

Many Investors Seeing Similarities To 1999

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — It's starting to feel like a 1999 flashback. Internet companies — some of them profitable, some not — sense a golden opportunity and are lining up to go public this year. But here's something to keep in mind as the latest case of Internet fever grips Wall Street: It's still nowhere close to the giddy days of the dot-com boom, when investors bought stocks as impulsively as lottery tickets. Technology stocks today are the cheapest in more than nine years, at least judging by one benchmark for appraising companies.

This year could yield the most initial public offerings of technology stocks since 2000. But the venture capitalists who bankroll high-tech startups aren't pouring money into the Internet like they once did. And even rapidly growing Internet companies LinkedIn Corp. and Pandora Media Inc. have lost some of their luster after dazzling investors when they went public in recent weeks.

All those factors signal that cooler heads are prevailing, especially with the global economy on shaky ground.

So far this year, 28 of the 74 IPOs completed in the U.S. have been by technology companies, according to IPO investment advisory firm Renaissance Capital. If, as expected, another 31 tech IPOs are completed by the end this year, it will be the most from the sector since 2000.

No More Health Care Waivers After Sept. 22

WASHINGTON (AP) — Removing a potential political distraction ahead of next year's elections, the Obama administration Friday announced an early end to a health care waiver program that has come under fire from congressional Republicans.

Political considerations were "absolutely not" part of the decision, said Steve Larsen, head of a section of the Health and Human Services department that oversees President Barack Obama's health care law.

Larsen said no new applications for waivers will be considered after Sept. 22. Approvals or renewals received by the deadline will be good through 2013. Starting in 2014, the main coverage provisions of the health care law will take effect, and such waivers will no longer be needed.

The waivers address a provision of the law that phases out annual dollar limits on coverage by health insurance plans. Starting this year, plans could not impose a limit below \$750,000. But some plans, offered mainly to low-income workers, currently provide \$50,000 a year in coverage, and in certain cases much less.

Those plans would have been forced to close down or jack up premiums significantly, leaving more people uninsured.

Campaign Against Driving Ban Hits The Road

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A Saudi woman defiantly drove through the nation's capital Friday while others brazenly cruised by police patrols in the first forays of a campaign that hopes to ignite a road rebellion against the male-only driving rules in the ultraconservative kingdom.

It was a rare grass-roots challenge to the Western-backed Saudi monarchy as it tries to ride out the Arab world's wave of change, and a lesson in how the uprisings are taking root in different ways. In this case, the driver's seat was turned into a powerful platform for women's rights in a country where wives and daughters have almost no political voice.

"We've seen that change is possible," said Maha al-Qahtani, a computer specialist at Saudi's Ministry of Education. She said she drove for 45 minutes around the capital, Riyadh, with her husband in the passenger seat. "This is Saudi women saying, 'This is our time to make a change.'"

About 40 women took part in Friday's show of defiance. No arrests or violence were immediately reported, though al-Qahtani was later ticketed for driving without a license.

But the demonstration could bring difficult choices for the Saudi regime, which has so far escaped major unrest. Officials could either order a crackdown on the women or give way to the demands at the risk of angering clerics and other conservative groups.

Phil Campbells Around The World Team Up

PHIL CAMPBELL, Ala. (AP) — After the small Alabama city of Phil Campbell was ravaged in April by a tornado that killed more than two dozen people and hurt even more, a select group from around the world offered to help: men named Phil Campbell.

Phil Campbells from across the globe are converging this weekend on the hard-hit city of 1,150 for the "I'm With Phil" convention, a gathering meant to raise spirits, money and new roofs.

Phil Campbells are cleaning up storm debris, marching in a parade, donating money to build a Habitat for Humanity house, listening to country music and just showing their care.

"We're doing whatever it takes to be part of the town for a weekend," said Phil Campbell of Nottingham, England.

There's also Phil Campbell from Brooklyn, N.Y.; Phil Campbell from Juneau, Alaska; Phil Campbell from La Farge, Wis.; Phil Campbell from Austin, Texas; Phil Campbell from Glasgow, Scotland; Phil Campbell from Palo Alto, Calif., ... you get the idea. A couple Phils from Alabama are here, and two from Australia are expected.

NTSB Checking Close Call Between Planes

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Federal officials are investigating why two commercial airplanes flew within 150 feet of each other above Fairbanks International Airport.

National Transportation Safety Board investigator Clint Johnson says one plane was forced to dive to avoid "an extremely close call" Tuesday.

Johnson tells the *Anchorage Daily News* an Era Alaska PA-31 Navajo was cleared for takeoff while a Beechcraft 1900 operated by Warbelow's Air Ventures was approaching for a landing.

He says the Navajo took off and turned right just as the Beechcraft passed below, and the Beechcraft had to dive to keep from hitting the other plane's tail.

