

# AMJ Financial Wealth Management

## Weekly Market Commentary

### November 13, 2023

#### The Markets

Earnings grew in the third quarter.

Four times a year, during earnings season, publicly traded companies report how well they performed during the previous quarter. The strength of corporate earnings – also known as bottom-line profits – is one of the economic indicators that investors watch closely.

When companies consistently grow earnings, investors feel confident they may continue to do so. Consequently, solid earnings can help lift a company's share price. The opposite is also true. When earnings are lower than expected, investors may lose confidence in a company or look for better relative opportunities. As a result, weak earnings may lead to a company's share price falling.

Companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index have been in an "earnings recession." That occurs when year-over-year earnings decline for two consecutive quarters. The earnings of companies in the S&P 500 retreated for three consecutive quarters – from October 2022 through June 2023, reported John Butters of *FactSet*.

Last week, with 92 percent of companies in the S&P 500 reporting on third-quarter performance, overall earnings were up 4.1 percent, year-over-year. The earnings recession is over. While that's positive news, concerns about slowing economic growth and the possibility of recession caused many analysts to lower estimates for fourth-quarter earnings by more than usual, reported *FactSet*.

Year-over-year earnings growth for the fourth quarter is estimated to be 3.2 percent, down from estimates of 8 percent at the end of September. Analysts also lowered forecasts for the first half of 2024. They expect earnings growth to be 6.7 percent year-over-year in the first quarter, and 10.5 percent year-over-year in the second quarter.

Downward earnings revisions reflect current market uncertainty. Last week, in a *Bloomberg* opinion piece, economist Mohamed El-Erian explained that while many hope for a soft economic landing, "There are multiple other plausible scenarios for the trajectory of interest rates...frustrating as it is for many of us seeking clarity, there is a range of possible reasons why policy rates may decline in 2024, and their economic and market implications can vary significantly. Conversely, there are also reasons why rates may remain elevated for most of next year."

Last week, investors appeared to embrace the idea that a soft landing and lower rates may be ahead. Major U.S. stock indices gained led by big technology and growth stocks, while the Treasury market remained relatively calm. At week's end, the yield on the benchmark 10-year U.S. Treasury was 4.6 percent.

<b>Data as of 11/10/23</b>	<b>1-Week</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>1-Year</b>	<b>3-Year</b>	<b>5-Year</b>	<b>10-Year</b>
Standard & Poor's 500 Index	1.3%	15.0%	11.6%	7.6%	10.1%	9.6%
Dow Jones Global ex-U.S. Index	-0.7	2.2	6.3	-1.6	1.7	0.9
10-year Treasury Note (yield only)	4.6	N/A	3.8	1.0	3.2	2.8
Gold (per ounce)	-2.7	7.1	11.3	1.1	10.0	4.2
Bloomberg Commodity Index	-3.4	-9.9	-12.4	11.2	4.1	-1.9

S&P 500, Dow Jones Global ex-US, Gold, Bloomberg Commodity Index returns exclude reinvested dividends (gold does not pay a dividend) and the three-, five-, and 10-year returns are annualized; and the 10-year Treasury Note is simply the yield at the close of the day on each of the historical time periods.

Sources: Yahoo! Finance; MarketWatch; djindexes.com; U.S. Treasury; London Bullion Market Association.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Indices are unmanaged and cannot be invested into directly. N/A means not applicable.

**HOW MUCH WILL YOU SPEND ON HEALTHCARE IN RETIREMENT?** Spending on healthcare – including amounts spent on healthcare, administration of insurance, health research, and public health through public and private funds – in the United States grew more slowly than usual during the pandemic, rising just 2.7 percent from 2020 to 2021, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Despite the slower rate of increase, Americans spent about 4.3 trillion on healthcare in total or about \$13,000 per person. It's a significant expenditure even before you consider the fact that the real median household income was about \$70,784 in 2021 in the United States.

Here's a different perspective: healthcare spending was equal to almost one-fifth (18.3 percent) of U.S. gross domestic product – that's all goods and services produced by the U.S. economy in 2021. For comparison, U.S. manufacturing contributed \$2.3 trillion (12 percent) to GDP that year.

