

WEEKLY MARKET COMMENTARY

For the Week of March 7, 2016

THE MARKETS

February employment data edged stocks higher on Friday, landing Wall Street its first four-day winning streak since October. The rally pushed the Dow above 17,000 for the first time since January and left the S&P 500 only a fraction below the coveted 2,000 mark. For the week, the Dow rose 2.24 percent to close at 17,006.77. The S&P gained 2.71 percent to finish at 1,999.99, and the NASDAQ climbed 2.76 percent to end the week at 4,717.02.

Returns Through 03/04/16	1 Week	YTD	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year
Dow Jones Industrials (TR)	2.24	-1.84	-3.58	9.01	9.69
NASDAQ Composite (PR)	2.76	-5.80	-5.04	14.02	11.12
S&P 500 (TR)	2.71	-1.73	-2.62	11.78	11.00
Barclays US Agg Bond (TR)	-0.22	1.73	1.62	2.09	3.57
MSCI EAFE (TR)	4.65	-4.72	-10.14	2.16	1.49

Source: Morningstar.com. *Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Indexes are unmanaged and cannot be invested into directly. Three- and five-year returns are annualized. The Dow Jones Industrials, MSCI EAFE, Barclays US Agg Bond and S&P, excluding "1 Week" returns, are based on total return, which is a reflection of return to an investor by reinvesting dividends after the deduction of withholding tax. The NASDAQ is based on price return, which is the capital appreciation of the portfolio, excluding income generated by the assets in the portfolio in the form of interest and dividends. (TR) indicates total return. (PR) indicates price return. MSCI EAFE returns stated in U.S. dollars.

Half as Much — The average nationwide price of gasoline was \$1.728 a gallon on Friday, Feb. 26. Two years ago (Feb. 26, 2014), the average nationwide price of gasoline was \$3.432 a gallon. Thus, the price of gasoline has dropped 50 percent in the last two years (source: AAA, BTN Research).

Connected? — The S&P 500 has lost 6.9 percent (total return) in the 48 trading days since the Federal Reserve raised short-term interest rates for the first time in 9½ years on Dec. 16, 2015, i.e., the 48 trading days from Dec. 17, 2015, through last Friday, Feb. 26, 2016 (source: BTN Research).

Good for Home Buyers — The average 30-year fixed rate mortgage nationwide was 3.65 percent last week (Thursday, Feb. 18, 2016), resulting in a \$457.46 monthly principal and interest payment per \$100,000 of debt. The average 30-year fixed rate mortgage nationwide was 5 percent just five years ago (Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011), resulting in a \$536.82 monthly principal and interest payment per \$100,000 of debt (source: Freddie Mac, BTN Research).

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WEEKLY FOCUS – National Consumer Protection Week

Financial security involves more than having a retirement plan or a way to accumulate wealth. It also requires being vigilant to protect your finances so you don't fall victim to fraud.

Sunday marked the start of National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), an annual coordinated campaign that promotes resources available online from government agencies and consumer organizations to help people make smarter buying decisions and spot rip-offs.

Created 19 years ago by the Federal Trade Commission in conjunction with more than 100 agencies and organizations on the front lines of consumer protection, NCPW aims to bring consumer fraud protection to the forefront of everyone's mind.

Many Americans assume victims of scams are usually from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, naive about finances or older and more vulnerable. According to a 2014 AARP study, however, many of those stereotypes aren't true. No one is immune to scam artists, and anyone connected to the Internet should be aware of common high-risk activities.

The study, "Caught in the Scammer's Net," found nearly two-thirds of Americans who use the Internet received at least one online scam offer in 2013. Because they are familiar with investment products, financially literate and financially stressed people are usually more susceptible to investment fraud than those who would never purchase investment products to begin with. While older adults are more likely to lose a significant amount of money to fraud, younger adults – who are more active online – are actually more vulnerable to succumbing to fraud.

Lonely people are at a higher risk as well. According to AARP, 66 percent of victims having identified themselves as "often or sometimes feeling isolated." Dating websites have become prime avenues for scammers to prey on vulnerable people. Hardship frequently lures con artists, with many scams aimed at those coping with legal issues or the aftermath of a natural disaster.

National Consumer Protection Week's website, www.ncpw.gov, lists organizations, government agencies, tools, tips and resources to help you and your family make more informed buying decisions and recognize, guard against and report scams and fraud. Protecting your personal and financial information is our top priority. If you would like more information about the safeguards we have in place to protect your finances, please contact our office.



This commentary brought to you by:

Davidson Financial Services

Anthony A Davidson, Investment Advisor Representative
1795 Alysheba Way Suite 3101 Lexington, KY 40509
859-245-5880 fax: 859-245-7007

anthony@wealthhappens.net www.wealthhappens.net

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* The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a price-weighted index of 30 actively traded blue-chip stocks. NASDAQ Composite Index is an unmanaged, market-weighted index of all over-the-counter common stocks traded on the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation System. The Morgan Stanley Capital International Europe, Australia and Far East Index (MSCI EAFE Index) is a widely recognized benchmark of non-U.S. stock markets. It is an unmanaged index composed of a sample of companies representative of the market structure of 20 European and Pacific Basin countries and includes reinvestment of all dividends. Barclays Capital Aggregate Bond Index is an unmanaged index comprised of U.S. investment-grade, fixed-rate bond market securities, including government, government agency, corporate and mortgage-backed securities between one and 10 years. Written by Securities America. SAI# 1437079.1