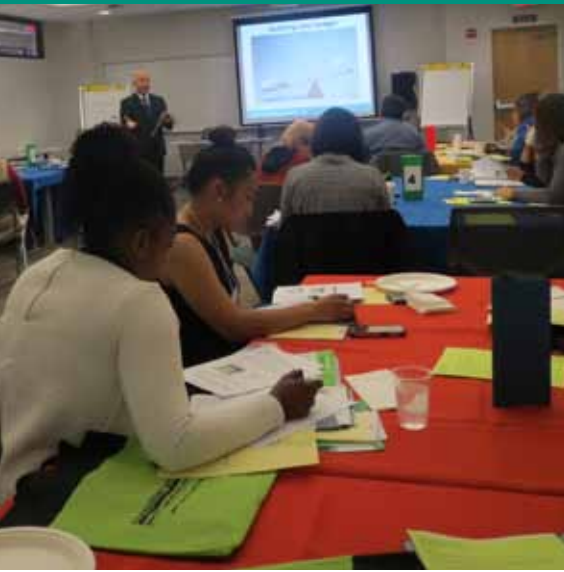


Consumer Action Annual Report



2016-2017
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www.consumer-action.org

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What is Consumer Action?

Consumer Action is a non-profit organization that has championed the rights of under-represented consumers nationwide since 1971. Throughout its history, the organization has dedicated its resources to promoting financial and consumer literacy and advocating for consumer rights both in the media and before lawmakers to promote economic justice for all. With the resources and infrastructure to reach millions of consumers, Consumer Action is one of the most recognized, effective and trusted consumer organizations in the nation.

Consumer education. To empower consumers to assert their rights in the marketplace, Consumer Action provides a range of educational resources. The organization's extensive library of free publications offers in-depth information on many topics related to personal money management, housing, insurance and privacy, while its hotline provides non-legal advice and referrals. At Consumer-Action.org, visitors have instant access to important consumer news, downloadable materials, an online "help desk," the Take Action advocacy database and seven topic-specific subsites. Consumer Action also publishes unbiased surveys of financial and consumer services that expose excessive prices and anti-consumer practices to help consumers make informed buying choices and elicit change from big business.

Community outreach. With a special focus on serving low- and moderate-income and limited-English-speaking consumers, Consumer Action maintains strong ties to a national network of nearly 7,000 community-based organizations. Outreach services include training and free mailings of financial and consumer education materials in many languages, including English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. Consumer Action's network is the largest and most diverse of its kind.

Advocacy. Consumer Action is deeply committed to ensuring that underrepresented consumers are represented in the national media and in front of lawmakers. The organization promotes pro-consumer policy, regulation and legislation by taking positions on dozens of bills at the state and national levels and submitting comments and testimony on a host of consumer protection issues. Additionally, its diverse staff provides the media with expert commentary on key consumer issues, supported by solid data and victim testimony.

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Dear Friends,

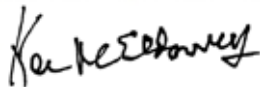
As we settle into the astonishing and, frankly, appalling “new normal” of the national political scene, I am more than ever energized to leverage our resources on behalf of underrepresented consumers. Each day brings new revelations about just how seriously consumers are being impacted by special interests and those interests’ friends in high places. It falls upon progressive society to keep the emphasis on human dignity and improving the human condition as our country relentlessly skews toward a distressing environment that apparently sees no need for a safety net to protect people from policies that disadvantage their income, health and chance for a secure retirement.

Since my days as an activist with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), I’ve fought against discrimination and inequality, and as the leader of Consumer Action for close to four decades, I’ve worked to further those goals by emphasizing the needs of low- and moderate-income and limited-English-speaking consumers. Our quest is assisted greatly by the coalitions, allies and partners we work with.

While Consumer Action has traditionally focused on the need to explain financial and communications services that help consumers prosper financially, the new technology that is part of our lives has opened not only opportunities but threats to the prosperity of many populations. Will low-income and unsophisticated consumers be left behind in the financial technology world? Will the so-called gig economy kill off well-paying, secure jobs? Will the ever-growing need for broadband access leave behind the poor and rural populations? Will insurance become a product only for the wealthy? Will our trusted, independent media be replaced by ranting tweets, fake news and an impenetrable forest of bots and trolls? These are some of the questions that keep me up at night—and that will inform our work going forward.

It’s not been an easy year for fundraising on behalf of consumer advocacy and education. The current political climate may be to blame, but we won’t give into despair, and will do our best to stay on top of the issues that affect consumer rights and the security of individuals and families. That’s a promise!

Yours in solidarity,



Ken McEldowney



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The year in review

National advocacy

Consumer Action's DC team advocated in our nation's capital for consumer-friendly legislation, regulatory reforms and increased corporate responsibility. This year, with the possibility—and eventual reality—of a pro-deregulation administration in the White House, we directed our efforts not only toward moving forward and building on previous victories, but also toward defending the protections we had already gained that would now be in jeopardy.

