

Consumer News & Views

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Consumer Confidence Index Rebounds in June. The Conference Board reported that its **Consumer Confidence Index**®, which had decreased in May, increased moderately in June. The Index now stands at 118.9 (1985=100), up from 117.6 in May.

“Consumer confidence increased moderately in June following a small decline in May,” said Lynn Franco, Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board. “Consumers’ assessment of current conditions improved to a nearly 16-year high (July 2001, 151.3). Expectations for the short-term have eased somewhat, but are still upbeat. Overall, consumers anticipate the economy will continue expanding in the months ahead, but they do not foresee the pace of growth accelerating.”



Consumers’ appraisal of current conditions improved in June. Those saying business conditions are “good” increased from 29.8 percent to 30.8 percent, while those saying business conditions are “bad” declined from 13.9 percent to 12.7 percent. Consumers’ assessment of the labor market was also more positive. Those stating jobs are “plentiful” rose from 30.0 percent to 32.8 percent, while those claiming jobs are “hard to get” decreased slightly from 18.3 percent to 18.0 percent.

Consumers, however, were less optimistic about the short-term outlook in June. The percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months decreased from 21.5 percent to 20.4 percent, however, those expecting business conditions to worsen declined marginally from 10.3 percent to 9.9 percent.

Consumers' outlook for the labor market remained mixed. The proportion expecting more jobs in the months ahead increased from 18.6 percent to 19.3 percent, but those anticipating fewer jobs increased from 12.1 percent to 14.6 percent. The percentage of consumers expecting an improvement in their income rose from 19.1 percent to 22.2 percent, but the proportion expecting a decline increased slightly from 8.7 percent to 9.2 percent.

ACC's 2017 Annual Report is Published.



AMERICAN CONSUMER COUNCIL

2016-2017 Annual Report



"Protecting Consumer Rights"

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Overview:

As the American Consumer Council (ACC) begins its new fiscal year, 2017-2018, we are pleased to report significant growth across three key metrics – membership, financial growth and program services.

Membership:

During the past 12 months covering the period of May 1, 2016 – April 30, 2017, a significant number of consumers joined ACC. The American Consumer Council (ACC) is pleased to report membership growth of 6.2% accounting for attrition.

As of April 30, 2017, ACC experienced a net membership growth rate of 5.2% resulting in the addition of 9,517 new members giving us a total of 189,644 members (accounting for attrition). ACC and its 46 state affiliate consumer councils easily surpassed its annual membership goal of 187,000 members for 2016.

ACC is also proud of its member retention rate of 92.8%. ACC currently has members in all 50 states as well as Europe, Asia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Some 65% of ACC members continue to come from individuals who consider themselves activists, advocates or mistreated consumers seeking redress through ACC. The balance of new members – approximately 35% -- are generated through our 72 credit union partners.

Also, ACC can report that 68.4% of ACC members have some credit union affiliation while 31.6% have no credit union affiliation or declined to state any affiliation with a credit union.

Financials:

During the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the American Consumer Council experienced a significant increase in revenues, up 14.6% from the previous year. Membership Revenues grew by 30.9% and sponsoring memberships grew by 13.5%.

With the expansion of staffing and state consumer council offices leased, ACC's expenses increased by 3.9% over the previous 12 months. Despite the increase in revenues and expenses during FY 2016-2017, ACC's net assets increased by 145% due to the growth in corporate sponsorships, membership revenue increases and tight controls on expenses.

Education:

During the past fiscal year, ACC honored its commitment to help our Millennial members by introducing a financial education series hosted by author, speaker and financial planner expert Kim Curtis of Colorado. Her book is Money Secrets: Key to Smart Investing. To date, Kim has produced a series of 7 short videos (3-4 minutes each) that are credit union-friendly and appeal to Millennials (1978-1993) and Generation Z (1994-2014).

The response from our membership and our credit unions partners towards this series has been very favorable. The videos are paid for by ACC and provided at no charge to our members and credit union partners.

2017-2018 Forecast:

We anticipate the overall American economy will continue to grow at a rate of 2.5 – 2.7% and consumers will continue to spend money on autos and travel at a steady pace. This is good news for lenders and savings institutions since more consumers are employed and spending continues to grow at respectable levels in key goods and services.

