



Consumer News & Views

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN CONSUMER COUNCIL



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Consumer confidence "holds steady" →

Consumer confidence held steady for May, according to The Conference Board's **Consumer Confidence Index®**, which was just released Tuesday, May 25.

The index currently stands at **117.2** (1985=100), down slightly from March's 117.5.

While these results remain virtually unchanged, it is clear the consumer outlook overall is beginning to soften.

The **Present Situation Index**—based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions—*soared* to **144.3**, up from 131.1 in April.

And the **Expectations Index**—based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—fell sharply, from 107.9 last month to its current **99.1**.

—See **CONFIDENCE, P3**

New Financial education videos to enhance your optimism

Kim Curtis, a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and our longtime financial education partner, recently produced **four new videos** to assist our members with ways to make their lives a little easier.

These quick--none are **ever** longer than 6 minutes--fun and easy videos are all you need to start feeling more financially smart, safe and secure.

Kim, CEO of the Wealth & Legacy Institute, has also written two best-selling books about the secrets on financial subjects, and her latest book, *Retirement Secrets: Keys to Retiring Happy, Healthy & Free*, will be featured in our next issue.

Foll is a recap of her four new videos, all which are available on the ACC site and are linked in the subheads of this article.



Kim Curtis, CFP

Resources for Financial Setbacks:

We've all been through COVID-19 and many of us are now concerned about our future. Kim has some great steps to take to keep you as financially buoyant as you can be.

Keep Your Money Safe Online:

In this video, Kim offers five ways to protect your money from all the vulnerable financial transactions and activities we now do online, things like scams, double-charges, subscriptions you forgot to cancel, password safety, giving out too much information, etc.

How to Stand Out in a Video Interview:

Today's job search world is now done mostly all online and this leads to many challenges for the job seeker. Kim offers not only the basics, but ways for you to stand out in what will most likely be a video interview instead of in person.

Making New Friends in Retirement:

Kim says when we reach retirement age, there are new ways to find happiness and one of those is in a social life with new friends. She shares six steps on how you can expand your social circle. ▲



Confidence, cont'

The recent passage of President Biden's American Rescue Plan, which was signed into law March 21 and put stimulus money into the hands of millions of Americans, has already been showing its impact.

It impacted the feelings of consumers who responded to the survey. The cutoff date for the survey's preliminary results was April 16.

According to its website, The Conference Board is a trusted source of Insights, designed to help members anticipate "what's next," improve their performance, and better serve society.

Their monthly Consumer Confidence Survey®, reflects prevailing business conditions and likely developments for the months ahead.

This monthly report details consumer attitude, buying intentions, vacation plans and consumer expectation for inflation, stock prices and interest rates. Data are available by age, income, region and the top 8 states.

The monthly Consumer Confidence Survey®, based on an online sample, is conducted for The Conference Board by [Toluna](#), a technology company that delivers real-time consumer insights and market research through its innovative

technology, expertise, and panel of over 36 million consumers. The cutoff date for this month's preliminary results was May 19.

"After rebounding sharply in recent months, U.S. consumer confidence was essentially unchanged in May," said Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at The Conference Board.

"Consumers' assessment of present-day conditions improved, suggesting economic growth remains robust in Q2. However, consumers' short-term optimism retreated, prompted by expectations of decelerating growth and softening labor market conditions in the months ahead.

"Consumers were also less upbeat this month about their income prospects—a reflection, perhaps, of both rising inflation expectations and a waning of further government support until expanded Child Tax Credit payments begin reaching parents in July.

"Overall, consumers remain optimistic, and confidence

should remain resilient in the short term, as vaccination rates climb, COVID-19 cases decline further, and the economy fully reopens."

Additional metrics are available [here](#).

In their recent "Year in Review" report, available on their website, The Conference Board touted numbers they produced during 2020; with 394 reports, 65 podcasts, 41 conferences, 605 expert briefings, 106 councils, 100 webcasts, 121,698 unique visitors to the COVID-19 hub, and 300 new member companies.

