# NELSONCORPNEWS

JULY
2026

## YOUR MID-YEAR FINANCIAL CHECKLIST

Five summer financial reminders you won't want to ignore. p6

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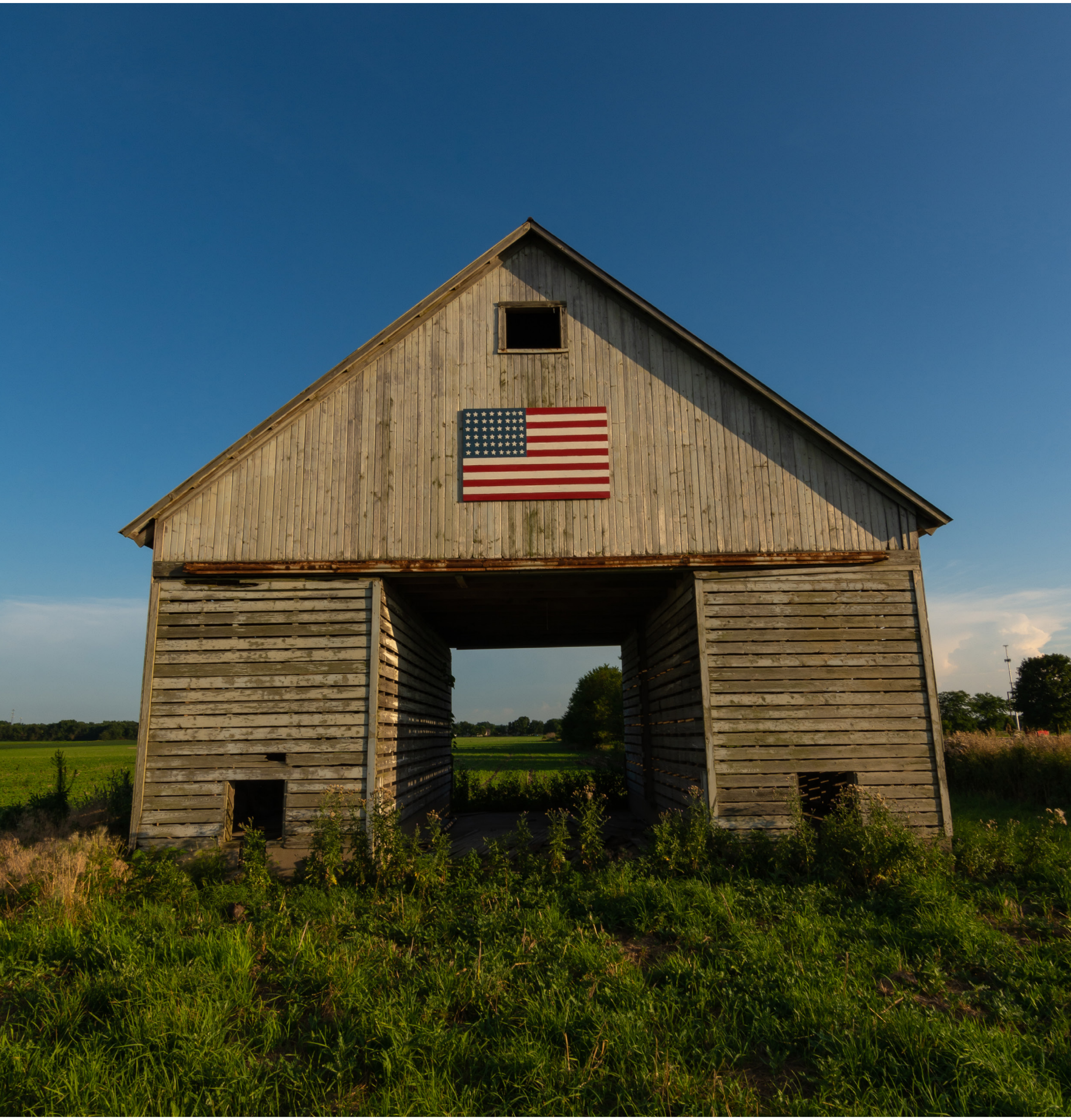
## FEATURED CHARITY OF THE MONTH

NelsonCorp's Charity of the Month is Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Mississippi Valley



# YOUR NELSONCORP TEAM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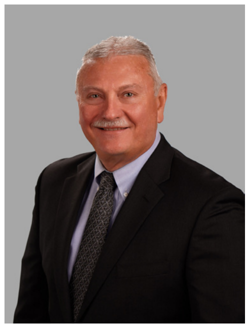
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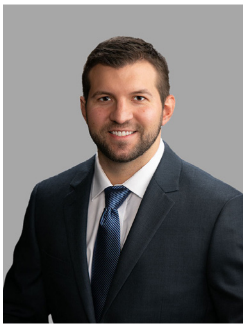
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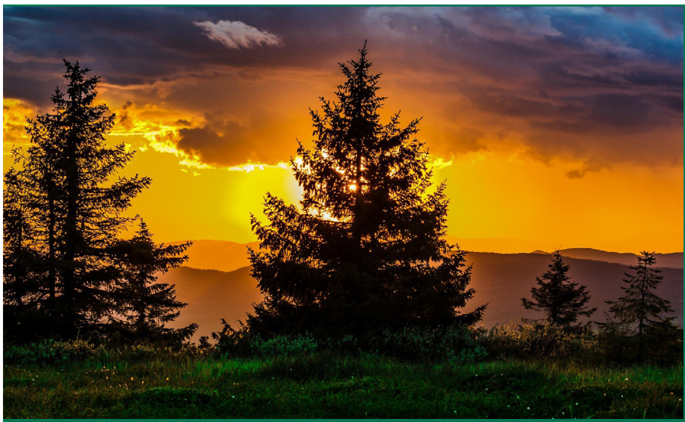

# THE VALUE OF A SUMMER EVENING

Recently, after a busy day, I found myself sitting outside as the sun began to set. Neighbors were chatting, the smell of grilled food was in the air, and crickets were starting to chirp. It wasn't a grand vacation or a special event—just an ordinary summer evening. Yet it felt rich in all the ways that matter most.

