MORTGAGE RATE WATCH
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Tricky Day... Mortgage Rates Fall Significantly, But Not Because of The Fed

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There's a distinct risk that, even in the financial community, that people will look back on today's drop in interest rates and conclude it must have something to do with the Federal Reserve's latest policy announcement. After all the Fed did cut its policy rate by 0.25% today, and the Fed was the only big ticket event on the calendar.

Unfortunately, almost all of the improvement in rates was in place well before the Fed announcement was released. This isn't a case of financial markets moving into position for an expected outcome either. The Fed's cut was 100% expected, and Fed Chair Powell had nothing too surprising to say (even if the delivery was memorable when he was asked if he'd resign if asked by the president).

So why did bonds/rates improve so much? We have to apply the same logic to gains that we've applied to other election related volatility. The election mobilized a massive (and massively volatile) amount of trading positions in the bond market and beyond.

We've seen several rate spikes that were just as bad as today's rate drop was good. All we could do with many of those was simply take them in stride and chalk them up to the exceptional volatility and highly charged environment. Today's friendly volatility is a constant invitee to these episodes, even if it feels like it doesn't show up as frequently as other guests.

To some extent, this morning's Jobless Claims data may have contributed, but it doesn't make sense to give it too much credit until other data shows similar cause for concern (continuing jobless claims are up to the highest levels in several years).

All told, the bonds that underly mortgage rates hit their best levels of the day by 12:30pm (half an hour before the Fed), and those were also the best levels in several weeks. As such, it's no surprise to see mortgage rates move back to their lowest levels in several weeks with the average lender just inching below 7.0% for the first time since October 25th.