After the new administration and Congress took office in January, Consumer Action ramped up our activity with the Americans for Financial Reform and Take On Wall Street coalitions, taking part in a “big tent briefing” with dozens of other organizations to brainstorm how to best push back against attacks on consumer protections, particularly those launched under the Congressional Review Act (CRA) loophole. Coalition efforts included a weeklong #RightsAtRisk social media campaign that highlighted the potential (and, at this writing, actual) damage to consumer rights if the new Congress employed the CRA to gut dozens of consumer-friendly rules and regulations passed under the Obama administration.

With no question remaining about the new administration's intentions, we published the Rules at Risk issue of our quarterly *Consumer Action News* in March (https://www.consumer-action.org/news/articles/rules_at_risk_spring_2017). Unfortunately, many of our “risk” predictions soon proved accurate. For example, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) rule requiring internet service providers (ISPs) to get

consumers' permission prior to sharing their personal information with third parties was rescinded in May by the new FCC Chair, Ajit Pai. And while the Department of Labor's rule requiring financial advisers to put their clients' best interest ahead of their own took effect as planned, full implementation has been delayed by a year, and weakening of the rule is still on the table.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)

In addition to engaging the CFPB on multiple consumer finance issues, Consumer Action was again actively involved in supporting and defending the agency from a GOP-controlled Congress intent on decimating the Bureau in the name of regulatory reform.

The U.S. House Financial Services Committee led the attack with a far-reaching bill called the Financial CHOICE Act (HR 10), dubbed the Wrong Choice Act and fiercely opposed by advocates. Among many other dangers, this bill would prohibit public access to the CFPB complaint database that Consumer Action and other advocates worked years to attain. This critical consumer tool, to which we devoted the Fall 2016 issue of *Consumer Action News* (https://www.consumer-action.org/news/articles/cfpb_complaint_database_report_fall_2016), offers the public access to the crux of individuals' complaints against financial services companies. Access to complaint narratives empowers consumers to make informed financial choices and allows regulators to identify and root out patterns of unfair, deceptive or discriminatory practices in the marketplace. The mere

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presence of the public database increases financial services companies' accountability.

At the same time, we continued to lead a coalition of consumer, civil rights, community, privacy and fair lending organizations to improve the CFPB complaint process, meeting regularly with Bureau staff to recommend ways to enhance the system, increase complaint resolutions and advance communications between the CFPB and consumers.

In *PHH Corp. v. CFPB*, before the U.S. Court of Appeals, we joined others in an amicus brief supporting the CFPB's right to maintain an independent agency director rather than grant the president the right to fire the head of the agency at will. Consumer Action supported the position that the director should be removed only for cause (as is the existing rule).

On July 21, 2016, Consumer Action co-sponsored a small private event in Washington, DC, to celebrate the CFPB's five-year anniversary and honor the Bureau's work on behalf of consumers. The very next day, we participated in a town hall-style gathering in Oakland, CA, with CFPB Director Richard Cordray and other Bureau staff, hosted by Housing and Economic Rights Advocates (HERA).

At Consumer Action's own anniversary event a few months later, we recognized, among other consumer champions, Director Cordray, who, through his dedication and leadership, has forged significant improvement for millions of consumers. Consumer Action's deputy director of national priorities and CFPB liaison, Ruth Susswein, gave a particularly stirring speech before introducing Cordray.

Comments

In addition to working closely with the CFPB,

Consumer Action met with or submitted comments and RFIs (requests for information) to the FTC, the FCC, the FHFA, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, HUD and other federal agencies.

The comments we submitted ranged from supporting greater access to credit for limited-English-speaking consumers to encouraging greater data collection from mortgage applicants in order to determine if consumers are being treated fairly.

We urged the new HUD secretary to preserve recent fair housing rules that were under review, such as the rule to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing.

We opposed the sale of used vehicles with open safety recalls and supported greater loss mitigation efforts as the Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) came to a close.

We urged protections for payday loan borrowers and requirements to assess their ability to repay these high-cost loans.

We encouraged the CFPB to finalize its proposed rule to prohibit class action bans in financial contracts, and to finalize its prepaid card rule to extend basic fraud and error protections and improved disclosures to cardholders.

We formally supported the CFPB's contention that lenders who rely exclusively on traditional credit data to evaluate individuals for a loan leave important gaps in access to mainstream credit for millions of creditworthy consumers, and that the use of payment-related alternative data can create new opportunities for the "credit invisible."

And we pointed out that since the CARD

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Act, disclosures have often improved but credit card interest rates remain relatively high, and fees are in need of further scrutiny.

Following are some highlights of our efforts to protect consumer rights and shape consumer-friendly regulation during the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

Foreclosure prevention: With the federal HAMP program expiring at the end of 2016, government regulators, mortgage servicers and consumer groups explored the best ways to prevent foreclosures in the new year. Consumer Action participated in numerous “Life After HAMP” meetings with regulators, including the FHFA, HUD and the Treasury Department, as well as weekly meetings with mortgage/foreclosure coalition members and other advocates. While servicers expressed interest in establishing a uniform loan modification plan that could be used to help struggling homeowners, consumer and housing groups advocated for individually tailored responses for those facing foreclosure.