As financial advisors, we spend a lot of time talking about goals, savings, investments, and planning for the future. Those things are important, but they're not the destination. They're the tools that help us create the lives we want to live.

When we ask clients what they envision for retirement or financial success, they talk about spending time with family, traveling, attending grandchildren's activities, volunteering, or simply having the freedom to enjoy life without financial stress.

That's why thoughtful financial planning is about more than numbers. It's about creating opportunities for meaningful moments—the kind that often seem small at the time but become the memories we cherish most.

As we celebrate the heart of summer, I encourage you to appreciate the simple things. Share a meal with loved ones, take an evening walk, watch a sunset, or enjoy a conversation with a neighbor. These moments don't require a significant financial investment, yet they often provide the greatest return.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your financial journey. We hope your summer is filled with many moments worth remembering.

*David Nelson*

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## THINGS TO NOTE

*NelsonCorp has some free community events happening this month! There will be a free LumberKings baseball game at NelsonCorp Field at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, July 12th. Ticket valid for general admission seating. There will also be free admission to Riverview Municipal Pool (main pool, kiddie pool, splash pads, water slides) from 1:00-5:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 25th. Ages 14 & under must be accompanied by an adult for both events.*

## SUPPORT OUR LOCAL CHARITIES & BUSINESSES

*Check out what's happening at our area charities, businesses, and communities:*

- *Blue Heron Eco Cruise at Rock Creek Marina & Campground, every Thursday in June-October (reservations required)*

### NelsonCorp Nuggets

**Lasting change is a series of compromises. And compromise is all right, as long as your values don't change.**

*Source:*
*Jane Goodall (1934-2025)*

# TRANSLATING THE LANGUAGE OF TRUSTS

As a financial advisor, one of my "unofficial duties" is acting as a sort of translator: Taking financial terms, jargon, or legalese that may be important but are hard to understand and explaining them in plain English. I really enjoy this part of my job, because it helps provide clarity...and the more clarity people have, the more confident they feel.


Helping people feel confident is one of the most important things *any* financial advisor can do.

One related group of financial terms that I am often asked about involve **trusts**. Since trusts are widely used for a variety of estate planning purposes, I have prepared a simple primer of trust terms that should help with the translation.

First, a *trust* is simply a legal document that acts as a container to hold or own property, cash, securities, or other items of value.

There are three parties to a trust. The first is the maker of the trust, called the **trustor** or **grantor**, who establishes the trust. The second is the **trustee** who manages and carries out the terms of the trust. Finally, there is the **beneficiary** who receives the benefits of the trust, either in the form of income or outright distribution of assets.

Now, here is where many people sometimes get a little confused if they are setting up or dealing with a trust for the first time. You see, there are actually two forms of trusts: **revocable** and **irrevocable**. What's the difference? A revocable trust can be changed by the grantor. For example, if the grantor ever wants to change which assets are inside a trust, or who the beneficiary is, a revocable trust enables them to do that.

An irrevocable trust, on the other hand, cannot be changed. Once established, it is fixed, with most details set in stone except under very specific circumstances. For this reason, most people only choose an irrevocable trust if they are trying to avoid triggering the estate tax or to protect assets from creditors, although there may be other reasons.

Two more types of trusts include a **living trust** and a **testamentary trust**. A living trust (also known as an *inter vivos* trust) is considered a revocable trust since it can be changed by the grantor. A trust created by a person's will, known as a testamentary trust, is generally irrevocable. A living grantor may also establish an irrevocable trust by making an irrevocable decision to change title to property into the name of the trust. A typical example of such a trust would be an education trust fund set up by grandparents for a grandchild or a life insurance trust.

In a revocable trust, the grantor, the trustee, and the beneficiary may all be the same person. In most irrevocable trusts, each will be a different person.

When a grantor establishes a trust, it is funded by changing property titles to the name of the trust, which makes the property subject to the terms and control of the trust. For example, when a person establishes a living trust and changes the title of a home into the name of the trust, they have funded the trust with the retitled home. This asset now becomes part of the principal, or **corpus**, of the trust.

A grantor of a trust may reserve for themselves the power to manage the trust as a trustee. Alternatively, they may give those powers to another person. Commonly, a **corporate trustee** is named as the primary trustee, especially if the trust is expected to last many years.

Trusts are often defined by their purpose. For example, a **charitable remainder** or **charitable lead trust** is used, as the name suggests, in charitable planning. **Life insurance trusts** allow the proceeds of a large amount of life insurance to pass, tax free, to beneficiaries. A **Qualified Principal Residence Trust** (QPRT) can be used to pass on a family or vacation home while allowing the grantor to live in the home.

