26 THINGS TO KNOW FOR YOUR 2026 RETIREMENT PLAN

MARKETS & VOLATILITY

1. Market returns matter. The order of those returns may matter even more.
2. The market isn't one investment. Different indexes, sectors, and asset classes can experience very different results over the same period.
3. Market volatility affects retirees differently than workers.
4. A written income plan changes how volatility feels. People with a coordinated strategy respond more consistently than those making decisions in the moment.
5. TIME IN the market matters more than TIMING the market.

To learn more about:

Why the mix of asset classes and sectors in my accounts matters at my stage of life.

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To bring to my next review:

Given recent market activity, is there anything in how my income is structured that we should revisit?

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SOCIAL SECURITY

Find questions to answers like "If I get married, will it affect my benefits?" at www.ssa.gov/faqs/en/questions.

6. Social Security faces long-term funding challenges, but history suggests changes are more likely than disappearance.
7. Claiming Social Security while still working can reduce benefits temporarily. Timing matters.
[Source: https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/whileworking.html]
8. Many retirees are surprised to learn Social Security can be taxable depending on their overall income.
[Source: https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-reminds-taxpayers-their-social-security-benefits-may-be-taxable]
9. The right claiming strategy for you might not be the right strategy for someone else.

To learn more about:

How my Social Security benefit interacts with my other income sources and what that means for my tax exposure each year.

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Something I want to understand better:

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Make sure your Social Security picture is still accurate:

Let us know if you have any life changes coming up, or if you're collecting based on a deceased or former spouse's record and something in your situation has shifted. These are the moments where a quick conversation can make a significant difference.

TAXES

10. Today's federal tax rates remain historically favorable, creating planning opportunities that may not exist forever.
11. Tax diversification, with assets across taxable, tax-deferred, and tax-free accounts, creates flexibility that a single-bucket approach can't.
12. The retirement rules have changed significantly over the past few years. Retirement strategies should be revisited.
13. For some, paying taxes sooner can mean paying less tax over a lifetime.

To learn more about:

How my tax situation affects the order in which I draw from different accounts and what that means for what I keep.

A question for my next review:

Opportunities in my current tax situation to look at before the end of the year:

Questions for my CPA:

HEALTHCARE & LONG-TERM CARE

14. Healthcare is one of the largest and most underestimated expenses in retirement.
15. Many retirees underestimate what Medicare doesn't cover. *[Source: https://www.medicare.gov/providers-services/original-medicare/not-covered]*
16. Most retirees will need some level of long-term care, but the financial impact often falls unevenly between spouses. *[Source: https://acl.gov/ltc/basic-needs/how-much-care-will-you-need]*
17. Higher retirement income can increase Medicare premiums through IRMAA, sometimes years after the income was received. *[Source: https://thefinancebuff.com/medicare-irmaa-income-brackets.html]*

To think about:

Have I talked with the people closest to me — my spouse, family, or whoever would be involved — about what would happen if significant care becomes necessary?

Something I haven't figured out yet:

For my next review:

Is our current plan realistic given what long-term care actually costs in South Dakota?

AI & FINANCIAL SECURITY

18. Artificial intelligence is changing financial services, but judgment, planning, and relationships remain human decisions.

19. AI has made financial scams dramatically more convincing than ever before.

20. Good habits can dramatically reduce your risk of financial fraud.

If you suspect fraud on your Raymond James accounts, contact us or call Raymond James Client Access support at (877) 752-2237. Visit https://www.raymondjames.com/privacy-security-and-account-protection/fraud-and-identity-theft-protection.

To talk with my family about:

What's our plan if someone contacts any of us claiming to be a financial institution or a family member in trouble? (Example: Set up a code word or verification step.)

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Questions for my next review:

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As a firm that puts clients above all else, Raymond James wants you to have the highest level of confidence in doing business with us and with Raymond James. That's why, in addition to the comprehensive security measures you expect from a leading financial services company, Raymond James offers this assurance:

We will reimburse you for losses in any of your Raymond James accounts due to unauthorized access to a Raymond James system that occurs through no fault of your own.

Reimbursement will be made only for account losses that result from unauthorized online access to one of Raymond James' systems. They do not cover losses caused by individuals who have your permission to control or access your account. As a reminder, always take care not to share your account information, since doing so implies that you have authorized that person's activities. Raymond James will determine the type and amount of any reimbursement, including whether to replace the assets in your account. We may not compensate you for losses for which you are reimbursed, or eligible for reimbursement, through other coverage, such as an insurance provider.
This reimbursement requires you to promptly tell us of any unauthorized access to your account and to comply with our requests and procedures during the review of your reimbursement. We may ask you to cooperate with us in connection with any investigation, to take steps to protect against further losses, and to sign documents in connection with any reimbursement. We reserve the right to not reimburse your losses in your retail brokerage account if you have not complied with any of the foregoing.

Can a victim of identity theft be assigned a new Social Security number? Yes, but only in limited circumstances. The SSA may assign a new Social Security number if the individual demonstrates ongoing harm from identity theft that remains unresolved through other means. Supporting documentation, such as police reports, IRS records, credit reports, or evidence of continued misuse, is typically required. However, SSA considers this a last resort. A new Social Security number does not erase prior records, as earnings history, tax records, and prior credit history generally remain linked to the original number. In some cases, obtaining a new number can also create complications with credit reporting, financial records, banking relationships, or benefit histories if accounts are not properly updated and linked. To report identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission and to begin a recovery plan, visit IdentityTheft.gov. *[Source: HEATHER SCHREIBER'S Social Security Advisor, June 2026.]*

AI and cybersecurity: Fighting fire with fire: raymondjames.com/commentary-and-insights/lifestyle-technology/2024/10/22/ai-and-cybersecurity-fighting-fire-with-fire

Knowledge And Good Practices Can Help Protect Against Financial Crimes: raymondjames.com/privacy-security-and-account-protection/fraud-and-identity-theft-protection

ELECTIONS & POLICY

21. Markets have historically responded more to economic fundamentals than election outcomes.
[Source: https://am.jpmorgan.com/us/en/asset-management/protected/adv/insights/market-insights/market-updates/on-the-minds-of-investors/how-do-markets-perform-in-midterm-election-years/]

22. Markets typically have done better under a divided government.
[Source: https://www.cnbc.com/2024/11/07/chart-divided-us-government-historically-better-for-stocks.html]

23. Election results rarely justify rewriting a long-term investment strategy.

To think about:

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THE BIG PICTURE

24. Planning is more powerful than predicting.

25. Coordination creates opportunity.

26. Simplicity creates confidence.

Three ideas that stood out to me:

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One thing I have been putting off that I can get done by the end of the year:

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WHAT'S NEXT?

For Cornerstone clients:
If tonight raised questions about your specific plan, bring them to your next review or reach out to our team.

For guests:
If you've been wondering whether your plan accounts for what we discussed tonight, a second opinion conversation is a natural starting point. It's not a commitment, just the opportunity to see where you stand.

SCHEDULE A CONVERSATION

CALL
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