This Week in Wall Street Reform |Feb 16- Feb22

Please share this weekly compilation with friends and colleagues.
To subscribe, email info@ourfinancialsecurity.org, with "This Week" in the subject line.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONSUMER FINANCE AND THE CFPB

CFPB proposes making debt collectors disclose statute of limitations | American Banker

Debt collectors would have to disclose they cannot sue to recover debt that has exceeded a statute of limitations under a proposal issued Friday by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The agency's supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking would require such a disclosure during a debt collector's initial contact with a consumer and on any required validation notice.

The proposal would require disclosures only if a debt collector "knows or should know" that the debt has exceeded the statute of limitations.

Lending Club announces plan to buy thrift, become a bank | Politico

Financial technology company Lending Club announced today that it plans to buy Boston-based thrift Radius Bancorp for $185 million, a move that — if approved by regulators — would convert the peer-to-peer lender into a full-service bank.

Lending Club is the latest fintech firm to indicate it’s willing to take on more regulation in exchange for being able to take insured deposits, although it would be the first to use this particular route.

Payments company Varo Money last week announced it is close to becoming a national bank after receiving approval for deposit insurance from the FDIC. Square and Rakuten are among the companies that have applied for an industrial loan company charter.

Consumer Finance Poised For Greater Scrutiny From States | Law360

Complaining that the federal government has abdicated its responsibility in the consumer finance space, California, New York and other states have declared that they will take action to fill the void in enforcement that has been created by a more restrained U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

A number of recent developments suggest that states may increasingly flex their enforcement muscles in the consumer finance arena.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom’s proposed 2020-2021 budget includes $10.2 million for a financial protection fund, which would be used to enhance consumer protection against unfair and deceptive practices in the financial services industry.

CFPB deputy director Johnson stepping down | Politico

CFPB Deputy Director Brian Johnson, one of several Trump administration appointees who tried to rein in the consumer bureau, will leave his position early next month, according to an official with knowledge of the matter.

Johnson told senior staff of his departure this afternoon. He did not say where he would be going next, according to the official.

Trump’s DOJ urges Supreme Court to keep CFPB up and running | Reuters

Facing an existential threat at the U.S. Supreme Court, which will hear oral arguments on March 3 in a constitutional challenge to the unusual structure of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the CFPB has found an unlikely champion. The Trump administration believes that the bureau's lone director is unconstitutionally shielded from accountability to the president, yet the Justice Department’s final brief before oral argument urged the Supreme Court not to issue a ruling that will halt the CFPB’s “critical work."

“The bureau,” DOJ argued in a reply brief filed on Friday, “is the federal government’s only agency solely dedicated to consumer financial protection.” Invalidating the entire statute that created the CFPB, DOJ said, will wreak havoc not just for consumers but for the banks, mortgage lenders, credit card companies, and other financial institutions regulated by the CFPB. The government even cited the billions of dollars CFPB has recovered in enforcement actions as proof of its crucial mission.

Payday-Loan Fight Goes Bipartisan in States | Bloomberg Government

Closing a loophole in Georgia’s usury laws that allows auto title lenders to charge interest rates as high as 300% is neither a Democratic nor Republican issue to State Sen. Randy Robertson.

The Republican lawmaker sees bringing auto title lenders under the state’s 60% interest rate cap, which has effectively prevented payday lending from taking hold in the state, is about helping people out of desperate circumstances.

DERIVATIVES AND THE CFTC

ENFORCEMENT

[Wells Fargo reaches $3 billion settlement with DOJ, SEC over fake-accounts scandal](#) | The Washington Post

Wells Fargo on Friday agreed to pay $3 billion to settle potential federal criminal and civil charges that for more than a decade the bank's aggressive sales goals led to widespread consumer abuses, including millions of accounts opened without customers' consent.

Under its settlement with the U.S. Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission, Wells Fargo acknowledged that it collected millions of dollars in fees as thousands of employees falsified records, forged signatures and misused customers' personal information in order to meet unrealistic sales goals. Bank leaders knew of the misbehavior but didn't stop it, according to the Justice Department.

