

Make Me Smart October 1, 2021 transcript

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Molly Wood: We had, you had three minutes warning and you're not gonna be ready on time?

Kai Ryssdal: Y'all know and then I got 10 seconds warning and then it's like, okay good. And we were talking, anyway. Come on.

Molly Wood: My fault, I distracted him. Hi, everyone. Hi, I'm Molly Wood. Welcome to Make Me Smart, the podcast where we make today make sense.

Kai Ryssdal: I would like to just say, there's a heat wave in Oakland. There's a heat wave in LA, it's just hot in the shed. It's hot in Molly's garage. It's just hot.

Molly Wood: October in California is just summer. Yeah. Happy October!

Kai Ryssdal: Happy October. I know, the third, the fourth quarter has started. I'm Kai Ryssdal, happy hour Friday. Economics on tap is how we have branded this, although I don't think we really did brand it. Live stream's up and running Of course. Thank you to everybody wherever you're finding us, podcast, YouTube livestream, it's also, I'm pretty sure we got discord, you're monitoring discord because I'm not.

Molly Wood: Oh yeah. It's hopping in the discord like it always is. This is like, hotober says Michelle in Savannah. Hotober, that's exactly what it is. Yes.

Kai Ryssdal: Everybody's chiming in with their weather updates. It's really funny. 73 in Idaho. Love it.

Molly Wood: 73 in Idaho? Wow. Pleasant in Seattle, like it always is. 24 hours of fall in Cleveland. Oh, delightful. It's tequila Friday for me.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh, good. Good. Good. Good. Good. Good. I'm, I'm doing my juicy xpat from, let me see. Oh, yeah, I love those glasses. Those are cool. Here's my beer can, some boring my beer. Not the ones I'm worried about this. It's, it's a, it's a local woman-owned brewery, Three Weavers. So I like to support them because they're good.

Molly Wood: Oh, yeah, you've had that before. Because I remember thinking like that's awesome. And it's a good name, Three Weavers.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, yes. It's a really good name.

Molly Wood: Ah, all right. Yes, we have some drinks. We have some news. We have some half full half empty. There are lots of good drinks, raspberry bubbly. It's 89 and sunset-y in Orlando and Megan is having the last glass of a Prosecco bottle. Get it, girl.

Kai Ryssdal: Chennai, India, 85 degrees. From Chennai. Man, do I want to go to India. Holy cow.

Molly Wood: That's amazing.

Kai Ryssdal: Also, it is not a haircut. I just washed my hair today. I just washed my hair. There was no haircut happening.

Molly Wood: Oh, yeah. Mine always looks dramatically different when that happens too. Yes. Alright, shall we, shall we news it up?

Kai Ryssdal: Yes. Let's. Okay, I'll go first because the first one's a quickie. The second one takes a little bit of explaining. So the governor of California, Gavin Newsom, said today that there's going to be a vaccine mandate for K through 12 school kids as soon as next fall. That is a big, big, big deal. It's a really big deal. He's inviting all kinds of political fighting and I can just tell you from my little town here in Southern California, there's going to be a lot of political fighting. But Newsom's taking it on the chin and he's running with it. Now I will say he's not going to mandate teachers or staff. But if you're a kid in California, you want to go to public schools next fall, K through 12 got to get shots. Kinda wild.

Molly Wood: Bring it on. Yeah, sorry. Yep. Yeah, yeah. PS, mandate students, or mandate teachers and staff too. Districts are doing that, like district by district. But yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: So that's the relatively straight ahead one. The one that takes a little more splaining is that senior Biden aides, this is from the Washington Post, senior Biden aides privately explored whether payments could continue even if the US breached the debt ceiling. So I have two things I want to point out about this. Number one, October the 18th is the day when Janet Yellen says we will hit the debt limit and she will not be able to borrow more money to pay bills we have already accrued. But if she wanted to, she could keep paying interest on the bond, she could pay the coupon, coupons on the bonds and this keeps our credit rating and our, our status as reliable lender intact, but she would have to not pay other things like social security, like the military, all that jazz. We've talked about that. So October the 18th is the date. The really great part of this story is that they also explored the idea of mint the coin. Now for those who might not be familiar with mint the coin, excuse me, it's been a thing for a number of years. But in recent debt ceiling crises, specifically 2013, it got really hot and heavy. And the idea is this. The Treasury Department is authorized by statute to print commemorative coins. And so what the mint the coin thing is all about is that the Treasury Department, without needing any authorization from Congress, could plant, could print a commemorative Platinum coin and value it at a trillion dollars. It then takes that coin and puts it, yes, yes, yes. Yes. The statute