In October 2016, advocates welcomed the publication of the CFPB’s new Mortgage Servicing Rule, which would provide vital new protections for homeowners and their heirs. Among other things, “dual-tracking” (moving forward with foreclosure while evaluating the homeowner’s modification application) would be banned if a completed loan modification application had been submitted. And widows and other heirs of a deceased mortgage holder would have the same rights as the original homeowner to protect their home from foreclosure. In addition, homeowners with mortgage modifications whose loans had been sold and transferred to a new mortgage servicer

would no longer lose their modified repayment plan because of the transfer. And some struggling borrowers with on-time payments who experienced a new hardship would qualify to be considered for a new loan modification more than once during the life of the loan.

Prepaid cards: Advocates, who had long encouraged the CFPB to establish a requirement that would extend Regulation E protections (including limits on fraud losses, clear fee disclosures and a dispute resolution process) to prepaid cards, were heartened when the Bureau announced its new Prepaid Card Rule in November 2016. Not unexpectedly, the consumer-friendly regulation, scheduled to go into effect in October 2017, quickly came under fire from GOP members of Congress doing the bidding for one big prepaid card issuer: Netspend.

Congress has threatened to repeal the rule under the Congressional Review Act, which would bar the CFPB from creating a similar regulation in the future. Consumer Action and coalition partners strongly urged the CFPB to carry through with its scheduled implementation, but the Bureau announced in April that it would delay and possibly amend the Prepaid Card Rule.

Fiduciary rule and Wall Street: The release of a final Department of Labor (DOL) Fiduciary Duty Rule in April was a huge victory for American workers and retirees, against serious odds. The rule eliminates the conflicts of interest that have allowed financial professionals to drain more than \$17 billion dollars a year in unnecessary costs from workers’ retirement accounts, yet the road to the final rule was long and arduous, with continuing attacks from pro-business and anti-consumer members of Congress. While

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the rule has survived so far—it was implemented on June 9, 2017, after a 60-day delay by the new administration’s Labor Department—full implementation has been delayed by a year, and weakening of the rule still isn’t out of the question. Consumer Action continues to strongly oppose efforts to rescind the rule, and has been actively involved in the Save Our Retirement Coalition to defend it.

Other “Wall Street-related” efforts we joined attempted to: pass a new Glass Steagall Act to create a legal wall separating consumer banking from high-risk investment and trading activity; close the carried interest loophole that allows hedge funds and private equity managers to pay much less tax on their earnings than ordinary workers pay; end the tax break that allows corporations to deduct CEO bonuses on the company’s tax return; and impose a tiny financial tax on securities trades that could serve as a brake on high-speed computerized speculation that risks destabilizing markets. On July 14, 2016, Consumer Action’s Linda Sherry joined a panel at the Securities and Exchange Commission’s Investor Advisory Committee meeting to advocate for blocking a proposed rule to reverse the default for delivery of mutual fund reports from paper to automatic electronic delivery with an option to *ask* for paper.

Contact Lens Rule: In November 2016, the FTC issued proposed changes to its Contact Lens Rule. The rule promotes competition by giving consumers the right to their prescription in order to comparison shop for contact lenses. After finding that many contact lens wearers had no idea they were supposed to be given a copy of their lens prescription at the eye doctor’s office, the FTC proposed to require optometrists to

obtain a signed acknowledgement after providing a prescription to a consumer, and to keep that acknowledgement on hand for three years. In support of the change, Consumer Action released our own poll data supporting the FTC’s contention that consumers are unaware of their right to a copy of their prescription.

Consumer Action opposed a troubling Senate bill to make it more difficult for consumers to buy contacts from a third-party provider, mainly by giving the prescribing eye doctor more time to respond to the “positive verification” request that the third party must submit if the patient/customer doesn’t present a copy of the prescription.

Debt collection: At the end of July 2016, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau released proposed rules to limit debt collection abuses by third-party debt collectors and others covered by the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, which includes many debt buyers. The proposal addressed many concerns of consumer advocates, but stopped short of protecting consumers in several key areas. Namely, it allows as many as six contacts per week, which amounts to harassment in our book, and it does not ban outright the collection of time-barred debts, which encourages debt buyers to attempt to revive and collect old “zombie” debts.

While we supported the Bureau’s efforts to create reasonable rules for the debt collection industry, Consumer Action and our coalition partners recommended stronger protections for consumers victimized by predatory debt collection practices. (The CFPB had not yet issued its final Debt Collection Rule by the time of this writing.)

