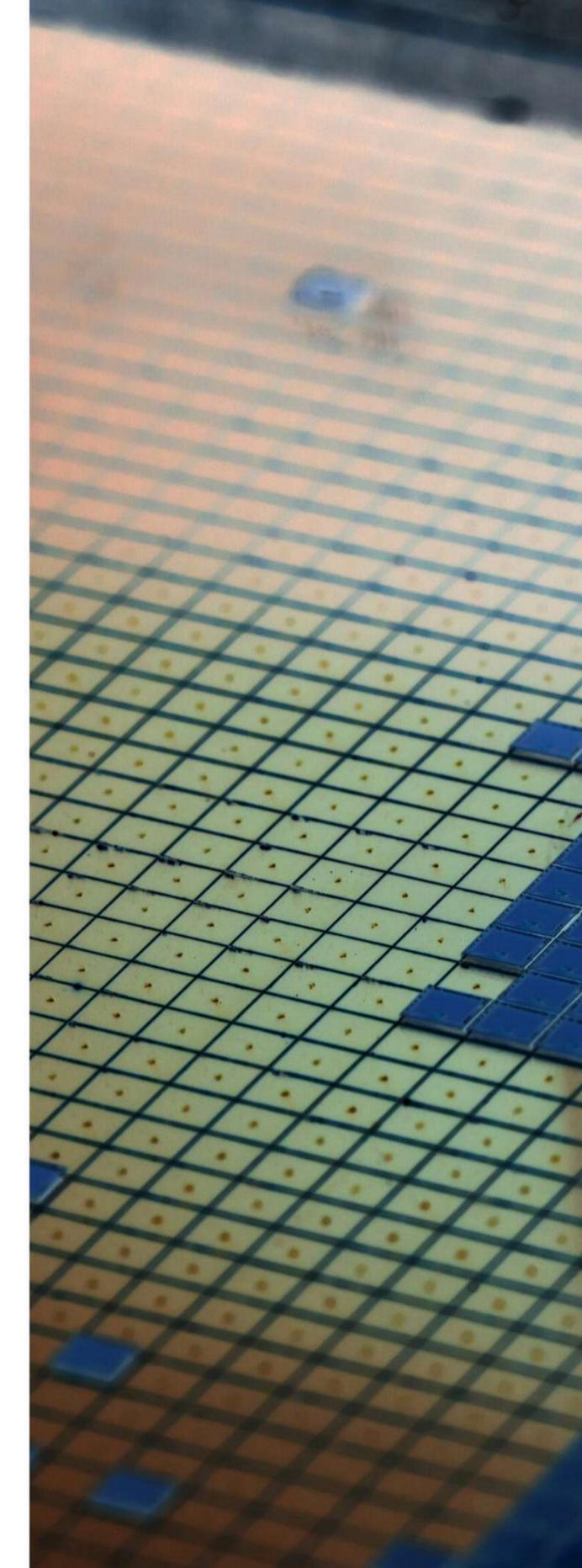
UNDERSTANDING THE SHORTAGE

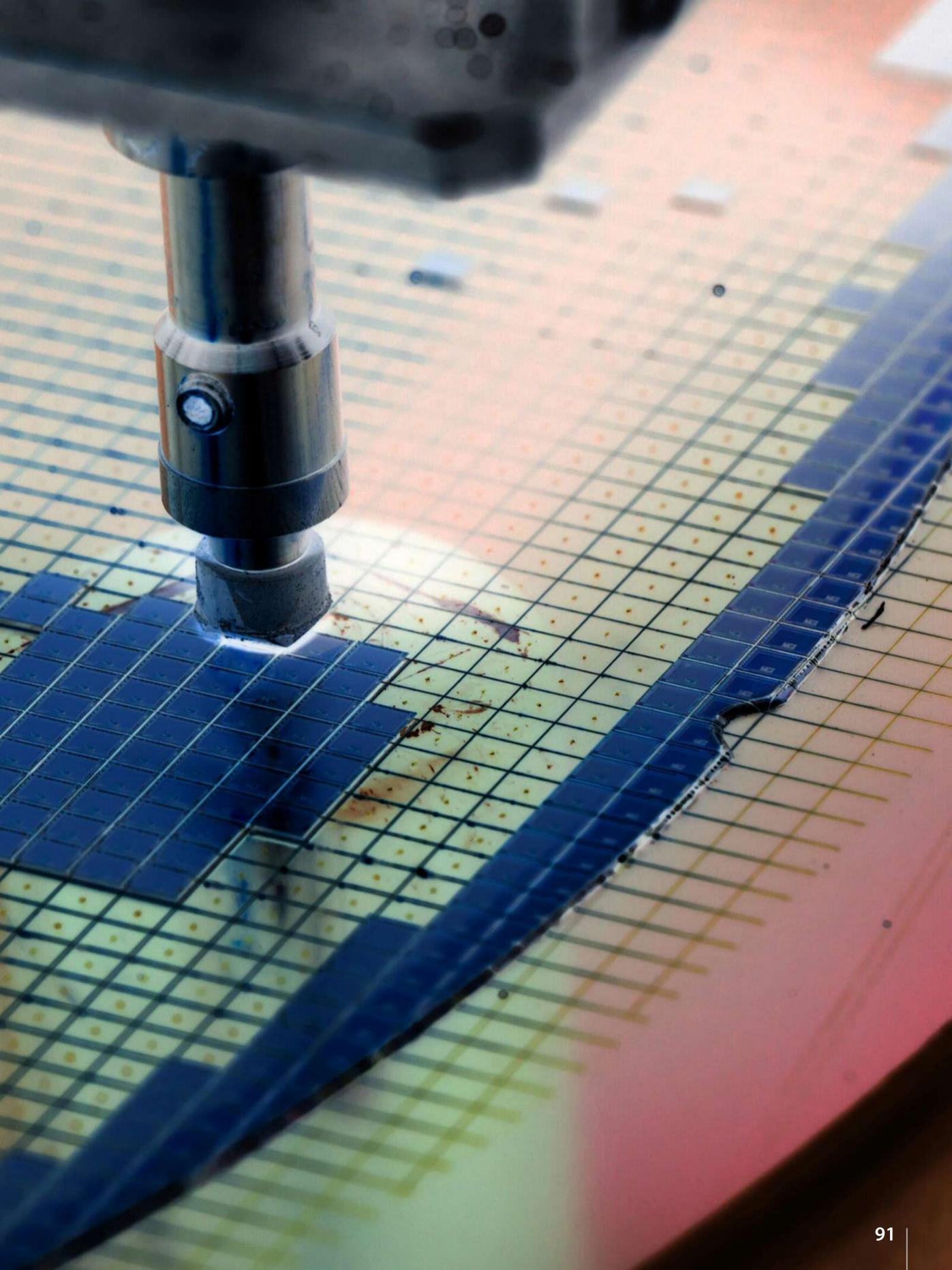
As a consumer, it's easy to see the news of a global semiconductor shortage and ask "why don't they just manufacture more?" - unfortunately, it's not that easy. Unlike car engines, for example, chips must be built in factories with highly-controlled environments, called fabs. If specks of dust enter the factory or the temperature spikes, it can damage

the workings of the conductors and mean they have to be scrapped. Being able to meet the unexpected rise in demand isn't quite as straightforward as opening another plant or taking on a few additional staff members - chip fabs require billions of dollars in investment and can take years to build. According to the latest data, fabs are running at maximum capacity around the world, and it'll take years before another one can come online and fill the extra demand for new electronics.

The impact of COVID-19 extends not only to the rise in consumer electronic spending but in the early days of the pandemic, where large parts of the world shut down. Economists said that consumer spending would fall overnight as people lost their jobs and stopped spending on non-essential goods, and auto brands slashed production and ordered fewer chips as a result. And with consumers forced to work at home, millions began pouring money they'd usually spend on vacations and theater tickets into new TVs, games consoles, and laptops. To help cope with demand, electronics giants invested in extra chips, and now there's been a knock-on effect, to the point where millions of cars are sitting almost-finished, assembled but waiting for a computer chip to power their onboard entertainment and controls, costing automakers billions of dollars in lost revenue.

And it's not just the pandemic that's causing a shortage of semiconductors; the rise of 5G technology in recent years has also made us more chip-hungry, with phones using more chips than previous generations. According to one report, 25% of all smartphones sold last year were 5G-compatible, creating a huge strain on









chip production, whilst former President Donald Trump's trading relationship with China also had an impact, with 10% of the world's chips coming from a company owned by the Chinese government. Because US officials temporarily banned American companies from selling SMIC chips, companies had to invest elsewhere. Other factors include the growth in working from home, and even the rise in cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Dogecoin, which encourage consumers to "mine" using a spare computer from home, as well as companies building cryptocurrency datacenters.

IMPACTING APPLE'S PRODUCTION LINE

Although it had previously been reported that the global ship shortage wouldn't impact Apple, the truth is that the company cannot be fully insulated from the ongoing crisis. The truth is that Apple stands in a more fortunate position than other companies, as it designs and commissions its own A-series chips from TSMC, whereas Android smartphone brands use processors like Qualcomm, Samsung, HiSilicon, and MediaTek and have less control over their manufacturing or supply. Another advantage for Apple over its rivals is that the firm has an operational edge, and typically secures priority orders in advance, and negotiates Apple-only production lines to shield the company from price rises, delays, and shortages.

Whilst MS Hwang, an analyst at Samsung Securities, revealed that "the tightened supply of Qualcomm AP chips produced by TSMC is affecting everybody except Apple," that's not strictly true. Samsung currently makes Apple's OLED screens, and as the drive chips for these

are made at Samsung's Texas plant, which has been adversely affected by weather and the chip shortage, there could be a knock-on effect for the company. The site also produces chips for organic light-emitting diode panels and image sensors, which could disrupt iPhone production in the months ahead. Apple has already made production line changes in recent months, cutting iPhone 12 mini production in favor of the iPhone 12, following lower-than-anticipated demand for the new smartphone with smaller screen real estate.

The truth is that, regardless of the chip challenges in the months ahead, Apple will still likely come out in a far better position than Samsung, though it could encourage the firm to further diversify its manufacturing processes and move away from third-parties such as Samsung and Qualcomm in favor of its own manufacturing facilities. Apple is already doing so in regards to the Mac range, launching new M1 Macs with custom silicon chips that outperform the competition, and by next year, the Cupertino company will have built its own modem, too. By taking over control of its manufacturing and supply, the company can reduce its reliance on third parties and overcome potential challenges in the years ahead. Demand for chips will only further increase in today's always-on, alwaysconnected world, and with plans to launch its own augmented reality products and Apple Car, the need for a watertight supply chain has never been more vital, especially if Apple wants to retain its position as a frontrunner.

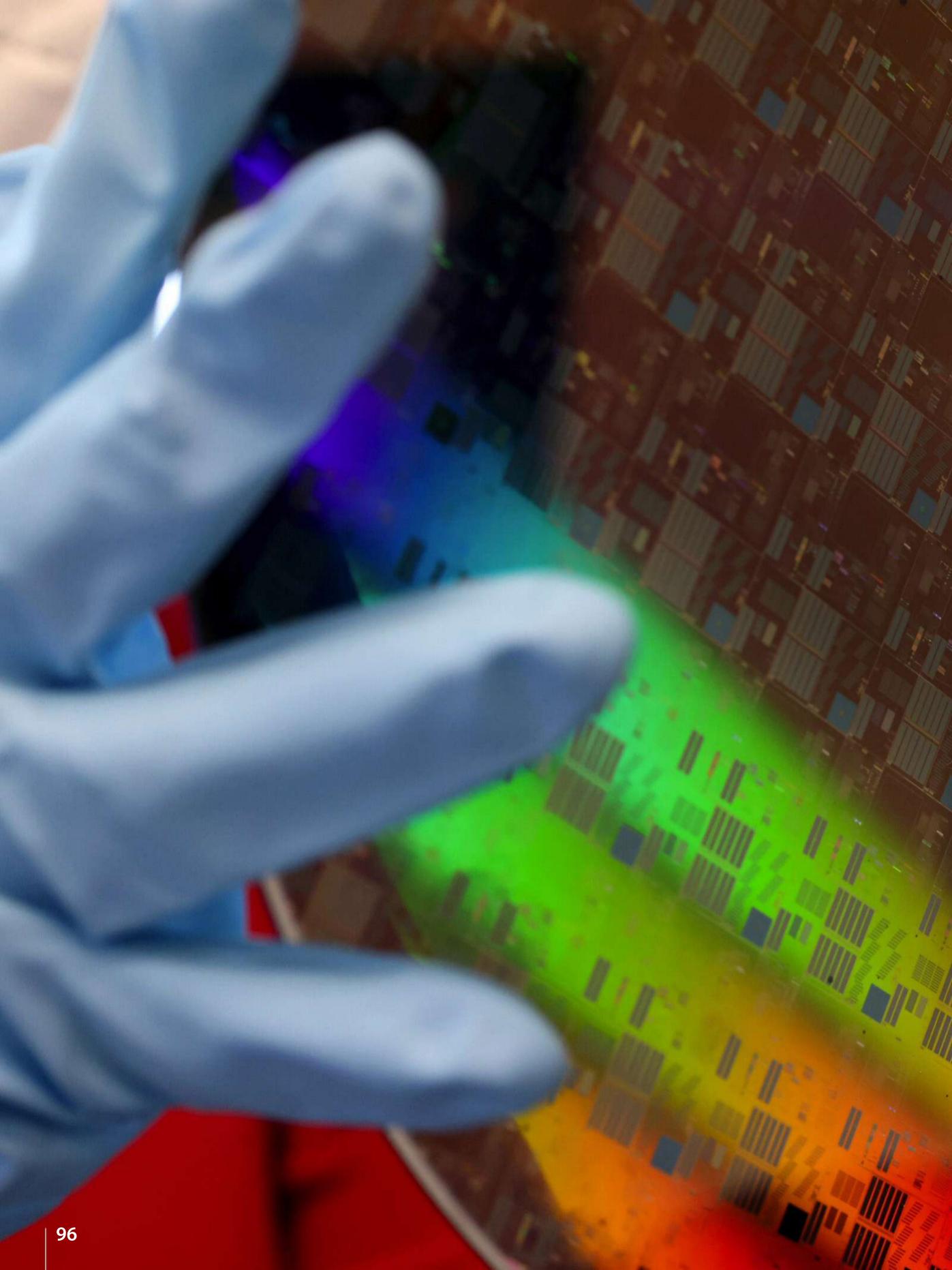
The months ahead will no doubt be challenging for the technology sector, and we'll no doubt