As you can see, there are many terms related to trusts, and trusts themselves rarely make for light summer reading. Hopefully this makes the language of trusts easier to decipher. Please let me know if I can help you with anything related to trusts, estate planning...or finance in general.

# YOUR MID-YEAR FINANCIAL CHECKLIST FOR 2026

Whether you're a pilot flying a plane, a surgeon performing an operation, or an engineer constructing a building, checklists are a secret weapon. They prevent errors, ensure consistency, and make the future just a little more reliable.

Checklists are an amazing financial tool, too. The late Charlie Munger, who was Warren Buffett's business partner and unquestionably one of the most successful investors of all time, frequently discussed the importance of checklists in his own decision-making.

*"I'm a great believer in solving hard problems by using a checklist. You need to get all likely and unlikely answers before you; otherwise, it's easy to miss something important."* — Charlie Munger

With that in mind, I've created a new "summer financial checklist" specifically for the third quarter of 2026. This checklist has five items, and while some may apply to you and some may not, each is worth doing now while the heat is high and the days are long.

☐ **Update Your Estate Plan**

Statistically speaking, there's a good chance you'll attend a wedding or celebrate a loved one's new baby during the summer. Both events are excellent reminders of the need to keep your estate plan updated.

When we first create an estate plan, it reflects exactly what we are thinking and feeling in that moment. But as time passes and life changes, those thoughts and feelings may change, too. That's why, if you haven't already done so lately, you should take the time this summer to create or update your will, trusts, advanced directives, and beneficiary designations so they reflect everything and everyone you want to take care of.

☐ **Freeze Unnecessary Subscriptions**

Summer means summer vacation, and for many people, vacations mean travel! Which, in turn, means we can often be away from home for weeks at a time. But while we usually remember to turn the AC down and the lights off before we leave the house, all our subscriptions stay turned on, quietly costing us money even though we're not using them.

So, as you prepare to go on any trips this summer, consider pausing or temporarily canceling any subscriptions you're not likely to use much. That streaming service that's meant more for cold winter nights than warm summer evenings. The gym membership that won't get used while you're away. Auto-deliveries from companies like Amazon you won't be there to receive.

☐ **Review Your Interest Rate Expenses**

From gas to beef, prices are on the rise again, and with rising inflation often comes the possibility of rising interest rates. (The Federal Reserve typically hikes rates as a way of combatting inflation.) That makes this the perfect time to review how interest rates are impacting *your* ability to spend, save, and invest. From credit cards to car payments, from a mortgage to medical debt, it's easy for interest rates to stack on each other and act as a drag on our finances. Take an hour to review all of the various forms of interest you are paying to determine whether there's a way to decrease them. Options like refinancing or payment plans aren't always right for everyone, but they are always worth considering.

☐ **Plan For Upcoming Expenditures**

It's hard to believe, but the year is already half over! That means the beginning of the third quarter is the time to plan for any big-budget expenses that might take place during the second half of year. Major purchases, family events, a child or grandchild starting college, even holiday plans. By getting a good sense of what these will cost, and when those costs will hit, we can ensure that not only will those expenditures be covered, but that they won't detract from saving and investing for even longer-term goals.

☐ **Hold Family Financial Conversations**

Whether it's an impromptu Sunday BBQ, a long road trip, or a reunion, summer is a season when families tend to spend more time together. That makes it the perfect opportunity to have "family financial conversations."

There are three types of conversations that are good to have.

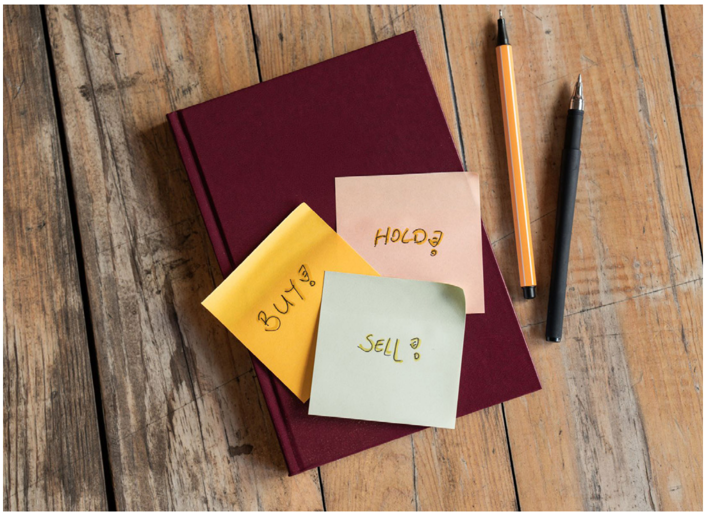
The first centers on "Family Financial Preparedness," which is where everyone (or at least the adults) talks about their plans and intentions should the unexpected happen.

The second is "Family Financial Assistance." This is where the family discusses what help loved ones may need with their finances. For instance, getting out of debt, helping someone go to college, or even investing in a family member's business.

The final conversation is about "Family Financial Priorities." Here, the family decides what they want to accomplish together. What trips and activities do you want to do together? What property would the family like to purchase and share?

With all three conversations, the family is using the summer months to get on the same page, move in the same direction, and ensure financial harmony in the home.

# WHY YOUR RETIREMENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY SHOULD CHANGE




If you are retired, or are nearing retirement, there is one common investment mistake you need to avoid:

*Using the same investment strategy when you're retired that you did when you were working.*

Broadly speaking, there are two basic stages of investing. The first and longest stage is where you invest to grow your nest egg, usually so that you'll have enough money to retire one day.

