

Upcoming Important Dates & Seminars

Monday, November 11

All locations will be closed in observance of Veterans Day

Thursday, November 28

All locations will be closed in observance of Thanksgiving

Tuesday, December 3

401k Rollover Planning Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Thursday, December 12

Women & Investing Virtual Seminar, 6pm

Tuesday, December 24

All locations will close at 1pm for Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 25

All locations will be closed in observance of Christmas Day & First Night of Hanukkah

Tuesday, December 31

All locations will close at 1pm for New Year's Eve

Wednesday, January 1, 2025

All locations will be closed in observance of New Year's Day

Register for upcoming virtual seminars on the events calendar at firstffcu.com

Spice Up Your Home This Fall with These Money-Saving Redecorating Tips



We get it – giving your home a complete “makeover” can seem like an expensive task, often putting it on the back burner in place of seemingly more important items on the to-do list. Thanks to DIY (“Do-It-Yourself”) enthusiasts who share their creative ideas on Pinterest, TikTok, and the like, there are plenty of sources of inspiration when it comes to redecorating and

finding cheap alternatives, too. Whether it’s finding an affordable alternative to an otherwise expensive piece of décor or getting your hands dirty and “DIY-ing it,” there are plenty of ways to redecorate without breaking the bank, especially if you’re redecorating every time the seasons change. Give these money-saving redecorating tips a whirl when giving your home a “refresh” this fall.

1. One Person’s “Trash” is Another Person’s Treasure: Estate sales, flea markets, and garage sales can all be a great place to start when you are in search of inspiration for your next redecoration or DIY project. Someone could be tossing a piece of furniture or a fixture that no longer serves a purpose in their home, only for you to discover that you can recycle and repurpose it into something you’ll love seeing in your home every day. When you’re roaming around, keep an open mind — you never know just how many creative spins you can put on an item you see!

2. Mount Wooden Crates: Wooden crates can easily be turned into wall-mounted shelves or displays! You can find wooden crates with a certain finish, such as those with a rustic feel, or unfinished if you’d like to paint or stain them yourself. Try using them as a makeshift bookshelf or display for your pumpkins and gourds. You can even lay some fall garland across the tops of the wooden crates to give them more of a festive fall feel!

3. New Uses for an Old Dresser: Among the many things you can find at a local sale will likely be a dresser that someone is letting go of. Dressers are

a common piece of furniture that can be repurposed into supply storage. Simply swap out the drawers for fabric bins, sand and repaint the outside as needed or desired, and now you have a wealth of newly discovered storage space! If you’d rather leave the compartments open, you can display your items on the wood as opposed to putting fabric bins within.

4. Repurpose Your Pumpkin: A pumpkin is a common fall gift that keeps on giving! If you have one pumpkin too many and you’re looking to repurpose it, try hollowing it out and making a pumpkin planter or pumpkin vase. To make a pumpkin planter, simply drill or carve a hole at the bottom for drainage, fill it with soil, and plant the fall flowers of your choice. If you are going the pumpkin vase route, you can fill the hollowed-out pumpkin with fake flowers or hide a vase bearing water and real flowers. Now you have a beautiful table arrangement and can use the insides of the pumpkin for a pumpkin dessert or bake the seeds in the oven for a snack, too.

5. Reuse Old Throw Pillows: Whether you find throw pillows at a sale, or have a few laying around the house, reusing old throw pillows can be an inexpensive way to transform a room. There’s a couple of ways to repurpose old throw pillows that don’t require expertise in art – like trying out embroidery or fabric paint. Embroidery involves decorating fabric and other materials using a needle to stitch thread or yarn. You can order fall embroidery patterns and kits or find tutorials online if you have the materials you need. If breaking out the needle and thread isn’t quite up your alley, you can use fabric paint to paint a design right onto the throw pillows. You can trace a design you find online or use free hand.