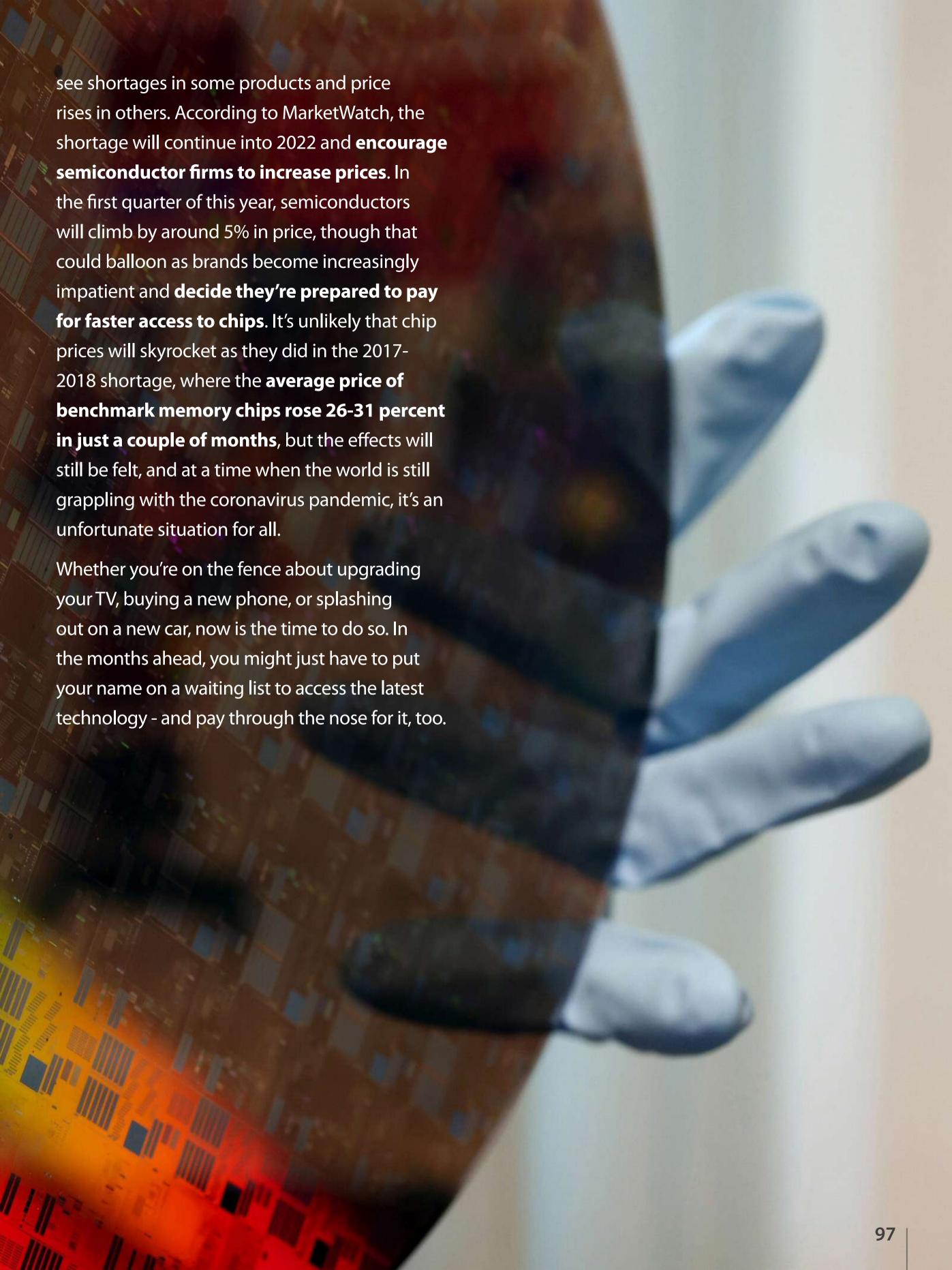


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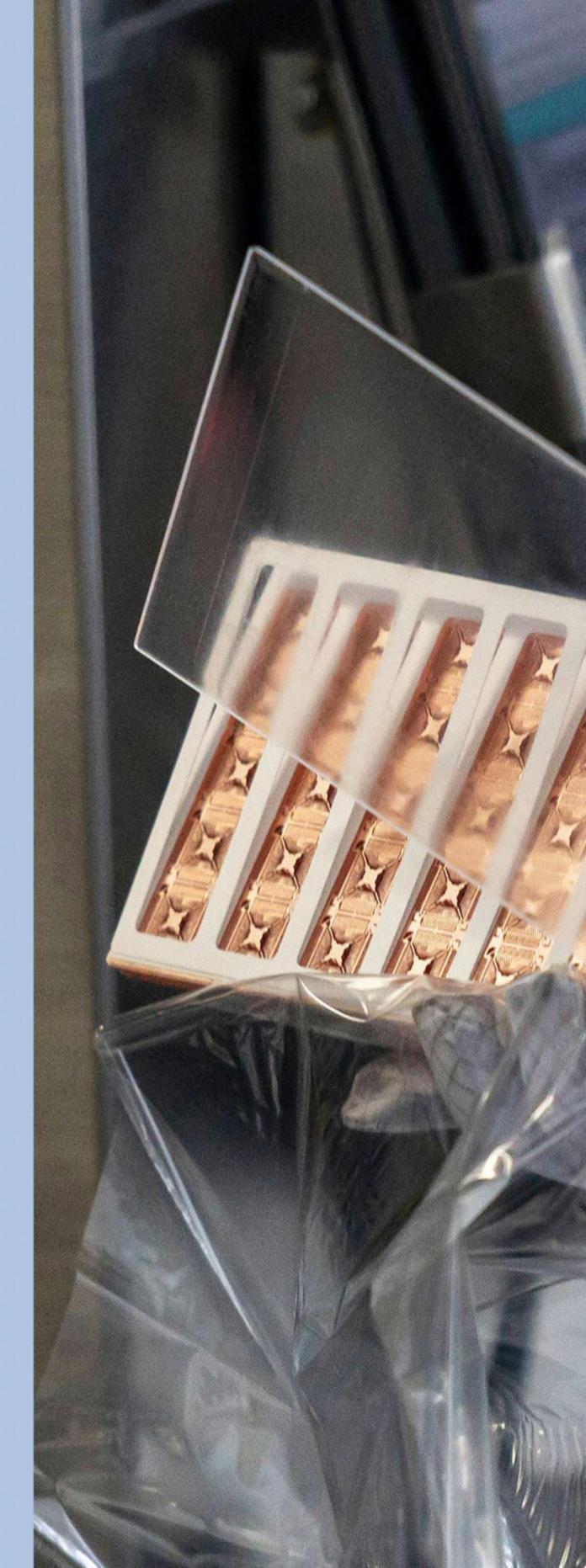


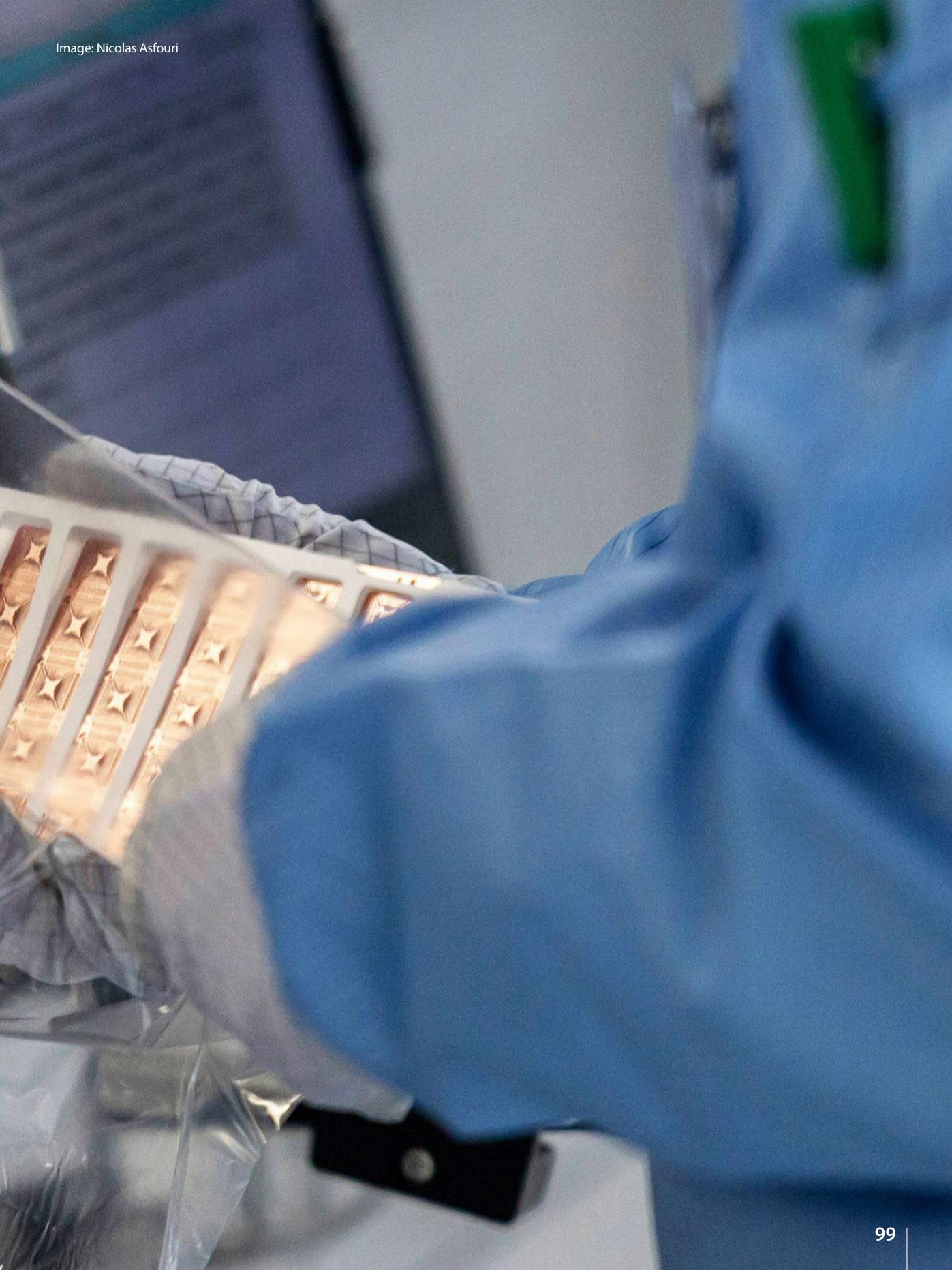


AUTO INDUSTRY BRACES FOR MORE CHIP SHORTAGES AFTER FIRE

A fire at a plant owned by Japanese chipmaker Renesas could deepen the ongoing global semiconductor shortage that has especially hampered automobile production.

The company, which makes chips for Toyota,
Nissan and Honda, expects production at one of
the buildings at its Naka Factory in Hitachinaka
to be halted for a month. Shares in all three
automakers fell this week.





Tokyo-based Renesas said the fire started when some equipment overheated and ignited, though it wasn't known what caused it to overheat. There were no casualties or damage to the building.

Renesas said two-thirds of the products made in the building could be produced elsewhere, although "due to the recent increase in demand for semiconductors, the situation does not allow for all products to be immediately produced alternatively."

Separately last week, Nissan said it was temporarily shutting down production at factories in Smyrna, Tennessee; Canton, Mississippi; and in Aguascalientes, Mexico, due to the chip shortage.

Volkswagen and Fiat Chrysler (now Stellantis) also say they have been affected by the shortage and forced to delay production of some models in order to keep other factories running.

The chip shortage, combined with a February winter storm, also recently forced Ford to build F-150 pickup trucks without some computers. The company said the pickups would be held at factories for "a number of weeks," then shipped to dealers once computers are available and quality checks are done.

Industry officials say semiconductor companies diverted production to consumer electronics during the worst of the COVID-19 slowdown in auto sales last spring. Global automakers were forced to close plants to prevent the spread of the virus. When automakers recovered, there weren't enough chips as demand for personal electronics boomed.









FOR TELEVISION, NFL DEAL IS LIKELY A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

The \$113 billion deal to telecast NFL games through 2033 is head-swimmingly large — until you consider that the very survival of broadcast networks as we know them may depend upon it.

The deal announced by the NFL and media companies spreads professional football content broadly, with CBS, NBC, Fox, ABC, ESPN and Amazon all getting pieces, and locks it in at a time little else can attract such a wide audience.

"If you think of the future of network television, there is nothing more important to it than the NFL," said Rich Greenfield, a media analyst for LightShed Partners, an industry research firm.

During the current television season, the eight most-watched recurring programs are football: the game "windows" on Sunday afternoon and Sunday or Thursday nights, the Nielsen company said. NFL football accounts for 12 of the 20 most popular programs, including highlights packages.

A decade ago, there were seven football entries in the top 20, Nielsen said. In 2000, when "ER" was the most popular program on television, football accounted for two of the top 20.

The economics are simple for broadcast networks: the bigger the audience, the more they can charge to run commercials. Yet the games are also important to a network's identity. With viewers cutting cords and spreading out among streaming services, there are no better platforms to promote their latest comedies and dramas.

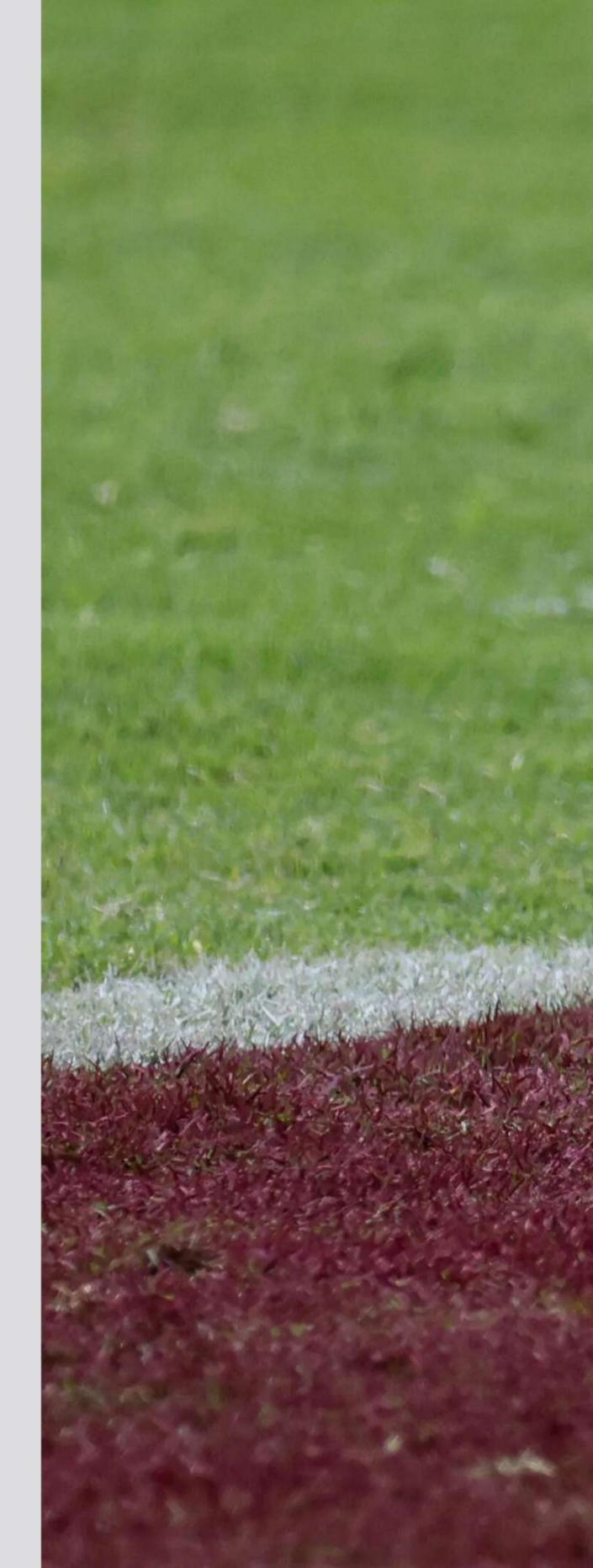
In recent years, live events that viewers can't see anywhere else have became increasingly crucial to networks. But the sudden collapse in ratings for awards shows like the Golden Globes and Grammys during the pandemic is an alarming warning that special events may not be so dependable anymore.

Pro football is still dependable.

Live sports is now the top reason people cite for subscribing to cable or satellite television hookups, said Dennis Deninger, a longtime ESPN employee and now a professor in the Falk College of Sport & Human Dynamics at Syracuse University.

"They are banking on the interest in sports to help them survive," Deninger said. Without sports, networks would be left chiefly with entertainment and news. People, especially young viewers, consider broadcast networks less important to filling those needs, he said.

Networks may have no idea what comedies people will laugh to in 2030, but the NFL deal at least gives them certainty that their most popular programming option will remain, said









Daniel Durbin, director of the USC-Annenberg Institute of Sports, Media and Society.

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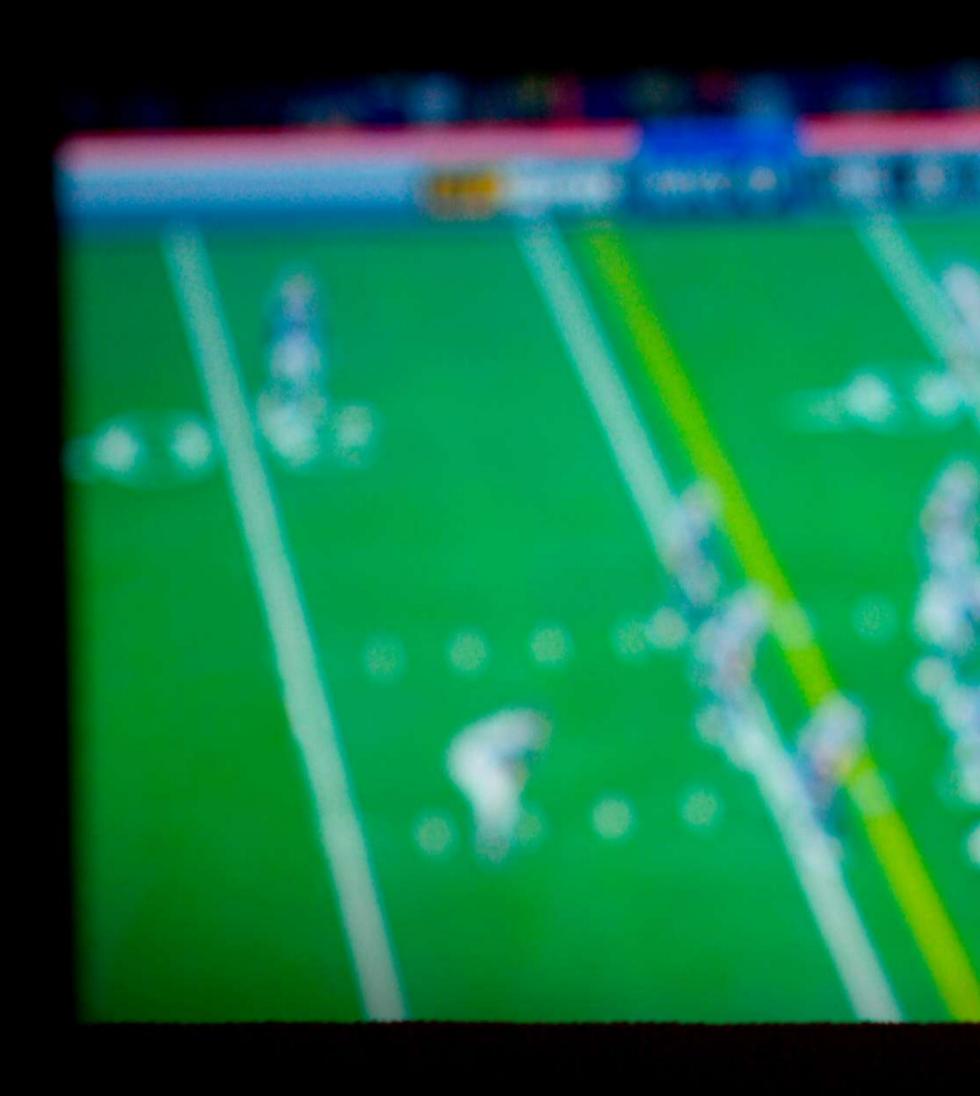
The deal also accounts for digital transmission of all NFL games; while NBC will continue to air "Sunday Night Football," that game will also be seen on the Peacock streaming service. Some analysts consider this a ticking time bomb, wondering if the digital availability will make people less dependent on television.

Greenfield understands why streaming was expanded. "You either lean into the future, or the future passes you by," he said.

Yet business consultant, technology advisor and Adweek columnist Shelly Palmer posed the question: "Has the NFL killed television?" Palmer said it will make young people more likely to cut the cord. He also suggested it will cripple the ability of network affiliates — the stations in your hometown that show CBS or ABC programming — to command high fees from cable and satellite providers to include them in their packages.

"As local TV stations fall into an inescapable vortex toward irrelevance to advertisers, it will become tougher and tougher for them to negotiate with their cable and satellite overlords," Palmer wrote.

Some experts see other clouds on the horizon, suggesting young people are less likely to watch long games when they can catch up on highlights later. Deninger said 2019 was the first time in more than three decades that the number of kids participating in high school sports dropped, meaning the pool of future fans could be shrinking.



"I think the networks are still deluding themselves," Durbin said. "I don't think they want to believe that the NFL is in any kind of eclipse."