While hopeful about the proposed improvements to debt collection practices, we were

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disappointed by the IRS' September announcement that four private debt collection companies had been selected to begin collecting federal tax debts in the spring of 2017. (The IRS was forced by a 2016 law to outsource collection of certain overdue tax debts.) Advocates, including Consumer Action, expressed concern that one of the collectors the IRS planned to use, Pioneer Credit Recovery, was already accused of providing inaccurate information to student loan borrowers, and that hiring private debt collectors would add to the problem of scam artists who pose as IRS collectors. Advocates urged the IRS to put in place several measures to protect consumers, such as excluding low-income taxpayers from the program.

To arm consumers against fraudulent or exploitative collection calls, Consumer Action, in February 2017, published *When a collector calls: An insider's guide to responding to debt collectors* (https://www.consumer-action.org/english/articles/when_a_collector_calls_an_insiders_guide_to_responding_to_debt_collectors). The free guide, available in English and Spanish, provides tips for communicating effectively with legitimate collectors and avoiding imposters.

With millions of consumers receiving calls and letters from collectors every year—not all of them warranted—Consumer advocates applauded the Federal Communications Commission for placing limits on the number of robocalls and texts (three per month) that can legally be made to a cell phone without the consumer's consent “to collect a debt owed to or guaranteed by the United States.” Consumer Action joined other consumer advocacy organizations in meetings urging the FCC to adopt this and other essential protections.

Mandatory binding arbitration/class actions: In August 2016, we joined together with 280 consumer, civil rights, labor, community and non-profit organizations to show strong, broad-based support for the CFPB's proposed rule to restrict the use of forced arbitration in cell phone, credit card and financial services contracts and restore consumers' right to join together to hold corporations accountable when they break the law. Consumer Action has had the removal of mandatory binding arbitration clauses and class action bans from consumer contracts high on its list of priorities for many years. While the CFPB's proposal prevented class action bans—a huge victory!—it wouldn't end all forms of forced arbitration clauses in consumer contracts (a disappointment). Just a couple of months earlier, in June, Consumer Action had placed an opinion piece in the widely read The Hill Congress Blog (<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/judicial/284687-finally-a-rule-to-stop-companies-from-ripping-off-consumers>). Unfortunately, at this writing in late 2017, the Senate has voted to overturn this valuable rule to protect consumers' right to collective redress through class actions.

Language access: We've long advocated for greater access to credit and financial services for limited-English-speaking consumers. In May 2016, Consumer Action, Americans for Financial Reform and coalition partners urged regulators, in a newly released white paper (http://ourfinancialsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/AFR_LEP_Isue_Brief_05.26.2016.pdf), to make it easier for limited-English-proficient (LEP) consumers to understand and navigate the financial system, especially the mortgage market. Together, we called on the CFPB and other

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federal agencies to require that: key financial documents be made available (upon request) in at least eight languages (Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Russian, Arabic and Haitian Creole); guidance on language access standards be provided to financial institutions; and mortgage applicants' language preferences be tracked. A companion paper (http://ourfinancialsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/AFR_LEP_Narratives_05.26.2016.pdf) tells the stories of several LEP homeowners who belatedly discovered unfavorable mortgage terms and had great difficulty securing loan modifications.

In addition to our efforts to elicit action from government, many members of Consumer Action's staff worked to get the word out to the public about the unique concerns of consumers with language barriers. Consumer Action's Jamie Woo raised awareness in various Chinese communities, through interviews on radio and in print with media outlets including Sing Tao Radio and the *Chicago World Journal*. Along with Woo, Consumer Action staffers Nelson Santiago, Ricardo Perez and Kathy Li translated our press release on the just-released language access white paper (https://www.consumer-action.org/press/articles/fair_treatment_for_homeowners_with_limited_english_proficiency) into Spanish, Tagalog and Chinese, with hired translators providing the Korean and Vietnamese. Our partner organizations went on to translate the information into Russian, Haitian Creole and Arabic. In addition, staffer Audrey Perrott helped facilitate communication between leaders of community-based organizations active in LEP issues and CFPB officials. The organizations were able to offer in-depth accounts of the hardships faced by those who have

had to overcome language obstacles and discrimination in their effort to participate in important financial transactions.

Consumer Action's Ruth Susswein was a panelist during the session on "Strategies to Protect Diverse Consumer Communities" at the FTC's December 2016 workshop on the nation's changing consumer demographics and the need to use different approaches to prevent fraud across a more diverse population. Susswein spoke about the need to alert community-based organizations to the latest scams and scandals and to learn from them what problems are plaguing individual communities. Consumer Action has often acted as a liaison between ethnic communities and government offices, alerting individuals and agencies to the latest scams.

Throughout the year, Consumer Action staff responded to LEP-regulation surveys, and participated regularly in language access coalition efforts as well as committee meetings with regulators such as the CFPB and the FHFA. One goal was to get the FHFA to add a question about language preference to mortgage applications (part of an overall effort to improve data collection on LEP needs). We also helped create a survey designed to acquire more details from lenders and mortgage servicers about what language access tools they currently offer—a step toward identifying what is still needed.