The Price of Wells Fargo's Fake Account Scandal Grows by $3 Billion | The New York Times

Wells Fargo has agreed to pay $3 billion to settle criminal charges and a civil action stemming from its widespread mistreatment of customers in its community bank over a 14-year period, the Justice Department announced on Friday.

From 2002 to 2016, employees used fraud to meet impossible sales goals. They opened millions of accounts in customers' names without their knowledge, signed unwitting account holders up for credit cards and bill payment programs, created fake personal identification numbers, forged signatures and even secretly transferred customers' money.

The Golden Age of White Collar Crime | HuffPost

Over the last two years, nearly every institution of American life has taken on the unmistakable stench of moral rot. Corporate behemoths like Boeing and Wells Fargo have traded blue-chip credibility for white-collar callousness. Elite universities are selling admission spots to the highest Hollywood bidder. Silicon Valley unicorns have revealed themselves as long cons (Theranos), venture-capital cremation devices (Uber, WeWork) or straightforward comic book supervillains (Facebook). Every week unearths a cabinet-level political scandal that would have defined any other presidency. From the blackouts in California to the bloated bonuses on Wall Street to the entire biography of Jeffrey Epstein, it is impossible to look around the country and not get the feeling that elites are slowly looting it.

INVESTOR PROTECTION, SEC, CAPITAL MARKETS

Morgan Stanley to buy E-Trade for $13 billion | The Washington Post

Morgan Stanley is buying E-Trade in a $13 billion, all-stock deal announced Thursday, bringing more consolidation to the brokerage market and giving the investment bank to the rich a foothold with a more mainstream clientele.

The deal, which is the biggest takeover by a major U.S. bank since the 2008 financial crisis, combines Morgan Stanley's prowess and client-facing resources with E-Trade's more than 5 million customers, with more than $360 billion in retail trade assets, the companies said in a news release. Morgan Stanley has more than 3 million clients with $2.7 trillion in assets under management. Combined, they will create a firm with a strong foothold on both Wall Street and Main Street -- Morgan Stanley's traditionally wealthier clients and investment management business with E-Trade's younger, mom and pop investors and online investing platform.

PRIVATE FUNDS

News Release: Internet, Federal Authorities Must Seek Answers Before Any Sale of Dot-Org | Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund and Electronic Frontier Foundation

Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund and the Electronic Frontier Foundation today called on authorities to ensure that the proposed purchase of the organization that administers all of the non-profit .ORG internet domain names by a private equity firm does not endanger this vital public resource.

In a letter today, the groups said the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, which coordinates the operation and maintenance of the internet's domain name system, should make sure that the transaction will "not imperil the future operation of .ORG" before allowing it to proceed. The groups sent a letter raising similar issues to the Federal Trade Commission.

Private equity's slow creep into doctors' offices | Axios

Private-equity firms accelerated their acquisitions of doctors' practices between 2013 and 2016, according to a new JAMA study.

Why it matters: "Private equity firms expect greater than 20% annual returns, and these financial incentives may conflict with the need for longer-term investments in practice stability, physician recruitment, quality, and safety," the author writes.

"There may be additional pressures to increase revenue streams (eg, elective procedures and ancillary services), direct more referrals internally, and rely on lower-cost clinicians," she adds.

By the numbers: 355 physician practices were acquired by private-equity firms over the time period, a small portion of total practices. But industry reports suggest that the growth kept up in 2017 and 2018.

What will private equity investment in healthcare look like in 2020? | MedCity News

By all accounts, 2019 was a year of continued robust healthcare M&A activity by private equity firms, significantly outpacing 2018. Private equity firms continued to deploy significant capital broadly across the healthcare industry during 2019 as demands to solve for industry inefficiencies, value-based payment models, and overall cost reduction all point toward private equity investment as an attractive option for healthcare businesses with aggressive growth strategies. In addition to the sustaining performance of the U.S. economy as a whole in 2019, the changing reimbursement and regulatory landscape of the healthcare industry contributed to deal volume overall and in particular sectors.

How Private Equity Became a Beta Play | Institutional Investor

All the numbers point to private equity and venture capital being at a peak. But it’s not for the reasons many think, according to McKinsey.

