



## Tom Payne

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## Market Reacts to Tariffs and New Fed Chair

There were two key considerations for financial markets this week: Fed Chair Jerome Powell's first congressional **testimony**, and the announcement of new **trade tariffs** by the White House. Both caused volatility for interest rates in the short term and raised questions for the future.

In [last week's newsletter](#), we examined recent stability in rates and laid out a line in the sand that they'd need to cross in order to "defeat" 2018's relentless uptrend. The **good news** is that they crossed that line! The bad news is that it came at a price.

Earlier in the week, it was **far from a given** that rates would defeat 2018's negative trend. Fed Chair Powell began his first round of congressional testimony on Tuesday morning at 10am. About 40 minutes later, he made a comment about his personal assessment of the economy being stronger than it had been in December.

Markets latched onto Powell's words and quickly began pricing-in higher odds of an additional Fed rate hike in 2018. Although the Fed Funds Rate only applies to overnight time frames, Fed rate hike **expectations** can have a direct impact on longer-term rates like 10yr Treasury yields and mortgages.

Fortunately, Fed rate hike expectations aren't the only consideration for longer-term rates. As can be seen in the following chart, 10yr Treasury yields (a benchmark for long-term rates) managed to move **lower** even as rate hike expectations held steady in the middle of the week. Rates continued even lower when the White House made its tariff announcement.

## National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
<b>Mortgage News Daily</b>			
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
<b>Freddie Mac</b>			
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

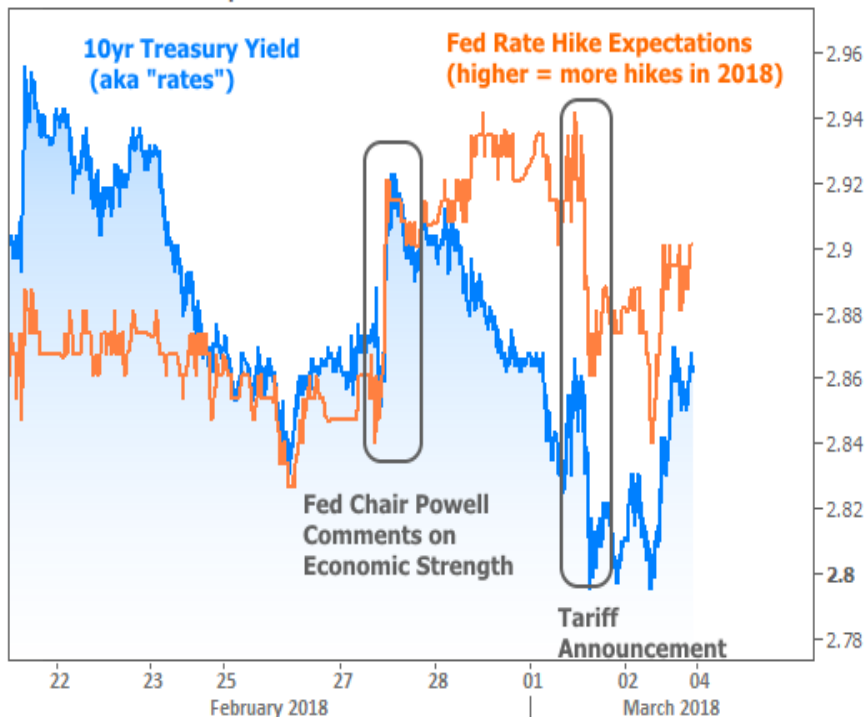
	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.5	99.39	-0.01
MBS GNMA 5.5	99.78	+0.00
10 YR Treasury	4.2276	-0.0249
30 YR Treasury	4.4458	-0.0267

Pricing as of: 7/23 6:54AM 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%

Rates and Rate Hike Expectations



The chart tells us that rates weren't too terribly surprised by Powell. True, rate hike expectations moved slightly higher, but the scaling of the chart overstates the size of the move. In objective terms, investors only saw the Fed Funds Rate **moving 0.04% higher** in 2018. A full rate hike is 0.25%.