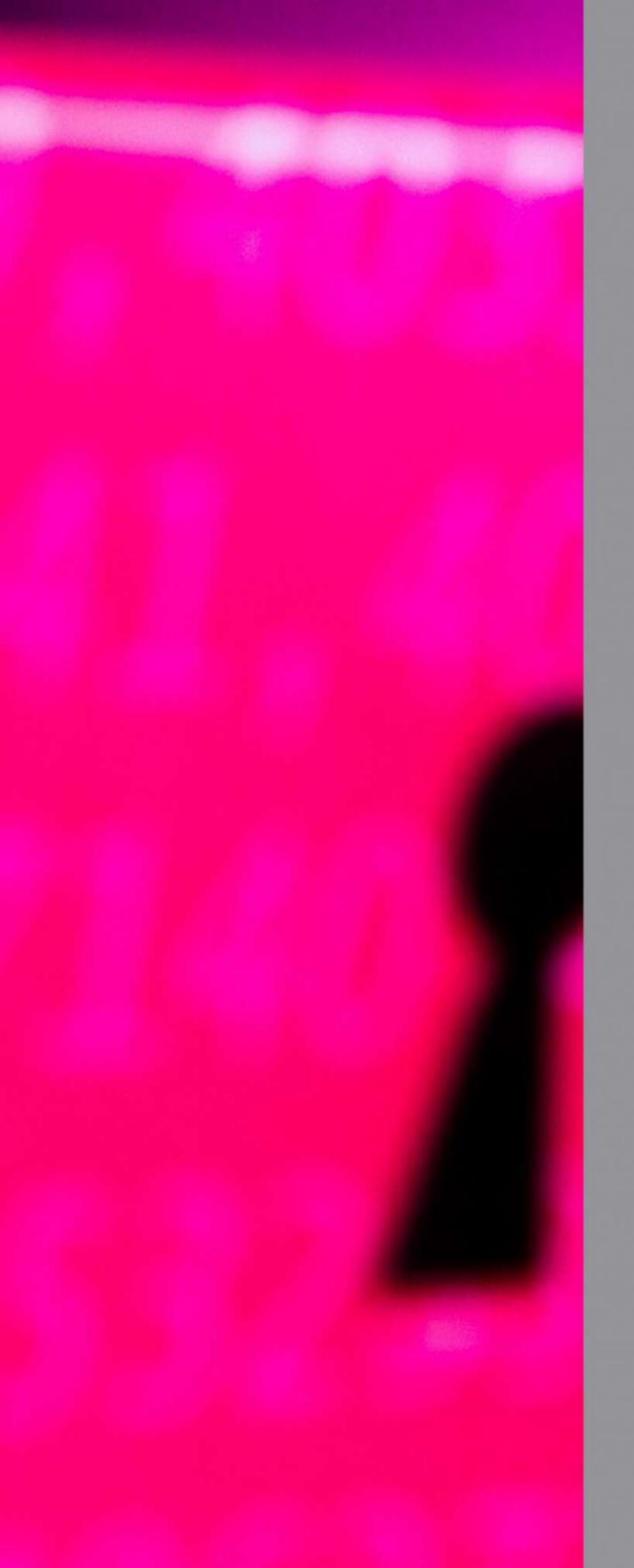
Pro football ratings did drop this season, and the Super Bowl's audience of 92 million people wasn't near the all-time high of 114.4 million in 2015, Nielsen said.

Still, nothing else on television reaches 92 million people. Nothing comes anywhere close. What responsible media executive wouldn't listen when the NFL comes calling?

"Hockey and curling are not going to get it for you," Durbin said.







TOOL CREATED TO AID CLEANUP FROM MICROSOFT HACK IN BROAD USE

A tool designed to help businesses protect themselves from further compromises after a global hack of Microsoft email server software has been downloaded more than 25,000 times since it was released last week, the White House's National Security Council said this week.

As a result, the number of vulnerable systems has fallen by 45%, according to an NSC spokesperson.

The one-click Microsoft tool was created to protect against cyberattacks and to scan systems for compromises and fix them. It was developed after a massive hack affecting an estimated tens of thousands of users of servers running Microsoft's Exchange email program.

The breach was discovered in early January and was attributed to Chinese cyber spies targeting U.S. policy think tanks. Then in late February, five days before Microsoft Corp. issued a

patch on March 2, there was an explosion of infiltrations by other intruders, piggybacking on the initial breach.

The White House earlier this month described the hack as an "active threat" that was being addressed by senior national security officials. The administration's response is being led by deputy national security adviser Anne Neuberger, who convened government officials and private sector experts to brainstorm solutions, particularly given that smaller businesses often lack resources to counter cyber attacks and to clean up after hacks. The administration pressed Microsoft to come up with a more simplified and streamlined fix and to track the number of compromised systems.

Since the release of the tool, the number of vulnerable systems in the United States has fallen to fewer than 10,000 from at least 120,000 at the peak. Many of the remaining vulnerable systems are tied to small businesses but not limited to any one sector.

While Microsoft has taken considerable heat for being the provider of software that elite hackers have exploited, Charles Carmakal, senior vice president and chief technical officer of prominent cybersecurity firm FireEye, said that Microsoft deserves credit for working hard to help people who run its software defend themselves.

He cited, especially, the downloadable turnkey script that people can use to apply patches and see if their systems have been compromised.

"The level of effort that they put into this to help companies defend themselves is terrific," he said. "It's a tough situation that organizations are in with the vulnerability in general."









CYBER ATTACK TIED TO CHINA BOOSTS DEVELOPMENT BANK'S CHIEF

The cyberattack crested just as finance officials from across Latin America were descending on Washington to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Inter-American Development Bank.

On Sept. 24, 2019, requests from more than 15,000 internet addresses throughout China flooded the bank's website, knocking part of it intermittently offline. To unclog the network, the bank took the drastic step of blocking all traffic from China.

But the attackers persisted, and as officials gathered for a day of conferences with athletes, academics and celebrity chefs the bombardment intensified.

Details of the attack, which has not been previously reported, are contained in an IDB internal document.

News of the attack is surfacing just as the bank's new president, Mauricio Claver-Carone, seeks to leverage his hawkish views on China from his time in the Trump administration to outmaneuver those in Washington and beyond still fuming over his politically charged election last year.

Claver-Carone, the former National Security
Council's senior director for Western Hemisphere
affairs, chaired last week in Colombia his first
annual meeting of the IDB since he was elected
last fall over the objections of Democrats and
some regional governments who complained
he was breaking the longstanding tradition of a
Latin American being at the helm.

A geopolitical ideologue, Claver-Carone seems in no rush to abandon his disdain for Beijing's growing influence in Washington's backyard. In sharp contrast to his predecessor, Luis Alberto Moreno of Colombia, who eagerly promoted Chinese investment in the region, Claver-Carone recently floated the possibility of inviting Taiwan, the island democracy claimed by the communist Beijing government as part of its territory.

In curtailing China's influence, Claver-Carone is looking to curry favor with Democrats who question his leadership but share his mistrust of Beijing. If he succeeds, they can help him deliver on what was the main pledge of his unorthodox candidacy: U.S. support for a capital increase so the bank can help the region dig out from a pandemic-induced recession that's the worst in more than a century.

There are early signs he may be making some headway. This month, a bipartisan group of five lawmakers led by Sen. Bob Menendez, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, proposed legislation authorizing an \$80 billion capital increase that would boost lending at the Washington-based bank by 60%.





"People need to accept that he won," said
Dan Runde, a former official with the U.S.
Agency for International Development in the
George W. Bush administration and an expert
on multilateral institutions at the Center for
Strategic and International Studies. "Those who
are not happy haven't gone through the five
stages of grief yet. They're stuck somewhere
between denial and anger."

But Sen. Patrick Leahy, the powerful chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has yet to sign on after warning last year that the choice of Claver-Carone, a "polarizing American," to lead the IDB would hurt — not help — the case for a funding boost. There's also an expectation that some in the region who supported Claver-Carone when Trump was in office — such as Brazil and Colombia — might switch allegiances to appeal to the new sheriff in town: President Joe Biden.

"The argument that an underfunded bank is an opportunity for China is very compelling," said Dan Restrepo, who served in the same National Security Council role as Claver-Carone during the Obama administration. "But it doesn't answer how you adequately fund the bank and with what leadership."

As far as cyber-disruptions go, the attack against the IDB was too small to generate concern beyond the bank. Last year, more than 10 million similar distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks were observed throughout the world, according to digital security firm NETSCOUT.

But occurring amid the IDB's gala celebration it was fraught with symbolism.









The bash in Washington was hastily organized after the Trump administration six months earlier rallied allies to force the cancellation of the IDB gathering in the Chinese city of Chengdu, which was to be something of a breaking out party for China a decade after it joined the bank.

While the U.S. had been trying to derail the meeting for months, China's denial of a visa to a representative of Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó gave it the opportunity to act decisively. While the IDB and the bulk of nations in Latin America recognize Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate leader, China is a staunch ally of President Nicolás Maduro.

Claver-Carone was the U.S. official driving the diplomatic standoff with China at the IDB. As the top White House official for Latin America, he was also the architect of "America Crece," (America Rising), a program that sought to curb the inroads being made by China in Latin America, where it has displaced the U.S. as the top trading partner in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile.

According to the IDB document, on Sept. 19, 2019, traffic to the IDB website surged to more than four times normal levels, forcing the main website and publications page offline. At first, the bank defended itself by blocking individual IP addresses.

But then "the attackers switched tactics and started to throw requests from more than 15,000 IP addresses spread throughout China," according to the internal document. "By Tuesday 24th evening all income traffic from China was blocked, a decision the allowed us to come back online."





Unthwarted, the attackers pivoted again, this time relying on 180,000 IP addresses from countries including Singapore and Japan. In all, the attack lasted for months but was effectively contained after three weeks when the bank turned to Amazon to build a more robust firewall.

While there is no indication the site was breached, "the downtime affected our digital presence and had a negative impact in different communication endeavors," the document says. "It also made our vulnerabilities explicit for third parties, which could potentially make us the target of new attacks and impact the reputation of the IDB brand."

Still, it's impossible to know who was behind the attack.

While China has some of the world's most skilled hackers, security experts say that doesn't necessarily mean it is behind the attacks. Poorly protected computers can be hijacked and marshaled from anywhere in the world and turned into botnets for unleashing DDoS attacks.

"A targeted attack this long has an obvious financial or political motive — you don't troll for three weeks," said Tord Lundstrom, a digital security expert at Qurium, a Swedish non-profit organization. "But determining whether China was behind it, or someone is just trying to make it look like it was, is very hard to determine without additional digital forensic information."

China's foreign ministry didn't respond directly to questions about whether the government knew about the incident at the IDB or was involved but said in a statement that it strongly opposes cyber attacks

"Linking cyber attacks directly to a government is a highly sensitive political issue," the ministry statement said. "All parties should jointly resolve the hacking issue through dialogue and cooperation and avoid politicizing the issue."

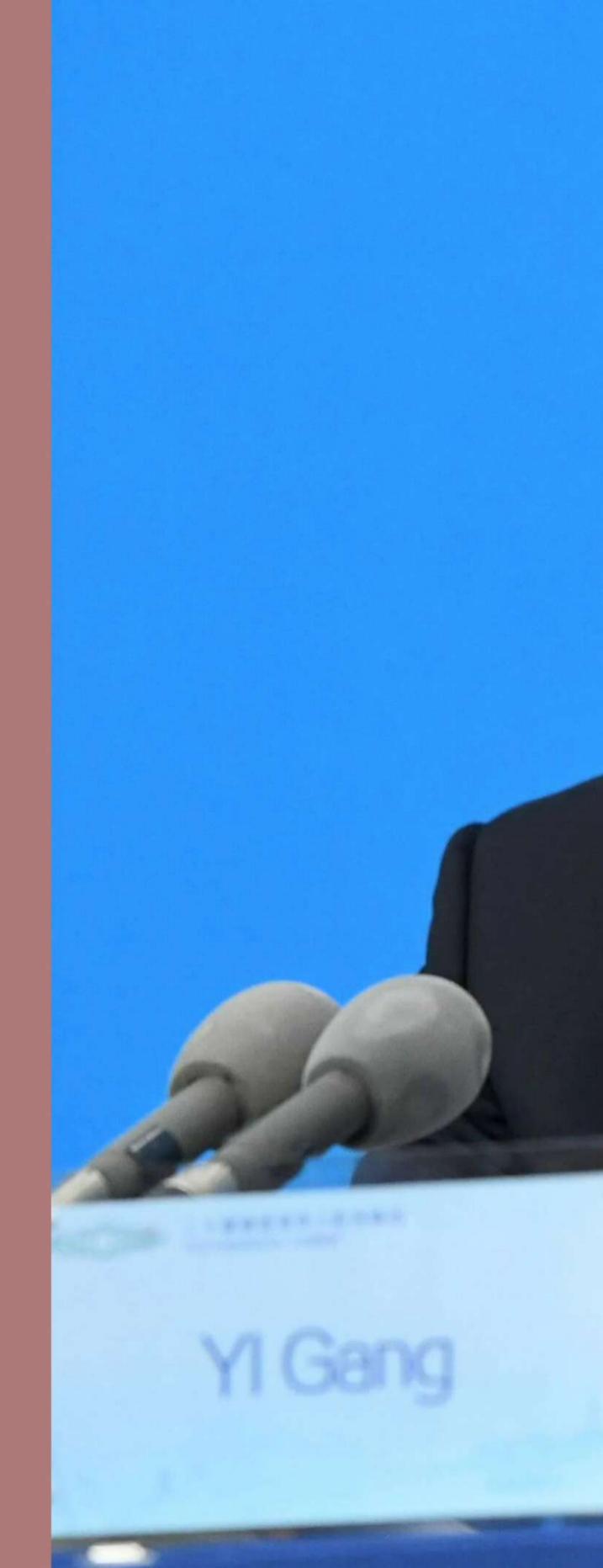
Claver-Carone declined to be interviewed while the IDB said it does not comment on internal cybersecurity issues. Nonetheless, three people at the bank told the AP they recall China being openly blamed for the attack in briefings back in 2019 to discuss the fallout. The people spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

On paper, China has a minuscule 0.004% of the IDB's voting shares, the smallest stake of any of the bank's 48 members. But membership has been a cheap way for China to expand its reach in Latin America. Chinese companies are able to bid on IDB-financed projects, rub shoulders with political leaders and pick up valuable economic intelligence that would be harder to acquire on its own.

China is also the second-largest non-borrowing shareholder in IDB Invest, the bank's private lending arm, with nearly 6% of shares, thanks to a reorganization in 2015 when the Obama administration refused to pony up additional resources and saw the U.S.' stake diluted to 13%.

The IDB also manages a \$2 billion fund made up entirely of contributions from China. Over the years the IDB also hosted more than a dozen business summits connecting Latin American entrepreneurs with Chinese investors.

"For too long the IDB was too friendly with the Chinese Communist Party," said Runde.









"The Bank and its shareholders did not hold China accountable when it ruined the 60th Anniversary for the IDB. This too cozy relationship has to change."

China has made no secret of its tense relationship with Claver-Carone. In a symbolic rebuke, Yi Gang, the head of China's central bank, refrained from voting in the special meeting last year when Claver-Carone was elected, according to a person who attended the meeting on the condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door discussion.

Rebecca Ray, a Boston University economist who tracks China's investment in the region, said the touchy politics around China can be a double-edged sword. While Claver-Carone's attempts to isolate Beijing may play well in the U.S. Congress and help him secure additional funding it could ultimately end up undermining the IDB's mission at a time of great need for financing to build infrastructure, improve health care and reduce poverty in the region.

She noted that as the IDB has lagged other multilateral institutions in securing more funding, three Latin American countries — Brazil, Ecuador, and Uruguay — have joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China's answer to the World Bank and one which the U.S. opposes.

"Sidelining China may end up limiting China's willingness to keep playing an active role, which would not be popular in the region," said Ray.

"As long as the need for financing remains high, countries will keep turning to China because that's where the money is."





APPLE TV+ GIVES A STRAIGHT-TOSERIES ORDER FOR LADY IN THE LAKE

Apple **announced** on March 10, 2021, that it had given a straight-to-series order for a new TV show titled Lady in the Lake. The series itself is a mystery still, but we have gathered all the available information about the show here and we are going to present it to you in today's article. Based on what we know, Lady in the Lake might be a real hit for Apple TV+, whose roster is becoming better and better with each new announcement.

Now, Lady of the Lake is a TV show based on Laura Lippman's bestseller of the same name, which was a New York Times bestseller once it came out in 2019. The official synopsis for the novel is described as follows: "In 1966, Baltimore is a city of secrets that everyone seems to know—everyone, that is, except Madeline "Maddie" Schwartz.

Last year, she was a happy, even pampered housewife. This year, she's bolted from her marriage of almost twenty years, determined to make good on her youthful ambitions to live a passionate, meaningful life. Maddie wants to matter, to leave her mark on a swiftly changing world. Drawing on her own secrets, she helps Baltimore police find a murdered girl—assistance that leads to a job at the city's afternoon newspaper, the Star. Working at the newspaper offers Maddie the opportunity to make her name, and she has found just the story to do it: Cleo Sherwood, a missing woman whose body was discovered in the fountain of a city park lake.

If Cleo were white, every reporter in Baltimore would be clamoring to tell her story. Instead, her mysterious death receives only cursory mention in the daily newspapers, and no one cares when Maddie starts poking around in a young Black woman's life—except for Cleo's ghost, who is determined to keep her secrets and her dignity. Cleo scolds the ambitious Maddie: You're interested in my death, not my life. They're not the same thing.

Maddie's investigation brings her into contact with people that used to be on the periphery of her life—a jewelry store clerk, a waitress, a rising star on the Baltimore Orioles, a patrol cop, a hardened female reporter, a lonely man in a movie theater. But for all her ambition and drive, Maddie often fails to see the people right in front of her. Her inability to look beyond her own needs will lead to tragedy and turmoil for all sorts of people—including Ferdie, the man who shares her bed, a police officer who is risking far more than Maddie can understand."













Natalie Portman is going to play Madeline Schwartz, the protagonist involved in the chief mystery of the novel. Portman, an Academy Award-winning actress also known for her SF and superhero outings, is going to have her first television main role in Lady in the Lake. She has previously done some television work (mostly voice work, some guest appearances), but Lady in the Lake is going to be her first main role in a television series and it seems that this strong, femalecentered is going to be just perfect for her. Her co-star on the show will be another Academy Award winner, Lupita Nyong'o, who is playing Cleo Sherwood, a working woman who also dedicated her life to advancing the Black progressive agenda in Baltimore. Other roles are unknown as of this moment.

Since this announcement is a relatively new one, we don't know anything else about the show. This includes the release date, the number of episodes and the start of the production. The only other information we know is that the studio working on the show is Endeavor Content.