Institutions once invested in private equity for the potential to earn higher returns than other asset classes, and the persistence of the outperformance, among other things. But pensions, sovereign wealth funds, endowments, and other institutions are now allocating increasing amounts to private markets because they don’t have a choice, according to a McKinsey & Co. report expected to be released Friday.

Institutional investors “used allocate to PE for three reasons: outperformance versus public markets, predictability as there was strong persistency of top quartile managers, and the belief that PE was fairly uncorrelated,” said Bryce Klempner, a partner at McKinsey and one of the authors of the report.

Two Big Workplace-Software Providers to Merge | The Wall Street Journal

Ultimate Software and Kronos Inc. are merging in a deal creating a big new player in workplace-software products.

The all-stock deal will create a company worth roughly $22 billion including debt, the companies said Thursday, confirming an earlier Wall Street Journal report.

Hellman & Friedman, the private-equity firm that controls both closely held companies, will remain the controlling shareholder, while Blackstone Group Inc., BX -0.49% which owns stakes in both, will be the largest minority investor in the combined company.

Kronos CEO Aron Ain will lead the combined company, which will have more than 12,000 employees and dual headquarters in Lowell, Mass., and Weston, Fla.

Private capital fundraising hits new highs in 2019 | Pitchbook

In 2019 the number of global private capital funds declined for the fourth straight year. But the amount of capital raised for those funds set a new record, reaching $888 billion—a sign of the growing role strategies such as venture capital, private equity and private debt are playing in institutional portfolios.

PitchBook's 2019 Annual Private Fund Strategies Report drills down into the specifics, offering detailed data and analysis on fundraising trends from VC, PE, real assets, secondaries and other slices of the private market. Among the highlights:

PE firms raised more money in 2019 than any year before

Nearly 90% of VC funds in 2019 were larger than their predecessors, a decade high

Private debt assets under management have swollen by more than 350% in the past 10 years

L Brands CEO Wexner out as private equity firm takes over Victoria's Secret | The Washington Post

Leslie Wexner, the billionaire who turned Victoria's Secret into a household name but who more recently has been scrutinized for his ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, is stepping down as chief executive of the retail giant he founded nearly 60 years ago.

Parent company L Brands is ceding control of the lingerie brand to private-equity firm Sycamore Partners, the companies announced Thursday. The roughly $1.1 billion deal comes as Victoria's Secret battles falling sales and criticism that its provocative messaging is out of touch with today's consumer.

5 factors that led to Victoria's Secret's fall

L Brands expected to sell Victoria's Secret to private-equity company, report says | USA Today

Victoria's Secret could soon become a private company.

L Brands, the struggling retailer's parent company, is expected to sell the lingerie brand to a private-equity company as early as Thursday, The Wall Street Journal reported late Wednesday. The paper, citing unnamed sources, said the deal valued Victoria's Secret at $1.1 billion.

Sycamore Partners, a New York-based investment company that has taken other retailers private including office-supply giant Staples, is expected to buy 55% of Victoria's Secret, the Journal reported.

According to the report, L Brands could retain 45% of the private company, which would include Victoria's Secret's Pink chain. Bath & Body Works is expected to remain a publicly-traded company.

Private equity firms are acquiring more physician practices. Which specialties are in highest demand? Fierce Healthcare

As Congress considers efforts to rein them in, private equity firms are buying up more physician practices, according to a new study.

Private equity firms acquired 355 physician practices from 2013 to 2016, a number that jumped each year of the study, according to a research letter published today in JAMA. The number increased from 59 practices in 2013 to 136 practices in 2016.

With approximately 18,000 group medical practices in the U.S., researchers said while private equity acquisitions increased across specialties during the study period, they still constituted a small proportion of practices. Those acquisitions continued in the years beyond those in the study period.

How Private Equity Ruined a Beloved Grocery Chain | The Atlantic

The news of Fairway Market's second foray into bankruptcy, this time with the threat that stores could be liquidated to pay off the unsustainable debt hanging over the grocery chain, dismayed its legions of loyal Manhattan customers. Fairway's New York City stores draw an eclectic crowd of shoppers: local residents, professors and students at schools from the City University of New York to Columbia University, and others seeking its fresh-baked breads, unusual cheeses, and wide range of international foods. Upscale and idiosyncratic, with its humble roots still evident, Fairway is emblematic of the city in which it has become a storied institution. But, fatefully, it is also emblematic of the way private-equity investors—including Fairway's former owner Sterling Investment Partners—have hastened the fall of brick-and-mortar stores caught in the so-called retail apocalypse.