The second stage is when you start relying on your investments for income. This stage usually begins once you actually retire.

It's important that you understand the difference between these two stages, because they should *not* be treated exactly the same. That's because the investment decisions you make in the first stage might not be suitable for the second.

That's especially true when it comes to a strategy called "buy-and-hold," which is probably the most common strategy investors use.

Put simply, "buy-and-hold" means that you pick a few investments you believe are sound, and then hold onto them for the long term, hoping they'll continue to rise in value. While this strategy may work when you're young (Stage One), it can be absolutely disastrous once you're retired.

Take a look at this example to see what I mean.

Imagine you retired at the beginning of 2000 with $1 million. Seems like a lot, right? So much so that you decide to keep doing what you've been doing: invest that $1 million in the markets and hold on for the long term.

Unfortunately, the S&P 500 went down 10.14% that year. Now your $1 million has turned into $898,600. No matter, you think. The markets have gone down before. You're in this for the long haul.

But the bloodletting didn't stop there. Over the next two years, the markets fell 36.41%. Now your $1 million has turned into $571,420. In other words, your retirement savings decreased by almost 50%.

Still, you decide to stick with the buy-and-hold strategy—and it seems to be paying off. Over the next five years, the S&P 500 rises 55%! Sounds great, right? Look again. Despite these tremendous gains, you still haven't recovered what you lost. All you did was go from $1 million, to $571,420, to $885,701.

And then 2008 hit. The Great Recession.

The S&P 500 fell 38.49% that year, and your imaginary portfolio fell with it. Eight years after you retired, you now have a grand total of $544,795 in retirement savings.

## UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO STAGES, BECAUSE THEY SHOULD NOT BE TREATED EXACTLY THE SAME

Of course, that's not even taking into account all the withdrawals you had to make for living and medical expenses. And assuming you didn't spend those eight years twiddling your thumbs, that means you also spent money on things like travel and recreation—activities that made retirement so desirable in the first place.

Factor all *those* costs in, and you could be looking at $200,000 or $300,000 instead of the $1 million you started with.

As you can see, sticking to a buy-and-hold strategy can be very risky once you retire. That's because you're at a stage in your life where you can't afford to just "hold on." Since you're no longer working, you need your investments to remain as stable as possible; after all, they're your primary source of income!

The good news is that there's an alternative to buy-and-hold. Think of it as a "buy-hold-*sell*" strategy.

Instead of picking a few investments and holding on no matter what, this enables you to *sell* at appropriate times so you can avoid the worst the markets throw at you. By doing this, you can preserve your hard-earned money instead of watching it enjoy its own personal roller-coaster.

"But!" I hear you say. "I thought it was impossible to time the market! How will I know when to sell? How do I protect against losses?"

Here's the answer. There is a technique called *technical analysis*. You see, most "buy-and-hold" investors rely on *fundamental analysis*, which is all about determining *what* to buy.

Technical analysis is more concerned with "when" to buy ... and when to sell. To do that:

1. Analyze market trends. Is a particular investment, asset

class, or the market as a whole trending up, or is it trending down?

2. Put in place a series of rules that determine at what point in a trend do you decide to buy, and at what point do you decide to sell. For example, if an investment trends down below a certain price, you follow "the rules" and sell. Period. If an investment trends *up* above a certain price, you buy.

There are three primary benefits to this approach:

1. By following an investment philosophy based on rules, you can eliminate emotion and guesswork from investment decisions.

2. Furthermore, using rules helps avoid "selling low and buying high." Instead of guessing what the highs and lows will be, instead determine *ahead of time* your **own high and your own low**.

3. By analyzing market trends, you can determine what the markets are likely to do next. It doesn't mean you'll know exactly what will happen—no one can—but it does mean you can make an informed decision rather than simply take a "wait and see" attitude.

The objective is simple: prevent your retirement savings from taking too many hits. Focus on growth with preservation.

The likely result? A financially fit retirement.

Of course, this only covers the basics. But, I hope you see at least why using a "buy-and-hold" strategy can be so risky when you're retired.

At its core, retirement planning is about more than growing your wealth—it's about helping ensure the money you've worked so hard to save can support the lifestyle you want throughout retirement. That's why having a strategy tailored to your goals, income needs, and risk tolerance is so important.

While investment management is an important part of the process, it's only one piece of the retirement puzzle. Factors such as income planning, tax efficiency, healthcare costs, inflation, and estate considerations can all affect your long-term financial security. Reviewing these areas regularly can help identify potential gaps and opportunities before they become larger concerns.

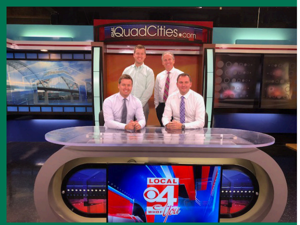
As retirement approaches—or as your circumstances change—it may be worthwhile to revisit your plan and evaluate whether your current strategy is still aligned with your objectives. Taking a proactive approach today can help provide greater confidence in the years ahead.

Remember, there are two stages of investing. Don't make the mistake of treating them exactly the same.