Reflecting on 2016-2017, the American Consumer Council accomplished the following:

1. ACC continues to play an active role in consumer advocacy and protecting consumer rights. ACC has been at the forefront of several consumer rights issues including the abuse of passengers' rights by airlines, the Takata Airbag problem, the Wells Fargo account fraud scam, and the sex discrimination issues involving Uber.
2. The expansion of ACC's state consumer council offices and regional offices from 24 locations to 38 physical locations across the United States.
3. ACC's use of social media to conduct more advocacy and speak out on issues relating to unsafe products such as Takata airbags and food handling contamination as well as concerns about shrinking seat size on airlines and the mistreatment of airline passengers.
4. An improved economic climate with meaningful job growth and more connected and engaged consumers.
5. Higher levels of consumer engagement and advocacy.
6. The growing awareness among consumers that credit unions are a safe, reliable and friendly alternative to banks.
7. More available lines of credit to middle-class consumers.

Annual Meeting:

In compliance with our Bylaws, ACC held its annual meeting in San Diego on Friday, June 10, 2016 at The Lodge at Torrey Pines located in San Diego, CA. All members of ACC's Board of Directors were present in person or via the conference call line. Over 480 ACC members participated in the annual meeting.

Professional Staff Appreciation:

ACC also is appreciative of our professional staff and elected Board of Directors for their dedication to consumerism and for their support of ACC as we continue to expand our national organization and fulfill our mission of consumer advocacy, financial education, and corporate social responsibility.

ACC Supports Fallen Heroes Fund for U.S. Military Traumatic Brain Injury Research and Treatment.

The American Consumer Council has announced its support for the Intrepid's Fallen Heroes Fund to support research and treatment for America's military men and women suffering from traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and requiring Psychological Health treatment (PH). The non-profit fund, which has raised nearly \$200 million to support America's military men and women who have suffered serious injuries in combat, is an outgrowth of the famous Intrepid Museum, which preserves the World War II aircraft carrier and serves as a popular museum in New York City's Hudson River.



The Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund is a leader in supporting the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. Begun in 2000 and established as an independent, not-for-profit organization in 2003, the Fund has provided nearly \$200 million in support for the families of military personnel lost in service to our nation, and for severely wounded military personnel and veterans. These efforts are funded entirely with donations from the public, and hundreds of thousands of individuals have contributed to the Fund.

Consumers who want to support the Fund may contribute directly at: <https://www.fallenheroesfund.org/Donate.aspx>. All proceeds go directly to the Fund and are tax-deductible. For more information on the Fallen Heroes Fund's important programs and services, please read below or visit their website at: <https://www.fallenheroesfund.org/About-IFHF.aspx>.

Here's how this excellent charity supports America's military men and women:

Family Support

From 2000 to 2005 the Fund provided close to \$20 million to families of United States and British military personnel lost in performance of their duty, mostly in service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Fund provided unrestricted grants to each spouse and dependent child; and to parents of unmarried service members. The payments were coordinated with the casualty offices of the Armed Forces, to ensure all eligible families received these benefits. In 2005 federal legislation substantially increased the benefits granted to these families. With that mission accomplished, the Fund redirected its support toward the severely injured.

The Center for the Intrepid

In January 2007 the Fund completed construction of the Center for the Intrepid, a \$55 million world-class state-of-the-art physical rehabilitation center at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. The Center serves military personnel who have been catastrophically disabled in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and veterans severely injured in other operations and in the normal performance of their duties. The 60,000 square foot Center provides ample space and facilities for the rehabilitation needs of the patients and their caregivers. It includes modern physical rehabilitation equipment and extensive indoor and outdoor facilities.



National Intrepid Center of Excellence

Following the opening of the Center for the Intrepid, the Fund turned toward another critical issue faced by our wounded troops: the treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The Fund addressed this need by constructing the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE). NICoE is a 72,000 square foot, two-story facility located on the Navy campus at Bethesda, Maryland, adjacent to the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, with close access to the Uniformed Services University, the National Institutes of Health, and the Veterans Health Administration. NICoE provides the most advanced services for advanced diagnostics, initial treatment plan and family education, introduction to therapeutic modalities, referral and reintegration support for military personnel and veterans with TBI and psychological health conditions. Further, NICoE conducts research, tests new protocols and provides comprehensive training and education to patients, providers and families while maintaining ongoing telehealth follow-up care with patients across the country and throughout the world. NICoE was dedicated on June 24th, 2010 and has now begun its critically important work.

Intrepid Spirit

In 2013 the Fund launched a new campaign to extend the care provided at NICoE to more service members suffering TBI and psychological health conditions. The Fund will build up to nine "Intrepid Spirit" centers at major military bases around the country. These centers will act as satellites to the central NICoE facility and will allow urgently-needed care to be brought to more troops and closer to home. Construction of all nine centers will cost \$100 million. The first five centers are

now in operation and the sixth is now under construction. Raising the remaining funds will guarantee that additional centers can be built and put into operation to support our wounded heroes in uniform.



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>

Green CSM 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 CSM Certification**. Applications for the 2017 cycle are now being accepted through Friday December 1, 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 CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