Corporate Landlords Aren't the Real Culprit | The Atlantic

In the fall of 2019, the private-equity company Blackstone Group went on a shopping spree, purchasing three apartment buildings in the Los Angeles metro area. For $177 million, Blackstone became the landlord for nearly 500 households. Over the past several years, the company has been steadily acquiring a portfolio totaling more than 40,000 apartments across some of the country's tightest, costliest housing markets, including California and the Boston and Washington, D.C., metro areas.

Most of Blackstone's buildings fall into a distinct category: They were constructed in the late 1980s and early '90s, and the apartments in them could use a few nips and tucks, but are located in markets with strong population and income growth and where local land-use regulations have limited new apartment construction. Or as the firm's website puts it, they invest in "high-quality assets" with "outsize growth potential."

How To Build A Franchisor That Is Attractive To Private Equity | Forbes

There's more to franchising than the allure of being your own boss and owning your own business. If you're thinking ahead, you may already be looking at different growth strategies. You might even be eyeing an aggressive expansion strategy for new locations or acquisitions. To do this, you'll likely need additional capital to make it happen. Many franchises are seeking said capital from private equity (PE) firms, and private equity is happy to oblige.

We've recently seen PE firms make significant investments into franchise systems. Roark Capital Group made waves in the franchising world when it purchased Buffalo Wild Wings for $2.4 billion in 2017. Similar acquisitions were made of other restaurant concepts including Ruby Tuesday and Krispy Kreme Doughnuts. We're also seeing the same thing happening in other markets, like the fitness industry.

Private Equity Likely to Deploy $1.5 Trillion War Chest in Home-Based Care Market | Home Healthcare News

Private equity players are sitting on more dry powder than ever before, entering 2020 with a reported $1.5 trillion in unspent capital. In all likelihood, a portion of this cash will go into the in-home care space.

In general, the health care sector has already seen an increase in private equity investment over the past few years. There were 299 health care deals involving private equity buyers or sellers in 2009; that number is expected to skyrocket to almost 750 for 2019 when all the deal data is in and analyzed, according to statistics from PricewaterhouseCoopers.

“There has been a large increase in private equity interest in health care,” Matt Picciano, principal at Alpine Investors, told Home Health Care News. “Overall, the market is big and growing, so you’re seeing private equity become more comfortable in the health care space. It’s a flywheel effect.”

MORTGAGES AND HOUSING

FDIC and OCC Announce 30-day Extension of Comment Period for Proposed Changes to Community Reinvestment Act Rules | Office of the Comptroller of the Currency

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) today extended the public comment period for proposed changes to the rules implementing the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) until April 8, 2020.

On December 12, 2019, the FDIC and OCC announced a proposal to modernize the regulations under the CRA and provided for a 60-day comment period following formal publication on January 9, 2020 in the Federal Register (85 FR 1204). The FDIC and OCC have now determined that a 30-day extension of the comment period is appropriate.

The proposed rules are intended to increase bank activity in low- and moderate-income communities where there is significant need for credit, more responsible lending, and greater access to banking services.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Publish Joint Enterprise Credit Score Solicitation | Federal Housing Financial Agency

The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) announced today that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (the Enterprises) have published a Joint Credit Score Solicitation.

"The publication of the solicitation is the first step in the process of evaluating new credit score models," said FHFA Director Mark Calabria. “FHFA will ensure that the Enterprises validate and approve credit score models in a timely and prudent manner, so that Americans continue to have a safe and sound path to sustainable homeownership."

STUDENT LOANS AND FOR-PROFIT SCHOOLS

Student Advocates Again Challenge DeVos in Court For Trashing Obama-Era Rules | Republic Report

Trump education secretary Betsy DeVos has trashed two key rules that the Department of Education, during the Obama administration, painstakingly developed to discourage for-profit colleges from deceiving and abusing their own students. With a new lawsuit filed today, advocates for students are now in court fighting to cancel both of the DeVos anti-rules and keep the previous Department regulations in place.