It isn't clear how many people were aboard the two planes. A PA-31 Navajo can typically carry up to eight people and a Beechcraft 1900 can carry up to 21, including crew.

Inmate Who Sparked Manhunt Gets 43 Years

KINGMAN, Ariz. (AP) — An Arizona inmate whose escape sparked a national manhunt last summer has been sentenced to 43 years behind bars for breaking out of prison and abducting two truck drivers whose big rig was used as a getaway vehicle.

John McCluskey's sentence was handed down Friday by Mohave County Superior Court Judge Steven Conn.

A jury found McCluskey guilty of escape, kidnapping, aggravated assault and other charges in his July 30 break from a Golden Valley prison.

Authorities say McCluskey, a second inmate and an accomplice went on to kill an Oklahoma couple traveling in New Mexico. They also face charges in that state.

McCluskey and two of his fellow inmates were accused of escaping with the help of a woman who threw cutting tools onto prison grounds.

Panel Agrees On Defense Budget Blueprint

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Senate panel has completed its work on a \$683 billion defense spending blueprint that includes a compromise on the handling of Guantanamo Bay detainees.

Detainees who are al-Qaida members or engaged in attempted attacks against the United States would have to be kept in military detention.

The agreement also establishes permanent limitations on the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to foreign countries. And it permanently bars use of Pentagon funds to build facilities in the U.S. to house those detainees.

The measure, approved unanimously by the Senate Armed Services Committee, covers defense programs for the fiscal year beginning in October.

Chairman Carl Levin says the committee found savings of more than \$6 billion, including a cut of more than \$1 billion from the president's request for military construction projects.

UN Backs Gay Rights For First Time

BY FRANK JORDANS
Associated Press

GENEVA — The United Nations endorsed the rights of gay, lesbian and transgender people for the first time ever Friday, passing a resolution hailed as historic by the U.S. and other backers and decried by some African and Muslim countries.

The declaration was cautiously worded, expressing "grave concern" about abuses because of sexual orientation and commissioning a global report on discrimination against gays.

But activists called it an important shift on an issue that has divided the global body for decades, and they credited the Obama administration's push for gay rights at home and abroad.

"This represents a historic moment to highlight the human rights abuses and violations that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face around the world based solely on who they are and whom they love," U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in a statement.

Following tense negotiations, members of the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council narrowly voted in favor of the declaration put forward by South Africa, with 23 votes in favor and 19 against.

Backers included the U.S., the European Union, Brazil and other Latin American countries. Those against included Russia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Pakistan. China, Burkina Faso and Zambia abstained, Kyrgyzstan didn't vote and Libya was suspended from the rights

body earlier.

The resolution expressed "grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination, in all regions of the world, committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity."

More important, activists said, it also established a formal U.N. process to document human rights abuses against gays, including discriminatory laws and acts of violence. According to Amnesty International, consensual same-sex relations are illegal in 76 countries worldwide, while harassment and discrimination are common in many more.

"Today's resolution breaks the silence that has been maintained for far too long," said John Fisher of the gay rights advocacy group ARC International.

The White House in a statement strongly backed the declaration.

"This marks a significant milestone in the long struggle for equality, and the beginning of a universal recognition that (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons are endowed with the same inalienable rights — and entitled to the same protections — as all human beings."

The resolution calls for a panel discussion next spring with "constructive, informed and transparent dialogue on the issue of discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against" gays, lesbians and transgender people.

The prospect of having their laws scrutinized in this way went too far for many of the council's 47-member states.

"We are seriously concerned at the attempt to introduce to the United Nations some notions that have no legal foundation," said Zamir Akram, Pakistan's envoy to the U.N. in Geneva, speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Nigeria claimed the proposal went against the wishes of most Africans. A diplomat from the northwest African state of Mauritania called the resolution "an attempt to replace the natural rights of a human being with an unnatural right."

Boris Dittrich of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights program at Human Rights Watch said it was important for the U.S. and Western Europe to persuade South Africa to take the lead on the resolution so that other non-Western countries would be less able to claim the West was imposing its values.

At the same time, he noted that the U.N. has no enforcement mechanism to back up the resolution. "It's up to civil society to name and shame those governments that continue abuses," Dittrich said.

The Obama administration has been pushing for gay rights both domestically and internationally.

In March, the U.S. issued a nonbinding declaration in favor of gay rights that gained the support of more than 80 countries at the U.N. In addition, Congress recently repealed the ban on gays openly serving in the military, and the Obama administration said it would no longer defend the constitutionality of the U.S. law that bars federal recognition of same-sex marriage.

COLBERT RAPPORT



WILLIAM DESHAZER/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/MCT

Political satirist and television personality Stephen Colbert arrives at the commencement ceremony at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, Friday, June 17, 2011. Colbert delivered the keynote address.

