

Consumer News & Views

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Will Consumers Shop this 2013 Christmas Holiday Season?

It's almost that time of year again when retailers get giddy hoping consumers will open their wallets and purses and spend, spend, spend. And, while Wall Street is celebrating with record-highs in the stock market on a daily basis, Main Street is hoping for more Christmas cheer. The question retailers are asking is this: Will consumers shop this holiday season? The answer depends on who you ask.

Wal-Mart, the nation's biggest retailer, has issued a rather downbeat forecast for the 2013 holiday shopping season. Wal-Mart reported its third consecutive quarter of disappointing sales. Kohl's department stores also reported weak quarterly results and says it reduced its inventories ahead of the holidays.



A new Gallup poll suggests that sales at many retailers could fall short of expectations. The average amount that Americans expect to spend on Christmas gifts was about \$704, according to a poll carried out in early November. The estimate was down from \$786 in an October poll. The number is below how much Americans planned to spend a year ago.

So, what can retailers expect this Christmas holiday season? Will consumers show up, or will the backlash of the sluggish economic recovery continue to take its toll on Main Street? The American Consumer Council (ACC), a non-profit consumer education organization, predicts consumers will spend wisely and frugally for the 2013 holiday shopping season. According to ACC, there is more to be optimistic about in 2013 than in 2012. But recent negative news stories including the ill-fated launch of the federal government's Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare), the federal government shutdown and the sluggish economic recovery have consumers worried... and rightfully so, according to Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council.

"For the past several years, American consumers have placed too much faith in the federal government to solve our economic woes," Hinton stated. "It's obvious Congress and the president can't agree on what day of the week it is, let alone take the necessary steps to support a strong economic recovery," he added. "Given the political mess in Washington, consumers are beginning to realize that a sustained economic recovery will only happen through innovation, hard work and good old Yankee ingenuity," Hinton said.

According to the American Consumer Council, this translates to a less optimistic attitude among American consumers for the 2013 holiday shopping season. But, as ACC's Thomas Hinton suggests, "The lack of any clear economic solution could also mean consumers will take the bull by the horns and spend what they feel they can afford to spend, relying heavily on credit cards; and then, limit their spending during 2014 to make ends meet."

American Consumer Council Add 7 New Regional Offices. The American Consumer Council (ACC) has complicated its 2013 regional office expansion by establishing seven offices in Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, Texas, Kentucky, South Carolina and Maryland. ACC continues to operate its larger regional service centers in Newark, NJ; El Segundo, CA; and the Washington, DC area. ACC is headquartered in San Diego, California.



Over the past year, ACC has created seven new regional offices at the following locations to better serve the needs of its growing membership and support its network of 44 state consumer councils:

The **Arkansas Consumer Council** office will also serve as ACC's Southern Regional office located at 10515 W. Markham Street, West Little Rock, AR 72205.

The **Maryland Consumer Council** office will also serve as ACC's Mid-Atlantic Regional office located at Metro Plaza II, 8403 Colesville Road, Suite 1100, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

The **Louisiana Consumer Council** office will also host ACC's South Central Regional office located at 3900 N. Causeway Blvd., Suite 1200, Metairie, Louisiana, 70002.

The **Texas Consumer Council** office will also serve as ACC's Southwest Regional office located at 9901 Interstate Highway 10 West, Suite 800, San Antonio, TX 78230.

The **Kentucky Consumer Council** office will serve as ACC's Appalachian Regional office located in The Paragon Centre at 2333 Alexandria Drive, Lexington, KY 40504.

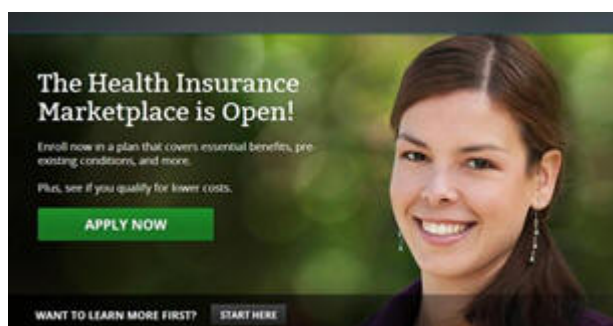
The **Florida Consumer Council's** new office in Tampa will also serve as ACC's Southeastern Regional office located at 8270 Woodland Center Blvd., Tampa, FL 33614.

The **Carolina Consumer Council**, which serves both North Carolina and South Carolina, will also host ACC's Coastal Regional office located at 1320 Main Street, Suite 300, Columbia, SC 29201.

The **Georgia Consumer Council** will continue to serve the Greater Atlanta Region with offices located at 4555 Mansell Road, Suite 300, Alpharetta, GA, 30022.

The **California Consumer Council** will continue to support ACC's Southern California Region at 400 Continental Avenue, Suite 600, El Segundo, CA 90245.

Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare) is Confusing to Consumers. Buying health insurance – assuming you can meet the insurance companies' rigid requirements – is no picnic. With the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare), many consumers, who are without basic healthcare coverage, were elated when the new law was signed into law by President Obama. But now, surfing through the website <https://www.healthcare.gov/> to determine plans and prices has become a confusing and frustrating process.



