

April 2018 Investment Outlook

US economy is strong and steady. Corporate profits are climbing at a fast pace (close to 15% in Q4 2017). Housing is strong and should remain strong as starts are just approaching the long-term average. Jobs are widely available and wages are rising at an accelerated pace. Inflation is picking up as the economy grows – maybe too fast? Consumer confidence remains elevated. Key to future growth will be slowly rising rates, manageable exchange rates and manageable energy prices. It is reasonable to expect further corporate profit growth with this backdrop. 2018 comps will be tougher and 2019 tougher still, however, as 2018 looks to be a strong year for profit growth in the 5%-10% range. P/E multiples are back to near a 25 year average. Especially in light of a <3.0% ten-year treasury environment, stock prices appear reasonable.

Asset Class	View	Comments
US Equities	Positive	Low levels of unemployment and rising wages should continue to fuel economic growth. GDP growth is accelerating. Job openings are near highs. Continuing unemployment claims at 50 year lows. Low interest rates offset slightly higher than average p/e and cash flow multiples. Tax reform may add considerably to corporate bottom lines.
Non-US Equities	Positive	The rest of the world is being dragged higher by US growth. The same catalysts fueling the US are helping overseas – declining unemployment and low rates. Interest rates are very low relative to history.
US Fixed Income - Total	Neutral	Rates are likely to creep higher. The Fed will most likely raise rates as a response to GDP growth rather focusing on inflation.
US Govt's	Negative	Very little return offered for the duration risk.
US Corporate	Neutral	Spreads are tight, however, corporate financial health continues to improve.
US Variable Rate	Positive	Short duration or adjustable rate should improve as rates creep higher. ANGI underlying credit risk will diminish as housing prices stay strong.
High Yield	Neutral	Spreads are historically tight. However, improving corporate health is a positive.
Global Fixed Income	Neutral	For the first time in many years, yields are turning positive. Any normalcy should be a positive.
Commodities	Negative to Neutral	Energy supplies are plentiful – not a lot to move oil/natural gas. Aside from North Korea, the world is relatively peaceful – no meaningful gold catalyst. Also, Bitcoin may displace gold as a seeming “store of value”. There appears to be no natural resource shortages anywhere.
REITS	Negative	Rate sensitive. Rates likely to rise steadily. Tax reform may impact as well. Valuations are relatively high.