And with this, we conclude our coverage of Apple TV+'s new show. As you can see, Lady in the Lake is going to be a highly entertaining and thrilling show with strong female characters, and something we are certainly looking forward to. With two strong leads, Lady in the Lake promises to be a hit for Apple TV+ and we are going to keep an eye out for new information as they come, especially the ones related to the start of production and the release date.





IN 'THE COURIER,' CUMBERBATCH IS AN EVERYMAN SPY

The new Cold War film "The Courier" about a Soviet whistleblower and the British businessman who helped transport information to Western intelligence agencies is both based on real events and people and also is very much the product of a screenwriter's imagination. That's not to criticize the film written by Tom O'Connor ("The Hitman's Bodyguard") and directed by Dominic Cooke ("On Chesil Beach"). It's simply to say that it is more historical fiction than it is history. The whole truth of this extraordinary chapter has likely died with the principal characters and/ or been obscured and distorted by the people who write these things down.

What we know is that there was indeed a Soviet official named Oleg Penkovsky, played in the film by Georgian actor Merab Ninidze, who was an essential source for the Americans during the Cold War and the leadup to the Cuban Missile Crisis. One of Penkovsky's contacts was a British civilian named Greville Wynne, who wrote an autobiography about his experiences. Even the reliability of that account has been questioned. Still, it provided an intriguing jumping off point for O'Connor to write a classic espionage thriller that opens in select theaters.

In "The Courier," after Penkovsky makes an initial outreach to the West, MI6 and the CIA are at a loss for how to cultivate him as a source. They decide a civilian who might do business in the Soviet Union is the best bet and somewhat casually land on Wynne.

Cumberbatch, who we've seen play suave, cruel and egotistical many times over the years, plays Wynne as an ordinary middle class schlub just trying to keep his family afloat and club memberships intact. He doesn't suspect he's dining with spies when his government friend Dickie (Angus Wright) and an American CIA agent, Emily (Rachel Brosnahan), sit down with him to recruit him into service. He reacts with a boyish giddiness as though it was Ian Fleming himself sitting across the table.

Emily is one of the inventions of the film.

O'Connor has said he just decided to make the

CIA agent a woman. It certainly breaks up the

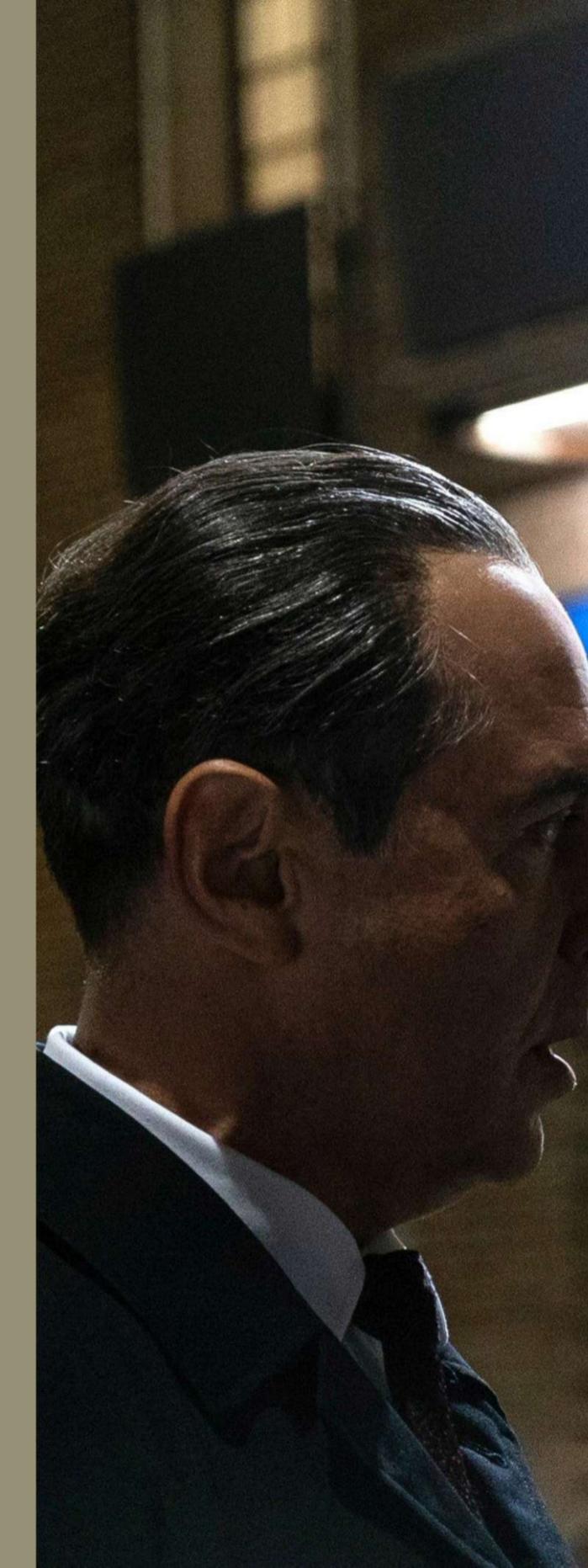
monotony of such a male cast and it's always a

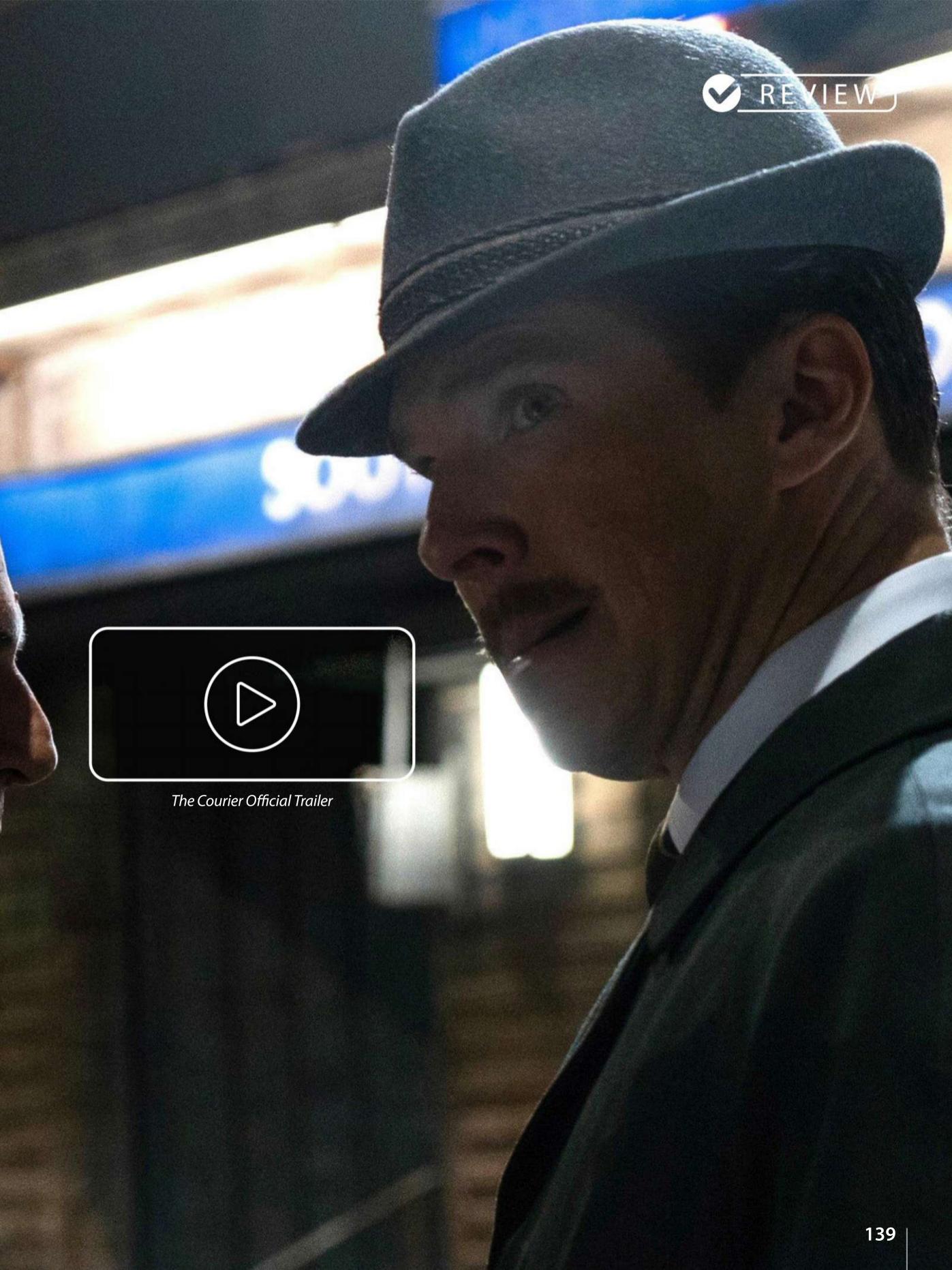
delight to see Brosnahan in 60s garb. But it also

feels a little insincere to just insert women in

specific historical settings where they weren't. It

was also done with the Felicity Jones character









in "The Aeronauts" and the effect is often the opposite of empowering. Since "The Courier" is so fictionalized, however, it's easier to accept here. Plus, she gets to be the more persuasive agent.

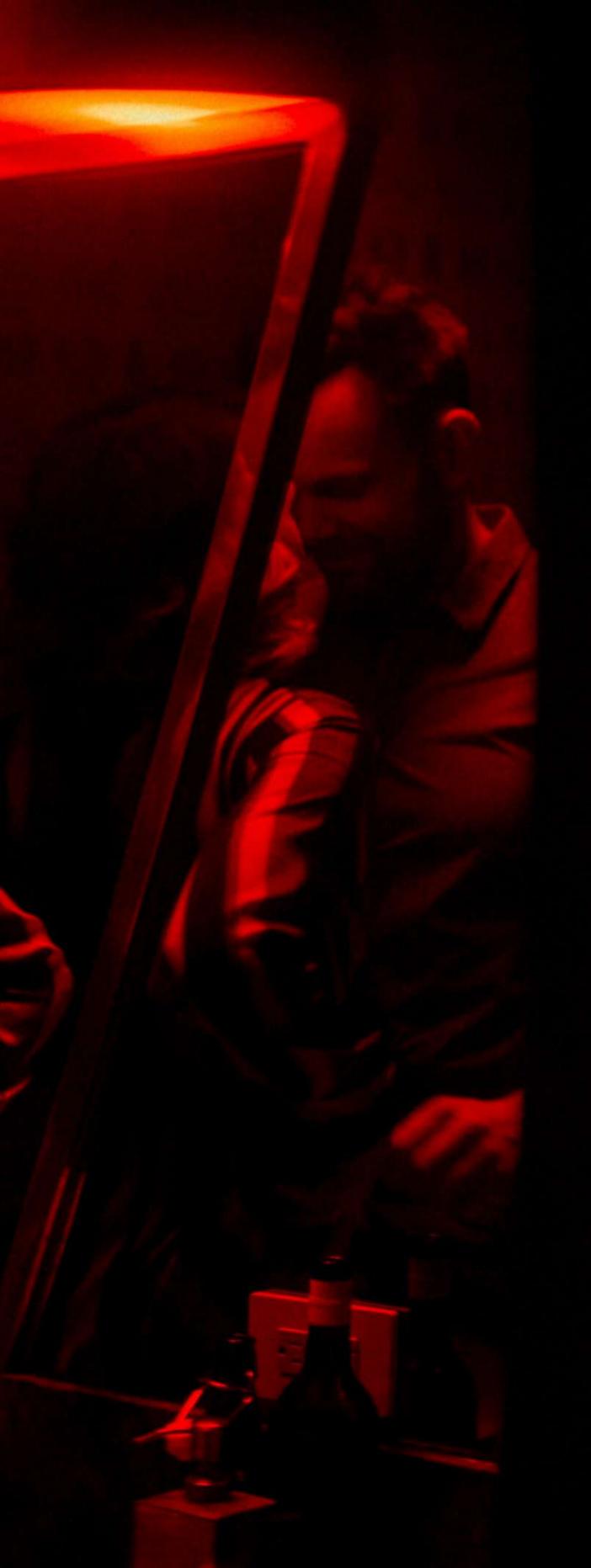
Not that Wynne, who was in a bit of a rut, needed much convincing. He jumps on the opportunity and starts taking extended trips abroad, leaving his wife (Jessie Buckley) and young son at home. The film has an almost ebullient tone for much of the first half as Wynne and Penkovsky get to know and like each other over caviar lunches, big drunken nights out and tearful evenings at the ballet. It lightly zips along despite the fact that the stakes include death and nuclear holocaust. The honeymoon is soon to end, though, as suspicions start to arise around this business relationship and things get infinitely more complicated for our protagonists, which I won't spoil here, but it's a tonal whiplash.

"The Courier" is a story we haven't seen on film but it still feels very familiar most of the time, with espionage film tropes and cliches to spare. While it might not be on the same level as "Bridge of Spies," it's solid, well-acted and enjoyable nonetheless. Just don't use it as the text for any history reports.

"The Courier," a Lionsgate/Roadside Attractions release in select theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "violence, partial nudity, brief strong language, and smoking throughout." Running time: 111 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

MPAA Definition of PG-13: Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.





IN 'HAPPILY' 10 MILLENNIALS WALK INTO AN AIRBNB....

Wait, where have we heard that before?

Actually, it's a familiar line in a new genre of thriller that's emerged the last few years:

Airbnb horror films. There are a few constants:

Attractive millennials, lots of good booze, a gorgeous weekend rental. And then something scary happens, and finally someone says: "Wait, how did we find this place?" Oops! Suddenly everyone realizes that the house actually chose

"How did we find this place, anyway?"

THEM. By then, it's too late to escape.

By the time "Happily," an ambitious, sometimes compelling but wildly uneven debut feature by BenDavid Grabinski, gets to this point, it's already lost us a bit, and started feeling like yet another slick hipster horror film — you know, for those who like their millennials attractive and their chef-quality kitchen appliances even more so. That's too bad, because the setup — the first act, as it were — is delicious.

"Happily" begins with this question: Does the "law of diminishing returns" apply in a biological sense to marriages, or can a couple remain as infatuated with each other as the day they met, year after year? The test case is Tom (Joel McHale) and Janet (Kerry Bishe), an absurdly attractive couple still in the honeymoon phase of their marriage. These two can't go to a party without having a steamy tryst in the bathroom.

Their friends are annoyed — and not just because the bathroom is tied up. They're annoyed because this honeymoon phase has lasted 14 years and shows no sign of abating.

"They're going home for Round 2," quips their jaded friend Karen at one such party, voice dripping with jealousy. She and husband Val do not have the same problem. Another "problem" Janet and Tom have is that they always forgive each other for any transgression. Genuine forgiveness, not the tired cease-fire some couples fall into.

A few nights later at dinner, Karen and Val drop Janet and Tom from an upcoming weekend vacation and return their deposit. "Everyone hates you," Karen explains. "You never even fight!" The couple protests, but they're proving Karen's point by engaging in hanky-panky under the table.



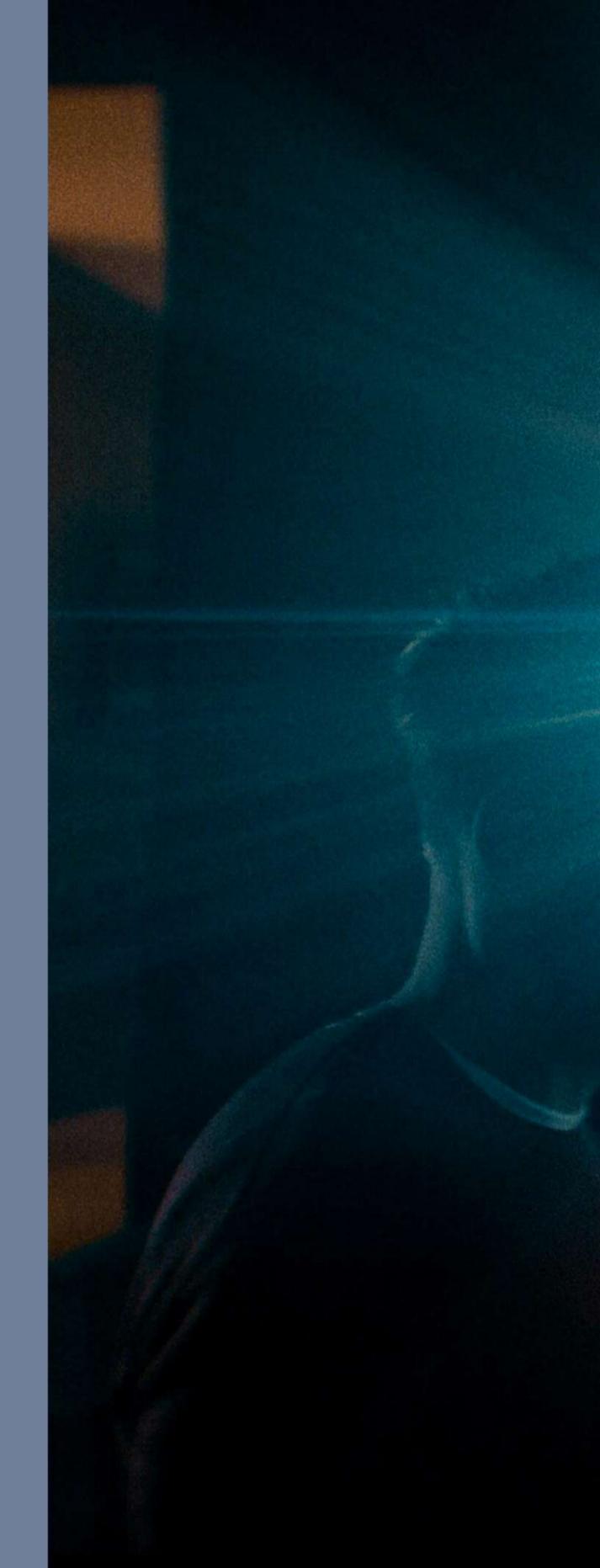


Shaken, they go home and tell each other: "We are not the weird ones. They are." Soon though, they have worse problems. A creepy older man (Stephen Root) shows up at their house with a briefcase, explaining that he works for "the city" and they have a major malfunction — a rare dual malfunction — in that the law of diminishing returns inexplicably doesn't apply to them. It all needs to be corrected with an injection. Once injected, they "will finally be totally normal." And they don't have a choice.