To complicate matters further, President Obama has directed insurance companies to continue to offer existing policies that don't meet Affordable Care Act standards into 2014, if the insurer chooses. But many insurance companies worry that extending or re-instating cancelled policies might be easier said than done.

Kate Rogers News reported that President Obama met with the heads of major insurance companies including Aetna and Humana to discuss implications of the administrative ruling. Obama said Thursday that the nearly 5 million individuals who had received policy cancellation letters would have the opportunity to have their coverage reinstated for one year at the discretion of insurers and state regulators. The move would not allow insurance companies to offer non-compliant plans to new enrollees, and they would be required to explain the difference between old policies and new offerings on the ACA exchanges, which include more comprehensive benefits.

America's Health Insurance Providers, which represents more than 90% of insurers across the country, was the first to weigh in on the president's announcement and expressed concerns as to how the fix would impact premiums and marketplace stability. "Changing the rules after health plans have already met the requirements of the law could destabilize the market and result in higher premiums for consumers," the group said in a statement. "Premiums have

already been set for next year based on an assumption of when consumers will be transitioning to the new marketplace. If now fewer younger and healthier people choose to purchase coverage in the exchange, premiums will increase and there will be fewer choices for consumers.

It remains to be seen how this progressive, but complex, program will all work out for consumers. In the meantime, while consumers want to enroll in an affordable healthcare plan because they recognize the importance of having health coverage, wading through a complicated website that is flawed and making a prudent decision on which healthcare plan is the right one, continues to be a challenge for most people.



NuVision Federal Credit Union is one of Southern California's leading credit unions with the strength of over \$1.2 billion in assets and over 80,000 members. Headquartered in Huntington Beach, California, NuVision has branches throughout Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California as well as Mesa, Arizona.

NuVision has been an icon in Huntington Beach for over 75 years, first serving employees of Douglas Aircraft. Additions to the NuVision family have resulted in a diverse group of sponsor companies in our field of membership in industries including aerospace, utilities, municipal, retail, automotive, housing, engineering, and healthcare.

NuVision places a high level of importance on convenience, providing many avenues to provide Easier Banking. Whether it's in a branch, on the phone, through electronic or mobile channels, we are committed to providing a wide choice of convenient financial services.

When you are searching for a place to put your savings or wondering where to borrow money, consider NuVision Federal Credit Union. Chartered in 1935 as a not-for-profit financial cooperative, we remain your local credit union and we are proudly owned by the members we serve.

NuVision Federal Credit Union membership is open to:

- Any immediate family or household member of a NuVision member.
- Any Southern California or Mesa, AZ Boeing Employee and their immediate family and household members
- Any Select Employer Group (SEG) employee and their immediate family and household members
- Any member of the American Consumer Council (ACC) at no cost to you. NuVision handles everything so you can start earning the benefits of NuVision membership right away.

For more information on how to become a member of NuVision Federal Credit Union, please visit their website at: <https://nuvisionfederal.com/membership/>

NuVision Expands to Include Members of Pacific Resource Credit Union. NuVision Federal Credit Union (NuVision) and Pacific Resource Credit Union (Pacific Resource) announced that their merger has received regulatory approval, as well as approval by a majority vote of the Pacific Resource membership. The merger will be effective July 1, 2013.

This merger between two well capitalized, growing organizations will create a \$1.3 billion credit union with 14 branches serving 87,000 members primarily throughout Los Angeles and Orange Counties. With strong balance sheets, full-service product offerings and established member bases, the merger joins two successful credit unions to create a new organization that will be well positioned to grow and increase member value over the long term.

The new credit union will operate under the NuVision Federal Credit Union name and federal charter, with combined leadership, employees and volunteers. NuVision's CEO Roger Ballard will remain CEO of the continuing credit union; Pacific Resource CEO James McHale will join NuVision's Executive Leadership Team as Chief Risk Officer. Employees from both credit unions will make up the team of the new organization.



Pinnacle Federal Credit Union Offers Great Benefits and Rates to ACC Members.

Who is Pinnacle Federal Credit Union?

Pinnacle Federal Credit Union is a full service financial institution which serves many employer groups located throughout New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. Members of the American Consumer Council are eligible to join Pinnacle Federal Credit Union.

As a non-profit organization, we look to offer the employees of our sponsor groups a rational alternative to conventional banking. All Pinnacle FCU affiliate groups are eligible to offer their employees the privilege and benefit of taking part in the wide variety of low cost financial products and services offered by Pinnacle FCU. Once an employee opens a savings or checking account with the credit union, they become a "member" of the institution for life.

With three branches located in **Edison, Fairfield, Leisure Village West**, and ATM locations in Edison, Fairfield, Edison Municipal Building, AND all 7-Eleven convenience stores, Pinnacle strives to be where you are. Whether you are looking for a great checking account, great rates or fast friendly service, PINNACLE FCU PROVIDES IT ALL.

Our Beginnings...

Established in July, 1962, Pinnacle Federal Credit Union has grown to serve nearly 300 employer groups and 30,000 members.

As our membership continues to grow and diversify, we remain committed to meeting the financial needs of our members. With a large selection of loans and deposit products, the credit union is able to serve as a primary financial institution to its members.

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*.



If so, the *Friend of the Consumer Award* is right for you!

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.

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>

Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2013 Winter 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 Winter cycle are now being accepted through December 13, 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>

