

Smart Dividend Picks: Where to Invest \$1,000 Right Now

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For investors seeking long-term income and stability, dividend stocks continue to stand out as strong options. Market data confirms that companies offering regular dividend increases tend to outperform those that don't. At a time when market volatility is keeping some investors on the sidelines, three well-established companies, PepsiCo, Chevron, and Realty Income, offer compelling reasons to put \$1,000 to work today.

PepsiCo Incorporated (NASDAQ: PEP), known for its global portfolio of beverages and snacks, has raised its dividend for 53 consecutive years. This remarkable consistency places it among the elite group of “Dividend Kings,” a title reserved for companies that have increased dividends for over five decades. While its stock has dipped about 15% over the past year due to short-term challenges such as tariffs, the drop has pushed its dividend yield near 4%. PepsiCo remains focused on long-term growth, targeting 4% to 6% annual organic revenue increases and strong earnings expansion. Its recent acquisition of Poppi, a maker of health-focused sodas, signals a continued push toward aligning its products with consumer demand for healthier options.

Chevron Corporation (NYSE: CVX), a major American oil and gas producer, has brought nearly four decades of uninterrupted dividend growth. Despite a modest decline in share price this past year, Chevron’s dividend yield has climbed above 4.5%. Its upstream segment, responsible for oil and gas production, boasts the industry’s lowest breakeven point at around \$30 per barrel. Chevron’s balance sheet is one of the strongest in the energy sector, giving it the flexibility to invest, return capital to shareholders, and grow through strategic deals. The company expects an additional \$9 billion in free cash flow next year, assuming oil prices stay at or above \$60 per barrel. Its recent acquisition of Hess Corporation strengthens its production pipeline well into the next decade.

Realty Income Corporation (NYSE: O), a real estate investment trust (REIT), offers monthly dividends and a yield above 5.5%. Since 1994, the company has increased its dividend 131 times, reflecting consistent operational performance. Its portfolio, built on long-term net leases with reliable tenants, generates stable income. Realty Income maintains a conservative payout ratio and has one of the healthiest balance sheets in the REIT sector. With an estimated \$14 trillion in potential net lease real estate across its target markets, the company is well-positioned for future expansion.

With proven track records, attractive dividend yields, and strong fundamentals, these three companies present a solid case for investors looking to deploy \$1,000 with both income and growth in mind.