To learn more or become a member, visit [conference-board.org/us](https://www.conference-board.org/us).

The next Consumer Confidence Survey report is due Tuesday, June 29, at 10 a.m. (ET). ▲





GIVE BACK TO ACC

American Airlines Consumer Flight Benefits

Now you can help ACC accrue travel miles for the organization, which they can eventually use when staff must travel to area affiliates or voting members need to attend annual meetings. All you need to do is include ACC's "Business ExtrAA" number: **878585** whenever you travel with American Airlines and or any of their One World airline, hotel and rental car partners.

While this program allows you to contribute air miles to ACC, please note that you will not lose any of your own frequent flyer miles.

It's a WIN WIN!

Here are a few ways you can accomplish making sure our Business ExtrAA number gets on your travel

documents:

Phone: Call American Airlines at 1-800-433-1790 and ask the agent to add the ACC Business ExtrAA account number (878585) to each eligible ticket.

Online: While logged into your American Airlines account on www.aa.com, input ACC's Business ExtrAA account number (878585) in the spot on the *Passenger Details* page during your booking process.

Ticket Counter: Just provide ACC's Business ExtrAA account number (878676) to the AA agent at the ticket counter when purchasing your ticket, or even when you are checking in.

Thank you for supporting ACC with these consumer flight discount benefits. ▲

Amazon SMILE Program



As an eligible nonprofit, ACC recently registered with Amazon's SMILE program, which donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charities selected by Amazon customers. There are no fees or extra costs involved.

When customers like you go to Amazon on any given day to shop, you can select from over a million registered charities, but we hope you will pick ours as your charity of choice.

As a result, we want to make it even easier for you, by providing the the link you need to donate to us.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/33-0718596>.

Since starting the program in 2013, Amazon's Foundation has seen donations of \$266 million through the SMILE program. These donations from Amazon are at **no cost to you**, so please consider ACC the next time you go shopping online.

The first time you set it up, it will pop up as a reminder every time you enter. To learn more about the program, visit smile.amazon.com. ▲

ACC Wrap Up

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Green C Certification

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for ACC's **"Green C" Certification**.

*Applications for the **Spring** cycle are now being accepted through **May 31**.*

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

All applicants should review the criteria, then complete and submit their applications to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the Green C Certification criteria can be viewed online at bit.ly/3d45Con.

For more information, call 1-800-544-0414 or visit ACC's website [here](#). ▲

Friend of the Consumer

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.



Each year, ACC awards numerous "Friend of the Consumer" awards to deserving manufacturers, retailers, and other businesses that produce or sell products in the United States, and which meet or exceed federally-mandated standards, and have "demonstrated a commitment to American consumers by providing products or services that foster consumer confidence and market acceptance."

To apply, complete the online application found here bit.ly/3w6jE1N and return it to ACC with the application fee.

Applicants will be notified within five 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 your submission. ▲



Financial Education

ACC is honored to have a partnership with Kim Curtis — author, speaker, and CEO of The Wealth Legacy Institute in Denver, Colorado — who writes, produces, and hosts our [financial education video series](#).

This free video series is comprised of 26 videos designed to help consumers, including Millennials and Gen Y individuals, to better manage their finances, feel more confident about their financial dealings, and get access to financial services.

Past video topics include, "How to Have a Great Vacation on the Cheap," "How to Ask Your Boss for a Raise," "Essential Checklist When Getting Married," "Goals to Reach y Age 30," and others with advice about timeshares, paying off debt, identify theft, and more. *Check out the new videos for 2021!*

To peruse and view Kim's many resourceful videos, visit bit.ly/3snW661. ▲

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Welcome our new credit union partner!

As a nonprofit consumer education organization, ACC has developed partnerships with credit unions across the country. These partnerships allow ACC members eligibility with our credit unions. If approved, our members gain access to a member-owned financial institution, with products and services designed to make banking more affordable, simple and convenient, and to offer additional resources that can help our members identify and achieve their financial dreams.

