

# Consumer News & Views

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## **Is the NCUA Jeopardizing the Safety and Soundness of Credit Unions?**

New questions have been raised by several federally chartered credit unions and national associations as to whether or not the National Credit Union Administration's efforts to regulate associational SEGs is jeopardizing the safety and soundness of credit unions.

Since the issue was raised during the American Consumer Council's recent summer meeting, several credit unions have voiced their concern about the NCUA's efforts to restrict their membership growth and, thereby, putting the future "safety and soundness" of credit unions at risk.

Thomas Hinton, president of the ACC told members, "The NCUA has a fiduciary responsibility as part of its charter to ensure the safety and soundness of credit unions. If the NCUA restricts the ability of national associations like ACC to prevent its members from joining credit unions, the NCUA will jeopardize the safety and soundness of credit unions. Associations like ACC have partnered with credit unions for over 20 years to help consumers manage their finances and obtain competitive loans. For the NCUA to limit or restrict associational SEGs will not only hurt consumers, but it denies credit unions the opportunity to grow. It's counter-productive and violates the very charter of the NCUA."

Hinton added, "Why is the NCUA's Office of Consumer Protection pursuing policies that hurt consumers? Something is fundamentally wrong with OCP's direction and policies."

For the past ten months, the National Credit Union (NCUA) has been conducting a "quality control review" of the American Consumer Council (ACC) and other associations that partner with credit unions. In the process, thousands of consumers across the country have been blocked from joining federal credit unions.

David Romanski, the Chairman of ACC's Board of Directors, said, "The NCUA's quality review process of raises serious questions regarding the intent and motive of the NCUA's Office of Consumer Protection. Not only are such reviews questionable in terms of the NCUA's regulatory scope, but they are also turning credit unions against the NCUA and angering thousands of consumers who have been frustrated in their efforts to join credit unions through national associations like ACC."



## ACC Partners with AdviceIQ to Help Consumers with Personal Finance and Investing

**Guidance.** The American Consumer Council (ACC), a non-profit membership organization dedicated to consumer education, advocacy and financial education, is partnering with AdviceIQ to provide ACC members with easy access to personal finance and investing guidance articles online.



With thousands of articles written by America's most accomplished financial advisors, AdviceIQ is one of the nation's leading syndicators of personal finance and investing content. All of ACC's 147,000 members will now be able to access three AdviceIQ articles per day on the ACC website. The arrangement compliments ACC's ongoing mission to support America's growth by encouraging the sale of safe, reliable goods and services to consumers.

"We're excited to extend our nationally leading syndication program to ACC members," stated Tom Morgan, SVP of Syndication & Publishing at AdviceIQ. "With three personal finance and investing content articles per day appearing on the ACC homepage, association members will receive the vital information they need to properly plan and appropriate their financial future."

Thomas Hinton, ACC President & CEO, reiterated the benefit of providing top-rate, nationally relevant articles to ACC members nationwide. "Since 1987, ACC has provided its members with guidance on how to better manage and administer their financial resources," said Hinton. "This new partnership with AdviceIQ will help to further educate, empower and motivate our members to become smarter investors and consumers."

**About AdviceIQ.** AdviceIQ is an online hub for advisor-submitted articles, daily advisor rankings and in-depth advisor profiles. Designed to provide consumers with rich financial content, AdviceIQ also employs geo-targeted syndication technology to help investors find local advisors. All featured advisors are vetted by AdviceIQ RCR™, the strictest regulatory review in the industry. Learn more at [www.AdviceQInstitutions.com](http://www.AdviceQInstitutions.com).

**ACC's Wellness Series Ready for October Launch.** The American Consumer Council will launch its Financial Wellness series with several programs starting on October 6. As part of ACC's commitment to help its members better manage their finances and make better financial decisions, ACC has developed a series of eight programs that will be offered free to members.