says that the Yellin can do this. I will say that Janet Yellen has said I'm not doing that. That's stupid, shut up, and much more diplomatic language. But the point is that the White House is, has looked into this so they could the Treasury Secretary, Secretary could print a, or mint, rather, a coin, value it at a trillion dollars, put it on deposit at the Federal Reserve. And then Jay Powell, using his magic fed chairman keyboard, can create a trillion dollars of money, put it in the White House's account, and we could keep paying our bills. I love it so much. It's never gonna happen. But I love it so much. I love that the White House, I love that the White House was asking people about it.

Molly Wood: What's amazing too is that our discord which of course is like, right on it is all about it. There's just like immediately hashtag mint the coin. Everyone's like, oh, yeah, hashtag mint the coin, mint the coin, mint the coin. Yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, some, sorry, some comments in the YouTube here. Wouldn't that be inflationary? It would not because it's not actually new money. It's just an asset swap. You take the trillion dollar coin, and you get the trillion dollars in money. It's an asset swap straight up. Just saying. Okay, anyway, go ahead.

Molly Wood: I want to do it. I think that's funny, because I had just heard on the morning report today, actually, the, the interview where they were like, oh, yeah, last time this happened, they explored the idea of the Fed buying the debt to get us out of it.

Kai Ryssdal: Oh yeah, that was Chris Lowe. That was a great interview, actually, David did with Chris Lowe.

Molly Wood: It was a great interview. So interesting. And it was like, oh, yeah, he, you know, they talked about it. And they were like, yeah, he's like, you know, the Fed was like, a secret plan. And then like, now that it's not a secret plan, it couldn't work, right? Which is also fascinating. You'd have to mint the coin. But also the fact that we're having this conversation is ridiculous.

Kai Ryssdal: I know. But the crazy part is that it was only a secret, it only works if it's a secret plan because Congress can't find out about it. That's the, that's the subtext, right? If Congress finds out that the Fed can bail out the Congress yet again on the economy, then it's useless because Congress just goes haywire, right? Like, oh, yeah, the Fed's gonna save us.

Molly Wood: If you did not all see Kai Ryssdal on Don Lemon on CNN last night, I'm not trying to, I'm not trying to like brag about you, or tell everybody except, like, totally go look it up. But I really appreciate it. Because it is so tempting to sort of like make it politics and make it all beltway, and I really appreciated the fact that you were like, whoa, whoa, whoa, this is not a get, the republicans are not playing a game here. They're not playing politics. They've made it very, very clear that they will let this happen. And then he was like, oh, crap Kai, you're right. And you were like, uh huh. And that was great. That was a great moment.

Kai Ryssdal: So you know what's interesting? Nevermind, that's a story for another time. I'll save it.

Molly Wood You sure? I mean, we're like drinking and reflecting now. We got nothing.

Kai Ryssdal: So here's what happened on, on Marketplace this afternoon. So the last question on Marketplace--so on Friday afternoons, we do the rap at six and a half, seven minutes of live radio. Today was Heather Long from the Washington Post. And my last question was to Heather about the debt limit. And I said, come on, seriously? And she gave a really, as Heather always does, a really thoughtful and considerate answer, and ended with, of course, the Republicans in Congress, specifically the senate won't go along with that. And if you listen to it, maybe, maybe they tightened up in post but in real time, there was like a four second lag, which is a long time when you're sitting there on live radio. I was out of time, right, I already had gone eight minutes in the rap, which is already a minute over. And, and I was, I was about this close to coming out with some really snarky comment about Mitch McConnell, which would have been really not great for us as a journalistic enterprise. And so what I came out with was, yeah Republicans in Congress, enough has been said about them. And then so I've been thinking about it all afternoon, right? I mean, so it's 3:40 now in the afternoon LA time. I got off the air an hour ago. And, and it's weird because I, I've pointed out every single day this week that it's the Republicans in the Senate who are not doing the bipartisan thing and raising the debt limit and alleviating all the potential chaos. But at the same time, I'm like, why is it not okay for me to say on the air, Mitch McConnell is the one who's doing the damage. And I've just, I've been wrestling with that. That's that, you know, and we've had conversations, you and I, about what do you do when one party is not operating in good faith and the other party is trying to uphold the norms. We've had those conversations and I just, it's, I've been grinding on that.

