

Consumer News & Views

Published twice monthly

May 1, 2013



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Consumer Confidence Jumps in April. It has taken consumers just 30 days to re-think their sentiments about the economy and send a more positive signal to the marketplace.

The Conference Board **Consumer Confidence Index**[®], which had declined in March, increased in April. The Index now stands at 68.1 (1985=100), up from 61.9 in March.

Lynn Franco, Director of Economic Indicators at The Conference Board, stated, "Consumer Confidence improved in April, as consumers' expectations about the short-term economic outlook and their income prospects improved. However, consumers' confidence has been challenged several times over the past few months by such events as the fiscal cliff, the

payroll tax hike and the federal government's pending sequester. Thus, while expectations appear to have bounced back, it is too soon to tell if confidence is actually on the mend."

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization, echoed Franco's comments noting, "While there are a number of very positive economic signs including the growth in new homes construction and the increase in home values, too many consumers are worried about federal budget cuts and the lack of significant job growth to get overly excited. Time will tell us more." Consumers' assessment of current conditions improved moderately in April. Those saying business conditions are "good" increased to 17.2 percent from 16.4 percent, while those stating business conditions are "bad" decreased to 28.1 percent from 29.1 percent.



Consumers' assessment of the labor market was mixed. Those claiming jobs are "plentiful" edged up to 9.8 percent from 9.5 percent, however those claiming jobs are "hard to get" increased to 37.1 percent from 35.4 percent.

Consumers were considerably more upbeat about the short-term outlook. The percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months increased to 16.9 percent from 15.0 percent, while those anticipating business conditions to worsen decreased to 15.1 percent from 17.7 percent.



Join the State Department Federal Credit Union (SDFCU) today! Take advantage of SDFCU's outstanding membership benefits. Visit SDFCU online at: <https://www.sdfcu.org/join> Any consumer 16 years of age or older is eligible to join State Department FCU through its strategic partnership with the American Consumer Council. Just check the "ACC" box on the credit union application and you'll be part of one of America's great credit unions! **Consider all the benefits you'll receive through SDFCU!**

- A significant amount of savings with lower rates and no hidden fees
- Membership can be shared with family members
- Ownership in the credit union
- Exclusive offers and discounts designed especially for you
- 29,000 surcharge-free CO-OP Network® ATMs nationwide
- 6,400 branches in the Credit Union Shared Network
- Online banking with Bill Pay
- Free 24 hour phone and mobile banking
- Mobile Banking App with convenient Mobile Deposit
- No Annual Fees and No Foreign Transaction Fees on Credit Card

- Free BALANCE Financial advice service to answer money management questions
- NO Fees for having a Debit Card
- CU Realty Service - Work with real estate agents and earn a REBATE when buying or selling a home
- Parent Center- Dollar Dog Kids Club, Savings Calculators and more.
- Access to a financial and investment advisor
- Federally Insured Savings to at least \$250,000 and backed by NCUA
- Member Emeritus Program
- Several Options for Safe Deposit Boxes
- Foreign Currency exchange
- Once a member always a member

As a member of the American Consumer Council, you are eligible to join SDFCU. For more information on how to join, please visit a local branch, or visit our website at: <https://www.sdfcu.org/join>



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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 Deserving Companies. Is your company or organization a friend of the consumer? Are your policies and corporate practices winning the hearts, minds and wallets of customers? If so, you should apply for The American Consumer Council's prestigious *Friend of the Consumer Award*.



Throughout the year, the American Consumer Council receives numerous applications from companies and organizations seeking to be recognized for their commitment to consumers and providing consumer-friendly products and services.

Most recently, ACC recognized CFS2 of Tulsa, OK for their commitment to consumers in a very difficult business – debt collection! Because they personally had been hounded by predatory debt collectors, Bill and Kathy Bartmann vowed they would find a better way.

Believing they could make a difference, Bill and Kathy started a small agency, CFS2. True to their promise, Bill and Kathy never treated customers the same way they had been mistreated. They treated customers with dignity and respect, and quickly discovered that most of those customers wanted to find a way to pay back their debts if only someone would work with them instead of hounding.

In the years since 1986, Bill, Kathy, and their team have successfully used debt discounting to help more than 4.5 million American families get rid of the debt that so often tears the family apart.

They even won the Better Business Bureau *Torch Award for Ethics*. Imagine that – a collection agency winning awards from the Better Business Bureau.

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 and Board of Director Nominations Announced 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 of \$169 at the Rancho Bernardo Inn. For information and availability, 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 newly elected Board members will be seated. Also, the annual meeting will discuss business matters pertinent to the management and operations of the American Consumer Council including budgets and tax filings for the previous tax cycle.

Currently, the following members have qualified for nomination to the ACC Board of Directors for a three-year term. Robert Ross, La Costa, CA; 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>

