

Consumer News & Views

Published twice monthly

July 1, 2014



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Consumer Confidence Continues to Improve. The Conference Board's *Consumer Confidence Index*[®], which had increased in May, improved again in June. The Index now stands at 85.2 (1985=100), up from 82.2 in May. This increase was welcome news in light of a first quarter decline of 2.9% for gross domestic product due to bad weather that was a significant drag on the economy.



Lynn Franco, Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board, stated “Consumer confidence continues to advance and the index is now at its highest level since January 2008 (87.3). June’s increase was driven primarily by improving current conditions, particularly consumers’ assessment of business conditions. Expectations regarding the short-term outlook for the economy and jobs were moderately more favorable, while income expectations were a bit mixed. Still, the momentum going forward remains quite positive.”

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, reported at ACC’s recent annual meeting that “It’s true that consumers are feeling more upbeat about their short-term economic future and job growth.” Hinton added, “However, consumers also want an increase in the minimum wage and less government regulation when it comes to taxing their internet purchases, starting new businesses and getting loans from their financial institutions.”

Hinton cited a recent survey of 958 consumers by the American Consumer Council that indicates consumers continue to be frustrated by restrictive lending practices at major banks for personal loans and home loans. The survey also reveals that consumers place the blame for restrictive lending policies on main street banks and too much federal regulation

ACC Hosts 2014 Annual Meeting – Propose New Directions for Consumers. During its recent annual meeting, the American Consumer Council reported steady membership and revenue growth for the past year.

ACC president Thomas Hinton reported to a ballroom of members and consumer advocates that the organization's membership continued to grow at double digits and ACC revenues increased by over 17% from FY 2013-2014.

As of April 30, 2014, ACC had experienced membership growth of more than 11.5% to end its fiscal year at 145,515 members. ACC revenues also grew by 17% over last fiscal year as a result of the organization's new membership dues structure.



Consumer Advocates and State Consumer Council Chairs discuss restrictive regulatory practices during ACC's annual meeting.

ACC's focus during the 2014-2015 cycle will be in four areas:

1. Membership Growth and Participation in 24 strategic locations across the USA.
2. Completing its "Association Compliance" status with the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA).
3. Expanding its Financial Education workshops and online programs.
4. Boosting the presence of our State Consumer Councils network.



ACC's Media Room drew over 14 Reporters and Bloggers during ACC's annual meeting.

ACC now supports 46 state/regional consumer councils across the nation through its Regionalization program. Additionally, ACC has added staff to support education and membership projects in each of our five regions.

During the past year, ACC has added over 88 member-volunteers to help the association administer local consumer issues and advocacy campaigns in 24 states. These volunteers participate in monthly conference calls and meetings at the various state consumer council headquarters offices. ACC's two regional vice presidents coordinate these member participation activities.



ACC's Consumer Advocacy Committee discusses project priorities during ACC's annual meeting.

During FY 2013-2014, ACC's member participation level reached 22.6%. This is an increase from 18.3% in the previous fiscal year. This translates to almost 30,000 member contacts during the past year.

Hinton also reported that ACC continues to promote its Friend of the Consumer awards program and the **Green C™ Certification** program that recognizes companies and organizations for their environmental stewardship and Corporate Social Responsibility. This advanced criteria helps applicants assess their environmental standards, adopt stronger environmental practices, and demonstrate their Corporate Social Responsibility practices. This reflects ACC's growing commitment to ensuring future generations will enjoy the natural resources of our planet.



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Green CSM 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 CSM 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 CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