Complementing our ongoing advocacy work on behalf of LEP consumers, the January 2017 edition of *Consumer Action News* was devoted to the issue of language access, focusing on both the gaps and the programs and services that do exist (https://www.consumer-action.org/news/articles/language_access_issue_winter_2016_2017).

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Payday/predatory lending: Early in the fiscal year, Consumer Action became the fiscal sponsor of the recently released academic report *The Power of Community Action: Anti-Payday Loan Ordinances in Three Metropolitan Areas*, by Robert N. Mayer of the University of Utah and Nathalie Martin of the New Mexico School of Law. The report, funded by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, highlights 10 factors that contribute to a successful local ordinance campaign to curb payday loan abuses against community residents. The industry is notorious for trapping consumers in a cycle of debt fueled by exorbitantly high interest rates. (The paper is available here: <http://lawschool.unm.edu/faculty/martin/docs/mayermartinpaydayordinances.pdf>.)

Soon after, in June 2016, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau unveiled its proposal for a new national rule on payday and car title lending that had the potential to save millions for U.S. consumers. The proposed rule addressed the amount of time and flexibility that lenders give borrowers for loan repayment, and would require payday and car title lenders to verify that the consumer has the ability to repay a loan without having to reborrow or renew it—two key protections that Consumer Action and advocates around the country had been pushing for.

The proposed rule was, not unexpectedly, attacked bitterly by payday lenders, who argued that they are filling a financial need. But advocates and consumers pushed back. The Bureau unveiled its proposal at a field hearing in Kansas City, where hundreds of payday loan opponents rallied to “Stop the debt trap.”

The following month, Consumer Action

joined its Americans for Financial Reform coalition partners in promoting “Shark Week” on both Twitter and Facebook to educate the public on the CFPB’s pending rule to rein in payday loan sharks and encourage consumers to let the CFPB know that they support a strong rule.

In September, Consumer Action and other members of the #StopTheDebtTrap coalition joined Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis at a press conference at the LA County Hall of Administration to announce support of stronger federal consumer protections against payday, vehicle title and other damaging high-cost installment loans. The action came at a critical time, as the CFPB was seeking public feedback on the proposed rule.

On October 5, 2017, the CFPB announced its final rule. While praising the CFPB, our coalition readied itself to build on this progress.

For-profit schools: In mid-2016, Consumer Action, as part of our ongoing campaign to support students who have been defrauded by for-profit colleges, put out the call for consumers to take action by signing an electronic petition asking the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to discharge the federal student loans of those who were scammed by unscrupulous schools.

Consumer Action also hosted its first-ever interactive tweet chat, to provide guidance to students who had been defrauded by ITT Tech and other for-profit schools. Under the hashtag #ForProfitFails, the social media event provided a platform for former students to ask questions about for-profit colleges, recent school closures and student loan debt, while Consumer Action and other advocates were able to share helpful re-

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sources and insight relating to student loan discharges, transferring school credits and any legal action defrauded borrowers might be able to take against their schools.

Along with coalition partners, we urged the ED to discharge the federal student loan debt of defrauded former ITT Tech students in a streamlined process similar to the one the Department implemented for Corinthian students. We also wrote to the ED regarding the for-profit industry's request that the implementation of the gainful employment rule—a law aimed at cracking down on underperforming career-training programs—be delayed, reminding the Department that the rule is needed to protect students and taxpayers from over-priced, poor-quality education programs that consistently saddle consumers with debt they cannot repay and degrees or certificates they cannot use.

In October, after years of engaging in the negotiated rulemaking process, Consumer Action celebrated the ED's announcement of its final Borrower Defense to Repayment rule, which would now prohibit the use of forced arbitration clauses at schools that receive federal financial aid, a practice that denied students the right to hold their school accountable in court if it broke the law. We also were encouraged that defrauded Corinthian students who were enrolled when the school abruptly closed (and those who withdrew on or after June 20, 2014) were able to benefit from a streamlined closed school discharge process. We also applauded the Department's decision to allow Pell Grant recipients who attended institutions that closed to have their Pell Grant eligibility restored. (The Trump Administration announced a delay in the final Borrower Defense to Repayment

rule in June 2017. A series of hearings in a new negotiated rulemaking process have been announced for late fall 2017 and early 2018.)

Soon after the new administration took office, Consumer Action and a number of allies demanded that five U.S. senators on the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) committee who received hundreds of thousands of dollars in political contributions from Trump's nominee for education secretary, Betsy DeVos, recuse themselves from voting on her confirmation.

In an effort to empower students with the information they need to avoid fraudulent training programs, Consumer Action staff finalized the five-piece Finding the Right Job Training School training module (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/job_training_schools). The publications highlight many of the red flags and pitfalls associated with attending for-profit colleges and vocational schools and offer insight on financing job training education.

Student loans and financial aid: With the average Class of 2016 graduate carrying \$37,172 in student loan debt, up 6 percent from the previous year, Consumer Action continued its fight for regulations that would protect the more than 44 million student loan borrowers, their families and taxpayers from unscrupulous loan servicers and fraudulent for-profit colleges that put corporate interests first.

