

BCA Market Perspective ©
The 2023 Banking Crisis - What Happened?
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As you are probably aware, the past few weeks have seen the banking industry in the news and bank stocks, particularly smaller regional bank stocks, have seen a significant decline in their value. What exactly happened and where do we go from here?

FIRST – WHAT HAPPENED?

On March 10, 2023, the FDIC shut down Silicon Valley Bank (SVB). SVB was a major lender to the tech industry and succumbed to what is known as a “run on the bank” where depositors sensed a problem with the bank and demanded their money. In order to meet the demands of depositors, SVB was forced to raise money by selling U.S. Government bonds at a significant, multibillion-dollar loss. SVB attempted to raise additional cash by selling shares of their stock, but that attempt was unsuccessful, forcing the FDIC to step in.

Many customers of Signature Bank out of New York (SBNY), apparently alarmed by the developments at SVB, made a run on deposits at SBNY, forcing the FDIC to shut that bank down on March 12, 2023. A few days later, another bank, First Republic Bank (FRC) was showing signs of stress and searching for help. That help came in the form of a private sector rescue negotiated by Treasury Secretary Yellen and JP Morgan’s CEO, Jamie Dimon. This rescue included over 11 national banks and \$30 billion.

By mid-March, Credit Suisse (CS) was showing signs of stress and on March 19, 2023, UBS announced the purchase of CS, aided by a \$54 billion dollar loan to the new entity from the Swiss National Bank.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

History would show that the vast majority of bank failures stem from bad loans. These recent failures are quite different. The stress on these banks has mostly resulted from a mismatch between the duration of the bank’s balance sheet assets (Treasury and other government securities) and its liabilities (customer deposits). In SVB’s case, they had a significant portion of their assets invested in long-term Treasury bonds with very low coupon rates. When rates rose significantly over the past year, those securities were worth much less. In order to meet depositors’ demands for their money, SVB was forced to sell at these lower prices, taking significant losses on the bonds. Put another way, they had long term (duration) assets supporting short term (daily) liabilities. A similar situation has evolved at the other banks mentioned, although Signature Bank also had a significant amount of cryptocurrency on their balance sheet.

The “bailout” by the FDIC, the private sector support of First Republic and the combined public/private sector agreement to shore up Credit Suisse appear to have calmed the financial markets – at least for now. Fortunately, your portfolio is well diversified among asset classes and management firms/funds. Our research indicates that your Plan has very minimal exposure to the banks mentioned above.

BCA will continue to monitor the situation and we will maintain a dialogue with your managers regarding any possible exposure to troubled banks. Please don’t hesitate to call us if you have any questions or concerns.