We know that some redecorating ideas require more than just traipsing around a local garage sale until you stumble upon a piece of furniture or a fixture that inspires you. First Financial’s Home Improvement Loan is a great option for those looking to chase bigger home improvement dreams, such as redesigning your kitchen. Our Home Improvement Loan features great rates, flexible terms up to 10 years, a fixed monthly payment, and more.* If you’re ready to get started, you can apply online 24/7 at firstffcu.com or call our Loan Department at 732.312.1500 Option 4.

For more financial tips and resources, subscribe to our First Scoop blog at blog.firstffcu.com

*Visit our website Home Improvement Loan page at firstffcu.com for full terms & conditions, or to apply online.

Autumn Greetings

Happy autumn! We recently celebrated the 76th anniversary of International Credit Union Day, a testament to the importance and strength of credit unions around the globe. First Financial wouldn't be able to celebrate such a momentous occasion if it weren't for our Ambassadors who, through continued partnership, encourage your employees to learn about how First Financial can support their journey to financial well-being.

With the holidays right around the corner, we hope you are all looking forward to spending time with your loved ones and embracing the warmth of the season. If your organization is planning an in-person or virtual event among the holiday hustle and bustle, please let us know and we would be happy to attend or send materials.

If you're interested in bringing First Financial to your school or business, contact business development at business@firstffcu.com.

We hope you enjoy the remainder of 2024, and we look forward to working together in the New Year!

Sincerely,

The Business Development Department
at First Financial

Community Spotlight



We recently published an employee spotlight on our First Scoop Blog to introduce our new Business Development Representative, Samantha Colella. Samantha will be supporting marketing and business development initiatives across our various channels, working with our existing community partnerships, and forging new relationships for the credit union. Since she began her role at First Financial this past September, she has gotten the chance to visit some of our valued community partners and is looking forward to meeting more in the coming year. Let's take a look at where we've been over the last few months!

Our first stop took us to the Monmouth County Division of Benefits & Workforce Wellness Employee Lunch Walk and Health Fair on a beautiful September day. Over the course of two days, we visited the Ladacin Network to attend their employee benefits fairs at their Ocean Township and Lakewood locations.

Our next stop took us to Lakewood Township's Open Enrollment and Benefits Fair, and then we met with Ocean Township's employees at their annual Health and Benefits Fair.

We look forward to being a part of any upcoming benefits and wellness fairs you may hold at the end of this year and to kick off 2025. If you would like us to visit your organization or send you virtual materials, please contact us!

Meet Anthony Schifilliti, Owner of Nino's Coal Fired Pizza

We recently highlighted one of our valued business members – Anthony Schifilliti, owner of Nino's Coal Fired Pizza in Brick and Nino's Bistro Express in Neptune. Anthony has been a member of First Financial for over 14 years. He loves what he does, loves his customers, and he loves working with First Financial too. Learn more by watching his video testimonial at youtube.com/FirstFinancialFCU.

You can visit Nino's Coal Fired Pizza at 66 Brick Blvd., call 732-255-7700, or on the web at ninoscoalfiredpizza.com.



You Don't Have to 'Leaf' Your Car Lease this Fall

Maybe it feels like just yesterday you drove your newly leased vehicle off the lot, and now you're getting ready to say goodbye. Or maybe you went over your allotted miles or unexpectedly built up some wear and tear.

At First Financial, our Lease Buyout Loan can help "squash" having to say goodbye to the car you know and love. Our Lease Buyout Loans have low rates, flexible terms, and we'll give you a quick approval decision within 24 hours.*

*Visit our website Lease Buyout Loan page at firstffcu.com for full terms & conditions, or to apply online.



The Impact of Elections on the Markets and Tax Policy

We're in the final stretch of the 2024 presidential election race. As we follow the news and parse the most recent polls, some may ask, "How might what happens on November 5 impact my finances?"

