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Wait and see

Data and surveys released last week didn't offer a clear consensus on the economy, and neither did the minutes of the January Federal Reserve policymaking meeting published Wednesday. Poor readings in various manufacturing assessments were countered by better-than-expected service activity figures. Sales of existing homes declined, but builder confidence rose, the latter due in part to expectations for lower mortgage rates. (It will soon be apparent which housing market metric got it right as the crucial spring selling season approaches.) Unemployment claims are still too caught up in the government shutdown to be definitive. In the Fed's last meeting, the members expressed they wanted a clearer picture before making any policy decisions; doesn't seem they have gotten that just yet.

Last week, the 1-month London interbank offered rate (Libor) remained at 2.48%, 3-month dropped from 2.68% to 2.65% and 6-month fell from 2.75% to 2.71%.