# NELSONCORP MEDIA APPEARANCES

**Be sure to catch our weekly educational content featured locally on television, radio, and the newspaper. You can get this and more at www.nelsoncorp.com/blog.**

James Nelson explained that the traditional stock-and-bond "seesaw" has been less reliable since 2020, as rising interest rates and technology-driven stock performance have reduced bonds' historic protective role, making portfolio flexibility more important. John Nelson discussed the equity risk premium, noting that stocks are offering only a small advantage over 10-year Treasury bonds compared to historical levels, suggesting investors should be more selective while remaining invested. Nate Kreinbrink highlighted that small-cap stocks have lagged large-cap stocks for nearly 15 years due to passive investing trends, higher interest rates, and enthusiasm for AI-driven mega-cap companies, creating a significant valuation gap for investors to monitor.




*4 Your Money airs Tuesday mornings on FOX 18 News at 8am and on WHBF CBS Local 4 News at around 6:10pm and is a paid appearance.*

David Nelson noted that strong market performance continues to be fueled by AI-related investments despite geopolitical and economic uncertainties, while cautioning that narrow market leadership and elevated valuations could create future volatility. Nate Kreinbrink emphasized that retirement readiness depends not only on savings balances but also on managing debt, taxes, healthcare costs, and long-term cash flow needs through thoughtful planning. Nate and Andy Fergurson discussed the importance of proactive tax planning, explaining that filing requirements are based on income rather than age and that coordinating investment, retirement, and tax strategies can help improve long-term financial outcomes.


*Financial Focus airs every Wednesday at 9:00 am on KROS FM 105.9 and AM 1340.*

# IS AN IPO RIGHT FOR YOU?

What would you do if you had a time machine? Go back and see the dinosaurs? Warn the Titanic about an iceberg ahead? Or maybe just ensure your parents still got together at the high school dance?

All are good ideas...but the answer many people give is often some variation of, "I'd tell myself to buy Apple stock in 1995."

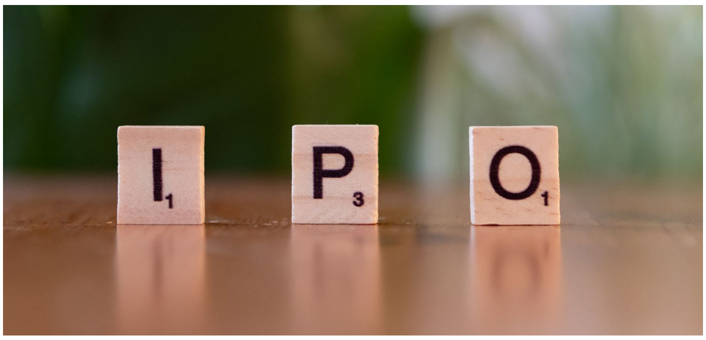
There are an infinite number of investing ideas, but getting in on the ground floor of a company *before* it takes off is perhaps the most enticing idea of all. For this reason, nothing catches the investing world's attention quite like an **initial public offering**. An IPO is when a private company sells shares of its stock to the public for the very first time. It's the quickest way for a business to raise capital...and the only way for an investor to snag a seat on the rocket ship *before* it lifts off.

But an IPO also comes with major risks for investors. So, as there are a number of extremely high-profile IPOs that have recently recently been in the news, I thought this would be a good time to review both the pros and cons of investing in an IPO and how it works.

**THE IPO PROCESS.** The first step a company takes after deciding to "go public" is to hire an investment bank to act as an **underwriter**. The underwriter's job, among other things, is to act as an intermediary between the company and the public. To do this, the underwriter purchases all of the company's shares at a predetermined price and then sells it to the public at a higher price in order to secure a profit. The underwriter also assists the company in preparing and filing the necessary legal and financial documents in order to go public.

The next step is to create a **prospectus**. You've probably seen these before — they are long, technical, and the perfect cure for insomnia. But they also contain extremely important information, both for investors and for **Securities Exchange Commission** (SEC), which oversees the whole process. The prospectus outlines exactly what the company does, its financial situation, how it's managed, how it expects to return value to shareholders, and more.

Next, the company and the underwriters determine the actual **offer price**. (Remember, this has to be higher than what the underwriter(s) paid in order to turn a profit. The difference between these two prices is known as the **underwriting spread.**) The offer price is determined in a variety of ways. Expected investor interest. The share price for similar companies. The amount of capital that needs to be raised in order to fund expansion. Expected future cash flows. Whatever the formula, it's critical that they get it right. Setting the offer price too high can lead to unsold shares. Setting it too low means potentially leaving money on the table.




Then comes the **roadshow**...so named because it's like when a traveling circus comes to town. The company will unleash a storm of marketing, press releases, and media appearances to drum up interest in the IPO. Through it all, the underwriters may issue new prospectuses, change the offer price, or move the IPO date forward or backward, all while remaining compliant with SEC regulations.

Finally, we have the IPO itself. The company's shares are listed on a specific stock exchange, like the NYSE, and investors can begin purchasing as many shares as they want or can afford... although in truth, the vast majority of shares are usually purchased by *institutional* investors like mutual funds than by individual *retail* investors.

**THE PROS AND CONS OF INVESTING IN AN IPO.** So, now that you know a bit more about what IPOs are and how they work, the question becomes: Should you participate in them? Most IPOs come and go without major fanfare. Sometimes, though, when an already-famous company announces an IPO, it becomes a much-anticipated *event*. (Some recent examples include Visa, Facebook, and Uber.) When this happens, it can be highly tempting to invest. After all, the pros are obvious. Some companies become superstars, and their share price may never be more affordable than when they first go online. (Hence, going back in time to tell yourself to buy Apple stock.) You may also be a great believer in the company's mission and have reasons to cheer for its success that go beyond material gain.

