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Opposing Arguments in Housing Data and Markets

Over the past few weeks, downbeat, cautionary housing market data has been increasingly prevalent. During that time, rates had generally moved lower. But those trends shifted this week--in some cases, abruptly.

Let's look at rates first. The most recent move lower began after the March 15th Fed Announcement. The Fed hiked rates, but the outlook for future rate hikes **didn't** accelerate as much as investors expected. Investors had "priced-in" the accelerated outlook by trading rates **higher** ahead of the Fed, and were thus able to trade rates **lower** when the Fed's stance became clear.

In other words, the Fed's overall message was slightly more **accommodative** than markets thought it would be. Stocks like an accommodative Fed just as much as bonds (aka "rates"), so it was no surprise to see stocks gain some ground at the same time that rates were falling.

In the following week, it was the failure of the **healthcare bill** that drove both stocks and rates lower. Markets put an exclamation point on that move on Monday morning. Until then, investors weren't sure if there would be some update on the healthcare bill. When the weekend passed without such an update, stocks and rates had a bit farther to fall.

But just a few hours into the domestic trading session, updates from members of the House began hitting the wires. Then, Speaker Ryan held a press conference saying lawmakers **remained committed** to passing healthcare legislation and to "getting it right."

As far as financial markets were concerned, this was better than the absence of information over the weekend. To whatever extent fiscal reforms look viable, the **higher rates and stock prices** that followed the election are relatively more justified. Thus the first "opposing argument" to last week's lower rates/stocks was heard. Markets reacted accordingly although stocks recaptured more lost ground than rates.

National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30YR Fixed	7.29%	+0.03	0.00
15YR Fixed	6.93%	+0.11	0.00
30YR FHA	6.97%	+0.02	0.00
30YR Jumbo	7.40%	0.00	0.00
7/6 SOFR	6.68%	+0.08	0.00
30YR VA	6.99%	+0.03	0.00

Rates as of: 11/27

MBS and Treasury

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 6.0	99.65	-0.24
10 YR Treasury	4.9345	+0.0755
30 YR Treasury	5.3271	+0.0792

Pricing as of: 11/27 5:59PM EST

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Nov 18	212	+6.11%
Building Permits	Oct	1.3M	-7.5%
Housing Starts	Oct	1.31M	+7.21%
New Home Sales	Oct	701K	+3.7%
Pending Home Sales	Oct	63	-4.69%
Existing Home Sales	Oct	3.99M	+0.25%
Builder Confidence	Nov	25	-13.79%