In April 2016, Consumer Action joined the "1T Day" protest of record-high college costs and called for an extension of low interest rates on federally subsidized Stafford loans. ("1T" refers to total student debt having reached \$1 trillion.)

Working with other advocates, we called on

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Congress to avoid raiding the Pell Grant allocation in the upcoming budget to redirect it to other programs. Pell Grants provide access to college for millions of low-income students—most from families making \$40,000 or less.

We held a student loan repayment panel at our November 2016 National Consumer Empowerment Conference, which highlighted repayment options for student loan borrowers. (Education Secretary DeVos would soon have us fighting to prevent dissolution of student loan borrowers' access to affordable income-driven repayment plans.)

Consumer Action supported the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's decision to sue Navient, the country's largest student loan servicer, for misleading and cheating borrowers at "every stage of repayment." Navient, formerly known as Sallie Mae, services more than \$300 billion in federal and private student debt, and was accused of creating "obstacles" for borrowers by providing bad information about loans, incorrectly processing payments and not acting on borrower complaints.

Advocates called on the White House to crack down on private companies that charge fees for student debt assistance, loan forgiveness and consolidation services that are otherwise free. These companies, known for preying on vulnerable student loan borrowers, must be closely monitored and shut down.

We also participated in the Department of Education's development and launch of a new student loan complaint database, designed to increase both accountability and transparency in higher education. Opened to the public in the summer of 2016, the database serves as a useful tool for students and whistleblowers to hold colleges, loan

servicers and collectors accountable while also helping to prevent fraud, abuse and waste of taxpayer dollars.

Lifeline: Consumer Action has long been an advocate for the California LifeLine telephone subsidy program, which, along with the federal Lifeline program, provides discounts on phone service for the state's low-income residents. As such, we applauded the March 31, 2016, vote by the Federal Communications Commission to bring the Lifeline program into the 21st Century by expanding it to include broadband for qualified low-income households. (By mid-2017, our editorial staff had updated our popular *Connect to California Lifeline and Save!* [https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/articles/connect_to_california_lifeline_and_save] publication to reflect program changes.)

As a member of the Universal Lifeline Telephone Service Trust Administrative Committee (ULTSAC), we attended committee meetings throughout the year. ULTSAC is an advisory board providing advice and recommendations to the California Public Utilities Commission on the development, implementation and administration of the Lifeline program.

Privacy: An April 2016 press release in which Consumer Action announced a new white paper on improving consumers' control over data consent (bit.ly/principles_for_consent) was the jumping off point for our privacy work in the new fiscal year. The white paper, in which we outline a series of principles for data privacy, centers on a single premise: Consumer consent should guide corporate behavior and proper use of customer data. Specifically, companies that lack a direct, first-party relationship with consumers should not have access or rights

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to data about them.

The following month, the Federal Communications Commission, recognizing that consumers should not have to choose between going online and enjoying privacy protection, proposed a rule to allow ISP customers to control who has access to information about them. We were pleased when, in October, the FCC voted to give broadband customers the legal right to make informed choices to protect their privacy and that of their families. The FCC rule (since killed by new FCC Acting Chair Ajit Pai) would have generally required ISPs to ask for permission before using or sharing customer information for purposes other than to provide service, and to safeguard that information and notify consumers if a breach occurred.

As a member of the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) digital privacy coalition, we met with the coalition many times over the year to discuss the latest in privacy issues, including TSA oversight, big data, broadband internet privacy and more. As one example of our participation, we contributed a “statement of interest” to an EPIC amicus brief in the First Amendment case *Packingham v. North Carolina*, which would unconstitutionally deny citizens their access to various websites based on their criminal background.

Recognizing the key role played by industry, we participated in meetings with companies including Google, Facebook, American Express, Verizon and Walmart to understand any planned changes to privacy policies and practices and to offer consumers’ perspective and advocates’ recommendations prior to implementation.

We maintained our long-time membership in the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue

(TACD), a consortium of consumer groups from the EU and the United States that meet (in person or by phone) regularly to monitor and discuss global regulatory issues and their impact on consumer and privacy protections.

California advocacy

Throughout the year, Consumer Action’s California legislative coordinator, Joe Ridout, lobbied for passage of legislation benefiting consumers and opposed bills we considered harmful to their interests. In the effort to protect and promote consumer rights in Sacramento, Consumer Action collaborated with home-state allies, including the Consumer Federation of California, the California Reinvestment Coalition, Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety and the East Bay Community Law Center.

The signing of Senate Bill 1150, the Homeowner Survivor Bill of Rights (SBOR), into law at the end of September 2016 gave us cause to celebrate midway through our fiscal year. The law, which took effect in January, protects widows, widowers and other heirs from unnecessary foreclosure.

We were also rewarded with the defeat of AB 2395, a scheme by AT&T and Assemblymember Evan Low to decommission all the landlines in California. This would have made AT&T more profitable, but would have harmed seniors, Lifeline discounted phone service program participants and rural consumers, and would have jeopardized 911 service for some users.