Not to reveal too much, but violence ensues. Now it's a tale of a dead body. And a weekend getaway with eight friends — because they're suddenly invited again. And this time, they have a terrible secret.

The second act turns into something more muddled and less interesting. It doesn't help that none of these friends are even remotely appealing or compelling. Not nervous Patricia (Natalie Morales), who made the house booking, and her odd husband Donald (Jon Daly), not jealous Karen (Natalie Zea) who wants to sleep with Tom to prove he's getting tired of his wife, and her always-annoyed husband Val (Paul Scheer), not nasty, puzzle-obsessed Richard (Breckin Meyer) and his poor mistreated girlfriend Gretel (Charlyne Yi). Only Carla (Shannon Woodward) and her partner Maude (Kirby Howell-Baptiste) seem the least bit worth spending a weekend with.

Why are they all even there? Well, there's a frightening reason they ended up in this particular house, which emerges in due course. But what we're really asking is, why are these people even together?







HAPPILY | Official Trailer | Paramount Movies

Nobody seems to enjoy each other or have any fun at all. OK, there's the tense atmosphere caused by the unexpected murder and all, but there's no sense these people EVER enjoyed each other.

Without spoiling any secrets, the film progresses in horror-film mode before, in its third act, tying things up in a somewhat clever, unexpected way. By then, though, you may have given up on this group.

Call it the law of diminishing returns.

"Happily," a Saban Films release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America "for sexual content, language throughout and brief violence." Running time: 96 minutes. Two stars out of four.









REGAL CINEMAS, 2ND LARGEST CHAIN IN US, TO REOPEN IN APRIL

Regal Cinemas, the second largest movie theater chain in the U.S., will reopen beginning April 2, its parent company, Cineworld Group, announced this week.

Regal had been one of most notable holdouts in the gradual reopening of cinemas nationwide. For nearly half a year, its 7,211 screens and 549 theatres in the U.S. have been dark. Doors will open early next month with attendance limited to 25% to 50% capacity in about 500 locations.

Cineworld also agreed to a new multi-year deal with Warner Bros. Beginning next year, the studio's releases will have a 45-day exclusive window at Regal cinemas, roughly slicing in half the traditional period. That doesn't apply to Warner releases this year, which are streaming simultaneously on HBO Max when they open in theaters.

"We are very happy for the agreement with Warner Bros." said Mooky Greidinger, chief executive of Cineworld. "This agreement shows the studio's commitment to the theatrical





business and we see this agreement as an important milestone in our 100-year relationship with Warner Bros."

Regal's April 2 reopening coincides with the release of Warner Bros. "Godzilla vs. Kong."

The agreement is the latest in a reordering of the theatrical marketplace — a sea change accelerated by the pandemic but viewed as long-in-coming by some analysts given the rise in streaming services.

Universal Pictures last November agreed to deals with AMC and Cinemark — the first- and third-largest chains — to shrink the theatrical window to 17 days, or three weekends. Greidinger at the time said the company didn't see "any business sense" in that model.

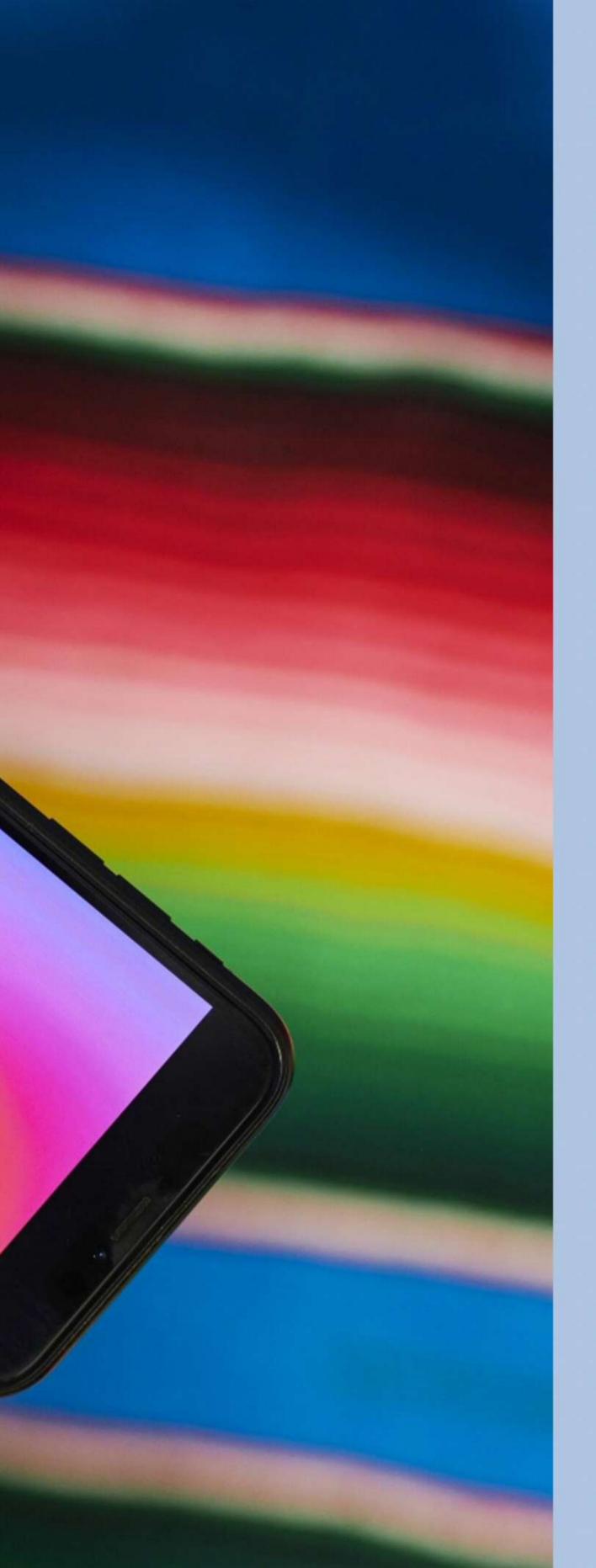
The Walt Disney Co. said it would release several of its largest upcoming films, including the Marvel movie "Black Widow" simultaneously in theaters and on Disney+.

In the United Kingdom, where Cineworld is targeting a May reopening, the Warner agreement shortens the theatrical window to 31 days but can be extended to 45 days if a film reaches a certain box-office threshold.

About half of North American theaters were open as of last week, according to data firm Comscore. In the past few weeks, theaters have been allowed to reopen in New York and Los Angeles — the two largest U.S. markets — for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

"With capacity restrictions expanding to 50% or more across most U.S. states, we will be able to operate profitably in our biggest markets," said Greidinger.





FACEBOOK WORKING ON INSTAGRAM FOR KIDS UNDER 13

Facebook says it is working on a version of its Instagram app for kids under 13, who are technically not allowed to use the app in its current form due to federal privacy regulations.

The company confirmed an earlier report by Buzzfeed News, saying it is "exploring a parent-controlled experience" on Instagram.

The move came after Facebook announced a slew of new measures intended to keep teenagers safe on Instagram — but that announcement made no mention of the plan to build an Instagram for kids.

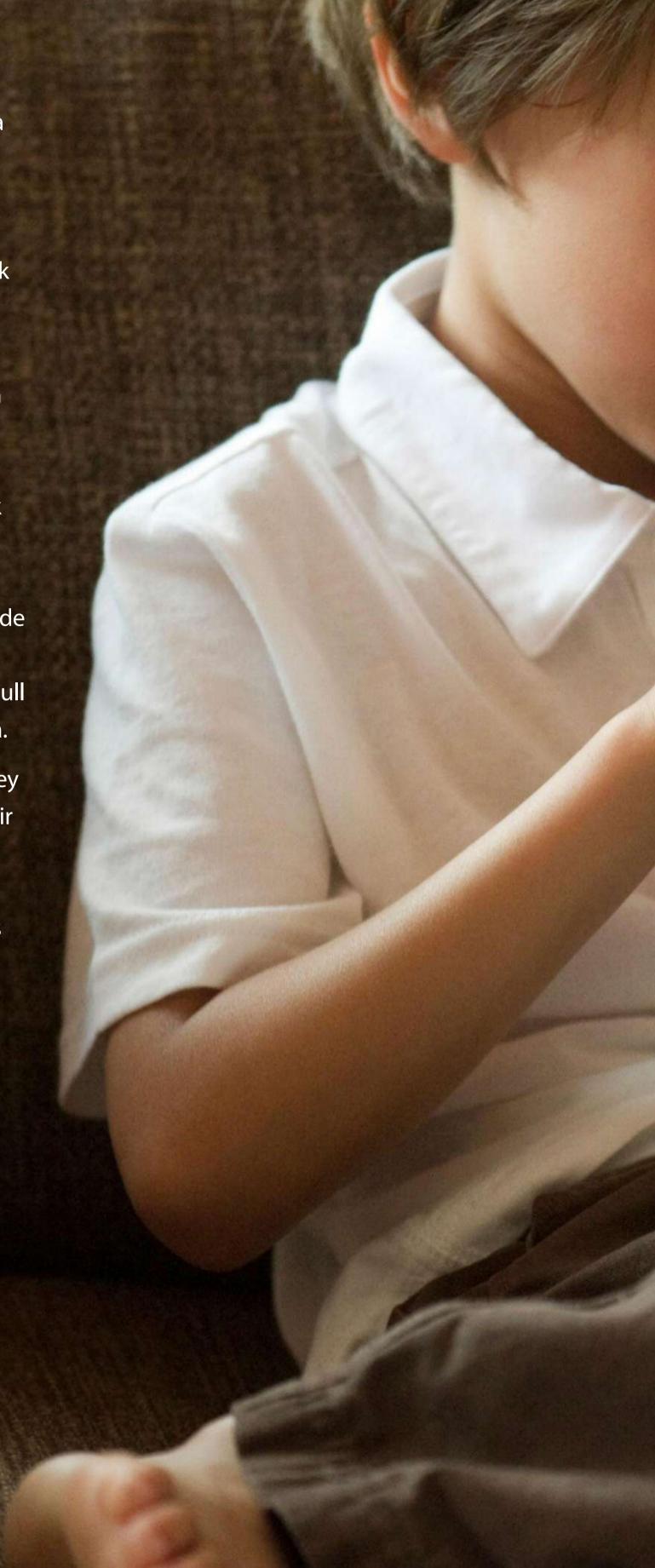
Critics raised concerns immediately, saying a kid-friendly Instagram is just a way for Facebook to expand its user base and condition children into using its products so it can later make money off of them.

"Facebook poses one of the biggest threats when it comes to children's privacy," said Rasha Abdul-Rahim, co-director of Amnesty Tech, an arm of the nonprofit Amnesty International. "Increasing safeguards for children online is paramount, but the fact remains that Facebook will be harvesting children's data and profiting off their detailed profiles."

Facebook launched the Messenger Kids app in 2017, pitching it as a way for children to chat with family members and friends approved by parents. It doesn't give kids separate Facebook or Messenger accounts. Rather, the app works as an extension of a parent's account, and parents get controls, such as the ability to decide who their kids can chat with. But many child-development experts urged the company to pull it, saying kids don't need to be on social media.

"Increasingly kids are asking their parents if they can join apps that help them keep up with their friends," Facebook said in a statement. "Right now there aren't many options for parents, so we're working on building additional products — like we did with Messenger Kids — that are suitable for kids, managed by parents."

When it launched Messenger Kids, Facebook said it wouldn't show ads or collect data for marketing to kids.







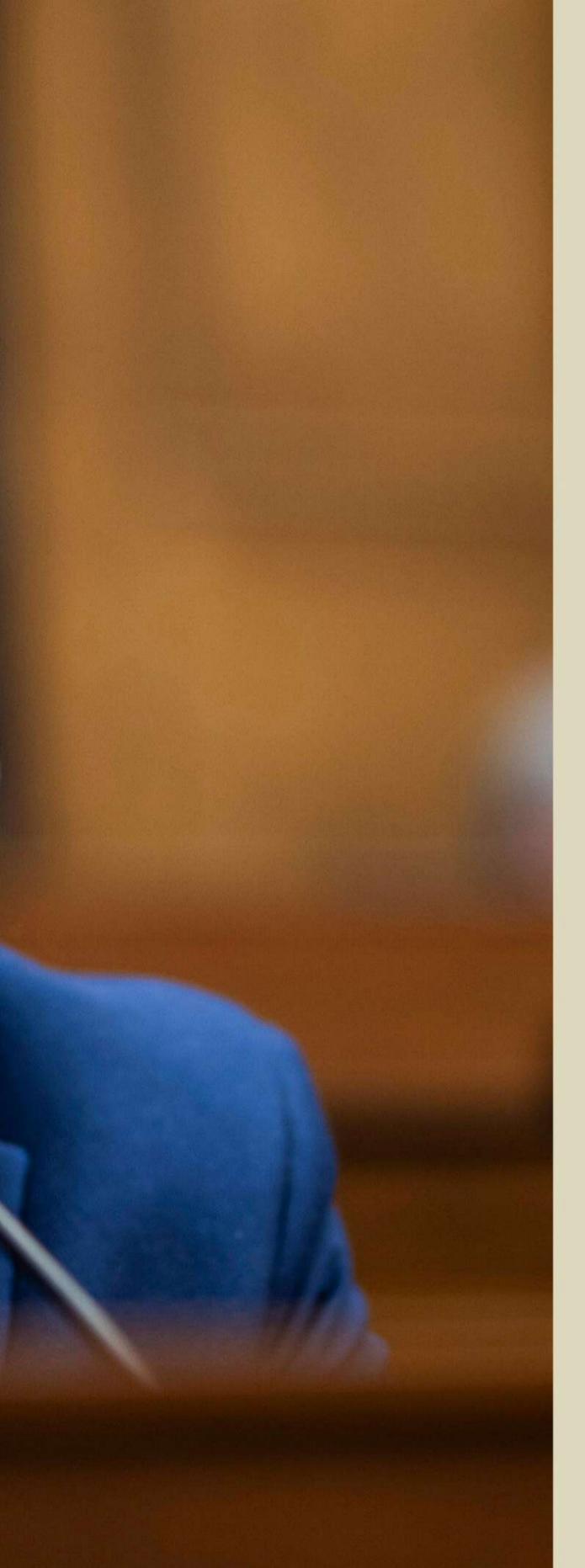
BILL TO AID US PUBLISHERS VS. GOOGLE, FACEBOOK RISES AGAIN

A congressional effort to bolster U.S. news organizations in negotiations with Big Tech has supporters hoping that third time's the charm.

The bill, the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act, was introduced in March for the third time since 2018. Its odds of passage may have improved in a Democrat-run Congress that's working on overhauling antitrust laws.

Australia and other countries have started pushing mechanisms to support news publishers against Facebook and Google, which





dominate online advertising. Publishers argue that Big Tech squeezes news organizations out of digital ad revenue and exerts undue control over who can see their journalism.

The bill would offer a four-year antitrust exemption to publishers so they can negotiate as a group with "dominant online platforms." Facebook and Google get the majority of online ad dollars in the U.S. The measure aims to give publishers better leverage with the tech companies, while only allowing coordination that benefits the news industry as a whole, amid a long-running decline in local news.

Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat and one of the bill's sponsors, said in prepared remarks for a hearing earlier this month that the legislation would provide news publishers an "even playing field" to negotiate deals with major tech platforms. The news industry is struggling with falling revenues, shrinking newsrooms and failing publications — which Cicilline and others call a threat to democracy — while Google and Facebook rack up billions in profits.

"This bill is a life support measure, not the answer for ensuring the long-term health of the news industry," the congressman said.

While the bill has Republican cosponsors in both the House and Senate, some Republicans in the same hearing expressed reservations.

Rep. Jim Jordan, an Ohio Republican, said he worried about giving more power to large media companies that would suppress conservatives' opinions. Republicans often assert without evidence that tech companies censor conservatives and right-wing media.

The News Guild, a union that represents journalists, says the bill would work best with additional provisions to support jobs. It has long objected to media consolidation and criticizes many publishers for impeding unionization and slashing newsroom jobs, particularly at chains owned by hedge funds and private equity firms.

News Guild president Jon Schleuss would like the legislation to require publishers to spend 60% of the revenue won from bargaining to hire more journalists and also support small papers and fund start-ups in "news deserts," areas where papers have folded, worried that instead it might be spent on things like dividends, stock buybacks and squeezing out higher profit margins.

Microsoft, whose president testified during the hearing, supports the bill. Google and Facebook declined to comment on the legislation.

In February, however, Facebook took the extraordinary step of banning Australian news from its platform to protest a law that would have required it to negotiate with publishers to compensate them for its use of news content. Facebook lifted the ban once the government agreed to modify the law. Microsoft, meanwhile, has teamed up with European publishers to support measures similar to the Australian law in Europe.

Over the past few years, Facebook, Google,
Amazon and Apple have all come under
increasing scrutiny from Congress and
regulators. The Justice Department, Federal
Trade Commission and state attorneys general
are suing the internet giants for a variety of
antitrust violations, some of which are related to
the woes of publishers.