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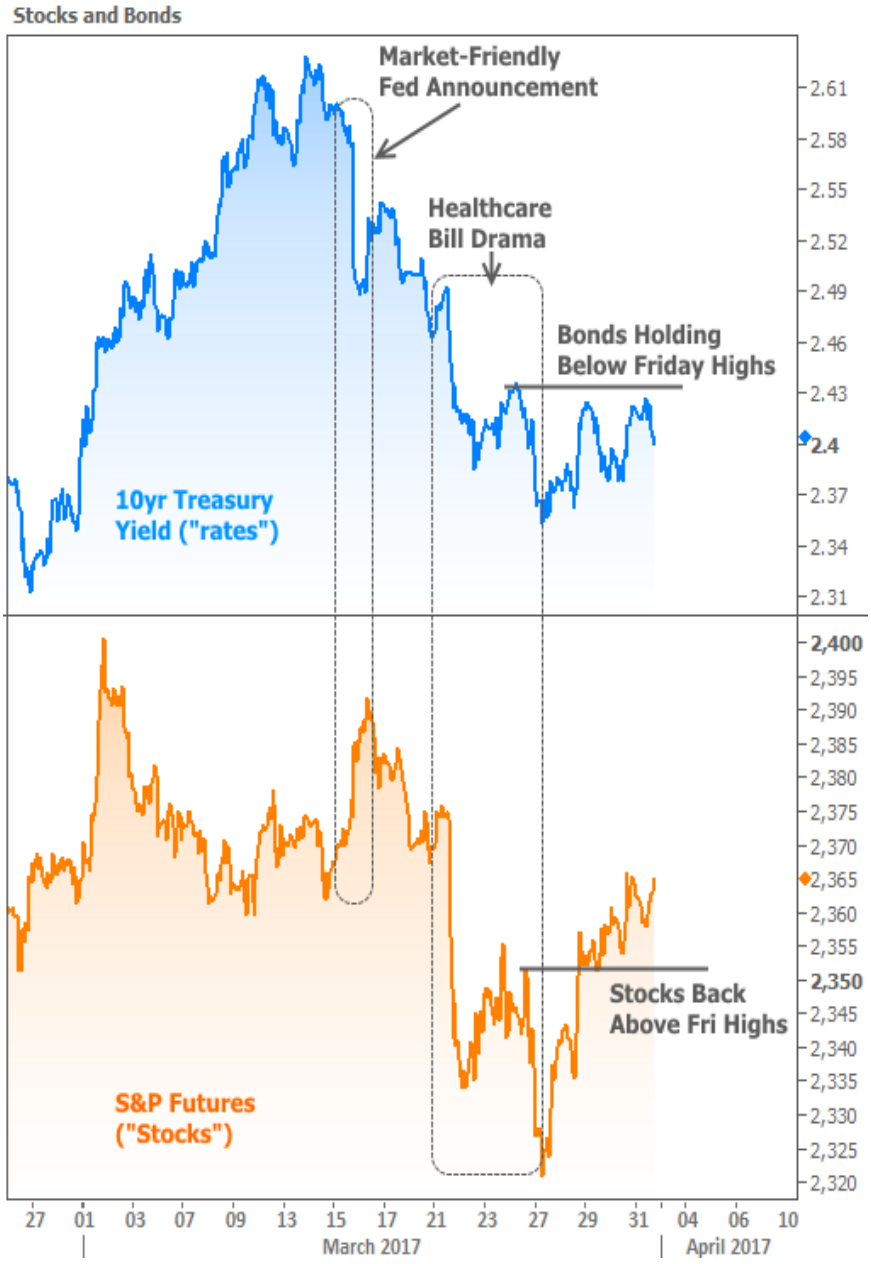

In addition to the healthcare updates, financial media has given a fair amount of attention to a **rebound in oil prices**. While this does indeed correlate fairly well with movement in stocks and bonds over the short term, there's no question that all three indicators are more than willing to go their separate ways over longer timeframes.

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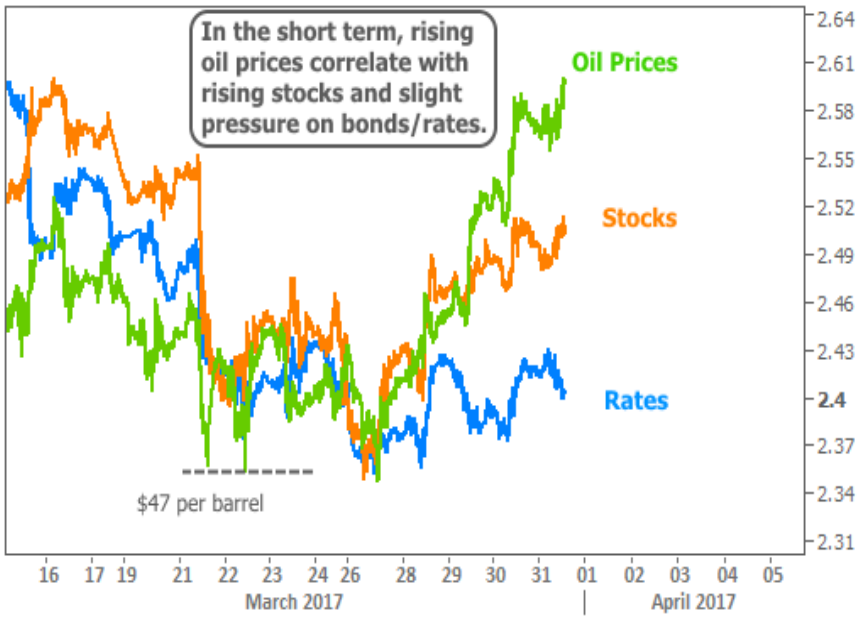