But IPOs also come with some *very* definite risks. For starters, consider our hypothetical time machine. There's a reason people talk about traveling back to the past to tell themselves which companies to invest in — because we can't look into the future! Many IPOs never match the hype and eventually fall by the wayside or sink into the masses. For every Apple, there are dozens of companies you've never heard of. That makes investing in an IPO exceptionally risky, because you're banking everything on what is, essentially, a gamble.

IPOs can also be extremely volatile. As investors rush to hop on board, or look to make a quick buck, a company's stock price can change rapidly until it achieves equilibrium. Facebook is a good example of this. After an initial burst of excitement, its stock price quickly fell. In fact, it took over two years for the stock to rise above its initial offer price! For many investors, that can be a long time to wait.

Furthermore, many companies see a steep drop a few months after their IPO. That's because of something called the **lock-up period**. When a company goes public, company insiders — like owners and employees — are legally prohibited from selling their shares for a predetermined length of time. This period can be as few as three months and as many as twenty-four, but when the lock-up ends, the stock price may drop as those insiders finally begin selling their shares.

For these reasons, investors should think very carefully before investing in an IPO. (They should also keep in mind that they might eventually own shares in the company anyway through the funds they're already invested in.)

# BREAKING DOWN BOND YIELDS

There's a financial topic that never gets discussed around the water cooler or at the dinner table. It's boring and obscure... especially compared to the stock market, or bitcoin, or real estate, or any of a dozen other subjects people *do* talk about. And yet, it's arguably more important than any of those. In fact, it's one of the pillars that prop up our economy.

I'm referring, of course, to the bond market.

The bond market is something that tends to hum along in the background, mostly unnoticed. But every so often, something happens with bonds that makes headlines. Like on May 19, **when the yield on 30-year Treasury bonds hit their highest level since 2007.**

For most people, that last sentence likely has no emotional impact whatsoever. The what on what did what? But Treasury yields are actually a key indicator for where the economy might be headed, and they can have an indirect impact on the stock market, too. While yields *have* gone down somewhat in recent weeks, the factors that caused the spike may not go away anytime soon. So, I thought it would be a good idea to explain what headlines like this are all about and why the topic matters.

Let's start by breaking down what I mean by "yield." To put it simply, a bond's yield *is the return an investor expects to gain until a bond matures*.

Yields can be determined by dividing the bond's annual interest rate payment by its price. For example, imagine an investor, whom we'll call Alfred, buys a bond with a 10% interest rate for $1000. The bond's yield would be 10%, too. But now imagine that Alfred sells that bond to Ethyl a year later... but for $75 more than his initial $1000 investment ($1075). Since the bond is being traded for more than its original value, the yield would go down to 9.3%. (After all, if Ethyl pays more than Alfred for the same level of interest rate, she's getting a lower return on her investment than Alfred did.) However, if Alfred sold the bond for less than he originally paid — say, $975 — then Ethyl's yield would rise to 10.25%.

Based on this example, we can see that yields and bond prices are **inversely related**. If a bond's price goes up, its yield will go down. If the price goes down, the yield goes up. Make sense?

So, that's yield in a nutshell. Now, you may be wondering, "Why am I hearing so much about bond yields in the media?" Well, many analysts and economists use yields to project which direction interest rates will move in the future...and by extension, the overall economy. You see, when interest rates are expected to rise, bond prices tend to go down. (That's because an existing bond's interest rate will no longer be as attractive as that of a new bond, meaning the owner would need to sell the bond at a discount.) And when interest rates are expected to fall, bond prices rise. For that reason, when yields rise across the entire bond market, analysts often see it as a signal that interest rates may rise soon, too.

Why are yields rising now? Because inflation is on the rise. In recent months, consumer prices have gently but persistently inched upward due to skyrocketing oil prices and the lingering effects of higher tariffs. In April, the Consumer Price Index, which tracks price changes for a basket of consumer


goods over a 12-month period, rose to 3.8%. That's the highest in three years.

The Federal Reserve has a stated goal of keeping the inflation rate at 2%. (A number we haven't seen since early 2021.) Because it has a mandate to stabilize prices, when inflation rises, the Fed often turns to its primary tool: Hiking interest rates. As of this writing, the Fed has *not* yet chosen to do this. But if inflation continues to rise, history suggests the Fed will eventually have no choice. This, ultimately, is why bond yields are on the rise.

Now, why does all this matter? Well, Treasury yields are an important bellwether for the overall economy. As they are often seen as the ultimate "safe harbor" investment, investors *all over the world* buy U.S. treasury bonds so they can simultaneously secure their money while also earning a return on it. Because of this, many other interest rates and borrowing costs are tied to Treasury bonds. For example, **2-Year Treasuries** affect credit card interest rates, auto loans, short-term personal loans, and business loans. **10-Year Treasuries** influence borrowing costs for mortgages. Finally, **30-Year Treasuries** are a barometer for how investors and financial institutions assess the health of the overall economy. As a result, they impact how much companies and municipalities pay in interest on *their* long-term bonds.

