

WEEKLY MARKET COMMENTARY

For the Week of Sept. 16, 2013

THE MARKETS

U.S. stocks rose on Friday, leading the Dow to post its best weekly gain since January as investors looked to the Federal Reserve to reduce stimulus measures soon. The S&P 500 also posted its best weekly gain in nearly two months. For the week, the Dow rose 3.10 percent to close at 15,376.06. The S&P gained 2.03 percent to finish at 1,687.99 and the NASDAQ climbed 1.70 percent to end the week at 3,722.18.

Returns Through 09/13/13	1 Week	YTD	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year
Dow Jones Industrials (TR)	3.10	19.54	16.60	16.45	9.16
NASDAQ Composite (PR)	1.70	23.27	17.95	17.65	10.48
S&P 500 (TR)	2.03	20.18	18.21	17.08	8.56
Barclays US Agg Bond (TR)	0.32	-3.34	-2.62	2.60	4.63
MSCI EAFE (TR)	2.45	13.92	20.09	8.73	4.02

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.

Comeback – The United States has added 6.15 million jobs since Dec. 31, 2009, equal to 72 percent of the 8.57 million jobs that were lost during the 2007-2009 recession (source: Department of Labor, BTN Research).

Winner By Month – The best monthly performance on a total return basis for the S&P 500 has occurred in April, October or November in 10 of the past 12 years (i.e., 2001-12). With still four months to go in 2013, January's 5.2 percent gain is the frontrunner month YTD (source: BTN Research).

Top Rating – Thirteen U.S. states have a higher credit rating with S&P than does the U.S. government (source: S&P, BTN Research).

WEEKLY FOCUS – Your Personal Health Care Plan

According to a new survey by the National Business Group on Health, the cost of providing employee health care benefits at the nation's largest employers is projected to increase 7 percent in 2014 – the third consecutive year employers have budgeted this amount. The survey also found that some employers believe health insurance exchanges could be a viable option for certain populations, and more companies plan to offer workers a consumer-directed health plan as their only health benefit.

As the government continues to debate and negotiate health care laws and provisions, health costs may continue to rise. By focusing on making smart health care decisions, including getting the most out of employer or government-sponsored insurance programs, you can potentially free up money that can be invested for your long-term goals such as college savings or retirement.

While you don't know when you might get sick or suffer an injury, you can predict with some degree of accuracy the amount you will pay in premiums in the coming year. You may also have recurring expenses that you can predict: maintenance medications, prescription glasses or contact lenses, annual exams and vaccinations. Some of these may be covered by insurance, with or without a deductible.

Timing those expenses can make a difference. For example, some employer-based health insurance coverage includes Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) that allow employees to set aside pretax wages to cover medical costs not covered by insurance. Most flex plans have a "use it or lose it" feature – meaning you must use the dollars in your flex account by year end or you forfeit leftover money. Now may be a great time to audit your FSA payments so far this year against your provider statements to ensure any eligible costs have been paid by the FSA. If you discover that you have paid out of pocket for covered expenses, you may be able to request reimbursement – and then add that cash to your investment account.

Of course, not everyone has employer-based health insurance. Over the coming weeks, we'll look at how leveraging the efficiency of other health coverage options, like health savings accounts and Medicare Part B, may make additional money available for investing for your future. If you or a loved one needs help with strategies for college, retirement or other long-term goals, please call our office for an appointment.

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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#729624