Lawyers from Public Citizen Litigation Group and the Harvard Project on Predatory Student Lending this morning filed a federal lawsuit in Manhattan on behalf of the New York Legal Assistance Group, which represents, among others, low-income students who attended predatory for-profit colleges. The suit aims to invalidate the Trump-DeVos Borrower Defense rule, which overruled the Obama-era borrower defense rule.

Agency saved by DeVos appears to have accredited a college with no students, faculty or classrooms | Salon

The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges & Schools (ACICS) accredited a college which appears to have no faculty or students after Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos reversed an Obama era decision to shutter the federal agency after it accredited colleges that defrauded students, according to a new investigation.

The ACICS, which accredited now-shuttered for-profit schools, including ITT Tech, Corinthian Colleges, and Brightwood College, was shut down by former President Obama's administration in 2016. The department argued at the time that the agency, which oversaw 725 schools and more than $3 billion in federal financial aid, "exhibited a profound lack of compliance" with the "most basic" responsibilities of an accreditor.

Lambda School's Misleading Promises | New York Magazine

If you visit the website of Lambda School, a "boot camp" for people who want to quickly learn how to code, you're greeted by a photograph of a grinning student with an open laptop and the encouraging words: "Your new tech career starts here." It's the first of many promises made by Lambda, which currently boasts 2,500 students, all of whom receive their education online from their own homes — and none of whom pay out of pocket for their educations, instead signing "Income Sharing Agreements," or ISAs, through which Lambda gets a percentage of their first tech job after graduating.

Lambda School, a buzzy online coding bootcamp backed by big Silicon Valley names, could be placing far fewer graduates in jobs than it says | Business Insider

Lambda School, a hot online coding bootcamp that has attracted funding from the likes of Ashton Kutcher and GV, claims that 86% of its graduates find jobs within six months after graduation. But a new report from New York Magazine's Vincent Woo indicates that the statistic may be misleading.

"We're at roughly 50% placement for cohorts that are 6 months graduated," Lambda School said in a May 2019 investment memo obtained by New York Magazine. The memo was reportedly titled "Human Capital: The Last Unoptimized Asset Class."

Austin Allred, CEO of Lambda School, told New York Magazine that some student cohorts had job placement rates that low, and that since the memo involved potential risk to investors, it chose to play it safe: "We're going to pick our lowest number."

'It's ruined my life': Academy of Art ex-student owes $431,000 and has no job | San Francisco Chronicle

Shaun Dunn is an expert 3-D designer whose images look so real you want to pluck them off the screen — the very sort Hollywood studios Disney and Pixar might pay an artist big money to create.

Or so Dunn believed when he was a top student at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, whose ads say graduates "are some of the most successful and sought-after professionals in art and design today." Dunn earned a bachelor's degree in industrial design and stayed, at the school's urging, he said, for his master's in animation and visual effects. He graduated in May.

'Education deserts' are a 'staggering' problem, and for-profit colleges are taking advantage | Yahoo Finance

It's one thing to not be able to afford a college education. It's an entirely different issue altogether when you don't even have a college around you.

A recent report from Jain Family Institute (JFI) reveals that access to college isn't just about the cost of college. Physical access to public higher education institutions across America has also been highly unequal.

Specifically, as detailed by JFI's interactive map, regions in America's West have little-to-no access to an institution of higher education, compared to the East Coast.

"One of the major takeaways when you're looking at the map is the staggering amount of populated areas that are considered highly concentrated," Laura Beamer, higher education finance project lead at JFI and one of the two authors of the study, told Yahoo Finance. "We figured out that roughly 2.4 million prospective students have access to most one public option nearby … Though financial access is extremely important, geographic access is also a very important piece of this dialogue and should be talked about more."

To pay for college, more students are promising a piece of their future to investors | Hechinger Report

One day in 2017, Lauren Neuwirth sank into a chair in her university's financial aid office feeling out of options. She was finishing her second year at Purdue University in northwest Indiana, a school she'd chosen for its top-ranked engineering program. Neuwirth, who grew up near Milwaukee, was working two jobs to cover her living expenses and quickly running through the money her mother had set aside for college. Federal student loans only covered some of Purdue's pricey out-of-state tuition. She worried that to remain in school she'd have to take out expensive private loans or join the Army.

