

Consumer News & Views

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Will Most Consumers Participate in the Recovery? For businesses waiting for consumers to come off the bench and get into the economic recovery game, the wait will be a while longer. According to Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization with over 138,000 members, “consumer engagement in the recovery is a mixed bag and doesn’t bode very well for business in 2013.”

According to a recent survey by the American Consumer Council, results show that 42.4% of consumers who responded (based on a sampling of 1,100 consumers) indicate they “do not think they will participate in America’s economic recovery during 2013 by spending more money this year.” Some 41.2% of the respondents indicated “they would participate in the recovery by spending more money this year,” while 16% indicated they “didn’t know” or were “unsure.”

ACC’s Hinton added, “It appears the consumer optimism experienced in the final months of 2012 was short-lived and is not continuing with the same level of enthusiasm we had hoped for in 2013. While this could be a seasonal adjustment,

our most recent survey results reveal a dampening of enthusiasm among consumers because of a jobless recovery and the fact that, economically speaking, things are just not that much better in 2013 than they were last year.”

The survey also found over 55% of consumers responding to a survey question about “the responsibility of businesses to boost the economic fortunes of consumers...” critical of businesses for not hiring more people to fill jobs and alleviate the over-worked, under-paid workforce.

Congress was also severely criticized by 61% of respondents for their “inaction and irresponsibility” to put America back on stronger economic footing. The Obama Administration received negative ratings from only 31% of consumer respondents.

When asked if consumer optimism would continue to increase, Hinton noted that “Consumer confidence is fluid. It will reflect the good times and bad times. Over the long haul, I’m confident the economy will get better, but it’s taking much longer than anyone had expected. Frankly, most consumers are frustrated because the recovery has yet to help them personally.”

Andrews Federal Credit Union Offers Low Loans to its Members



Andrews Federal Credit Union can help you save money and avoid bank fees. Consider the benefits of switching you accounts to a member-owned credit union that values you as a person and a customer. Visit <http://www.andrewsfcu.org/joinnow> or call 800.487.5500 to open your account today!

Tired of paying high banking fees? Then switch to Andrews Federal Credit Union and enjoy savings and checking accounts with no minimum balances and no monthly maintenance fees. As an Andrews Federal member, you will also enjoy:

- Free ATM withdrawals at more than 37, 000 ATMs nationwide
- Free online banking and bill payment
- No-fee Visa Check Cards and e-statements

What we have to offer

In addition to fee-free deposit accounts and no cost access services, Andrews Federal offers a wide array of share certificates and loans – all with very competitive rates and minimal fees. And our deposit accounts are safe and sound because they are federally insured up to at least \$250,000 by the National Credit Union Administration, a government agency.

Our commitment to service

Andrews Federal is committed to providing our members with world-class customer service. We also offer a variety of financial education tools to help our members make sound financial decisions. These tools include:

- Online Education Center at <http://www.andrewsfcu.org/education>
- In-person Seminars
- Free Financial Counseling

About Andrews Federal

Andrews Federal Credit Union has met the needs of its members for over 60 years and we’re proud to serve as a sponsor of the American Consumer Council (ACC). We have 11 branch locations throughout Maryland, Washington D.C, Southern Jersey as well as Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

How can you become a member?

Banking doesn’t get any better than Andrews Federal Credit Union. And, as a member of the American Consumer Council, you are eligible to open an account. If you are not an American Consumer Council member yet, Andrews Federal will pay your one-time membership fee when you also join our credit union. What are you waiting for? Visit <http://www.andrewsfcu.org/joinnow> or call 800.487.5500 to open your account today or find out more about the great benefits of membership at Andrews Federal. We look forward to hearing from you!

Ten Steps to Avoid Scams. Scam artists in the United States and around the world defraud millions of people each year. They use the phone, email, postal mail, and the internet to trick you into sending money or sharing personal information. DON'T! Here are 10 things you can do to stop a scam and avoid being a Victim.



1. Know who you're dealing with.

Try to find a seller's physical address (not a P.O. Box) and phone number. With internet phone services and other web-based technologies, it's tough to tell where someone is calling from. Do an online search for the company name and website, and look for reviews. If people report negative experiences, you'll have to decide if the offer is worth the risk. After all, a deal is good only if you get a product that actually works as promised.

2. Know that wiring money is like sending cash.

Con artists often insist that people wire money, especially overseas, because it's nearly impossible to reverse the transaction or trace the money. Don't wire money to strangers, to sellers who insist on wire transfers for payment, or to anyone who claims to be a relative or friend in an emergency and wants to keep the request a secret.

3. Read your monthly statements.

Scammers steal account information and then run-up charges or commit crimes in your name. Dishonest merchants bill you for monthly "membership fees" and other goods or services without your authorization. If you see charges you don't recognize or didn't okay, contact your bank, card issuer, or other creditor immediately.

