



Friday, February 19, 2021

Week in Review, February 19, 2021

Special Focus: When You're Without Power in Bone-Chilling Cold, Cancun is Calling

The U.S. Commerce Department report showed retail and food services sales for January 2021 were \$568 billion, an increase of 5.3%, well ahead of the 1.2% expectation ([USCB](#)). The jump in consumer spending was the result of millions of Americans spending their stimulus checks ([CNBC](#)). Knowing stimulus checks can help revive spending, President Biden is focused on keeping in that element in his stimulus plan. The minutes of the Federal Reserve's January meeting showed the U.S. economy and job growth had slowed, demonstrating the ongoing health crisis still poses considerable risks to the economy ([Bloomberg](#)). Americans continue to lose jobs nearly a year after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. New jobless benefit claims increased to a four-week high of 861,000 in the week ending February 13 ([DOL](#), [MarketWatch](#)). Inflation will most likely move higher in the next year before the U.S. recovers from its COVID-induced recession, which is potentially concerning to families and investors ([MarketWatch](#)). Volatility returned to the mortgage market this week, as long-term interest rates rose slightly, though they remain at historic lows ([AP](#)). The latest Household Debt and Credit report showed a 1.4% increase in total household debt in the fourth quarter of 2020, much of which was due to a steep increase in mortgage originations. The largest component of the household debt, mortgage balances, surpassed \$10 trillion for the first time in 2020, while credit card balances had the lowest yearly decline in more than 20 years ([NY Fed](#)). For the week, markets ended with the S&P 500 down 0.7%, the DJIA up 0.1%, and the NASDAQ down 1.6%.

Bill Gates' newly published book, 'How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need' sets out a wide-ranging, practical- and accessible- plan for how the world can get to zero carbon emissions in time to avoid a climate catastrophe. Is he the right messenger for solving the climate crisis? Watch the 60 Minutes interview [here](#). ([FT](#), [NY Times](#))

Turning to the electricity disaster in Texas, a top Republican federal energy regulator criticized his party for blaming the Texas power crisis on frozen wind turbines. He was demoted as [FERC](#) chairman by the previous White House administration in November after promoting support for carbon pricing and clean energy ([WE](#)). A video of a helicopter purportedly de-icing a wind turbine with chemicals went viral and was widely distributed by Republican officials, [even though](#) the video is from 2014 in Sweden and actually depicts hot water de-icing the turbine. While his Texan constituents froze in the bitter cold and millions remained without electricity, a Senator and his family flew to Cancun for some R & R ([The Guardian](#)). As Californians, we know all too well the difficult and catastrophic outcomes can be from chronic underfunding and poor grid maintenance. We hope regulators and legislators look for better ways to ensure the resiliency of the power grid.

Our thoughts are with the people who are suffering through this.

Fair Fight Action founder and former Democratic nominee for governor of Georgia, Stacey Abrams, and her former campaign manager, Lauren Groh-Wargo, offered their opinion in the NY Times on replicating the steps they took to achieve Georgia's blue victory in other states ([NY Times](#)).

EarthRights International co-founder and 1999 Goldman Environmental Prize recipient, Ka Hsaw Wa was featured in this month's Prize Winners Today. Read Ka Hsaw Wa's story [here](#) and learn how the Prize motivated him to double down on his commitment to defending environmental and human rights.

As always, please reach out to us with any market questions or commentary.

Weekend Reads

RBC [Global Insight Monthly February 2021](#)

RBC [Global Insight Weekly February 18, 2021](#)

RBC [Corporate bonds and ESG](#)

RBC [The Current Account – Chart of the day](#)

Bloomberg [How the warming arctic helped drive a deep freeze into Texas](#)

Bloomberg [Ford Going Almost Entirely Electric By End Of This Decade In Europe](#)

CSIS [Geo-economics without Fossil Fuels](#)

CNN [Citibank can't get back \\$500 million it wired by mistake, judge rules](#)

CTV News [Coca-Cola testing its first paper bottle prototype](#)

GNN [The First Farmer in the U.S. to Sequester Carbon for Cash in Private Marketplace Earns \\$115,000 For His Planting Strategy](#)

Grist [Oil companies don't want to be known for oil anymore](#)

NY Post [SpaceX valuation reportedly surges to \\$74B in \\$420-a-share fundraise](#)

NY Times [The Auto Industry Bets Its Future on Batteries](#)

NY Times [The Economic Case for Regulating Social Media](#)

NY Times [The Carlyle Group ties a \\$4.1 billion credit line to board diversity](#)

Unilad [The Empire State Building Is Now Entirely Powered By Wind](#)

Vox [8 first-term House members explain how they plan to prioritize racial justice](#)

WSJ [KKR Executive's Push to Spread Employee Stock Ownership Begins to Gain Traction](#)

Weekend Podcast

RBC [Diversity In/Action: Improving Inclusivity in the Tech Sector](#)

Recommended Events

Confluence Philanthropy [RESET 2021 - Advisors Forum & Climate Solutions Summit](#)
Virtual | March 2-4

Catalyst [2021 Catalyst Award Program and Celebration](#)
Virtual | March 17-18

Written by Thomas Van Dyck, Catherine Chen, and Gwenne Bacani

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