Consumer Action also helped to successfully oppose AB 2688 (Gordon), a bill that would have weakened privacy protections for users of health fitness devices (think Fitbit). Had the legislation passed, “commercial health monitoring programs,” encompass-

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ing a whole host of health monitors and wearable health devices, apps and online health data trackers, would have allowed companies greater freedom to share health fitness information with third parties and/or penalize consumers who choose not to have their information shared.

We unsuccessfully opposed AB 516 (Mullin), a bill that sought to charge all car buyers more by increasing the “doc fee.” Consumer Action and allies were concerned that the legislation failed to protect some vulnerable consumers in cases when dealerships failed to send buyers permanent license plates within 90 days.

We also met with defeat in our effort to end price discrimination based on gender. The defeated bill, SB 899 (Hueso), sought to prohibit gender-based pricing disparities.

Some legislation of interest resulted in compromises. AB 287 (Gordon) would have made it legal in the state for car dealers to knowingly sell unsafe recalled used cars to consumers if they merely “disclosed” that the vehicles were under recall. Consumer Action argued that this was a recipe for disaster, as car buyers who didn’t take the cars in to get the defects repaired would be exposed to danger. The bill was withdrawn but later amended in positive ways, which led us to drop our opposition. The final law prohibits the rental or sale of unrepaired recalled cars by rental car companies, and bans advertising a car as “certified” if it has an unrepaired safety recall.

By the start of 2017, we opposed bills that would remove basic privacy protections from schoolchildren, teachers and school employees; authorize a five-year pilot program allowing San Jose and San Francisco to install and test automatic speed cameras; and mandate that state and local

governments buy “identity theft protection” services for Californians in the event of a data breach (corporate welfare disguised as consumer protection).

The Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal rallied consumer advocates against egregious corporate wrongdoing and the forced arbitration clauses that block harmed customers from taking the corporate wrongdoers to court. On Nov. 28, Ridout testified before the California Senate Banking and Financial Institutions Committee about how Wells Fargo’s customers had been harmed by the company’s scam, and made recommendations for mitigation. We rallied for a related legislative effort, SB 33 (Dodd), that will protect consumers harmed by unauthorized accounts by preserving their right to take the culprit to court.

The following February, We Do Count!, a coalition of consumer advocacy groups of which Consumer Action is a member, submitted a letter to Wells Fargo CEO Timothy Sloan calling upon the bank to stop forcing its customers and workers to give up their legal rights and submit to mandatory arbitration. Ridout hand-delivered the letter to the bank’s San Francisco headquarters and promoted our consumer tips for switching banks (https://www.consumer-action.org/alerts/articles/tips_for_switching_banks).

Coalitions

During the 2016-2017 fiscal year, Consumer Action took part in activities as a member of more than 60 national and state coalitions (see full list at end of report), including weekly calls and meetings with Americans for Financial Reform regarding new and continuing legislative and advocacy actions. These alliances, while diverse in composition and purpose, all enable participants to

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achieve far more than they could individually.

In April 2016, we helped with promotional efforts to role out a new Fraud.org website created by the newly established Alliance Against Fraud coalition (hosted by the National Consumers League). As part of the effort, we advertised this valuable resource to our consumer and community-based organization network.

We also announced our membership in the Alliance for Investor Education (AIE). We joined with the hope that our membership would help us improve access to investor information for limited-English-speaking consumers.

To learn more about what we are doing in coalition with other groups, check out our Coalition Efforts page online (<https://www.consumer-action.org/coalition/>). Here are just a few highlights of our coalition efforts that don't appear in other sections of this report:

Protecting fliers from soaring fees. Consumer Action joined other advocates in urging Senate leadership to support the FAIR Fees Act (S 2656), which would prevent airlines from charging consumers unreasonable or disproportionate cancellation, baggage or other ancillary fees.

Extending banking to all. Continuing our support of a strong public postal service (as opposed to privatization), we participated in efforts by the coalitions Campaign for Postal Banking and A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service to devise strategies for bringing banking services to post offices as a way to foster financial services inclusion in underserved communities.

Preventing damage to the credit scores of millions. Consumer Action joined consumer and civil rights advocacy groups in expressing opposition to the Credit Access and Inclusion Act of 2016 (HR 4172). Contrary to its name, the legislation would create a negative credit score for “thin file” or “no file” consumers, who are disproportionately from low-income and moderate-income minority communities. In areas like employment and insurance, where a negative credit report or low score could harm job prospects or increase rates, it is often better to have no credit history.

Preventing the FBI from overstepping its bounds. Forty-six privacy, civil liberties and immigrant rights organizations sent a letter to Congress urging them to hold oversight hearings to assess the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Next Generation Identification program and its use of citizens' biometric data. The FBI's biometric database and facial recognition technologies raise crucial privacy, civil liberties and human rights issues.