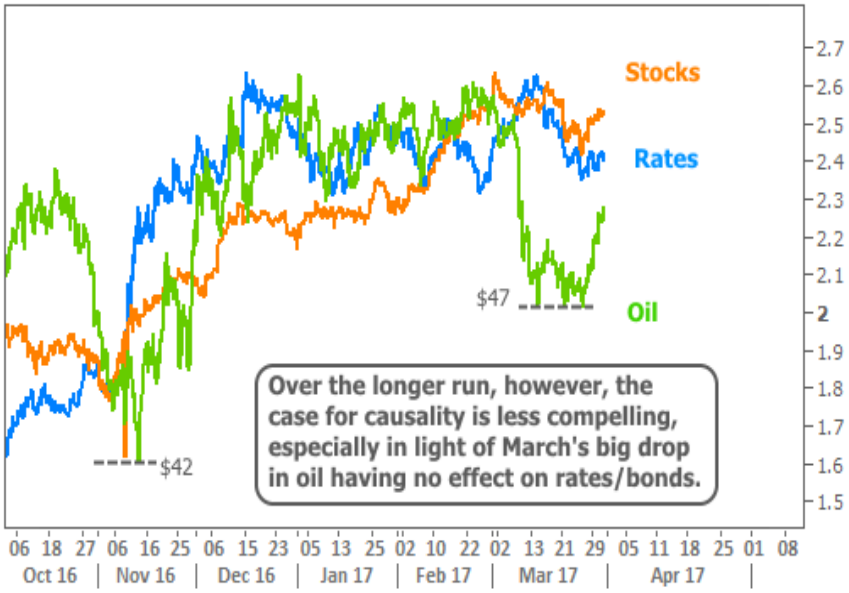

In terms of housing-related data, this week's "opposing arguments" came in the form of strong sales numbers and price gains. Whereas several HPIs (home price indices) have noticeably begun to decelerate, this week's Case Shiller data (for the month of January) showed the **strongest price gains** in more than 2 years.

One of the most important home sales metrics was similarly upbeat. In fact, the National Association of Realtors' Pending Home Sales Index soared to its second highest level **in nearly 11 years**. February hit an index level of 112.3. Apart from last April's 113.6, you'd have to go all the way back to May 2006 to find anything higher. As always, when looking at charts of home sales data, keep in mind that the homebuyer tax credits distorted the true level of demand in 2009-10.

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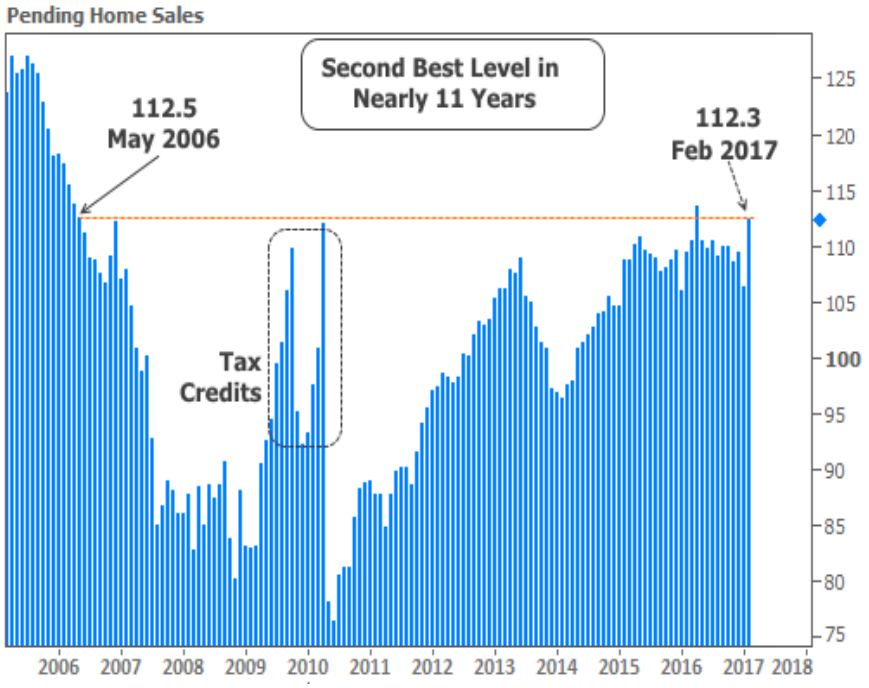