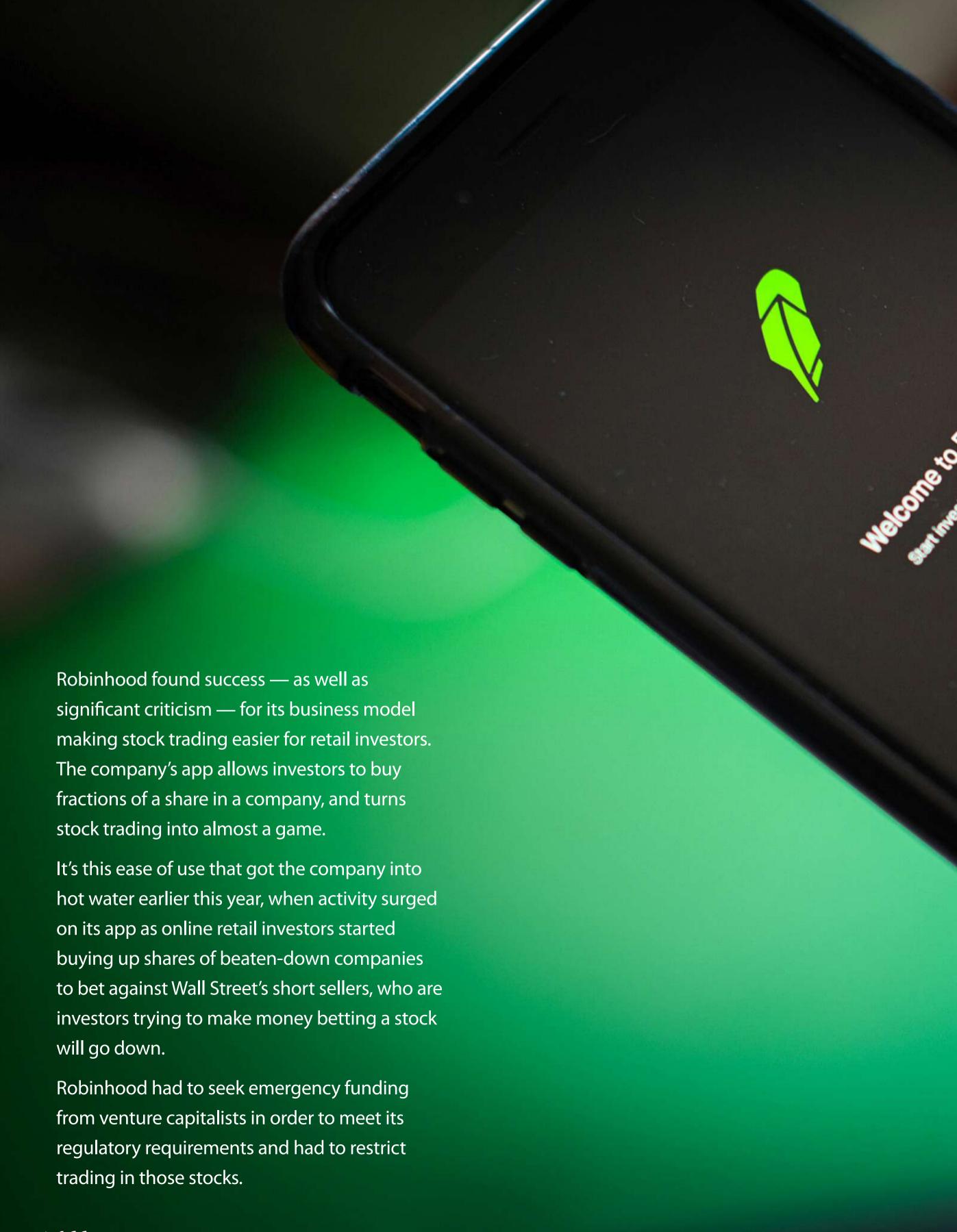


STOCK TRADING APP COMPANY ROBINHOOD FILES PLAN TO GO PUBLIC

Stock trading app company Robinhood said this week that it has submitted a confidential plan to go public later this year.

The company based in Menlo Park, California, filed the paperwork with the Securities and Exchange Commission while at the center of a battle between online activist retail investors and institutional investors over companies such as GameStop and AMC Entertainment. Robinhood had to restrict trading of those companies earlier in the year, and has been subject to congressional investigations.

Robinhood did not disclose the size of its initial public offering, or where it plans to trade its stock. CNBC reported earlier this year that the company was planning on listing on Nasdaq and that Goldman Sachs is the lead investment bank advising it on its plan to go public.









GRANDPARENTS IN THE PANDEMIC: A LOST YEAR, BUT NOW SOME HOPE

No sleepovers with popcorn and Disney movies. No dance recitals or holiday pageants, let alone any Grandparents' Day for visiting the kids' classrooms.

No hugs.

The first 12 months of the pandemic represent a lost year for many in the largest group of grandparents in U.S. history. Most of the nation's some 70 million grandparents are in the fourth quarter of their lives, and the clock has kept running.

"Working with older adults, I'm seeing a lot of depression, a lot of increases in loneliness," says Nick Nicholson, a nursing professor and researcher on aging at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. "It's been really difficult... the anxiety, the despair, the social isolation. Over time, there are so many adverse effects. The sooner we expand the bubble, the better, so people can start healing together."

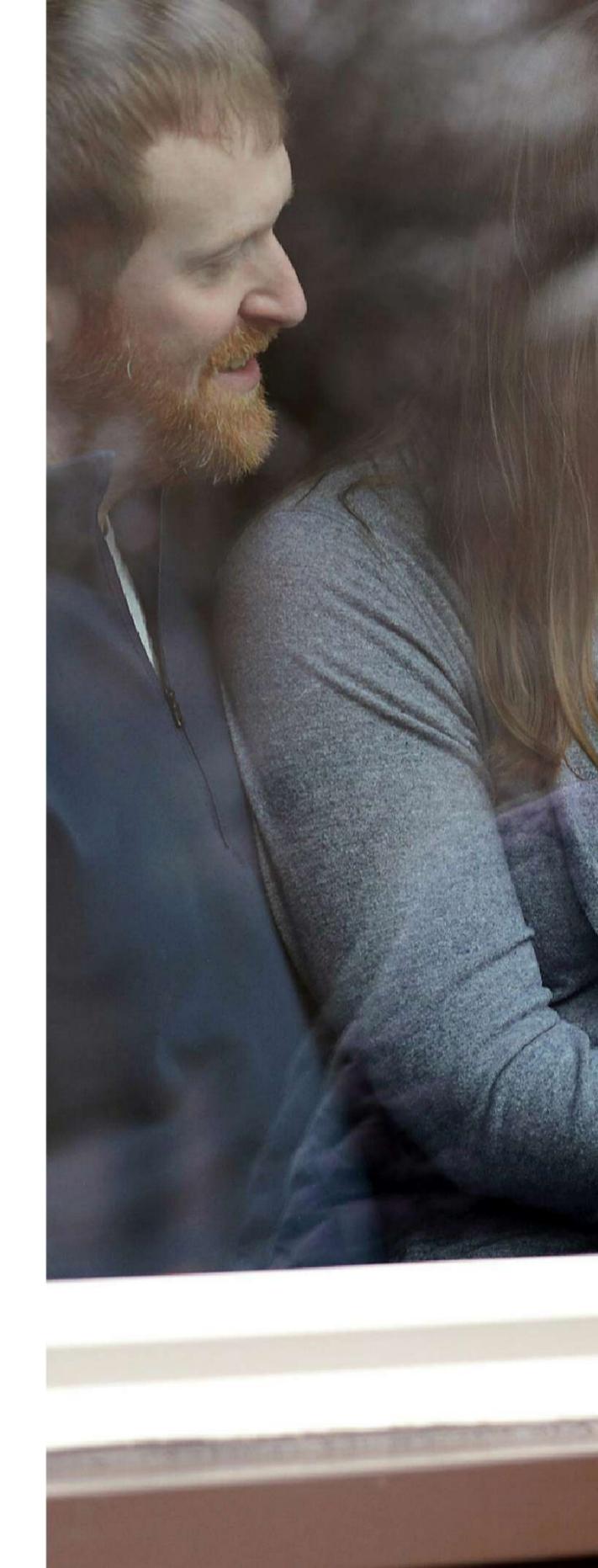
The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last week offered some beginning steps forward for Year 2, saying fully vaccinated grandparents could visit in a single household with healthy children and grandchildren without masks or other special precautions.

Doris Rolark blew air kisses to her maskwearing grandchildren and greatgrandchildren when they dropped off presents on her 78th birthday last month. She resumed hugs last week after the CDC guidelines were announced.

"It was great. I'm getting excited to see the rest of them," says the Middletown, Ohio, woman, who has three grandchildren and 16 greatgrandkids. "I hope it's going to be better now."

Joe and Nancy Peters had one of their 11 grandchildren over to visit last week as they began "cautiously returning to normal," he says. Both retired educators in their 70s, they were used to being heavily involved with the grandchildren, all living near them in suburban Cincinnati, before the pandemic and its safety restrictions hit.

It was especially tough losing time with the youngest.









"They're 3, 4, and 5 years old and a whole year has gone," Nancy Peters says. "They've changed a lot ... and Amelia would say each day to her Mom, 'I am going to have a sleepover at Grandma's when coronavirus is over.'

"And now she isn't 3 anymore," she says.

Both Peters and Rolark have been fully vaccinated as the shot pace has picked up nationally in recent weeks, with an estimated 60% of those 65 and older getting at least one dose so far. But the CDC reports that only 10% of the population as a whole has been fully vaccinated and reminds that vulnerability increases with age. The CDC says eight of 10 people who have died in the United States from the virus were 65 or older.

Nicholson says that while some older adults are "just breaking down the door to get out" after a year of isolation, others remain apprehensive with variant strains and other unknowns ahead.

"They wonder: Is it safe?" he says.

PRESCRIPTION: CAUTION

Joaniko Kohchi, who heads the Institute for Parenting at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York, says grandparents and other family members need to be cautious as they try to return to something that passes for normalcy.

"There's going to be unquestionably a period of adjustment that will continue; planning and flexibility is really important," she says.

Also unknown: how much some older adults have been hurt not only emotionally but mentally by losing in-person contacts and other activity outside their homes for a year.





"I think seeing the same two to three people all time, it can be really tough," says Arman Ramnath, whose India-born grandmother Vijaya Ramnath, 94, has lived with his parents in Columbus, Ohio, since before he was born. "It kind of ages you faster."

While many grandparents are keeping in touch by phone, text and video chats, others lack access or ability to use such technology. A study conducted last September and October found resilience among older Americans, but also signs of trouble, with many reporting decreased happiness and some reporting increased loneliness and depression heading into winter.

During good weather, the Peterses had gone on and received a lot of driveway visits, including a driveway one-person dance recital for them by a granddaughter. They went to dozens of outdoor events such as baseball and soccer games last year, but couldn't attend the grandkids' indoor basketball games.

"It's been pretty tough," says Joe Peters, who recounts gym-hopping Saturdays in previous years when they hit as many as eight kids' basketball games in a day.

Many grandparents actively help out their children by baby-sitting and school or daycare pickups, so pandemic barriers against that have made for "a lose-lose" situation for families, Nicholson says.

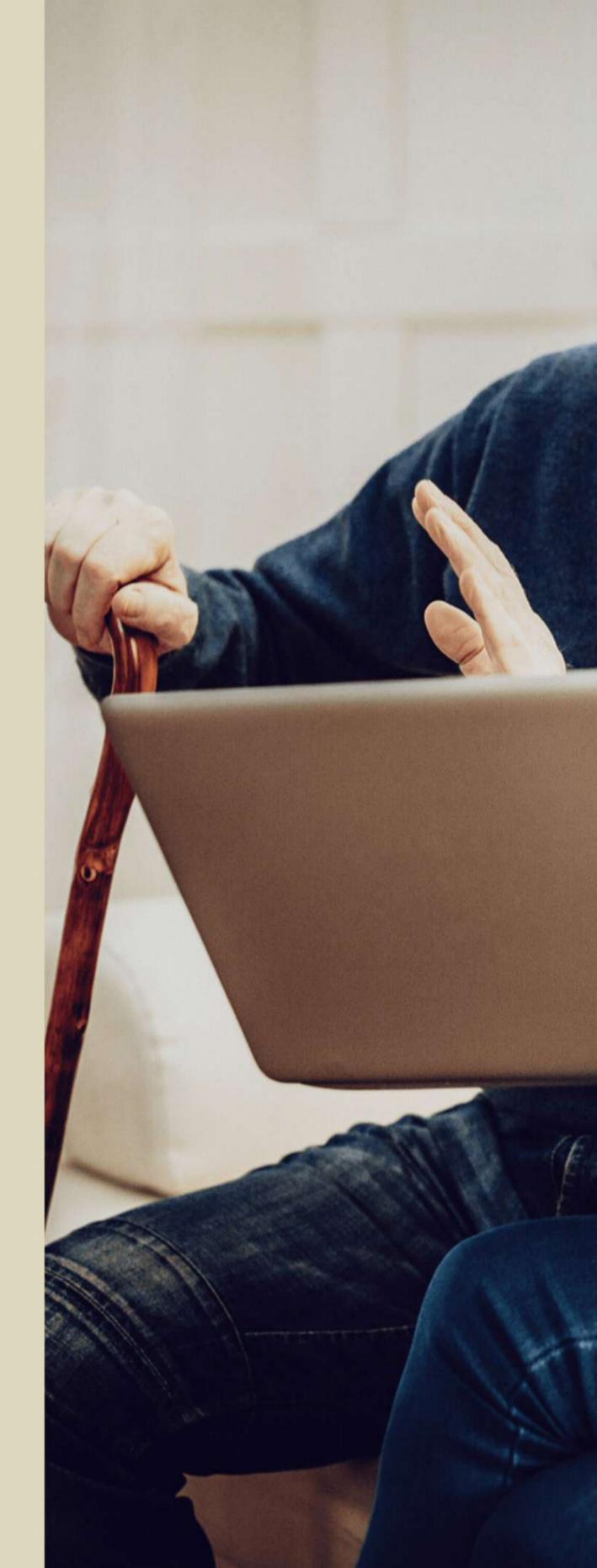
Rolark, of Middletown, Ohio, has always been active with the offspring. She raised three children as a divorced single woman, and two of her great-grandchildren lived with her through high school. Her progeny have been paying her back during the pandemic for all those years of her support when she was also working a full-time office job at a steelmaking company.

"I couldn't have made it without them," says Rolark, who says great-grandson Amarius Gates kept her driveway shoveled during the winter, while granddaughter Davonne Calhoun and others in her large family have run errands and helped her with house chores.

HOUSEHOLDS, FACILITIES STRUGGLE

Nursing homes and other assisted-care facilities, too, have faced challenges to keep grandparents connected as many cut off contact visits because of concerns about virus spread. "It's been lonely," says Deb McGlinch, a patient in Versailles Rehabilitation & Health Center in western Ohio.

She was used to frequent visits from her granddaughter, Kortaney Cattell, 20, to play card games such as Uno with her. She has been able to do video chats with Kortaney and seven other grandchildren, but has missed their card games. They recently resumed friendly competition at a distance with a virtual slot machine game.









McGlinch says that instead of just trading small talk by phone, now "we can have fun."

One in 10 U.S. grandparents now live in the same household with at least one grandchild. In some Asian cultures, that has long been common. In Ramnath's family, his India-born maternal grandmother, Saroja Seetharaman, rotates among her three children and their six grandchildren, in Dallas, Atlanta and his Columbus home.

Ramanth, 27, has been nervous about getting near his older grandmother, Vijaya, especially whenever he has just returned from Washington, where he is a Georgetown University Law School student. He is studying remotely but sometimes must visit school such as to pick up books.

Like the grandparents who lament time lost with their growing grandchildren, grandchildren can feel badly about missed opportunities with their aging loved ones.

Ramanth would have liked to have spent time with her in the past year learning more about the family's history. She once met Mohandas K. Gandhi, India's late famed leader and proponent of nonviolence. She attended a tea hosted by Queen Elizabeth II. And he's seen photos of her late husband, a high-ranking Indian Navy officer, with the late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

"This is a time when I wish I could talk to her more about her life, as she's getting older," says Ramanth, who hopes to have more contact soon now that she's been fully vaccinated. "At times it can be kind of sad. You don't get to spend as much time with someone even if they're living with you."





'NICE TO BE TOUCHED': BOUTIQUE STRETCHING THRIVES AMID COVID

Pandemic-weary Americans starved for human interaction and physical touch are taking advantage of a growing wellness option once reserved for Hollywood actors, rock stars and elite athletes: boutique stretching.

"It's like a workout, but you feel way more flexible," a masked Kelly O'Neal, 51, said as her leg was being pulled across her body during a recent session at a newly opened StretchLab studio in Centerville. "I get plenty done after I get done here because you just feel like you've warmed up really well." She said her legs and feet ache after her shift at a grocery store in southwest Ohio — often plus overtime because of COVID-19 demands.

Others cite some intangibles offered by assisted stretching during the coronavirus.

"It's really nice to be touched. It is," said Laura Collins, 39, who visits a StretchLab near her home in White Plains, New York, twice a week. "We're being deprived of social interaction, we're being deprived of hugs and people who are familiar, and ... it's just so comfortable being there."

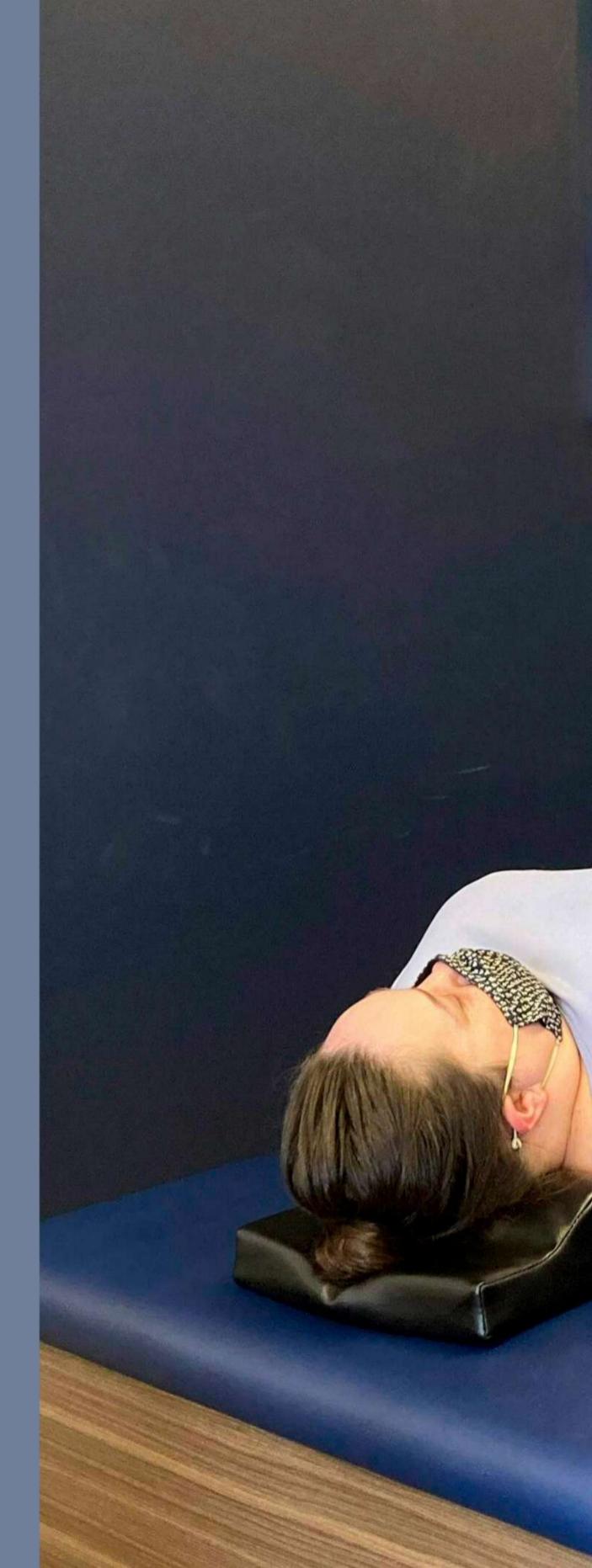
Even before the pandemic, assisted stretching studios — with names such as Stretch Zone, Stretch Pro, LYMBR and Stretch(asterisk)d — often featured just eight or 10 widely spaced tables in a shared area they say is conducive to good air circulation.

