

PERSPECTIVES AND POSITIONS

By James F. Dykstal, CFA, Portfolio Manager

October 2016

This is a summary of our views on the economy and markets as shared with discretionary clients.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

- After two quarters of growth below 2% in 2016, GDP will continue to grow modestly at approximately 2% over the next 12 months as global uncertainty fades. The Federal Reserve will put interest rate hikes on hold until 2017.
- Headline inflation will remain below 2% for the remainder of 2016 due to commodity price uncertainty, but recent readings for the Core inflation rate (without energy) have been steadily above 2%. A growing economy will continue to put upward pressure on prices.
- Wage growth will increase slightly with a tighter labor market. Job creation will be stable with the unemployment rate remaining below 5%. Labor force participation will increase slightly.
- The U.S. dollar will remain relatively strong, but stable, versus other currencies. The impact of “Brexit” will be isolated to the British Pound and the Euro. The weaker Pound may help British exports compete on the global stage. This could impact the earnings growth potential of large cap domestic multinational companies.

STRATEGIC MARKET OUTLOOK AND TACTICAL ALLOCATIONS

Fixed Income: The Federal Reserve will remain on hold for the remainder of 2016. The outlook is for stable rates in the near term until global uncertainty wanes. Expect increasing rates to resume in the later months of the year.

- High yield outperformed in the second quarter in response to stability in the energy sector. Higher coupon yields provide attractive yield in this low rate environment.
- We continue to overweight credit versus Treasuries and duration is tilted shorter than benchmarks.
- Negative yields on international bonds do not appear attractive. However, emerging market debt denominated in U.S. dollars provides diversification and yield potential. Stability in global growth will further entice yield investors to add to these positions.
- Commercial real estate continues to provide positive returns. Queues can delay additions to positions and an increase in interest rates could dampen valuation improvements. Value added or opportunistic strategies can be a complement to a core real estate exposure.

CONT. STRATEGIC MARKET OUTLOOK AND TACTICAL ALLOCATIONS

Equities: The domestic large cap stock market appears to be fully valued and has priced in an earnings rebound. The negative impact on earnings of a strong dollar and energy price correction are fading. The year-over-year comparisons will become easier.

- Small cap stocks are over weighted versus targets in portfolios. Small cap stocks, while more inherently volatile, are impacted less by currency fluctuations than multinational large cap stocks. We will continue to “buy in” and bolster small cap positions during corrections.
- International stocks are overweighted versus the target. The quantitative easing programs in Europe and Japan should provide a tailwind to stocks as the weaker currencies will boost export earnings. “Brexit” volatility will present opportunities for active investors.
- Within international equities, emerging markets stocks are comparatively attractive due to their low relative P/E multiples and are also overweighted versus targets. Asian stocks are preferred as demographic consumer trends favor that part of the globe.
- The dollar has strengthened due to markets pricing in a Fed rate increase and due to monetary stimulus by foreign central banks. The dollar will remain range-bound given an absence of positive global economic data. This should remove the currency headwind of the stronger dollar on future expected returns.