AARP Slammed For Not Fighting SS Cuts

STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — AARP, the powerful lobby for older Americans, was hammered Friday by fellow activists for refusing to oppose any and all cuts to Social Security benefits, a position the group says it has long held as a way to extend the life of the massive retirement and disability program.

The group, which has 37 million Americans as members, adamantly opposes cutting Social Security benefits to help reduce the federal budget deficit, said David Certner, the organization's director of legislative policy.

But for years AARP has acknowledged that cuts to future benefits may be necessary to improve the program's finances, he said.

"Our policy for decades has always been that we basically support a package that would include revenue enhancements and benefit adjustments to get Social Security to long-term solvency," Certner said. "That has been our policy stated over and over again for, I mean, literally it has to be two decades, now."

However, the issue gained major notice Friday as White

House and congressional leaders continued to negotiate ways to reduce government red ink. Social Security has not been a part of those talks. Instead, negotiators have focused on potential cuts to Medicare, the government health insurance program for older Americans.

In the midst of that, *The Wall Street Journal* quoted AARP's longtime policy chief, John Rother, saying the agency was dropping its longstanding opposition to cutting Social Security benefits.

"The ship was sailing. I wanted to be at the wheel when that happens," *The Journal* quoted Rother as saying.

Certner said the story was inaccurate, that AARP's views were long held. Nevertheless, the story set off a firestorm among Social Security advocates, who roundly criticized AARP as selling out seniors. Most advocacy groups oppose all cuts to Social Security benefits, even those that would affect only future generations, such as an increase in the retirement age.

"AARP is losing the confidence of seniors around the country, and not just seniors but people of every age group," said Max Richtman, acting CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security

and Medicare. "I hope the ship that he wants to be steer isn't the Titanic filled with seniors."

Ed Coyle, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, said, "AARP does not speak for all seniors, and on this topic probably not many of their own members."

Eric Kingson, co-chair of the Strengthen Social Security Campaign, a coalition of about 300 groups, accused AARP of trying to win an influential seat at the negotiating table when lawmakers tackle Social Security.

"AARP is positioning itself as an inside dealmaker that's open to benefit cuts when in fact it should be educating the public about the need to selectively improve the one economic security retirement institution that works quite well," Kingson said. "Even if one believes that some ground may have to be ceded on Social Security, it's terrible negotiation strategy to signal a willingness to compromise before negotiations are joined."

Syrian Forces Open Fire On Protesters

BY ZEINA KARAM
AND ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY
Associated Press

BEIRUT — Syrian security forces fired on thousands of protesters Friday, killing a teenage boy and at least 15 other civilians as accounts emerged of more indiscriminate killing and summary executions by the autocratic regime of President Bashar Assad, activists said.

The three-month uprising has proved stunningly resilient despite a relentless crackdown by the military, the pervasive security forces and pro-regime gunmen. Human rights activists say more than 1,400 Syrians have been killed and 10,000 detained as Assad desperately tries to maintain his grip on power.

"What is our guilt? We just demanded freedom and democracy nothing else," said Mohamed, 27, who spoke to *The Associated Press* from a refugee camp in neighboring Turkey where nearly 10,000 Syrians have fled.

Mohamed, who asked to be identified only by his first name for fear of reprisals, and other refugees offered harrowing accounts of the regime's bombardment.

"I saw people who were headed with machine-gun fire from helicopters" and a man tortured to death when security forces poured acid on his body, he said.

He said a sugar factory in Jisr al-Shughour was turned into a jail where they "hold quick trials and execute anyone who they believe participated in protests." Jisr al-Shughour was a town that was spinning out of government control before the military recaptured it last Sunday.

U.N. envoy Angelina Jolie traveled to Turkey's border with Syria on Friday to meet some of the refugees, and she was greeted by a 45-foot-long (15-meter) banner that read: "Goodness Angel of the World, Welcome" in English and Turkish. Police prevented media coverage of the visit.

Assad is expected to give a speech as early as Sunday in what would be only his third public appearance since the uprising began in mid-March, inspired by the revolutions sweeping the Arab world.

US To Stop Accepting Most Mail To Canada

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Postal Service says it will stop accepting most mail to Canada effective on Saturday night.

Postal officials said they were acting because it appears labor problems being experienced by Canada Post will continue at least into sometime next week.

The post office will continue to accept items to Canada sent by its premium Global Express Guaranteed service, which is delivered in Canada by FedEx Express.

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MONDAY-FRIDAY

Monday
7:40 County Commissioners
8:15 Joyce Stevens

Tuesday
7:40 Kathy Jacobs
8:15 KC Royals
8:45 Crystal Nelson

Wednesday
7:40 Christ Episcopal Church
8:15 Chef Staci
8:45 Irene Rodea

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