The programs series include the following topics:

- Exploring your Retirement Decisions.
- How to Save and Pay for College.
- Smart Budgeting for Twenty-Somethings.
- A Crash Course on Cash and Credit Cards: How not to Over-spend.
- To Buy or Rent: That is the Question!
- Where to Bank and Where to Invest: How to Get the Best ROI on Your Money.
- How to Get Health Insurance and stay Insured
- Managing Your Credit and Pay-off Your Debt

A complete schedule of programs and podcasts will be published next month. ACC is partnering with the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) to provide these programs. NEFE is a leading private nonprofit 501(C)(3)

foundation dedicated to inspiring empowered financial decision-making for individuals and families through every stage of life.

Here's more information provided by Financial Finesse on Financial Education issues...

### **2014 Gender Gap in Financial Literacy**

By **Financial Finesse**, June 19, 2014

After watching the financial literacy gap widen steadily, in 2013 this trend started to reverse itself. From 2012 to 2013 the overall gap shrank from a 14 percentage point difference to just under a 13 percentage point difference. Although this seems like a small movement, it masks the overall advances women are making. While each gender regained their 2011 financial wellness levels and are moving even farther ahead in terms of engagement and proactivity, women appear to be taking larger strides than men.

#### **Key Trends:**

- Overall financial wellness is improving for both genders, but at a slower pace for men than women.
- Women are closing the gap in several key areas, including managing debt, saving for emergencies, and feeling like they are on track for retirement.
- The gap narrowed most notably for men and women with incomes between \$60,000 and \$100,000.

### **Trends in Employee Financial Issues Q1 2014**

By **Financial Finesse**, June 4, 2014

The first quarter of 2014 continued a trend of increased employee engagement and proactivity that began to emerge in 2012. The increased focus and engagement has contributed to improvements in financial wellness in several key areas. According to Financial Finesse, here are the results since Q1-2012:

- Cash management has improved, as more employees have a handle on cash flow (72% v. 66%), maintain an emergency fund (55% v. 49%), and pay their bills on time (89% v. 85%).
- Debt management has improved, as more employees are comfortable with their debt (60% v. 57%) and regularly pay off credit card balances in full (57% v. 52%).
- Investment management has improved, as more employees feel confident in the way their investments are allocated (42% v. 33%), have a general knowledge of investing (74% v. 72%), have taken a risk tolerance assessment (48% v. 43%), and rebalance their investments (37% v. 31%).
- Retirement preparedness has improved, as more employees report being on track to reach their income replacement goals in retirement (22% v. 15%), and fewer employees report having taken a retirement plan loan or hardship withdrawal (25% v. 34%).

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**ACC Adds Regional Office in Portland, Maine.** In response to a growing number of new members in the northeast, the American Consumer Council has relocated the New England Consumer Council headquarters and ACC regional office to Portland, Maine. The address is: 477 Congress Street, 5th Floor, Portland, Maine 04101-3431. Telephone: 1-800-544-0414.





## **Fleet Financial is a National Finance and Insurance Marketing firm that focuses on Auto Refinancing.**

We offer auto finance solutions with the customer's well-being in mind. There are a lot of companies out there that can provide a loan or refinance your vehicle. Fleet Financial focuses on setting our customers up for success by saving them money and educating them about what is best for their particular financial situation.

Whether you are looking to save money by refinancing your vehicle, want to avoid excess fees and penalties when you're buying out your lease, or you want to build resale value by buying out your company car- Fleet will guide you through the process and make sure you understand what's going on every step of the way.

Fleet Financial also works with companies of all sizes to help employees purchase their own company car or any car from the company fleet. By using this process, employees can buy cars at below market rates. It also helps employers avoid the expensive and pain-staking process of selling their cars to a dealership.

If your company doesn't have a fleet, we can still help you purchase a vehicle for a very reasonable price through our inventory of fleet cars that are available to the public.

Our expert loan consultants will take the time to educate you about auto finance, ensuring that your past mistakes don't continue to affect your credit and your life. Let us help get you out of a difficult financial situation.

**CALL FLEET FINANCIAL TODAY FOR MORE INFORMATION  
(866) 683-5505**



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## **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification Accepting Applications for 2014 Summer Cycle:**

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification**. Applications for the 2014 Summer cycle are now being accepted through August 31, 2014.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

