

# Consumer News & Views

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**Consumer Confidence Continues to Climb in November.** American consumers continue to be optimistic about their economic prospects as indicated by the continuing rise of the Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index®.



The Conference Board **Consumer Confidence Index**®, which had improved in October, increased further in November. The Index now stands at 129.5 (1985=100), up from 126.2 in October.

The monthly **Consumer Confidence Survey**®, based on a probability-design random sample, is conducted for The Conference Board by Nielsen, a leading global provider of information and analytics around what consumers buy and watch. The cutoff date for the preliminary results was November 14.

“Consumer confidence increased for a fifth consecutive month and remains at a 17-year high (Nov. 2000, 132.6),” said Lynn Franco, Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board. “Consumers’ assessment of current conditions improved moderately, while their expectations regarding the short-term outlook improved more so, driven primarily by optimism of further improvements in the labor market. Consumers are entering the holiday season in very high spirits and foresee the economy expanding at a healthy pace into the early months of 2018.”

Consumers’ assessment of current conditions improved moderately in November. The percentage saying business conditions are “good” increased from 34.4 percent to 34.9 percent, while those saying business conditions are “bad” declined from 13.5 percent to 12.7 percent. Consumers’ assessment of the labor market also improved. Those stating jobs are “plentiful” increased from 36.7 percent to 37.1 percent, while those claiming jobs are “hard to get” decreased slightly from 17.1 percent to 16.9 percent.

Consumers’ optimism about the short-term outlook was also more favorable in November. The percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months increased slightly from 22.1 percent to 22.4 percent, while those expecting business conditions to worsen decreased from 7.0 percent to 6.5 percent.

Consumers’ outlook for the job market was also more upbeat than in October. The proportion expecting more jobs in the months ahead increased from 18.7 percent to 22.6 percent, while those anticipating fewer jobs declined from 11.6 percent to 11.0 percent. Regarding their short-term income prospects, the percentage of consumers expecting an improvement decreased marginally from 20.3 percent to 20.1 percent, while the proportion expecting a decrease was virtually unchanged at 7.6 percent.

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a nonprofit consumer education and advocacy organization, said, “There continues to be a strong need for new jobs and wage growth in most sectors of our economy. Consumers need a realistic tax cut and additional stimuli to sustain economic growth and prosperous times.”

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**Will Changes at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Hurt Consumers?** Now that the federal courts have made the first decision to resolve who is going to be in charge at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the fiercely independent government agency that was established in the wake of the 2008 Recession and bank scandals, consumers are worried that President Trump’s new appointee, Mick Mulvaney, will act to weaken the agency. Should consumers be concerned?



The Reuters News Agency reports that Mick Mulvaney, the White House budget director, has instructed agency staff to “disregard” instructions from Leandra English, the deputy director of the CFPB, who was named Acting Director when her boss, Richard Cordray, resigned the top post earlier this month. His resignation and appointment of English sparked the legal wrangling that is being fought out in federal court.

And, Mulvaney is increasing his influence at the agency. A spokesman for Representative Jeb Hensarling, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, confirmed Friday that Brian Johnson, one of his top aides, had left the committee to assist Mulvaney at the CFPB. Hensarling, a Texas Republican, is one of the CFPB’s harshest critics in Congress.

Cordray left behind 14 lawsuits that are ready to be filed against financial services companies, Mulvaney told the *Washington Times* on Thursday. Mulvaney told the newspaper he is “combing through” those draft lawsuits now. A spokesman for Mulvaney did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

One of the drafted lawsuits is against Santander bank and accuses the Spanish lender of overcharging borrowers on auto loans in the United States, Reuters has reported. Consumer advocates including the American Consumer Council, and

banking industry leaders have battled over the CFPB for years but both sides agree the president has the right to nominate Cordray's full-time successor, who must be confirmed by the Senate.

Both sides also agree that English is the agency's deputy director for the time being. The legal fight should last for weeks. In the meantime, consumers will be watching the legal battle play out and hope that the CFPB isn't stripped of its powers or we could face a repeat of the 2008 recession and banking scandals.

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## **ACC's Friend of the Consumer Award Recognizes Outstanding Businesses.**

Is your business consumer-friendly? Does your business deserve greater recognition for its service to consumers? If so, you should apply for the American Consumer Council's Friend of the Consumer Award. Now is the time to apply!

Throughout the year, ACC presents its "Friend of the Consumer" Awards. This prestigious award recognizes manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States that meet or exceed federally-mandated standards and are touted by consumers as "consumer friendly."

Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" Awards to deserving companies and organizations because they have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by providing a specific product or service that fosters consumer confidence and market acceptance."



To apply for the "Friend of the Consumer" Award, complete the online application and return it to ACC with the application fee. Applicants will be notified within 5 days of receipt of their application. Thereafter, a panel of independent judges will review your application and make a formal recommendation within 20 days of receipt of your award application.

For more information, visit: <http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/awards.asp>

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## **Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification Accepting Applications for 2017 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 2017 cycle are now being accepted through December 31, 2017.

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>