The chart also tells us that **there's a limit** to how quickly longer-term rates are willing to fall in this environment. The tariff news caused an unexpected drop and rates weren't ready for that much of a good thing. 10yr yields bounced firmly on 3 separate occasions near 2.80% before moving right back up to previous levels. Bigger-picture headwinds for rates aren't going anywhere anytime soon, so any progress is more likely to look like cautious, sideways movement.

# US Housing Market Weekly

US 10yr Yield ("rates")



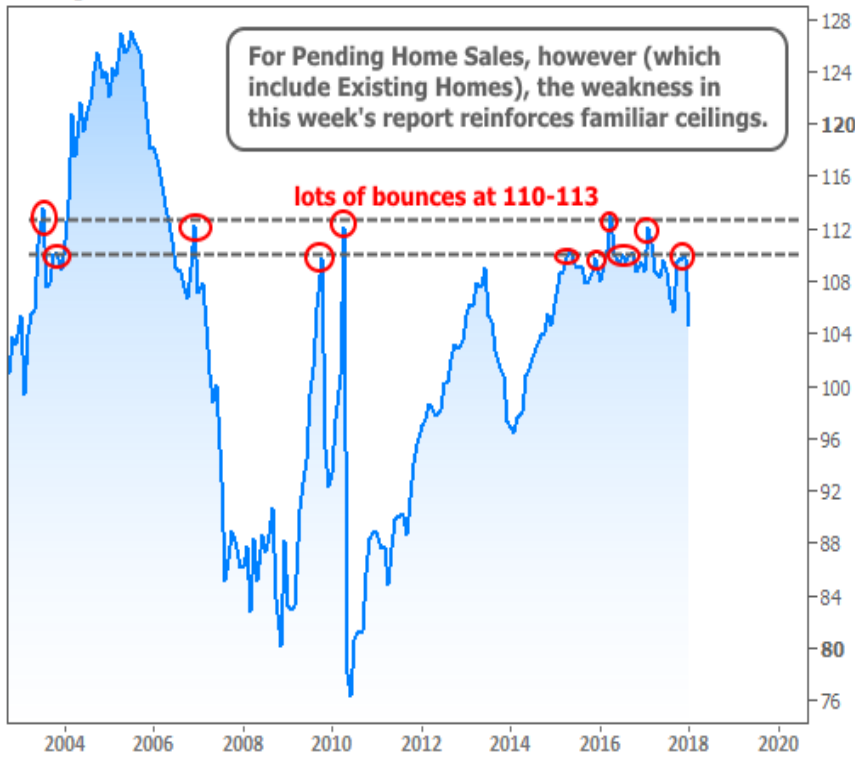
US 10yr Yield ("rates")



# US Housing Market Weekly

Although rates have been digging their heels in over the past few weeks, the broader move higher began to show up in **home sales** figures. Sales tend to **increase** briefly as rates first begin spiking (buyers motivated to get off a fence by the prospect of higher payments). From there, rates tend to create headwinds as long as they continue higher. In the current crop of data, this is most readily seen in the Pending Home Sales Index.

Pending Home Sales



Meanwhile, **new home sales** are still safely inside their broader trend of improvement.

New Home Sales



Of course rates are far from the only input for home sales. As we discussed last week, **inventory** is an ongoing problem, as is affordability. The tariff news creates more uncertainty on that front. Tariffs could increase building costs and hinder the construction of affordable homes, according to Lawrence Yun, chief economist of the National Association of Realtors.

At the same time, the news caused a drop in the stock market as investors generally view it as **negative for the broader economy**. To whatever extent that negativity plays out, it could impact homebuyer attitudes by decreasing the "wealth effect" for any prospective homebuyers who own stocks.

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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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