When all these events happen — rising inflation, rising yields, and rising interest rates — it can sometimes affect economic growth. Inflation, obviously, reduces purchasing power, which decreases consumer spending. But higher yields can have a similar effect because companies have to pay higher interest rates in order to borrow money. At the same time, higher yields can also put pressure on stock valuations. That's because bonds that yield a higher return can start to look more attractive than stocks, which are historically seen as riskier, more volatile investments.

It's worth noting that everything in the last two paragraphs is hypothetical. Economic growth has been solid in 2026, and the stock market has reached record highs. But as we move into the second half of the year, it's worth keeping an eye on Treasury yields and interest rates as a potential "early indicator" for volatility on the horizon.

As always, you don't have to spend much time thinking about any of this. That's what my team is here for! But whenever you see bond yield headlines in the news, you'll know what they're talking about...and why it matters.

# AMERICA AT 250: STILL RISING

America is 250 years old.

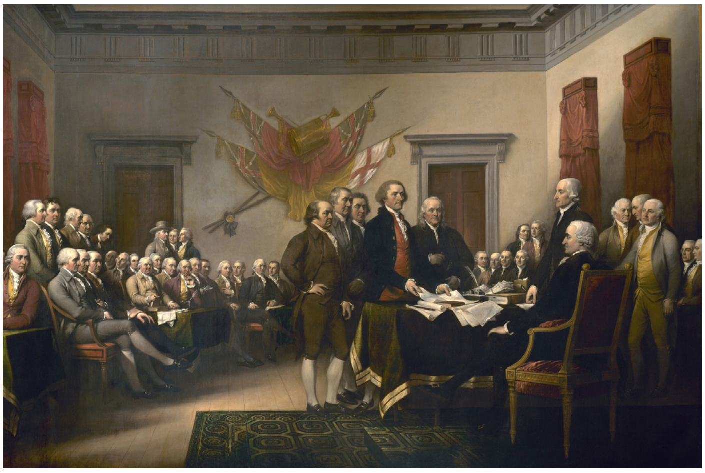
It's a number that would have astonished just about everyone who was there in the beginning. Even many of the Founders expected the United States not to last. That's not surprising. While today, the creation of both our country and our Constitution seem like Hollywood-worthy moments in history, to those who actually lived them, they were quite the opposite.

Like most births, our nation's was both glorious *and* messy.

For example, consider the lead up to the Declaration of Independence. When Richard Henry Lee of Virginia first stood up to say, "these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states," it triggered an uproar that lasted nearly a month. Delegates to the Continental Congress argued bitterly. Multiple colonies voted against the idea. News from the war was disastrous. The only thing people could agree on was to take everything off the record. On the eve of the final vote, a tremendous storm broke out, and some delegates had to journey for dozens of miles in the rain just to make it…forcing John Adams to repeat his closing argument for their benefit. (That's something you'd never see in a movie.)

Or think about when the Constitution was first written. It's one of the greatest episodes in our national story, but it was hardly cinematic. For four months, fifty-five men labored for long days, in sweltering heat, over the future of our country. Over whether our country would *have* a future. For all intents and purposes, they were operating outside of the law by debating a constitution at all, since they had been sent merely to amend the Articles of Confederation. The need for secrecy meant the windows had to be kept closed during the hottest months of the year. Outside those windows, the stench of open-aired butcher shops and free-flowing human waste grew worse in the heat. Inside was hardly any better, the air stifling with sweat and frustration.

As the months dragged on, many of the Framers wanted to wrap things up and go home. Points were argued, settled, and then argued again. Most of the New Yorkers left early; the Rhode Islanders never came at all. And even when the work was done, nobody was *truly* satisfied. Fourteen of the delegates refused to sign, and even some of those who did doubted whether the Constitution would last very long. Nathaniel Gorham, who played one of the biggest roles in crafting the convention, publicly stated the United States was unlikely to last more than 150 years.



But as the Convention was ending, as the Constitution itself was being signed, something happened that *was* worthy of cinema. At the head of the room was a hard wooden chair reserved for the president of the convention, none other than George Washington. At the top of the chair was painted a golden half-sun. Here's how James Madison described it.

*Whilst the last members were signing, Doctor [Benjamin] Franklin, looking towards the Presidents Chair, at the back of which a sun happened to be painted, observed…that the Painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising from a setting sun.*

*"I have often," said Franklin, "in the course of the Session, looked at that chair behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting.* ***But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun."***

When you think about it, both the writing of the Declaration and the creation of the Constitution set the tone for the rest of our country's story. Often angry, almost always messy, and rarely as romantic as we'd like to believe. But each event set the tone in another way, too: They were *triumphs.*

Both the Founders and the Framers were often grumpy and frequently disagreed, but the majority of them were also united by a common sense of goodwill and mutual respect. Progress may have been slow, but it was also relentless, building momentum as it went along. Not all of our nation's problems or dilemmas were solved, but the *framework* for solving them was created.

