



John Adams Associates

## DAILY EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

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*A customized daily update of current reports and analyses of economic, health, environmental, and related regulatory and policy issues, prepared for clients of John Adams Associates, 750 National Press Building, Washington, D.C. 20045, 202-737-8400, [info@johnadams.com](mailto:info@johnadams.com).*

### LATE DEVELOPMENTS

**Oil and natural gas prices.** US oil prices dropped \$2.79 to \$83.40 a barrel in early trading. Natural gas prices remained stable at \$4.01 per million Btus.

**Unemployment down.** First time unemployment claims fell by 7,000 to 440,000 last week, the Labor Department reported.

**Productivity up.** US productivity continued to rise in the first quarter, up 3.6 percent, the Labor Department reported. Unit labor costs decreased at a 1.6 percent annual rate. Both figures exceeded expectations.

### TERRORISM

**Data privacy bill.** House energy and commerce communication subcommittee chairman Rick Boucher (D-VA) is expected to release his long-awaited bill on data privacy amid concerns about the growing use of online behavioral advertising, which involves using data about a consumer's web surfing habits to target ads to them. The bill would apply to the collection of personal information from consumers both online and offline and "initially require that all websites that collect information from consumers give consumers notice with respect to what information is collected, how it is used, who it is shared with, and the circumstances under which it is shared."

**Hazmat transport.** The Department of Transportation never conducted required safety checks on 20,000 to 30,000 companies that got special permits to move risky shipments of hazardous materials by road, rail, water and air, USA Today said records showed. Starting this month, DOT will require all the companies to file new permit applications and undergo a "fitness review," including assessments of their safety and security records, before the permit is issued, according to an agency plan.

## ENERGY

**Climate bill dead?** The Louisiana oil crisis may have dealt the "final blow" to chances of passing a climate bill this year, according to Politico, which reports that environmental groups are feeling "sick to their stomachs," given that chances for a meaningful bill are likely to diminish after the November elections.

**Focus on Gulf oil spill intensifies.** Members of Congress from several coastal states questioned whether Interior Department regulators who oversee offshore drilling have become too cozy with the oil and gas industry. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) asked the Interior Department's inspector general to investigate whether the oil and gas industry exerted influence over regulators from 2000 through 2004 when decisions were made on the type of backup systems that should be required on offshore drilling rigs and production platforms.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**FDA conflicts.** An editorial in the New York Times praises the Food and Drug Administration for reducing the number of potential conflicts of interest among outside scientists serving on the agency's various expert advisory committees. The paper describes the agency's significant reduction of waivers as "a major accomplishment toward cleaner decision-making." It also notes the problem of filling the "huge number" of vacancies on those expert committees.

## PHARMACEUTICALS

**Novartis to pay \$72 million.** The Department of Justice said that two units of drugmaker **Novartis** will pay a total of \$72.5 million to resolve allegations that the company caused false claims to be submitted to government health programs for an antibiotic drug. The proceeds of the settlement will be divided between the federal government and states.

## CHEMICALS

**Endocrine chemicals for testing.** EPA staff are reportedly scrambling to meet a congressionally mandated October deadline to release a new list of 100 chemicals to test for possible endocrine disrupting effects after partially agreeing to an industry request to allow public review of the list, reports Risk Policy Report.

## ENVIRONMENT

**Climate investigation.** The InterAcademy Council, a group representing scientists from around the world, said it has picked a 12-member committee to conduct an independent review of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change. The committee will review various aspects of how the IPCC's assessment reports are compiled, including the sourcing and quality of data used, the handling of a full range of scientific views, and the procedure for correcting errors after a report has been published.

**Montreal Protocol.** The US, Canada and Mexico jointly submitted a proposed amendment to the Montreal Protocol that would require party countries to reduce

production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons by 85 percent by 2033. "Together with our partners Canada and Mexico, the US believes that global action on HFCs is needed and that the Montreal Protocol provides an established, effective and efficient instrument for tackling the problem," the State Department said.

**Barriers to multipollutant rules.** EPA air chief Regina McCarthy said there are major gaps in research data, including how to better assess different mixtures of pollutants, that the agency must fill before it can achieve its goal of pursuing a multipollutant approach to regulation, under which EPA would develop rules to curb emissions of several pollutants at once. She said that EPA is already wrestling internally over how to define multipollutant regulations, and how to pursue the necessary research to support whatever approach it settles on.

## BIOTECHNOLOGY

**Superweeds proliferate.** Roundup-resistant "superweeds" are spreading rapidly in America's farmlands, forcing farmers to use more toxic herbicides and return to more labor-intensive methods, reports the New York Times. Such efforts could lead to lower crop yields, rising farm costs, greater pollution and higher food costs, according to agricultural experts cited in the story.

## COMPANIES

**Top innovators.** Fifteen of the world's top 50 innovators are Asian and most of the top 25 are based outside the US, reports Business Week (4/25) in its annual survey of the world's most innovative companies. Still, the top four are **Apple, Google, Microsoft** and **IBM**.

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