Next week brings several **important** economic reports, including the Employment Situation (the big "jobs report") on Friday. But the focal point for volatility may end up being Wednesday's release of the Minutes from the last Fed meeting. This will be the **first time** that markets get to see the Fed's recently-announced "fan charts." These charts are part of the Fed's forecasts (which are responsible for the move toward lower rates starting March 15th) and will provide a more detailed picture of the Fed's expectations.

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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Monday, Mar 27				
1:00PM	2-Yr Note Auction (bl)	26		
Tuesday, Mar 28				
9:00AM	Jan CaseShiller 20 mm SA (%)	+0.9	0.7	0.9
10:00AM	Mar Consumer confidence	125.6	114.0	114.8
1:00PM	5-Yr Note Auction (bl)	34		
Wednesday, Mar 29				
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Market Index	403.6		406.8
7:00AM	w/e MBA Purchase Index	238.1		235.3
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Refinance Index	1327.1		1366.1
10:00AM	Feb Pending homes index	112.3		106.4
10:00AM	Feb Pending sales change mm (%)	+5.5	2.4	-2.8
Thursday, Mar 30				
8:30AM	Q4 GDP Final (%)	+2.1	2.0	1.9
8:30AM	w/e Initial Jobless Claims (k)	258	250	261

Event Importance:

No Stars = Insignificant
☆ Low
★ Moderate
★★ Important
★★ Very Important

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Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
8:30AM	w/e Continued jobless claims (ml)	2.052	2.020	1.990
Friday, Mar 31				
8:30AM	Feb Personal income mm (%)	+0.4	0.4	0.4
8:30AM	Feb Consumption, adjusted mm (%)	+0.1	0.2	0.2
8:30AM	Feb Core PCE price index yy (%)	+1.8		1.7
9:45AM	Mar Chicago PMI	57.7	56.9	57.4
10:00AM	Mar U Mich Sentiment Final (ip)	96.9	97.6	97.6
Monday, Apr 03				
10:00AM	Mar ISM Manufacturing PMI	57.2	57.0	57.7
Tuesday, Apr 04				
9:45AM	Mar ISM-New York index	735.1		731.9
10:00AM	Feb Factory orders mm (%)	+1.0	1.0	1.2
Wednesday, Apr 05				
8:15AM	Mar ADP National Employment (k)	263.0	187	298
10:00AM	Mar ISM N-Mfg PMI	55.2	57.0	57.6
Friday, Apr 07				
8:30AM	Mar Non-farm payrolls (k)	+98	180	235
8:30AM	Mar Private Payrolls (k)	+89	175	227
8:30AM	Mar Unemployment rate mm (%)	4.5	4.7	4.7
10:00AM	Feb Wholesale inventories mm (%)	+0.4	0.4	0.4
3:00PM	Feb Consumer credit (bl)	+15.21	13.90	8.79
Wednesday, Mar 27				
1:00PM	7-Yr Note Auction (bl)	41		

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