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March 2017

Federal Reserve: U.S. Manufacturing Output Rose 0.5 Percent in February Upcoming Events

The Federal Reserve said Friday that U.S. manufacturing output rose 0.5 percent in February following a similar gain in January, [Reuters](#) reported. It was manufacturing output's "biggest back-to-back increase in three years" and the sixth straight month of increase. Reuters said the report underscored "the economy's resilience even as growth appears to have slowed significantly in the first quarter."

[Read more.](#)



Simmons Bank Acquires Acxiom Tower; Acxiom Relocates HQ to Conway

In separate announcements, Simmons Bank, a State Chamber Crown Pinnacle member, has purchased the Acxiom Corp. office tower in downtown Little Rock, and Acxiom will move its corporate headquarters to Conway – where it was originally based, according to a recent report in *Talk Business & Politics*. Terms of the deal between Simmons and Acxiom were not disclosed.

[Read more here](#)



Skills Gap: Millions of Manufacturing Jobs Expected To Go Unfilled

While the manufacturing sector is expected to create 3.4 million jobs over the next decade – "as baby boomers retire and economic growth spurs work opportunities" – a skills gap "could result in 2 million of those jobs staying unfilled," [Bloomberg BusinessWeek](#) says, citing a 2015 study

by the Manufacturing Institute and Deloitte LLC.

[Read more here.](#)



Rutledge Files Lawsuit Against EPA for Altering Regional Haze Rule



ATTORNEY GENERAL
LESLIE RUTLEDGE

Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge recently filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over amendments that would significantly change the regulations governing regional haze and are inconsistent with the Clean Air Act.

[Read more here.](#)

Fed Says “Economy Is Doing Well,” Hikes Interest Rates

[USA Today](#) reports, “Don’t look now, but nearly eight years after the Great Recession ended, it’s finally starting to feel like a normal economy again, at least judging by the Federal Reserve’s second interest rate hike in three months.”

[Read more.](#)



Chinese Company Purchases Site in Little Rock

After extensive discussions with Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola, Governor Asa Hutchinson, the Little Rock Regional Chamber and the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the subsidiary of Suzhou Tianyuan Garments Company, Ty Garments USA, has purchased a 101,000 square-foot building at the Little Rock Port.

For more information, click [here](#).

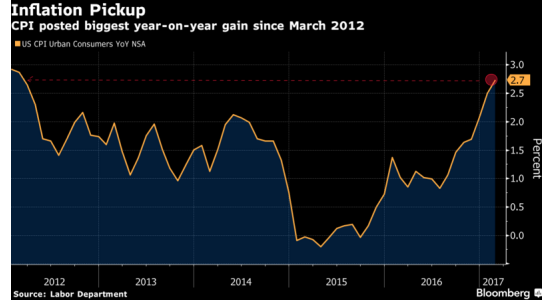


CPI Up 2.7 Percent Over February 2016; Retail Sales 0.1 Percent Higher

[BloombergNews](#) reports the Labor Department announced this morning that the consumer price

index rose in February by 0.1 percent, “while prices increased from a year ago by the most since March 2012” – 2.7 percent – “reinforcing the view that inflation is in line with the Federal Reserve’s goal,” and it could “help explain why policy makers will probably raise interest rates later Wednesday.”

[Read more.](#)



Commerce: US Housing Starts Rose 3 Percent in February

[Bloomberg News](#) reports the Commerce Department said last Thursday that residential housing starts rose 3 percent in February to a 1.29 million annualized rate.

[Read more.](#)



Mortgage Rates Climb to Highest Levels Since December

The [Washington Post](#) reports mortgage rates increased to their highest levels since December last week, according to data released by Freddie Mac last Thursday that does not take into account reaction to the Federal Reserve’s Wednesday benchmark rate hike.

[Read more.](#)



Trump Administration Withdraws Defense of Fracking Rule

The [AP](#) reports the Trump Administration said in court papers last Wednesday that it is withdrawing from a lawsuit challenging an Obama-era rule requiring companies that drill for oil and natural gas on federal lands be forced to disclose chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing. The Administration will begin a new rule-making process later this year.

[Read more.](#)



U.S. Homebuilder Confidence Rises to 12-Year High in March.

The [AP](#) reports the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo builder sentiment index hit a 12-year high this month, rising to 71 from 65 in February.

[Read more.](#)



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