



## Tom Payne

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## Markets Forcibly Extract Fed's Message

When it comes to the Fed providing solid clues about the next potential rate hike, financial markets are out of patience. Rates may be ready to make their next move **with or without the Fed's blessing**.

Over the past few weeks, we've increasingly witnessed a **consolidation** in bond markets. (That's a fancy way of saying interest rates have been less and less volatile.) When we look at this on a chart, and if we draw lines resting along the highest and lowest interest rates, the lines converge on a single point. More often than not, rates will break forcefully higher or lower before reaching that point.

If the analogy works for you, think of this like squeezing a spring between your thumb and forefinger. The space occupied by the spring gets smaller and smaller until one side slips. The spring could launch in either direction.

As of last week's Jackson Hole Symposium (where the Fed often shares some more candid thoughts about monetary policy), interest rates could scarcely have been compressed any further. When Fed Chair Yellen's speech came out, rates moved lower at first, but shortly thereafter, Fed Vice Chair Fischer framed Yellen's speech in a different context. In not so many words, he said **"hey everyone! Yellen just said we're going to hike rates in 2016!"** And rates moved quickly higher in response.

## National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
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### Mortgage News Daily

30 Yr. Fixed	6.89%	0.00	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.33%	+0.01	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.05%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.58%	0.00	0.00

### Freddie Mac

30 Yr. Fixed	6.77%	-0.09	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.05%	-0.11	0.00

Rates as of: 7/22

## Market Data

	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	99.50	+0.11
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.92	+0.15
10 YR Treasury	4.2281	-0.0244
30 YR Treasury	4.4528	-0.0197

Pricing as of: 7/23 8:50AM EST

## Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jul 10	206.1	-0.19%
Building Permits	Mar	1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar	1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar	693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb	75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb	3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%



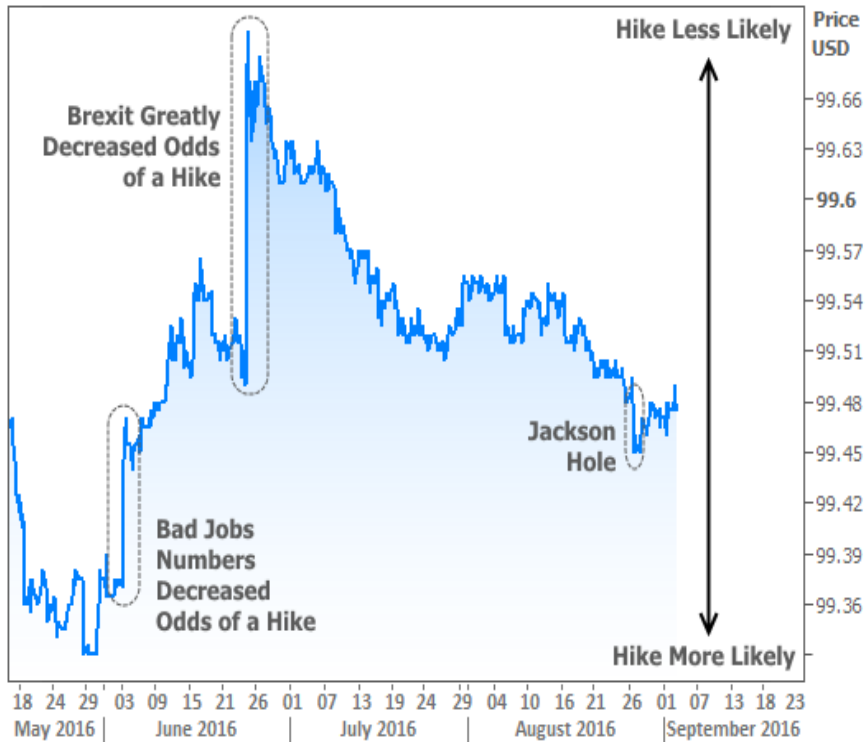
10yr Treasury Yield



Indeed, this has the potential to be the first sign of a bad break for rates, but there is at least **one caveat**. Financial markets tend to shed risk heading into weekends. This is doubly true for US markets heading into a 3-day weekend where the rest of the world will be trading on Monday. Shedding risk, in some cases, can mean that traders are selling bonds, thus causing rates to rise slightly more than they otherwise might be.

The **other caveat** is that markets themselves aren't particularly sold on the increased chances of a Fed rate hike. If we look at Fed Funds Futures (which measure the likelihood of a hike by a certain month--in this case, December), we can see that by the end of this week, odds of a hike moved back to pre-Jackson Hole levels.