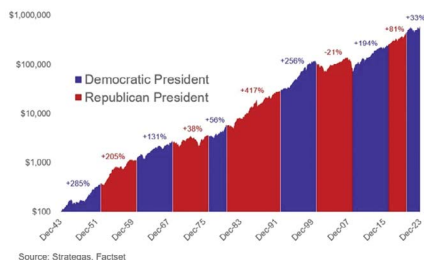
As financial professionals, we've done some homework and have come to the following conclusion: you may care passionately about who wins, but your investment portfolio probably doesn't.

Markets Over the Long Term

Consider how the stock market has performed under Republican and Democrat presidents throughout history. As the accompanying chart shows, the stock market has fluctuated under the leadership of both parties. However, the long-term trend suggests that the stock market's performance may have more to do with the overall strength and resiliency of the U.S. economy than the person who sits in the Oval Office.¹

The market's trend is apolitical

Growth of \$100 in the S&P 500 since December 1943



Is a Split Government Better for the Financial Markets?

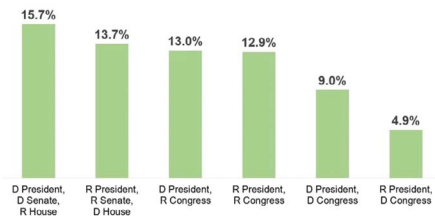
While stock market performance has not historically depended on who wins the presidency, history shows that the market tends to like split control between the two major parties.

As the chart below illustrates, Democratic control of the White House and Senate, with Republican control of the House, has produced the highest average annual return.

However, the runner-up is the opposite—a Republican president and Senate and a Democratic House. While mixing and matching control of the levers of power in Washington, D.C., produced comparable results, the low results for the Republican president and Democratic Congress combo may be attributed to the 1973 oil crisis and 2008 global financial crisis bear markets.¹

Financial markets are NOT partisan

Average annual S&P 500 performance by partisan control



1933 – 2023, excluding 2001-02 (due to Sen. Jeffords changing parties in mid-2001)
Source: Strategas, Factset

What Matters to the Markets

Following how election results have affected the stock market over time is fascinating. Still, data suggests economic trends tend to have a more consistent relationship with market performance than who wins in November. Improving economic conditions (which can include falling inflation) tends to create a more favorable business environment.²

The Fate of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 overhauled the federal tax code by adjusting individual and business taxes. Although some of the provisions were permanent, most individual tax changes are not. Unless extended, many of the changes implemented are scheduled to "sunset" on December 31, 2025. At that time, rates will revert to pre-2017 levels.³

Keep in mind this article is for informational purposes only and is not a replacement for real-life advice. Tax policy is subject to revision during the legislative process. We encourage you to consult your tax, legal, and accounting professionals before modifying your tax strategy. Also, we always welcome collaborating with your tax professional to help align your financial and tax strategies.

Staying the Course

While elections can trigger some market volatility, it's critical to keep short-term events in perspective and not allow them to distract you from long-term financial strategy. The best approach is often to create a portfolio that reflects your goals, time horizon, and risk tolerance.



Questions about this topic? Contact First Financial's Investment & Retirement Center by calling (732) 312-1534.

You can also email Mary.LaFerriere@lpl.com or Maureen.McGreevy@lpl.com

Securities and advisory services are offered through LPL Financial (LPL), a registered investment advisor and broker/dealer (member FINRA/SIPC). Insurance products are offered through LPL or its licensed affiliates. First Financial Federal Credit Union (FFFCU) and First Financial Investment & Retirement Center are not registered as a broker/dealer or investment advisor. Registered representatives of LPL offer products and services using First Financial Investment & Retirement Center, and may also be employees of FFFCU. These products and services are being offered through LPL or its affiliates, which are separate entities from and not affiliates of FFFCU or First Financial Investment & Retirement Center.