Molly Wood: You know, well, look, it comes down to journalism, what is it like you shouldn't, if it's raining, you don't ask five people. If it's raining, you open that window and you look and see if it's raining and then come back inside and you're like, it's raining like, they're the only ones who have ever messed with the debt limit. And they're, you know, and Heather Cox Richardson, my favorite, the only newsletter that I pay for, I pay, don't, you know, don't at every form of freaking media. She just happens to be the only newsletter that I pay for. But set, had a whole piece about--where was I going with that? The debt limit? And oh, that also, in this case, playing around with the debt limit, as in refusing to hold a vote on it and making sure that Democrats, if they want to do it alone have to do it as part of the reconciliation package, which as you pointed out, they're 100% serious about, there is not a situation in which the republicans are going to be like, no, we change our mind, we'll vote for it, don't worry. That forcing Democrats to include it in the reconciliation package has the added benefit of making sure that they can't hold and whip votes on the voting rights bill. Before the midterm, because it takes so much time. Which again, it's raining people, no one's peeing on your foot. Yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: That's right. Okay. So that's a segue.

Molly Wood: It's like my favorite. It's like my favorite. Yeah, speaking of pee on your foot. No, wait, I'm not going to speak about that again. I, there's been a lot. There's been a lot of talk recently about decentralized finance, and like, who are the banks of the future. And it's really been interesting to watch a firm, which was founded by one of the former PayPal founders, Max Levchin, starting to try to become this, like do it all finance app, because like in China, they have alipay, like WeChat. That is the sort of do it all finance app, you can like, do your banking, you can get a loan, well, you could until, you know, the Chinese government crackdown, and you can take out credit, and you can do all these things, and trade stocks and everything. And so Google had been apparently trying to get into this game. What I find interesting about it is how many people, how many companies are like, oh, yeah, I totally want to be a bank. Walmart, Amazon, Google was gonna offer bank accounts that would tie into the Google pay digital wallet, and you could get these checking accounts. And you get debit cards and like, do the whole thing with Google. And as of today, I know this seems like a random story given everything that's going on, but I just thought it was interesting that Google was like, yeah, no, we're not going to do that. We're not going to try to become a bigger name in finance. We're not going to offer checking accounts, probably because I regulators were like, yeah, there's like a lot of stuff that you can stick your fingers in. But finance is not that thing.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah, and why buy trouble, right?

Molly Wood: You know, yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: I'm really glad that Silicon Valley buys itself a bunch of trouble. But why buy more?

Molly Wood: And that is, there are, look, there are few there are like, tech has been allowed to run free, as we know, in a million different ways. There's hardly any regulation in that industry to speak of. And health care I would argue and finance are the only two issues where they have just like, sort of consistently run aground. And so Amazon, this wall street journal points out, has never moved forward, forward with its checking account proposal. Facebook tabled its crypto push for now. And you're just now seeing Google be like, yeah, okay, fine. Okay, fine. You have rules that we don't want to play. Which I think is very, very interesting. And then I know that I made, well, okay, before we get to half, half full, half empty, I just want to play this really, I'm sorry. It was so freakin delightful.

Kai Ryssdal: The decision process, there was audible.

Molly Wood: Mm hmm. Real time I was like, it's 3:43. What should I do? I think you guys are really going to appreciate it.

Kai Ryssdal: We got time. It's Friday.