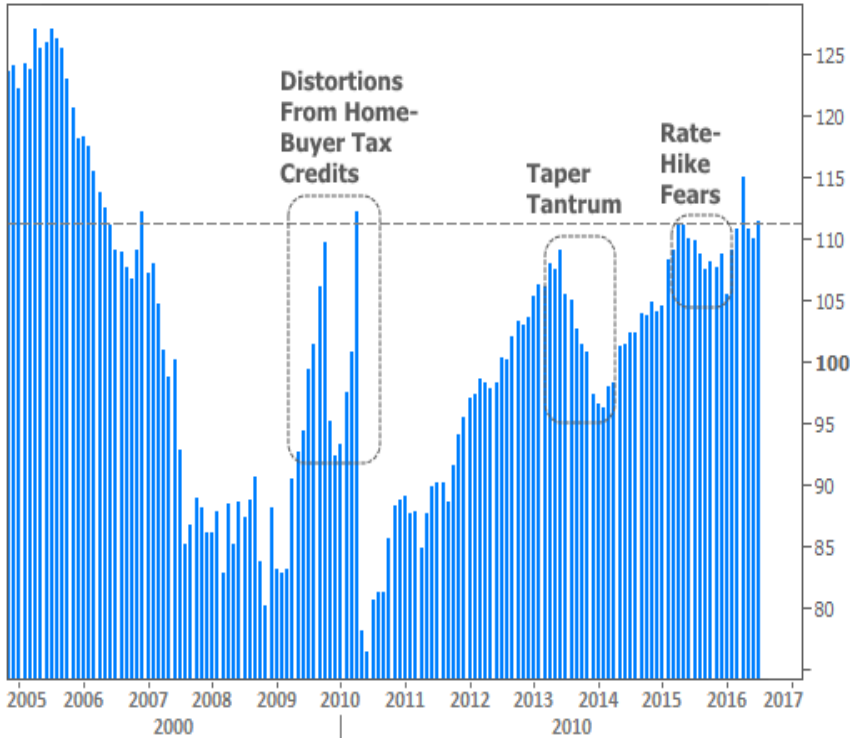
Fed Funds Futures



The comparatively bigger swings seen in June make the recent movement seem much more arbitrary (i.e. rates have been **more volatile** than the Fed rate hike outlook would suggest). This fits perfectly in line with the concept of markets simply having run out of patience for the increasingly narrow range of rates. Long story short: if you forced financial markets to pick the next move in rates, they'd probably choose "higher," but there is **at least some hope** that the answer will change when they get back in the office after the 3-day weekend.

Does all this Fed-related interest rate drama matter for the **housing market**? Absolutely! At first glance, it might not seem like housing would respond too much to interest rate volatility, but in the bigger picture, the correlations are undeniable. Not only are rates, themselves, a factor, but market psychology can also have a bearing on the strength of the housing market. Incidentally, a longer term chart of the [Pending Home Sales](#) data that came out this week helps illustrate the point.

Pending Home Sales



Apart from the homebuyer tax credit distortions in the immediate wake of the financial crisis, the most notable changes in the Pending Home Sales Index have followed the major Fed policy developments. In 2013, the Taper Tantrum clearly took a bite out of sales, and then the Fed's rate hike rhetoric in 2015 aligned with the next salient decrease in activity.

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## Update: Buyer Broker Agreement

After requests from real estate companies, a nonprofit consumer watchdog group the Consumer Federation of America has developed a list of factors to consider when creating a buyer contract in preparation for upcoming practice changes in the industry.

CFA released its "Proposed Criteria for Evaluating Home Buyer Contract Forms" on Tuesday. The 15 criteria focus on the contracts' form – whether the documents are readable and understandable – and content – whether they are fair to homebuyers.

- the document's expiration date (CFA recommends buyers asks for a three-month contract and never sign one longer than six months)
- the right to terminate the contract
- the disclosure that compensation is negotiable
- the broker's compensation clearly stated and that the buyer broker can't receive additional compensation for facilitating a sale
- that any additional fees, such as for showing a home, will be deducted from the broker's commission if there is a successful sale
- that the commission is due only if there is a successful closing
- that buyers have an obligation – for no longer than 60 days, CFA recommends – to pay a broker who earlier showed them a home they purchased after the contract ended
- seller concessions paid directly to buyers
- dual agency not pre-approved by the contract
- an explanation of how a broker treats different buyer clients interested in the same property
- that buyers should not be required to first go through mediation or arbitration if they have a complaint

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