Securities and insurance offered through LPL or its affiliates are:

Not Insured by NCUA or Any Other Government Agency	Not Credit Union Guaranteed	Not Credit Union Deposits or Obligations	May Lose Value
--	-----------------------------	--	----------------

The information provided is not intended to be a substitute for specific individualized tax planning or legal advice. We suggest that you consult with a qualified tax or legal professional. All performance referenced is historical and is no guarantee of future results. All indices are unmanaged and may not be invested into directly.

Stocks are measured by the Standard & Poor's 500 Composite Index, an unmanaged index considered representative of the overall U.S. stock market. Index performance is not indicative of the past performance of a particular investment. Past performance does not guarantee future results. Individuals cannot invest directly in an index. Stock price returns and principal values will fluctuate as market conditions change. Shares, when sold, may be worth more or less than their original cost.

Prepared by FMG Marketing.

¹ Baird.com, March 14, 2024

² U.S. Bank, June 21, 2024

³ Tax Foundation, June 2024

Protecting Your Finances: P2P Team Donation Scams



There's a new person-to-person (P2P) payment scam out there. It involves young adults going door to door, looking to "fundraise" for a sports team or extracurricular organization. But be leery, this is a scam designed to steal your money! How does it work? We'll show you exactly how this scam plays out and how you can prevent it from happening to you.

How the Scam Works

- A group of young adults rings your doorbell or comes up to you in person while you're out and tells you they are trying to raise funds

for their sports team to buy new uniforms (or for a similar activity).

- There is a clear spokesperson in the group whose job is to distract you, by explaining a lengthy story on what the "donations" will be used for and how much they would help the team. While you're listening to the bogus story, another member of the group says not to worry – you can easily donate through Venmo or Zelle, and they'll quickly put their contact information in your phone for you so that you can do a quick transfer once they leave.
- While you are distracted with the story and how easy the scammers make the donation options sound, it's not hard to fall for this scam and hand over your phone without thinking it through. **However, you should never give your unlocked phone to anyone you do not know! This is how the scam unfortunately takes place.**
- Once the scammer has your unlocked phone, they can easily click on your Venmo or Zelle app and transfer your money over to themselves in seconds. You probably wouldn't even realize it's happening as one member of the group continues to talk to you and distract you, while you think the one who has your phone is simply entering their contact information for you to make a transfer later.
- The worst part of a P2P payment scam is that you typically can't get your transferred funds back.

You can prevent this or other similar P2P payment scams from happening to you by only sending money to those you know and trust, treating Zelle and Venmo like cash, refraining from giving anyone you don't know your unlocked cell phone, and if you think something is too good to be true or it feels off – it probably is.

At First Financial, our goal is to help protect our members from scams and identity theft. If you have any concerns or questions about any of your First Financial accounts, please call member services at 732.312.1500 or visit one of our branches.

To learn more about scams and ways to protect yourself, visit zellepay.com/pay-it-safe, or subscribe to our blog at blog.firstffcu.com.

Loan Connection (732) 312-1500, Option 4

To Fax Loan Applications
(732) 312-1530 (24-hour)

Contact Us

Local Callers (732) 312-1500
Out of Area (866) 750-0100

info@firstffcu.com
firstffcu.com

Neptune Branch 783 Wayside Road

Toms River Branch
1360 Route 9 South
Corner of Routes 9 & 571

**Freehold/Howell
Service Center**
389 Route 9 North
Next to Howell Park & Ride



Contact Business Development

Samantha Colella
Business Development Representative
scolella@firstffcu.com
732.312.1421



First Financial's Supervisory Committee has the responsibility to investigate member complaints that cannot be resolved through normal channels. If you have a complaint or suggestion to improve our service to you or if you have an unresolved problem, please write to:

Supervisory Committee
P.O. Box 751
Neptune, NJ 07754



Information contained in the "Ambassador Courier" is intended to summarize products and services. It is not a complete disclosure of all terms and conditions. All rates and terms are subject to change without notice. For full details, please contact First Financial Federal Credit Union directly at 732.312.1500, email info@firstffcu.com, or visit firstffcu.com. Insured by NCUA