Kory Floyd, a professor of communication and psychology at the University of Arizona, said activities that provide social interaction and some relief for "skin hunger" can help people manage stress better. A lack of casual touch — holding hands, hugging, putting one's arm around somebody, shaking hands — can have a significant negative impact, Floyd said.

Touch, he said, "is beneficial even when we don't have a solid, strong emotional connection to the other person" — which can be the case with assisted stretching. "We may not even know the other person, and yet we can still benefit in part from just the attention and the sense of connection that we have, but also from the touch itself."

Loren Anthes, who follows the healthcare industry as a researcher at the Cleveland-based Center for Community Solutions, said stretch studios appear to be using a franchise model to offer lower prices for services resembling physical therapy and massage but delivered without the overhead and certifications required of skilled nursing facilities or hospitals.

He said the concept sounds like a hybrid between recreational fitness and insurancecovered wellness services.









"The essential question we have to ask ourselves related to any of these organizations that spring up is are they causing folks harm," he said. "And as long as they're not, or purporting themselves to be licensed medical professionals, then I don't see much of a distinction between what they're doing and offering a gym membership or a Pilates class or anything like that."

Desperation for physical touch and socialization during COVID-19 lockdowns came just as the stretching industry was already transitioning from an elite service centered in places like New York, Miami and Los Angeles to a retail model, said Vanessa Chu, who co-founded Stretch(asterisk)d in New York City three years ago.

"Our goal has always been to make it highly accessible to people — accessible from a price standpoint, from a location standpoint," Chu said. That includes taking some activities and training online.

Another business, Stretch Society, with two locations in Georgia, has added one-on-one stretching to its Stick Stretch classes and other offerings, according to its website.

Beth McGroarty, vice president for research at the non-profit Global Wellness Institute, said growing interest in stretch coincides with a new focus in the fitness world on recovery rather than just activity.

"Stretch was definitely a trend going into COVID and probably got ramped up because of it," she said, noting that ClassPass found that stretch classes were among the most popular online during COVID. "I mean it's ancient, a lot of this stuff. It's just getting an update."





Every company is a little different, but the technique generally involves a trained practitioner elongating a client's muscles to somewhere past where they could get them on their own, and the client offering resistance for a period of time.

Sessions in Centerville range from \$49 for a 25-minute stretch to \$95 for a 50-minute stretch. Four-, eight- and 12-month packages are also available, as are family plans and group stretches.

No accreditation is yet available for stretch technicians. Stretch companies typically require a certification and experience in another bodywork field, plus additional training in their particular method.

Janna Proctor, who owns the franchise in Centerville, said the studio's recent opening attracted practitioners hurt by the economic impacts of virus restrictions.

"We had 40, 50 qualified candidates apply," she said. "Because PTAs (physical therapy assistants), personal trainers, massage therapists, all the backgrounds we were looking for — that prior knowledge — they were all out of work."

Nationally, 1.4 million fitness industry employees lost jobs as a result of the coronavirus pandemic as of Dec. 31, according to statistics from the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association. Amid revenue losses of over \$20.4 billion industrywide, more than 17% of health clubs, gyms and studios have permanently closed.

Chu said Stretch(asterisk)d is training hundreds of people around the country through courses that moved online during the coronavirus.

"It's going to be coming to a lot of different markets now," she said.





SCHOOL SURVEY SHOWS 'CRITICAL GAPS' FOR IN-PERSON LEARNING

Nearly half of U.S. elementary schools were open for full-time classroom learning as of last month, but the share of students with inperson instruction has varied greatly by region and by race, with most nonwhite students taught entirely online, according to a Biden administration survey.

For the White House, the results of the national survey released this week mark the starting line for President Joe Biden's pledge to have most K-8 schools open full time in his first 100 days in office. But they also show that he never had far to go to meet that goal.

Among schools that enroll fourth graders, 47% offered full-time classroom learning in February, while for schools that teach eighth-graders, the figure was 46%. The results suggested that at least some students weren't opting in.

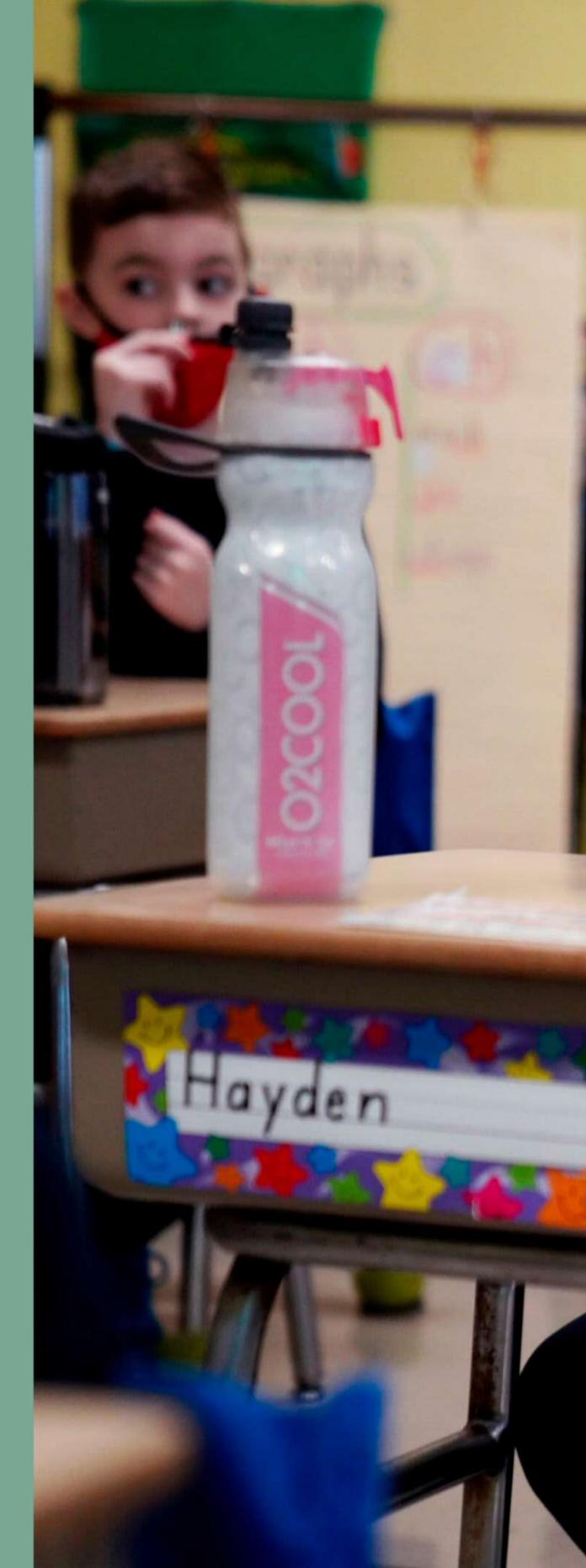
In total, about 76% of elementary and middle schools were open for in-person or hybrid learning, according to the survey, while 24% offered remote learning only. The percentage of students spending at least some time in the classroom has probably increased since February, when coronavirus rates were just coming down from a national surge.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said the findings, while encouraging, also showed "critical gaps" for in-person learning, especially for students of color.

"While schools continue to show us what's possible as they work to open their doors and meet students' needs, we know that we still have a lot of ground to go," Cardona said. "We owe it to our students — especially students in underserved communities and students with disabilities — to get all our schools opened safely and to meet the social, emotional, mental health and academic needs of all students."

Before Wednesday's school reopening summit, the administration announced it was releasing \$81 billion in education assistance from the \$1.9 trillion virus relief bill.

The survey findings establish a baseline data set that the administration plans to update each month to show how many U.S. schools are teaching in-person, online or through a combination. The government did not previously collect such information.









The findings are based on a survey of 3,500 public schools whose student bodies include fourth graders, along with 3,500 schools that serve eighth graders. Forty-four states agreed to participate; six states declined. The survey asked schools about their teaching methods as of February but gathered other data as of January.

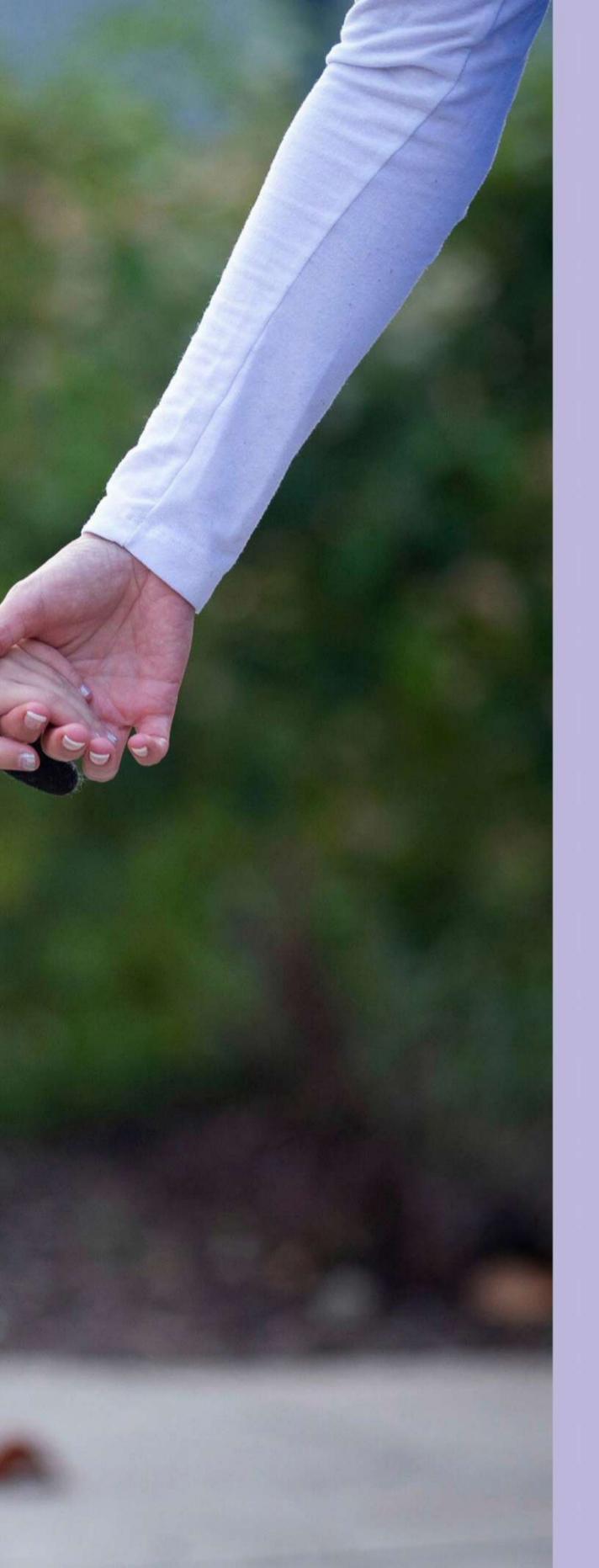
The survey casts new light on a period of particularly bitter debate in the school reopening process. In January, officials in California, Chicago and other places were in stalemates with teachers over reopening plans,. Vaccinations were often a sticking point.

Since January, the push to reopen has gained steam in many areas. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a road map to reopening in February. This month, the CDC relaxed guidelines around social distancing in schools. Under pressure from Biden, dozens of states are now focusing on giving COVID-19 vaccines to teachers and other school staff.

As more schools invite students back to the classroom, many parents are conflicted, according to a poll from The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It found that a majority of parents are at least somewhat concerned that in-person instruction will lead to more people being infected, but a slightly larger share is at least somewhat concerned that students will face setbacks in school because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to tracking school teaching methods, the federal survey also tracks how many students have enrolled in each type of learning.





In January, the survey found, 38% of fourth graders enrolled in full-time, in-person learning, compared with 28% of eighth graders. Larger shares of students were entirely remote, with 43% of fourth graders and 48% of eighth graders learning away from school. It was not clear what share was learning online by choice and how many students were in schools without in-person options.

There were stark differences based on where students live, reflecting the regional battles that have played out as cities debate how and when to reopen schools.

In the South and Midwest, where schools were the quickest to reopen, just under 40% of eighth grade students were enrolled full time in classroom instruction in January. In the West and Northeast, the figure was about 10%.

Across all regions, students in rural areas and towns were far more likely to be back in the classroom full time compared with students in cities and suburbs.

In a further illustration of the pandemic's uneven impact, the survey found striking differences based on students' race. Among fourth graders, almost half of white students were learning fully in-person, with just over one-quarter learning online. Among Black and Hispanic students, nearly 60% were learning entirely remotely.

The difference was even wider among students of Asian descent, with 68% remote and just 15% attending fully in-person.

Similar disparities have been uncovered in many cities, raising alarms among education advocates who fear the pandemic is

worsening racial inequities in education. The administration has pledged to confront racial gaps in education and is urging schools to prioritize the issue as they spend the billions in recently approved relief aid.

As of January, the survey also found that students with disabilities and those who are learning English were not being brought back to the classroom at significantly higher rates than other students. Just 42% of those with disabilities and 34% learning English were enrolled in full-time classroom learning, compared with 38% of all students.

Even so, more than 40% of schools reported on the survey that they were giving priority to students with disabilities, who often have more difficulty with remote learning.

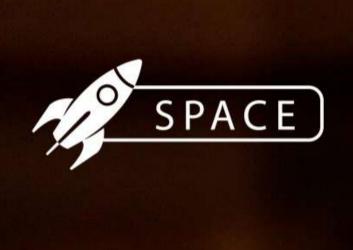
Among students learning online, the amount of time spent with a live teacher also varied greatly, the survey found. Roughly one-third of schools offered more than five hours a day of live instruction, but another third offered two hours or less. Among schools serving eighth graders, 10% were offering no live instruction at all.

The survey does not include high schools, which weren't included in Biden's reopening promise and pose additional challenges as they work to reopen. Younger children are less likely to get seriously ill from the coronavirus, and education experts say they have the greatest need for inperson learning.

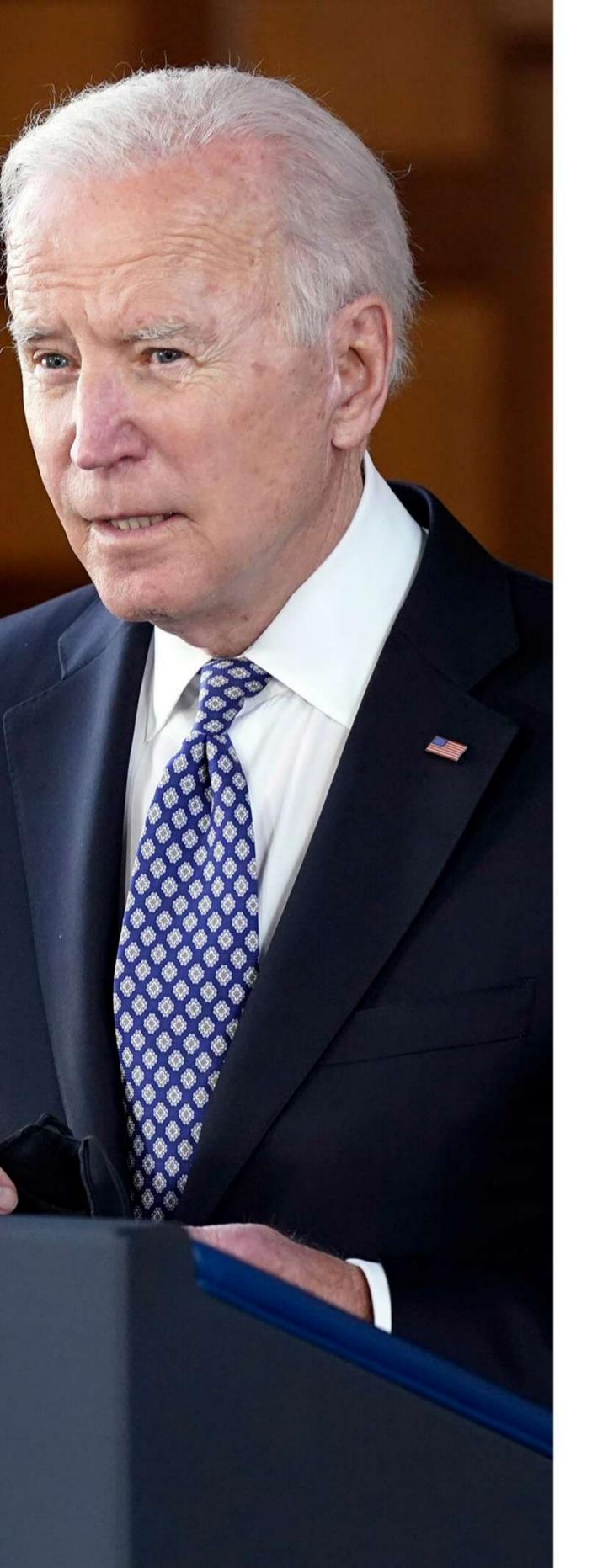
The Education Department said it will issue updated data from the survey each month through July. The information is published on a dashboard on the agency's website.











FORMER SENATOR WHO FLEW IN SPACE TO LEAD NASA

President Joe Biden has chosen a former senator from Florida who flew on the space shuttle right before the Challenger accident to lead NASA.

