



Friday, December 4, 2020

Week in Review, December 4, 2020

Special Focus: Working Our Way Out

This week, with hopeful news on vaccinations and the election uncertainty mostly behind us, the Dow finished November with its largest monthly gain since 1987. ([MarketWatch](#)) As cases surge throughout the U.S., cell phone data shows that Americans did travel in high numbers for the Thanksgiving holiday. ([NBC News](#)) It remains to be seen if the worst of our economy malaise is over. Data released this week show a slowing jobs recovery. U.S. unemployment claims fell last week, notching the lowest claim level since the pandemic began, but they still represent a higher level than any claims prior to 2020 ([WSJ](#)). The trend may not mean that unemployment has leveled off: the numbers could be lower due to the Thanksgiving holiday, and may miss the 'real' unemployment levels of Americans who have dropped out of the labor market. Today, the Labor Department released the November jobs report, showing that 245,000 jobs were added. These numbers, however, represent the fifth straight month of smaller jobs gains. Unemployment remains at 6.7%. ([NY Times](#)) With hopes of additional stimulus coming from Congress, markets ended the week in positive territory, with the Dow up 0.3%, the S&P 500 gained 1.0%, and the Nasdaq up 2.3%.

Speaking of jobs, recent research says that 30 million Americans have the skills to earn 70% more. Why aren't these people moving into higher-paying jobs that match their skill sets? Because 74% of new jobs posted require a college degree, leaving 2 out of every 3 workers in the U.S. ineligible for consideration. For people of color, the exclusion is even worse: screening by college degree excludes 76% of Black workers and 83% of Latinx workers. ([NY Times](#)) Given that the "college-degree filter" grants greater upward mobility to middle and high income jobs, is it any wonder that Black parents take on great amounts of loan debt to put their children through college? For the first time, the U.S. Department of Education has released the debt levels of parents using federal loan programs. Topping the list of indebted parents are historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and small arts colleges. At many schools, parents are borrowing nearly \$100,000 (or more in the case of Spellman College, an all-women's HBCU) to foot the portion of tuition not covered by financial aid and student loans. ([WSJ](#))

While Congress continues to negotiate the size of the latest coronavirus relief package, millions of unemployed Americans are at risk for eviction at the end of this month. We hope they consider programs to re-skill workers and offer employers incentives to remove arbitrary degree requirements from skilled position postings. Giving more Americans the opportunity to have higher-paying work means more Americans are likely to be able to work remotely, and less likely to contract Covid-19 from work-related activity. Sheltering more folks from the economic devastation of the coronavirus helps our public health efforts and the resiliency of our economy.

We also hope Congress provides ways to relieve the stress working parents feel as they attempt to work and supervise remote learning. Four times as many women left the workforce in September than men due to lack of child care and increased responsibilities related to remote learning. ([American Progress](#)) As New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has discovered, public opinion is shifting away from closing schools indefinitely, particularly for younger children who seem to be less likely to be impacted by the virus, and who have the greatest need for in-person learning to serve their education. ([NY Times](#)) In California, the State is defending itself against a lawsuit that alleges that remote learning is denying equal access to education for low-income students and students of color. ([KQED](#)) The pandemic continues to lay bare our differing fortunes and opportunity, but the steady light being shone on inequity may finally force creative, collective action to combat these issues. Here's to working our way out.

A quick note to our clients, the end of the year is quickly approaching. If you haven't already, please inform us of your charitable stock donations as soon as possible, and as always, reach out to us with any questions or commentary. Thanks!

Weekend Reads

RBC [Global Insight Weekly December 3, 2020](#)

RBC [Global Insight Monthly November 2020](#)

[Crisis Charitable Commitment 2020](#)

Carbon Tracker [Nothing to Lose But Your Chains](#) (attached)

The Economist [Compounding inequality - India's super-rich are getting much richer](#)

NY Times [The Rich Kids Who Want to Tear Down Capitalism](#)

NY Times [Time to Upgrade Your Mask?](#)

NY Times [G.M. Drops Its Support for Trump Climate Rollbacks and Aligns With Biden](#)

WSJ [NYC Students Voice Concerns Over Low Diversity in Selective School](#)

WSJ [Hong Kong Activist Joshua Wong Jailed for More Than a Year Over 2019 Protest](#)

WSJ [Can President Trump Pardon Himself and His Family?](#)

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