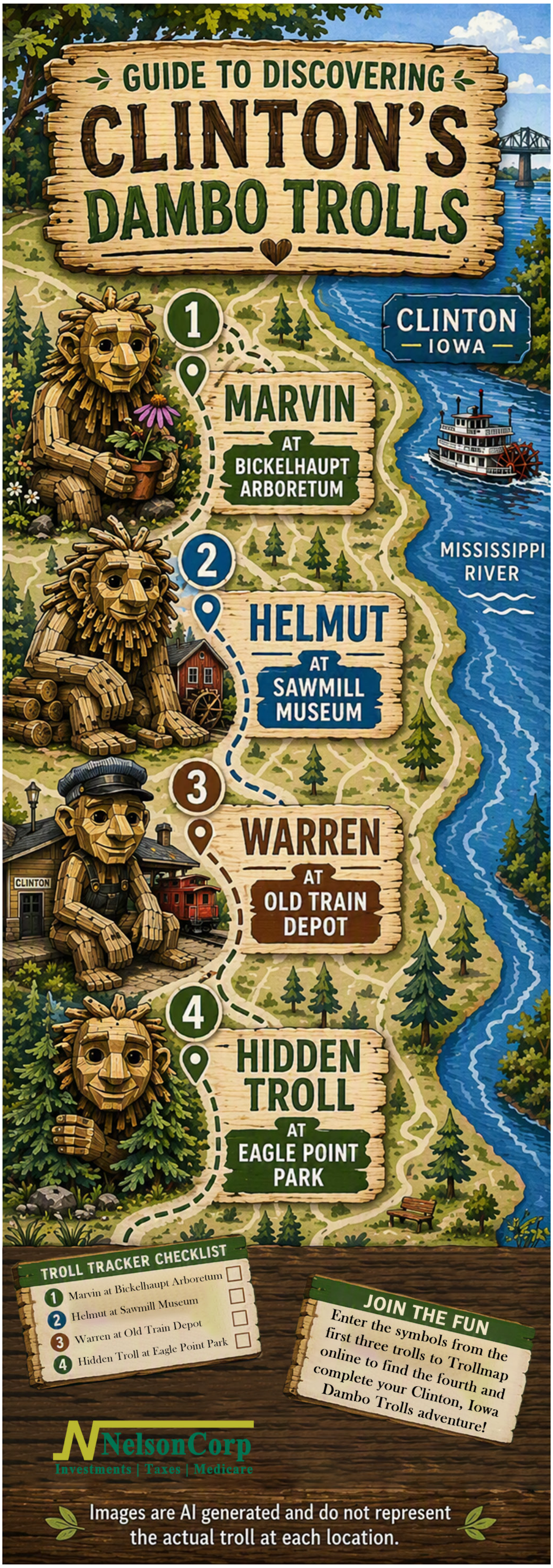
The Constitution didn't yet exist when Independence was declared, and many of the freedoms we hold most dear weren't even in the final version of the Constitution. They had to be added later with the adoption of the Bill of Rights.

America is 250 years old. The road from then to now has been neither straight nor smooth. It probably never will be. Progress has been slow…and nobody is ever really satisfied with the result. But over those years, our country has won a revolution and survived a Civil War. We have ended slavery and extended liberty to millions who were once deprived of it. We have endured Depressions and Recessions, World Wars and Pandemics, crises and chaos. And though we Americans frequently disagree, most of the people I meet, even those with very different views from my own, are united by a common sense of goodwill and respect. Our progress may be slow and halting, but it has never stopped. Not all our national problems and dilemmas have been solved, but history suggests we *will* solve them…and if not us, our descendants.

The fact we have a country at all is a major accomplishment. The fact that we have endured all that we have and usually emerged stronger from it…well, that's a miracle.

Our nation is often angry, always messy, and rarely as cinematic as we'd like it to be. But as we celebrate our two-hundred-and-fiftieth Independence Day, as we reflect back on all we've been through and all we've accomplished, I firmly believe what Benjamin Franklin did:

That over our country, the sun still rises.




# THIS MONTH'S FEATURED CHARITY IS BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

Over the EDGE
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Mississippi Valley
For Kids' Sake

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Mississippi Valley (BBBSMV) is a youth mentoring organization serving eastern Iowa and western Illinois, including the Quad Cities area. It pairs adult volunteers ("Bigs") in one-to-one friendships with children ("Littles") ages 7 through 18, aiming to help youth reach their full potential through consistent support.

The biggest fundraiser of the year is Over the Edge in August. Brave "edgers" go Over the Edge and rappel down Hotel Blackhawk in Davenport!

To donate to this worthy cause, checks can be made payable to Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Mississippi Valley and mailed to:

WHBF TV
C/o Andy McCray - Over the Edge
231 18th St
Rock Island, IL 61201

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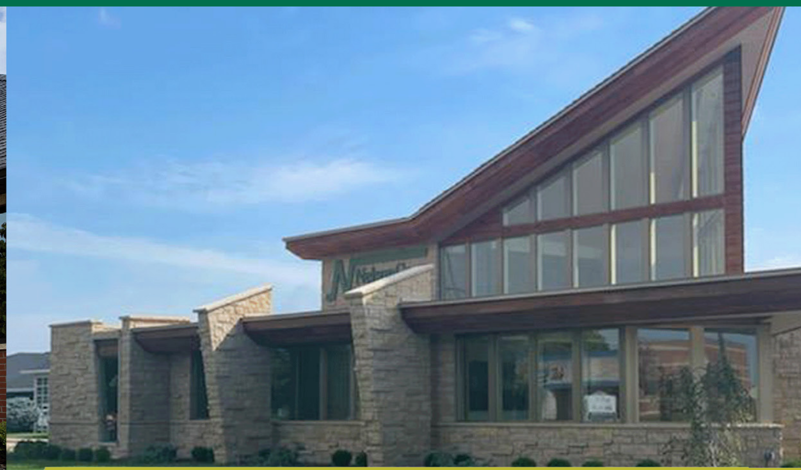

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