News helps boost stocks

S&P 500 ends losing streak at 5 days

By Steve Rothwell
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NEW YORK — Upbeat news about jobs and retailers helped the Standard & Poor's 500 index snap its longest losing streak of the year on Thursday.

U.S. unemployment claims fell close to their lowest level in six years, the government reported, and J.C. Penney and Bed Bath & Beyond delivered encouraging news.

The positive trends outweighed worries about a potential government shutdown in Washington next week. Those concerns had led the S&P 500 index to five consecutive days of declines, the index's worst run in 2013.

That ended Thursday when the S&P 500 index rose six points, or 0.4 percent, to close at 1,698.67.

"There's a little bit of a bounce here," said Robert Pavlik, chief market strategist at Banyan Partners. "It may be a little bit of bargain hunting."

The broad index is less than 2 percent below its all-time high from Sept. 18.

U.S. economic growth rose to an annual rate of 2.5 percent from April through June, the Commerce Department reported Thursday. That was an increase from the 1.1 percent growth in the previous quarter.

Applications for unemployment benefits fell 5,000 to a seasonally adjusted 305,000 last week, the government said, the fewest since September 2007, three months before the Great Recession began.

The Dow Jones industrial average climbed 55 points, or 0.4 percent, to 15,328. The Nasdaq climbed 26 points, or 0.7 percent, to 3,787.