



Weekly Economic News & Updates

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FMOCC-Wall Street liked what it heard from Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell last week. While speaking Wednesday to an audience in New York, Powell stated that interest rates “remain just below the broad range of estimates of the level that would be neutral for the economy – that is, neither speeding up nor slowing down growth.” He also noted there was “no preset policy path” for raising interest rates in the near term. These dovish signals helped to send all three major U.S. stock indices 2.3-3.0% higher for the day, and their weekly performances were stellar: across five trading sessions, the Nasdaq Composite gained 5.64%; the Dow Jones Industrial Average, 5.16%; the S&P 500, 4.85%. They settled Friday as follows: Nasdaq, 7,330.54; Dow, 25,538.46; S&P, 2,760.16.

NAFTA REPLACEMENT DEAL TAKES ANOTHER STEP FORWARD

Friday, President Donald Trump, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto formally signed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) at the 2018 G20 summit in Buenos Aires. The legislatures of each nation must now vote to approve the accord. The USMCA may face significant resistance in Congress.

CONSUMER SPENDING PACE ACCELERATES; CONFIDENCE GAUGE STILL HIGH

In October, personal spending rose 0.6%, while incomes improved 0.5%. (In noting this, the Department of Commerce revised the 0.4% personal spending gain of September down to 0.2%.) The monthly consumer confidence index, maintained by the Conference Board, declined 2.2 points in November to 135.7; that still exceeded the 135.5 consensus forecast from analysts polled by Briefing.com.

BLACK FRIDAY SALES- For most, Thanksgiving means time with the family and a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. For others, the holiday includes early morning door-busters and shopping for the best deals of the season. This year, however, fewer Americans headed out for post-turkey bargain hunting. According to RetailNext, following years of decline, foot traffic again dipped this holiday week, down 5% on Thanksgiving Day and Black Friday compared to last year. In 2017, roughly 174 million shoppers took advantage of sales in-stores and online over the holiday weekend. This year, however, just over 165 million Americans shopped over the same five-day period, reducing net sales at U.S. malls and brick-and-mortar stores roughly 6% over the long holiday weekend.

But in today’s cyber-based world, fewer shoppers rushing out to the stores during the Thanksgiving weekend doesn’t necessarily mean people weren’t shopping or even spending less. It does mean, however, that Americans have changed how they shop. Increasingly more consumers this year simply opted to sort through the deals and bargains from the comfort of their own home, with a computer screen or phone, that is. According to the National Retail Federation, a quarter of holiday weekend shoppers only shopped online, more than the 21% that sought out holiday specials only in-store. Still, the vast majority of shoppers, 54%, did both in-store and online shopping hoping to get the best of both worlds.

WEEKLY QUOTE

*“Resolve to **be thyself**: and know, that he who finds himself, loses his misery.”*
Matthew Arnold

WEEKLY TIP

When you write a **will**, you must name an **executor**: either a friend or relative, or a financial or legal professional. A financial or legal professional who serves as your executor will probably be paid with assets from your estate.

WEEKLY RIDDLE

It can be open, closed, empty, or full. Sometimes you see one, sometimes two. It can be bare, but never a bear. What is it?

Last week’s answer:
Breakfast and Lunch

Sources: Financial Strategies Group, The Baker Group, wsj.com, bigcharts.com, treasury.gov, Randy Baker and Chris Low and Rebecca Kooshak FTN Financial
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