Biden on Friday announced his intent to nominate Bill Nelson as the space agency's administrator.

If confirmed by the Senate, Nelson will become NASA's 14th administrator, succeeding another former member of Congress, Jim Bridenstine, a Republican from Oklahoma. Nelson currently serves on the NASA Advisory Council.

Nelson promised, if confirmed, to "help lead NASA into an exciting future of possibilities." The space agency is working to send astronauts back to the moon this decade and counting more than ever on private U.S. companies and even other countries to get that job — and others — done.

"Its workforce radiates optimism, ingenuity and a can-do spirit," Nelson said in a statement. "The NASA team continues to achieve the seemingly impossible as we venture into the cosmos."

Nelson, 78, grew up near Cape Canaveral and was serving as a Democratic congressman when he launched aboard space shuttle Columbia on Jan. 12, 1986. His commander was Charles Bolden Jr., who later served as NASA administrator under President Barack Obama — at Nelson's urging.

Just 10 days after their flight ended, Challenger was destroyed shortly after liftoff and all seven astronauts were killed.

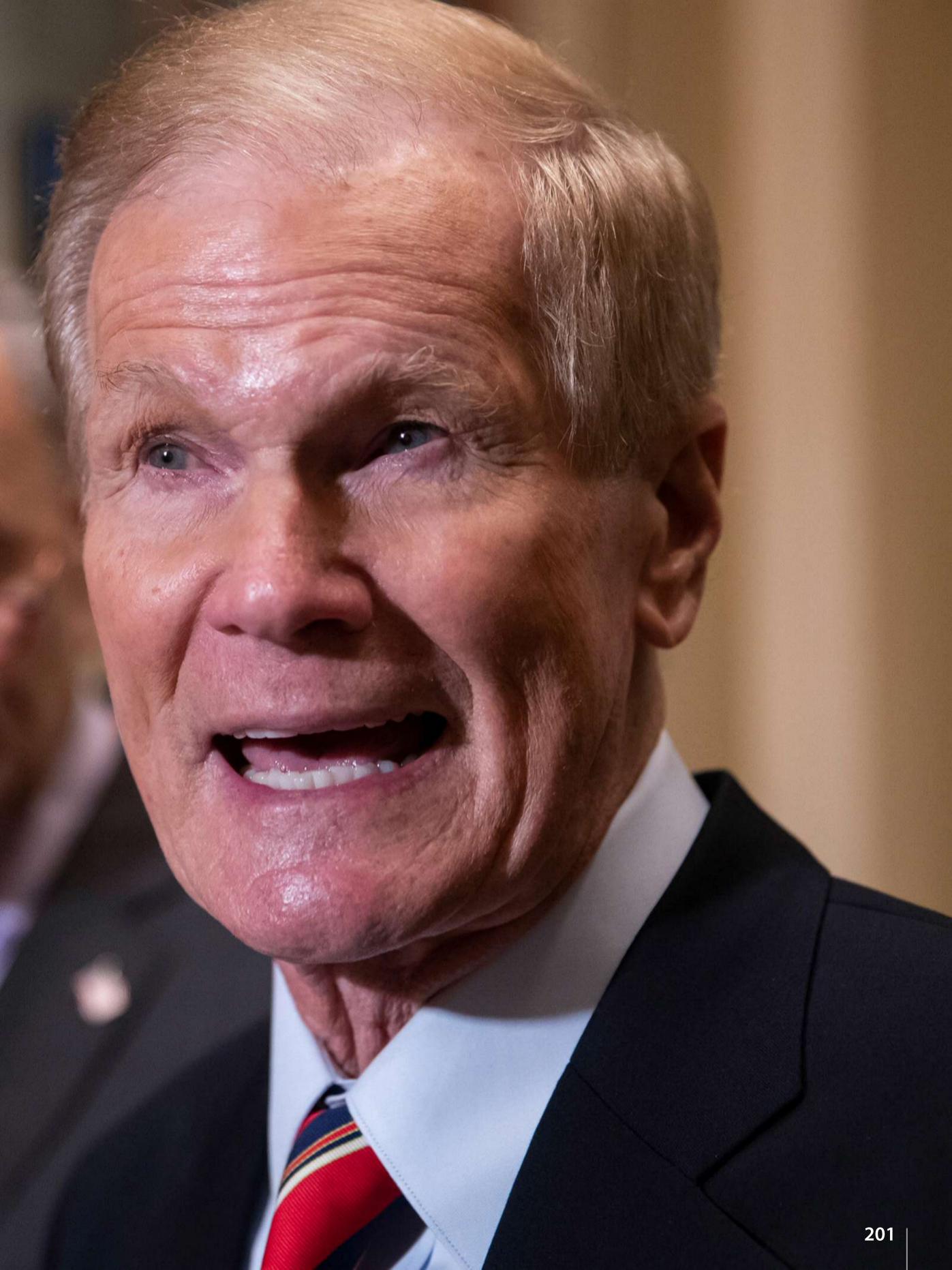
Nelson, who has a law degree and is a former captain in the U.S. Army Reserve, served six terms in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1979 to 1991. He was elected in 2000 to the Senate, where he served until his defeat in 2018 by former Florida Gov. Rick Scott.

In 2017, Nelson criticized Bridenstine's nomination by President Donald Trump, saying the leader of NASA shouldn't be political but rather nonpartisan.

Bridenstine instead offered kind praise Friday and urged Nelson's confirmation "without delay."

In a statement, Bridenstine said Nelson has the political clout to deal with both the White House









and Congress, and the diplomatic skills to lead an international effort to send astronauts back to the moon and on to Mars. He also has "the influence to deliver strong budgets for NASA."

Members of Congress already are voicing support for Nelson.

"There has been no greater champion, not just for Florida's space industry, but for the space program as a whole than Bill," Sen.

Marco Rubio, R-Florida, said in a statement.

"His nomination gives me confidence that the Biden administration finally understands the importance of the Artemis (moon landing) program, and the necessity of winning the 21st century space race."

This is a critical time for NASA as momentum accelerates in the commercial space program.

SpaceX is about to launch its third flight of astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA; Boeing is expected to begin making crew deliveries later this year. Space station supply runs, meanwhile, have been handled by private companies under contract to NASA for nearly a decade.

At the same time, NASA is teaming up with private companies to launch experiments and equipment to the moon, and also lunar landers that would deliver astronauts to the surface.

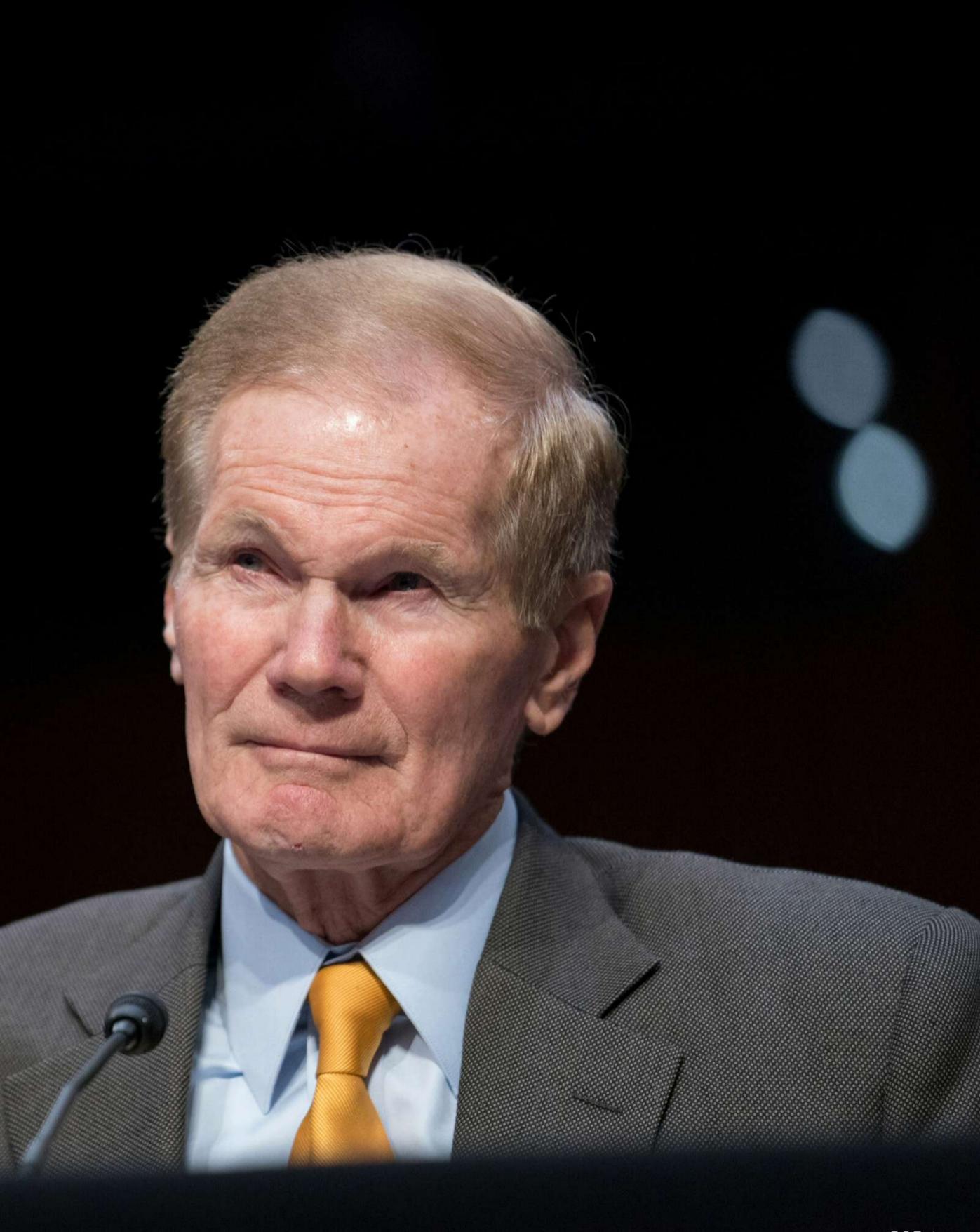
Just Thursday, NASA conducted a successful test firing of the core stage of its SLS moon rocket — the Space Launch System.

The new moonshot program is named Artemis after the twin sister of Apollo, and intends to include a woman on its first moon landing.

Some space observers had hoped to see the first woman at NASA's helm.

"It's time for a female administrator. Plenty of qualified candidates," retired space shuttle director and program manager Wayne Hale tweeted earlier this month. He is also a member of the NASA Advisory Council.

One of the few women to have served as NASA's deputy administrator, Lori Garver, noted in a tweet Thursday: "The good-ole-boy network is strong." She's rooting for former space shuttle commander Pam Melroy for the No. 2 spot.



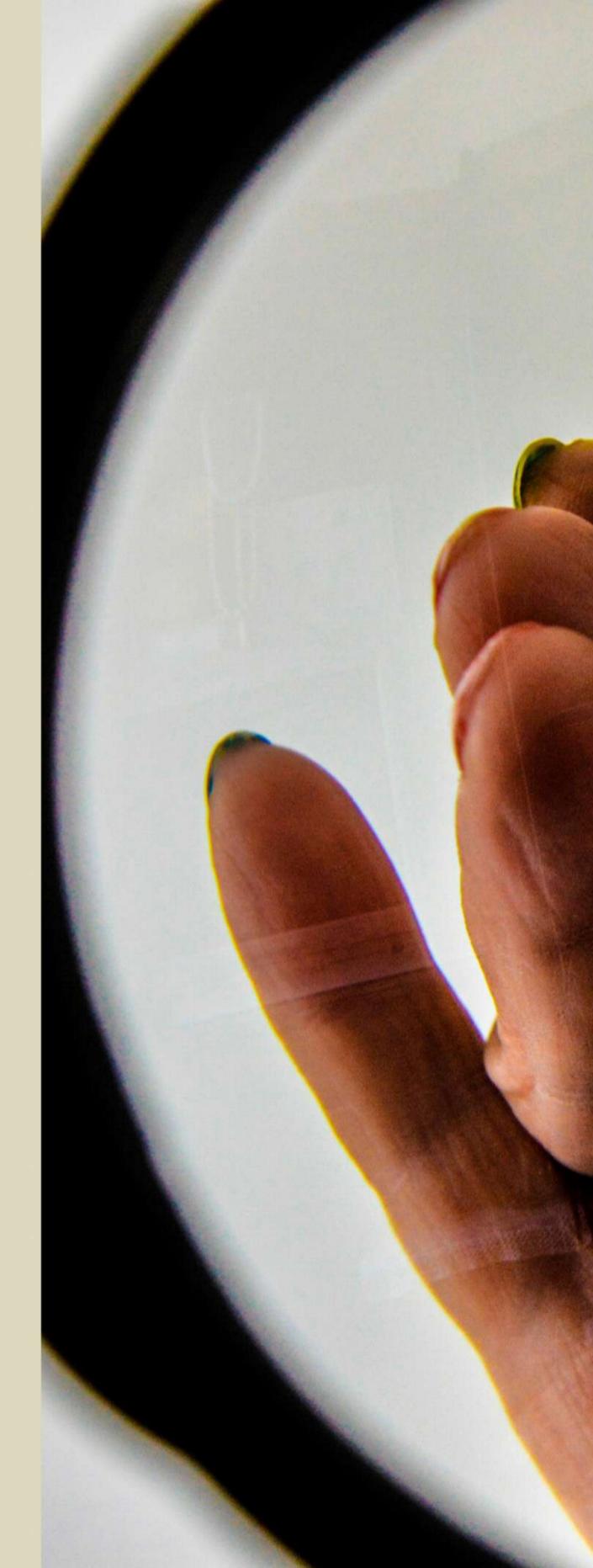
TWITTER TO ESTABLISH LEGAL ENTITY IN TURKEY, COMPLY WITH LAW

Twitter has announced it will establish a legal entity in Turkey in order to continue operating in the country, which passed a controversial social media law last year.

In a statement, the social media company said it had reviewed the amended internet law and made the decision to comply with, it but promised to continue "defending open, public conversation and ensuring our service is available to people everywhere."

Turkey slapped advertising bans on Twitter,
Periscope and Pinterest in January. Those bans
were the next step in a series of measures to
force social media companies to maintain
legal representatives in Turkey to manage
content complaints.

Companies with more than 1 million users that refuse to designate an official representative are subjected to fines, followed by advertising





bans. The next penalty would be bandwidth reductions that would make their platforms too slow to use.

Human rights and media freedom groups say the law amounts to censorship and violates the rights to privacy and access to information.

Under the law, local representatives of social media companies are responsible for answering individual requests to take down content violating privacy and personal rights within 48 hours or to provide grounds for rejection. The company would be held liable for damages if the content is not removed or blocked within 24 hours.

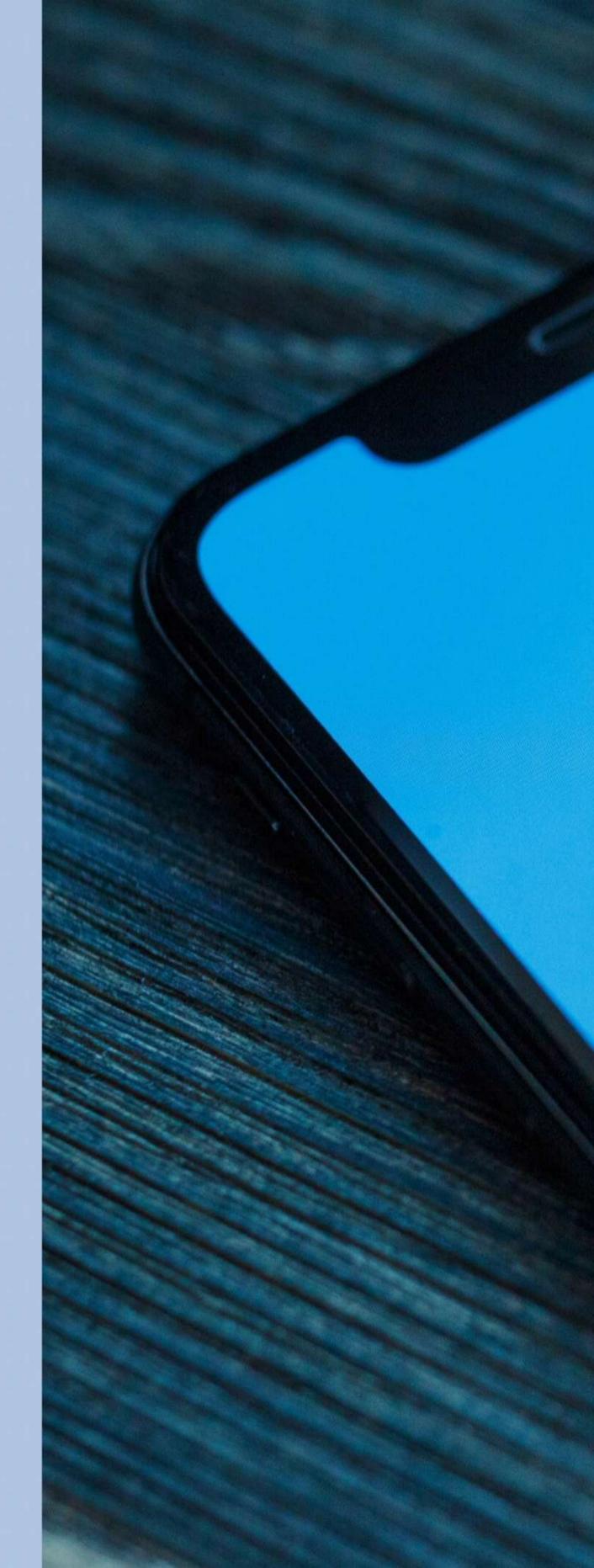
The law also requires social media data to be stored in Turkey, raising concerns in a country where the government has a track record of clamping down on free speech.

"We remain committed to protecting the voices and data of people in Turkey who use Twitter. We will continue to be transparent about how we handle requests from government and law enforcement," Twitter said.

Turkey's legal demands for content removal make up 31 percent of all requests globally, according to Twitter. The country has made some 45,800 demands and Twitter says it complied with about a third.

The government insists the legislation is needed to combat cybercrime and to protect the rights of Turkish social media users.

According to the Freedom of Expression Association, as of October 2020, more than 450,000 domains, 120,000 links and 42,000 tweets were blocked in Turkey.







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