In 2021, the fastest-growing segments of healthcare spending were:

- Out-of-pocket spending (\$433 billion, up 10.4 percent),
- Medicaid (\$734 billion, up 9.2 percent),
- Medicare spending (\$901 billion, up 8.4 percent), and
- Prescription drug spending (\$378 billion, up 7.8 percent).

Understanding the cost of healthcare is important – and not just because it rises quickly. Healthcare is an essential component of retirement planning. Some pre-retirees assume that Medicare (the federal health care plan available to most retirees at age 65) will cover all healthcare expenses after retirement.

It does not.

As you prepare for the future, it's important to understand what Medicare covers, when you can enroll, and the estimated cost of any premiums or co-payments that may be required.

If you would like to talk about retirement planning or review your current plan, please get in touch.

Best regards,

Angela M. Bender

P.S. Please feel free to forward this commentary to family, friends or colleagues. If you would like us to add them to the list, please reply to this email with their email address and we will ask for their permission to be added.

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- \* Government bonds and Treasury Bills are guaranteed by the U.S. government as to the timely payment of principal and interest and, if held to maturity, offer a fixed rate of return and fixed principal value. However, the value of fund shares is not guaranteed and will fluctuate.
- \* Corporate bonds are considered higher risk than government bonds but normally offer a higher yield and are subject to market, interest rate and credit risk as well as additional risks based on the quality of issuer coupon rate, price, yield, maturity, and redemption features.
- \* The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. You cannot invest directly in this index.
- \* All indexes referenced are unmanaged. The volatility of indexes could be materially different from that of a client's portfolio. Unmanaged index returns do not reflect fees, expenses, or sales charges. Index performance is not indicative of the performance of any investment. You cannot invest directly in an index.
- \* The Dow Jones Global ex-U.S. Index covers approximately 95% of the market capitalization of the 45 developed and emerging countries included in the Index.
- \* The 10-year Treasury Note represents debt owed by the United States Treasury to the public. Since the U.S. Government is seen as a risk-free borrower, investors use the 10-year Treasury Note as a benchmark for the long-term bond market.
- \* Gold represents the 3:00 p.m. (London time) gold price as reported by the London Bullion Market Association and is expressed in U.S. Dollars per fine troy ounce. The source for gold data is Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRED), <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GOLDPMGBD228NLBM>.
- \* The Bloomberg Commodity Index is designed to be a highly liquid and diversified benchmark for the commodity futures market. The Index is composed of futures contracts on 19 physical commodities and was launched on July 14, 1998.
- \* The DJ Equity All REIT Total Return Index measures the total return performance of the equity subcategory of the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) industry as calculated by Dow Jones.
- \* The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA), commonly known as "The Dow," is an index representing 30 stock of companies maintained and reviewed by the editors of The Wall Street Journal.
- \* The NASDAQ Composite is an unmanaged index of securities traded on the NASDAQ system.
- \* International investing involves special risks such as currency fluctuation and political instability and may not be suitable for all investors. These risks are often heightened for investments in emerging markets.
- \* Yahoo! Finance is the source for any reference to the performance of an index between two specific periods.
- \* The risk of loss in trading commodities and futures can be substantial. You should therefore carefully consider whether such trading is suitable for you in light of your financial condition. The high degree of leverage is often obtainable in commodity trading and can work against you as well as for you. The use of leverage can lead to large losses as well as gains.
- \* Opinions expressed are subject to change without notice and are not intended as investment advice or to predict future performance.
- \* Economic forecasts set forth may not develop as predicted and there can be no guarantee that strategies promoted will be successful.
- \* Past performance does not guarantee future results. Investing involves risk, including loss of principal.
- \* The foregoing information has been obtained from sources considered to be reliable, but we do not guarantee it is accurate or complete.
- \* There is no guarantee a diversified portfolio will enhance overall returns or outperform a non-diversified portfolio. Diversification does not protect against market risk.
- \* Asset allocation does not ensure a profit or protect against a loss.
- \* Consult your financial professional before making any investment decision.

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