MARKET MINUTE

With McGAREL

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At the end of August, the S&P 500 Index was higher by 13% on the year. The S&P MidCap 400 Index was higher by 15% and the S&P SmallCap 600 Index was up 21%.

A great eight months across the board. In the January 2026 *Market Minute*, we wrote, "We believe mid- and small-cap stocks with double-digit earnings growth and low P/E multiples could be a good opportunity in the new year for investors looking for upside opportunity."

The earnings growth has been dramatically better than expected for each of the above three indexes so far this year. Stocks truly followed earnings growth this year with only modest changes in multiples. And in our view, that's where an opportunity still exists.

There are two reasons that we see small-caps outperforming year-to-date. First, valuation. The small-cap index started the year at a forward multiple of 14.5x versus 15.7x for mid-caps and 22.1x for the large-cap index. Investors saw good valuations and earnings growth showed up. Secondly, small-cap earnings growth is expected to increase by over 16% for the calendar year 2027. Investors are looking ahead and still expect excellent earnings growth for small-caps.

As of 31/8/26, the small-cap index traded at 16.6x 2026 earnings and 14.2x estimated 2027 earnings. Despite strong year-to-date performance, the forward P/E multiple is essentially unchanged from the start of the year due to strong earnings growth. Historically, small-cap stocks trade at a similar forward multiple to large-caps (see chart below) for the simple reason they have been able to grow earnings just as fast as large-caps. Yet even after outperforming their large-cap peers over the last 8 months, the small-cap index still trades at a 20% discount to the large-cap index despite expectations for significant earnings growth ahead. If the projected earnings growth materializes over the next 12 months, we believe small-caps have attractive upside potential as investors may rerate the small-cap index closer to the forward multiple of the large-cap index.

S&P SmallCap 600 Index / S&P 500 Index Forward P/E

Source: Bloomberg. Data from 1/1/99 to 28/8/26. For illustrative purposes and does not represent any actual investment.