Molly Wood: My imaginary friend of the show because we've never actually had him on Rex Chapman tweeted today that it was 50 years ago today that Disney World opened. And what I did not know is that when Disney World opened 50 years ago, it was like the coolest, most

arguably culturally subversive thing that ever happened. Roll the tape. That's right. This is, you can't see it. This is a super multicultural cast of dancers 50 years ago and zippity doo da rendition that includes scatting and full on interpretive dance. It's just, it was like, I know that we don't have big smiles on Friday, but I was like, I'm not leaving that one until Monday. That's the greatest thing I've ever seen. Scatting, scatting and interpretive dance at Disney World 50 years ago. Alright, should we play a game now that we're all in a good mood?

Kai Ryssdal: Let us. Please. I'm regretting right now not bringing another beer into the shed. I would just like to say that. Okay, this is half full, half empty, our predictions on various topics. Yeah, I don't, but I don't need another beer. Lianna Squillace is doing the honors today. What have you for us Miss Squillace?

Lianna: Well, you guys really took the wind out of my sails with that trillion dollar coin thing because that was topic number one. All right, let's go with it. The next topic, topic number two, FAA planning to reduce taxiing time, half full half empty?

Molly Wood: I mean, hope springs eternal because that is ridiculous. I don't think it's gonna happen.

Kai Ryssdal: Molly has spoken. So I was, it was it MMR this morning? Or was it, was it on the BBC. There's, there's, there's some proposal to get planes to the runway faster. The catch, of course, is that airport operations for all the time that it seems like you're sitting around doing nothing, they're really quite efficient. And it would only like, reduce carbon emissions by some infinitesimal amount. But look, anything we do I think I'm in favor of that. So half full.

Molly Wood: Yeah, I'm half full. And not just because I complain about how long it takes, but because it would be apparently a pretty significant impact, 7 million gallons of fuel and the elimination of more than 75,000 tons of carbon dioxide. So yeah, whatever you got to do to do that half full, all the way full. There you go, boom, boom, rocket.

Lianna: Alright, are you half full or half empty on congestion pricing for drivers?

Kai Ryssdal: So they're talking about this in New York City, it's a big deal in London, I think there is definitely a thing. There's definitely congestion pricing in Italy because I got nailed. We rented a car when we went to Italy because my oldest son was studying in Bologna for a semester and we went for Thanksgiving. And I got nailed for violating by like a millimeter over the freakin line into the congestion zone two \$600 tickets. I bleep you not. Yes, yes, they are not screwing around. And of course, you know, so we had to rent the car. And the note comes from the rental car, and we're gonna pay for going to charge 14% and this and that, and oh, yeah. And then I had to get money orders and transfer it into euros. And yeah, it was a mess. Anyway, provided it is well adjudicated, which in my experience, it has not been. Oh, yeah, yeah. Anyway, so I'm half full for a lot of reasons, but mostly because there's too many cars on the road.

Molly Wood: I'm half full. Yep, there are too many cars on the road. And look, I mean, it goes along in line with like a carbon tax. Like if you want to change behavior, you have to create both incentives and sometimes disincentives, and this is definitely in the latter. And I'm into it. Yep. Bring it up.

Lianna: Are you half full or half empty on the Macy's versus Amazon billboard debacle?

Kai Ryssdal: I am unaware.

Molly Wood: Okay, so this is an amazing story. Amazon wants to buy a billboard that sits on top of the Macy's, the historic Macy's building in New York City, and Macy's has filed a lawsuit to stop this and they're like, we would suffer reputational harm and this is like horrible, basically they're just like, you cannot do that you are like our number one competitor, you're already putting us out of business. Hell no. You cannot have a billboard on top of our brick and mortar building. And then all these people are like, this shows that Amazon needs to get into brick and mortar, and I'm like this kind of just shows that Amazon are dicks, like I don't actually think that there's a lot of business going on here except for like, we will, we will crush you. I mean, I don't even know which part I could be half full or half empty on. I'm half full on the hilarity of the story.

Kai Ryssdal: Yeah. I'm going with that, I'm half full on the on, the of it. Yeah. Oh, can I do that? Yeah, I guess I can, I just did.

