

# Consumer News & Views

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### **Consumer Confidence Drops in February 2015:**

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index®, which had increased in January, declined in February. The Index now stands at 96.4 (1985=100), down from 103.8 in January.

According to Lynn Franco, Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board, "After a large gain in January, consumer confidence retreated in February, but still remains at pre-recession levels (September 2007, Index, 99.5). Despite February's decline, consumers remain confident that the economy will continue to expand at the current pace in the months ahead."

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization, echoed Franco's comments saying, "Economically, there's more good news than bad. But, consumers are also weighing global conditions and the jump in gasoline prices and the extreme winter cold have consumers worried. We remain upbeat about economic gains for consumers."

## Happy Customers




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### Consumers Continue Spending in Fourth Quarter:

American households picked up spending in the fourth quarter and remained confident in early 2015, indicating the economy is poised to overcome any bumps caused by slower global demand.

The report by Bloomberg indicates that the biggest gain in consumer purchases in four years helped gross domestic product expand at a 2.2 percent annualized rate at the end of 2014, although that was less than previously estimated, according to Commerce Department data.

Other reports showed household sentiment held close to an 11-year high, manufacturing in the Chicago area shrank and more people signed contracts to buy a home.

An improving job market and cheaper fuel will help sustain consumer spending, which accounts for almost 70 percent of the economy. That will be critical in supporting the expansion as the lingering effects of the work stoppage at West Coast ports and harsh winter weather, combined with a rising dollar and slower growth among trading partners, hold back American factories.

The American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization, reported that its economic forecast for consumer spending looked very positive for the first half of 2015. Thomas Hinton, president of ACC, stated "As we look at job growth, increased wages and other favorable factors that impact consumer spending, we remain very optimistic for strong consumer spending through June."

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**ACC Opens New Offices in California, Ohio, Kansas and Michigan.** The American Consumer Council (ACC) has expanded its staff and added four new offices -- in Sacramento, CA, Overland Park, KS, Ann Arbor, Michigan and Columbus, Ohio – to serve its growing membership and state consumer councils.

The expansion brings ACC's regional office total to 31 physical locations, including 26 state consumer council offices with physical locations for members in the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, California (4), Connecticut (2), Maine, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania (2), Kansas, Kentucky, Florida, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Georgia, Utah, Texas (2), Louisiana; South Carolina, Oregon, Indiana, Michigan, and North Carolina.

ACC's office expansion in 2015 will also include the addition of physical offices in Pittsburgh, PA; Boulder, Colorado (which will also serve the Wyoming region) and Tacoma, Washington to bring ACC's physical office locations to 27 states.

ACC continues to operate its three national service centers in Newark, NJ; El Segundo, CA; and the Washington, D.C. area. ACC is headquartered in San Diego, California.



ACC's Sacramento, CA office is also home to the California Consumer Council

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## **ACC's Friend of the Consumer Award Recognizes Outstanding Businesses in 2015.**

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 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 2015 Spring 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 2015 Spring cycle are now being accepted through March 31, 2015.

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>

