

Economic & Market Commentary

The last week of May saw most stock markets push higher and finish sharply higher for the month. The S&P 500 and Nasdaq posted their best month since November 2023. The biggest catalyst was the de-escalation of global tariff tensions, especially with China, as well as the announcement of a trade agreement with the United Kingdom. It is important to remember that the tariff/trade finish line is still way off in the distance and has been further complicated with last week's court rulings that blocked some tariffs. However, a federal appeals court temporarily reinstated the tariffs and the White House is expected to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. Historically, when tariffs are challenged, courts have ruled in favor of sitting administrations as long as the tariffs were implemented in accordance with laws passed by Congress, which this administration has done. Even if the courts uphold these rulings, the administration has other tariff laws in which to enact its tariff agenda. It was interesting to see last Thursday how the markets reacted to the courts blocking of the tariffs. Early in the morning stock futures rallied on the news, which didn't make sense because with the courts now getting involved it only adds additional layers of complications and will greatly prolong uncertainty for capital markets, businesses, and consumers. As seen over the past couple of months, markets dislike uncertainty. Markets sold off sharply in mid-March to mid-April on tariff-related concerns only to rally back sharply in May as progress, and a lesser degree some clarity, was made on the tariff front. By mid-morning Thursday, markets turned negative as they realized the complexity legal challenges will bring to the tariff journey. Later that day, a federal appeals court stayed the ruling and the markets finished modestly higher. Tariff headline volatility will remain an overhang for the market for the foreseeable future and, as we have seen, it is going to be a bumpy ride.