Molly Wood: I just did this part. I just said that. I just said the D word. So we're off the rails.

Kai Ryssdal: Everybody was all uptight about Dennis getting the E and I'm like, well, whatever. Okay.

Molly Wood: Oh, my goodness. Hilarious. The chat room is basically with me and just the fact that Amazon is trying and what a, what just like power move, let's say, that word is? Just like, wow, this year. Wow. Yeah. Yeah.

Kai Ryssdal: Next, okay. Oh, sorry. Wait, hang on. Your, your fan is getting so much love in the YouTube chat. Can I just tell you.

Molly Wood: Oh, it is. So my sister in law gave this to me and apparently I've just had it sitting here on the desk and only at this exact moment did I realize like well, this is useful and has an actual job. Have a pretty little paper fan at my desk. And it's working.

Kai Ryssdal: And it's working out up there, that's all. Alright, what do we got? We got one, we got one more?

Lianna: Yeah, last one. And there's a little bit of context for you on this one. So a Dutch supermarket chain says it will introduce 200 chat registers in its stores to help combat

loneliness, especially in the country's elderly population. Half full or half empty on chat registers?

Kai Ryssdal: You know, so, so number one is an extremely serious topic right? Because lonely old people is a big, big deal of which my mother is one. I don't know that she would stand there and talk to a, I don't even know if it's a person or a bot or what but, but perhaps this could be technology solving a very human problem, I don't even know.

Molly Wood: I mean, that's why so much robot development started in Japan is because they had such an aging population and they were like, we're getting a caretaker and also company. that actually has you know, like that's driven a lot. This question has driven a lot of robot development. I think it's freaking tragic that this is the place we're in. Even in like socialist companies that come to, countries that are supposed to be taking good care of their people like you still have people are so lonely that they want to go talk to robots at grocery stores. That is freaking heartbreaking. I'm half full, you know what I'm just gonna do like a politician and change the topic. I'm half full on awesome communal living when you're old. Boom. How about that?

Kai Ryssdal: Answer the question you want to answer, not the one you want to get.

Molly Wood: Plot twist. I guess I'm half full.

Kai Ryssdal: Thank you, Liana Squillace. That's, yeah, there we go. Because we stole your first one.

Lianna: That's it, no that's it. They didn't get me any other information for you.

Molly Wood: Well then we love it. Show's up. There, exactly. Why don't people hang out together? Communal living, says Bob.

Kai Ryssdal: Whole different deal All right. I believe that means we are done for today. If you see a make me smile, would you, out there in the wild, or if you want to share something that made you smile, send it to us because honestly sometimes Molly and I just don't have it. Sometimes we just don't got it. You know, send it to us.

Molly Wood: And sometimes you're funnier. Honestly.

Kai Ryssdal: There's, there's, no there's that too. There's that too.

Molly Wood: Let's be honest, you're hilarious. So yes, send us make me smiles and any questions or answers to the make me smart question, which once again is what is something you thought you knew and you later found out you were wrong about? Makemesmart@marketplace.org, we accept all kinds of communications, emails, voice memos, beer, you can call us, 508-827-6278, which is 508-UB-SMART.

Kai Ryssdal: There was a point where I used to get beer in the mail at Marketplace. They would just like, randomly show up.

Molly Wood: You shouldn't say that because he's gonna make it worse. Make Me Smart is produced by the absolutely wonderful Marque Greene, who is learning to do this job and has been a killer producer on the How We Survive podcast, launching next week. Today's episode is engineered by Charlton Thorp. Half full half empty was hosted by Liana Squillace. The senior producer is Donna Tam.

Kai Ryssdal: The team behind our YouTube live stream and our game half full, half empty is Steven Byeon, Catherine Divine, Emily McCune and Mel Rosenberg. Note to Bridget Bodnar should she be listening, we can take the pronunciation note out of those names now, by the way. the theme music perhaps it was written by one Drew Jostad The executive director of on demand is Sitara Nieves.

Molly Wood: This is a beautiful, this is just a beautiful little fade out.