4. After a disaster, give only to established charities.

In the aftermath of a disaster, give to an established charity, rather than one that has sprung up overnight. Pop-up charities probably don't have the infrastructure to get help to the affected areas or people, and they could be collecting the money to finance illegal activity. For more donating tips, check out ftc.gov/charityfraud.

5. Talk to your doctor before you buy health products or treatments.

Ask about research that supports a product's claims — and possible risks or side effects. In addition, buy prescription drugs only from licensed U.S. pharmacies. Otherwise, you could end up with products that are fake, expired, or mislabeled — in short, products that could be dangerous to your health. Learn more about buying health products online.

6. Remember there's no sure thing in investing.

If someone contacts you with low-risk, high-return investment opportunities, stay away. When you hear pitches that insist you act now, that guarantee big profits, that promise little or no financial risk, or that demand that you send cash immediately, report them at ftc.gov.

What Not to Do:

7. Don't send money to someone you don't know.

Not to an online seller you've never heard of — or an online love interest who asks for money. It's best to do business with sites you know and trust. If you buy items through an online auction, consider using a payment option that provides protection, like a credit card.

If you think you've found a good deal, but you aren't familiar with the company, check it out. Type the company or product name into your favorite search engine with terms like "review," "complaint," or "scam." See what comes up — on the first page of results as well as on the later pages.

Never pay fees first for the promise of a big pay-off later — whether it's for a loan, a job, a grant or a so-called prize. It's always a Scam!

8. Don't agree to deposit a check and wire money back.

By law, banks have to make funds from deposited checks available within days, but uncovering a fake check can take weeks. You're responsible for the checks you deposit: If a check turns out to be a fake, you're responsible for paying back the bank. No matter how convincing the story, someone who overpays with a check is almost certainly a scam artist.

9. Don't reply to messages asking for personal or financial information.

It doesn't matter whether the message comes as an email, a phone call, a text message, or an ad. Don't click on links or call phone numbers included in the message, either. It's called phishing. The crooks behind these messages are trying to trick you into revealing sensitive information. If you got a message like this and you are concerned about your account status, call the number on your credit or debit card — or your statement — and check on it.

10. Don't play a foreign lottery.

It's illegal to play a foreign lottery. And yet messages that tout your chances of winning a foreign lottery, or messages that claim you've already won, can be tempting. Inevitably, you have to pay "taxes," "fees," or "customs duties" to collect your prize. If you must send money to collect, you haven't won anything. And if you send any money, you will lose it. You won't get any money back, either, regardless of promises or guarantees.

Report Scams:

If you think you may have been scammed:

- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. If you are outside the U.S., file a complaint at econsumer.gov.
- Visit ftc.gov/idtheft, where you'll find out how to minimize your risk of identity theft.
- Report scams to your state Attorney General.

If you get unsolicited email offers or spam, send the messages to spam@uce.gov.

If you get what looks like lottery material from a foreign country through the postal mail, take it to your local postmaster.



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Transamerica markets the quality products of AEGON's affiliated insurance carriers and utilizes the resources and expertise gained from diverse products and distribution channels. With a portfolio that includes credit and mortgage insurance, debt cancellation, reinsurance solutions and related products, Transamerica can tailor products that strengthen your financial institution while protecting customers' loan obligations.

Transamerica utilizes the following AEGON company carriers that are rated by A.M. Best Company, Standard & Poor's, Fitch Ratings and Moody's Investor Service based on financial strength and operating performance.

Transamerica has an outstanding track record of supporting credit unions and other financial institutions. Transamerica is also a corporate sponsor of the American Consumer Council.

For more information, please contact Transamerica Vice President Tom Kazar at:

http://www.transamericafinancialsolutions.com/contact_us.html

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.

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 45 days of receipt of your award application.

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

ACC Annual Meeting Scheduled for June 21st in San Diego. The annual meeting of the American Consumer Council will be held on Friday, June 21, 2013 at the Rancho Bernardo Inn in San Diego, CA. The meeting will begin at 10:00 am PST. Members are invited to attend the meeting. There is no registration fee to attend the annual meeting which typically lasts one hour.

Guest rooms are available at a special rate at the Rancho Bernardo Inn. For information and rates, please call: 877.517.9340 or visit the Rancho Bernardo Inn website at: <http://www.ranchobernardoinn.com/accommodations/>

At the annual meeting, the election of new members of the Board of Directors will be announced and those new Board members will be seated. Also, the annual meeting will discuss business matters pertinent to the management and operations of the American Consumer Council.

Currently, the following members have qualified for nomination to the ACC Board of Directors for a three-year term. Malcolm Franks, Solana Beach, CA; David Romanski, Esq., Moraga, CA; Mary Schepkin, Tallahassee, FL; and, Margaret Loftus, Havertown, PA.

Retiring Board members include: Claudio Stemberger; James Bastis and Gary Plantz. Current Board members include: Thomas Hinton; Jean M. Greer, and Megan M. Hinton.

For information, please contact ACC at: info@americanconsumercouncil.org

Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2013 Spring 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 2013 Spring cycle are now being accepted through May 31, 2013.

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>

