

## Consumer News & Views



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**Consumer Confidence Sags with Weak Economic Forecast.** Consumer Confidence continued to slide in October down from 46.4 in September to 39.8 at the end of October. The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index®, which had slightly improved in September felt the strains of poor economic news and declined in October.

Lynn Franco, Director of The Conference Board Consumer Research Center, said, "Consumer confidence is now back to levels last seen during the 2008-2009 recession. Consumer expectations, which had improved in September, gave back all of the gain and then some, as concerns about business conditions, the labor market and income prospects increased. Consumers' assessment of present-day conditions did not fare any better."

Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization with over 116,000 members said, "The continued decline of consumer confidence sends a clear message to Congress and the Obama Administration – millions of consumers need help now. Consumers need meaningful jobs, major mortgage relief to avoid foreclosure and small business support through tax breaks if we expect them to carry this recovery forward."

Hinton added, "As the holiday season approaches, both consumers and retailers are still feeling the economic pinch from this recession. Without meaningful action, the Congress will be viewed as the 'Grinch who stole Christmas' for millions of middle-class families."



## **Banks Scurry to Drop Debit Card Fees but Consumers Continue to Drop Banks.**

Bank of America Corp. has joined the ranks of Wells Fargo and JPMorgan Chase in scrapping their plan to levy a monthly fee for debit card purchases after outraged customers staged a mass exodus.



Bank of America's about-face comes as customers across the country petitioned the second largest bank in the nation and mobilized to close their accounts in favor of credit unions and community banks. The outcry prompted other major banks to cancel trial tests of their own debit card fees.

But, according to Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization with over 116,000 members, "The damage is already done. Banks have bloodied their noses. The harsh reality is consumers are better organized now than two years ago. Consumers have clout. Banks, airlines and other global companies are not going to be able to arbitrarily raise their fees without first consulting consumer groups and addressing their customers' financial needs and concerns. To do so will be suicidal for that business."

ACC's Hinton also noted that pharmaceutical companies are now "on the radar screen" and slated for consumer action as millions of consumers have complained about the shortage of certain prescription medicines and rising prices for premium drugs and medications.



Hinton suggested that consumers should remain alert to "stealth fees" that banks will try pass on to consumers including such tactics as paper bank statements, using tellers and not maintaining minimum balances in accounts.

The reason banks introduced new debit card fees has been blamed on the so-called Durbin Amendment – a provision in the recent financial reform bill that caps the interchange fees banks can charge at 24 cents instead of 44 cents, leading some banks to seek new forms of revenue. Largely hidden from sight, many consumers never realized they were shouldering the cost of these fees in the first place. The move to monthly fees represents a bold step that has angered many bank customers especially at Bank of America.



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## **2011 Green C<sup>SM</sup> Certification Accepting Applications for Fall 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 2011 fall cycle are now being accepted through November 30, 2011.

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: [www.americanconsumercouncil.org/green](http://www.americanconsumercouncil.org/green)



**For more information, please call ACC at 1-800-544-0414 or visit ACC's website by [clicking here](#).**

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