PARSONS Federal Credit Union

100 W Walnut Street,
Pasadena, CA 91124
(626) 440-7000

+++

5875 Trinity Parkway, Suite
111, Centreville, VA 20120

(703) 659-0984 or
(703) 659-0981

+

(800) 765-4527
parsonsfcu.org

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Parsons Federal Credit Union has been serving employees, affiliates and family members of the Parsons Corporation since 1975. Since then, they've expanded their footprint to include members from around the world, through member referrals and their innovative online and digital mobile app banking services.

Their mission is to make the life of each member "easier." And with a mission statement that says, "Uniquely partnering to make life's journey easier," and a marketing catch phrase



of, "Wherever your life's journey takes you," we think they mean business.

Like most credit unions, Parsons is member owned and being a partial owner of credit union offers many more benefits than a traditional bank is able to do. Specifically, it's people over profits, since Parsons' member-owners are the key to their success.

Lower rates are the general order of business and Parsons belongs to a co-operative network that offers 5,000 brick-and-mortar locations to its members as well as access to 3,000 ATMs around the world. That's better than a traditional bank can offer.

All deposits are secured up to \$500,000 by the National Credit Union Association (NCUA) and most traditional banks only offer \$250,000 through FDIC.

Their website puts it more simply: "We are a not-for-profit, member-owned financial cooperative, which means that profits are returned to our members in the form of lower loan rates, higher savings rates and little to no fees. As a share savings account holder, you own a piece of your credit union. That's why we have your best interests at heart and are committed to making your life's journey easier."

During the pandemic, Parsons moved fast to keep its members - and their investments - safe from financial ruin, according to President and CEO Ray Crouse:

"As we head toward COVID-19's second spring, we are reminded of how this pandemic impacted and devastated the lives of so many. Despite the challenges we faced each day, it also brought out the best in many people and essential businesses, including our credit union.

"When the pandemic erupted, we took immediate

—See **CREDIT UNION P7**

Credit Union, cont'

steps to ensure our staff and members were safe.

"We implemented the necessary safety and health protocols, which allowed us to continue to serve our members with minimal disruptions to daily operations. We quickly partnered with our members who suffered financially by offering services such as loan forbearances, modifications on mortgage loans, and Skip-a-Payment. We waived non-sufficient fund (NSF) fees and provided an emergency loan at a low fixed rate.

"As your credit union, we were simply staying true to

our mission of making your life's journey easier.

"As we reached the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic this March, we reflect on the overall impact of this virus and how it dramatically changed peoples' lives and relationships across the world. As the vaccine becomes more available, we are hopeful that it will provide healing and a sense of renewal and normalcy to everyone. Be assured that we will continue to provide you with excellent service levels, and we are committed to providing you with competitive products and services." ▲

**Welcome to ACC,
Parsons FCU!**

**We are proud to share ACC's
consumer council affiliates
in the
State of California.**

**California Consumer Council
10620 Treena St, Ste 230
San Diego, CA 92131**

**Central Coast (CA)
7 W Figueroa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101**

**East Bay (CA) CC
4900 Hopyard Rd, Ste 100
Pleasanton, CA 94588**

**Fresno Consumer Council
516 W Shaw Ave, Suite 200
Fresno, CA 93704**

**Golden Gate CC
1001 Bayhill Drive, 2nd Floor
San Bruno, CA 94066**

**Inland Empire CC
473 E. Carnegie Dr Ste. 200
San Bernardino, CA 92408**

**Los Angeles CC
400 Continental Blvd.
El Segundo, CA 90245**

**Northern California CC
3558 Round Barn Blvd
Suite 200
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

**Sacramento CC
333 University Ave, Ste 200
Sacramento, CA 95825**

**Silicon Valley (CA) CC
177 Park Avenue, Suite 200
San Jose, CA 95113**

**Southern California
1100 Town and Country Rd,
Suite 1250
Orange, CA 92868**

#StopTheSpread



**SPREAD
Kindness
INSTEAD**