

Financial Daily Dose 3.31.2020 | Top Story: US retail giants furlough hundreds of thousands of workers as locations remain closed

Macy's announced on Monday that it will furlough most of its nearly 130,000 workers (at its Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Bluemercury retail locations) starting this week as its stores remained shuttered due to the pandemic. The company will "continue to pay health benefits and cover 100% of premiums at least through May" Gap and Kohl's revealed similar measures this week, too – WSJ and NYTimes and Bloomberg

Markets continued their tentative rebound on Monday, with the S&P 500 up more than 3% thanks to a good showing from a handful of healthcare companies. Still, relatively light trading seems to suggest that caution is still the name of the game – NYTimes and WSJ

A COVID-19 Relief Bill #4 is in the works, even as the ink dries on the \$2.2 trillion 3rd effort. Government agencies have already notified the White House of more than \$600 billion in funding requests, and state and local government aid and additional individual payments are apparently on the table as well – Bloomberg and WSJ

Even as businesses all across America fear for the worst during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, the bankruptcy and restructuring expert industry is bracing for boom times, "anticipating that companies will not be able to make good on their commitments on time and may seek to negotiate new terms with lenders, vendors, employees, and other parties" – NYTimes

More on our ongoing look at the unprecedented situation facing Chair Powell and the Federal Reserve, which have acted with uncharacteristic alacrity in an effort to "meet the dislocation the coronavirus pandemic unleashed on the economy" – WSJ

Facebook, continuing its efforts to change the narrative, is doling out \$100 million to local news outlets and marketing efforts "in response to the coronavirus-prompted economic downturn, which has caused advertising to plummet and has threatened media industry revenues" – NYTimes

The Department of Justice has opened a probe into the stock trades of at least one of the members of Congress accused of making big market moves "after lawmakers attended sensitive, closed-door briefings about

the threat of the new disease—weeks before the outbreak sent the stock market plummeting” – WSJ and Bloomberg

We’re keeping a careful eye on insurance companies’ response to the COVID-19 outbreak. While many standard policies contain exclusions for “claims stemming from viruses,” mounting pressure from state governments and insureds alike is forcing the industry to at least consider some changes – WSJ

NY AG Letitia James has opened a timely probe into videoconferencing giant Zoom’s “data privacy and security practices,” and pressing the company on what it’s done to address “security flaws such as vulnerabilities ‘that could enable malicious third parties to, among other things, gain surreptitious access to consumer webcams’” – NYTimes

New data from Goldman Sachs shows that a rising number of big US firms are “rein[ing] in” planned buybacks in an effort to conserve cash during this time of reduced cash flows – Bloomberg

If you thought Juul and its e-cig ilk had it bad here in the States, consider how they’re being received by the rest of the world’s regulators – NYTimes

BNY Mellon has named interim CEO Todd Gibbons as the bank’s permanent chief executive. Gibbons assumed the role last October after Charles Scharf left the bank to take over as president and CEO at Wells Fargo – WSJ

I’m not saying that *all* Brits are doing lockdown better than we are. But *this* family certainly is. Bonus points for the tux, no question – BBC

Stay safe,

MDR