But then Purdue offered her another way to pay. Investors — including wealthy alumni, a hedge fund and the Purdue Research Foundation — would front her $50,000 to cover two years of college. In exchange, she'd owe them 14.8 percent of whatever income she earned in the eight years after she graduated. Neuwirth agreed. Last fall, her fifth and final year as a double major in food science and biological engineering, she received a job offer from the agribusiness Cargill at a salary of $56,000. If all goes as planned, she'll eventually return a healthy profit for those investors.

Public Partners With For-Profit | Inside Higher Ed

Arkansas State University is exploring a partnership with a for-profit company to build a veterinary medicine school.

While it would be the first such school in the state, it's unclear whether it's necessary, and some question if partnering with a for-profit is a good move for a public institution.

"By arranging for the for-profit to operate on campus, the public university is lending its credibility to a for-profit college," said Robert Shireman, director of higher education excellence and a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. "For-profit colleges have a sketchy reputation because of disproportionate consumer abuses."

Charleston law school falls short of new accreditation standards | Charleston Post & Courier

The Charleston School of Law has narrowly fallen short of a change in national accreditation standards on bar exam passage rates, data released this week show.

Seventy-two percent of the law school's 2017 graduates were able to pass the bar exam within two years of leaving campus, according to a consumer information report released Tuesday by the American Bar Association.

This measure is what's known as the "ultimate bar pass rate." Since the bar exam is administered twice a year, students have four tries to pass during this window.

To be in compliance with a revised standard adopted last year, the ABA's Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar requires at least a 75 percent ultimate pass rate.

ELECTIONS, MONEY, AND POLITICS -

Mike Bloomberg's Financial Reform Policy | Mike Bloomberg.com

Finance should serve the American people, facilitating the kind of growth that improves everyone's living standards. All too often, though, it fails to achieve that goal. The 2008 financial crisis destroyed millions of jobs and cost the average American an estimated $70,000 each. Unscrupulous brokers and lenders trap people in financial products that leave them worse off. Credit-reporting companies complicate the lives of consumers who never chose to do business with them. Ultra-fast trading costs investors worldwide an estimated $5 billion a year while exposing them to the threat of "flash crashes."

Bloomberg Financial Proposals Would Stiffen Wall Street Oversight | The Wall Street Journal

Presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg unveiled a raft of proposals to strengthen oversight of lenders, protect consumers and make college more affordable, a move that positions the billionaire former New York City mayor closer to the rest of the Democratic field on financial policy.

The nine-page plan, announced on Tuesday, would toughen tests intended to determine whether banks can withstand an economic downturn. It would reverse steps to ease trading restrictions known as the Volcker rule and impose a tax on financial transactions, an idea that has been embraced by other Democrats.

The Finance 202: Bloomberg criticized redlining reforms. Critics say it's more evidence he's a Wall Street defender | The Wall Street Journal

Mike Bloomberg earned the $60 billion-plus fortune that is funding his presidential campaign by selling his proprietary computer terminals to Wall Street firms. And when the Great

Recession hit, he defended Wall Street, blaming bad laws for inflating the housing bubble and slamming Washington's crackdown on financiers.

That history is taking center stage now that the former New York mayor is battling to secure the Democratic nomination against liberals Sens. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), who have made confronting Wall Street central to their bids.

OTHER TOPICS

Trump Administration Sees No Threat to Economy From Monopolies | The New York Times

President Trump and his economic team see "no need to hastily rewrite the federal government's antitrust rules," drawing a battle line with leading Democratic presidential candidates on an issue that has increasingly drawn the attention of economists, legal scholars and other academics.

In their annual Economic Report of the President, released on Thursday, Mr. Trump and his advisers effectively dismiss an emerging line of economic research that finds large American companies increasingly dominate industries like telecommunications and tech, stifling competition and hurting consumers.

That research, which President Barack Obama's economic team championed in 2016, has become fodder for presidential candidates like Senators Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Bernie Sanders of Vermont to call for breaking up big tech companies.