Demanding real consumer protection from pyramid schemes. Consumer Action joined consumer advocates in urging members of the U.S. House of Representatives to oppose HR 5230, the Anti-Pyramid Promotional Scheme Act of 2016. The bill purports to strengthen consumer protections against fraudulent pyramid schemes but instead would make it harder for the FTC to challenge illegal pyramid schemes and pernicious forms of deceptive multi-level marketing programs.

Monitoring availability and affordability of auto insurance through data collection. Consumer advocates have long argued that low-income drivers are price-gouged when it comes to car insurance. In response,

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advocates urged the Federal Insurance Office (FIO) to, among other things, evaluate premiums at the ZIP code level to ensure its affordability analysis accurately represents the cost of insurance around the nation.

Protecting immigrant victims of the Wells Fargo fraud. Wells Fargo employees set up more than two million unauthorized accounts for existing customers just to meet sales quotas and get commissions. In the aftermath of the scandal, Consumer Action joined consumer and civil rights groups in pressuring the credit bureaus to give immigrant victims of Wells Fargo's underhanded tactics free copies of their credit reports in their native languages so that they could dispute any fraudulent accounts that were created in their names.

Transparency around recalled vehicles. Most recalled consumer products are illegal to sell until the product has been repaired or replaced. However, unsafe recalled vehicles may be sold before the recall repair is made. Coalition advocates joined together in asking the Federal Trade Commission to prohibit auto dealers, including retail giant CarMax, from engaging in false advertising regarding the safety of unrepaired recalled cars.

Maintaining state-level protections for fintech consumers. More than 250 groups sent a letter to Comptroller of the Currency Thomas Curry urging him not to grant national charters to financial technology (or "fintech") firms. These charters could pre-empt stronger state oversight and state consumer protection laws that protect individual borrowers and small businesses from abusive financial practices like predatory lending.

Protecting non-citizens' privacy. Consumer and privacy advocates joined together in

a letter to the Department of Homeland Security condemning an invasive proposal that would require non-citizens to disclose their social media accounts, passwords and frequently visited websites to border officials. (Unfortunately, the policy went into play despite opposition.)

Encouraging competition. Consumer Action, in support of an open, competitive market for television and streaming video navigation devices and apps, participated in the Unlock The Box coalition fighting to end the "cable boxopoly," which mandates equipment leasing fees for 99 percent of cable households and costs them an average of \$231 per year in rental fees. Unfortunately, the FCC's Ajit Pai killed the proposal—vehemently opposed by the pay-TV industry—when the Trump administration took power.

Healthy Children Organizing Project

In July 2016, the website HealthyChildren.org, a project of Consumer Action founded in the early 1990s as the Lead Poisoning Prevention Project and later named the Healthy Children Organizing Project, was closed. Founder Neil Gendel, who retired from Consumer Action in 2009, headed the project for 19 years. Gendel, a former California deputy attorney general, helped the City and County of San Francisco write its model ordinance to protect children from lead poisoning.

Gendel led the successful community-wide effort to enact safe lead work practices inside and outside older lead-painted residential housing, child care facilities and government buildings (schools, recreation and park facilities) long before other communities

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and government agencies began to address these issues, which still exist today. He also led and helped to find funding for a city-wide effort to educate parents, particularly in low-income communities, to protect their children and themselves from lead poisoning and other toxins in their homes, child care facilities and schools.

HealthyChildren.org archives can be accessed at the Internet Archive website, where a feature called the “Wayback Machine” (<https://archive.org/web/>) allows visitors to view cached versions of websites at various dates in the past. Enter <http://www.healthychildrenf.org> into the Wayback Machine to see the site.

Amicus briefs

Consumer Action is proud to work with plaintiffs’ attorneys to file amicus (“friend of the court”) briefs in legal cases of importance to the consumer interest. Among the cases we weighed in on in the past fiscal year:

Credit card fee transparency and disclosure. Consumer Action and other consumer advocacy organizations filed an amicus brief in *Expression Hair Design et al. v. NY AG Eric Schneiderman* arguing that by restricting merchants’ right to refer to discounts for payment in cash as a credit card surcharge, the law in turn deprives consumers of crucial information about the cost of various payment options and drives up prices across the board for non-credit card users.

In a similar case, *U.S. Department of Justice v. American Express*, Consumer Action and U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) urged the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit to review its earlier decision in favor of American Express, which was sued

by the government for antitrust violations related to its contract provisions prohibiting merchants from steering customers toward other credit card networks. The groups argued that barring merchants from discussing cards with lower transaction fees raises retail prices for all consumers, including people who pay with cash.

Employee background checks in California.

An employee sued the school bus transportation provider First Student for violation of two California laws—the Consumer Credit Reporting Agencies Act and the Investigative Consumer Reporting Agencies Act—alleging that the notices First Student gave her regarding its intent to conduct background checks failed to obtain her written authorization to conduct a background check. Consumer Action joined the National Employment Law Project and half a dozen other organizations in an amicus brief asking the court to uphold an appeals court finding that California’s two principal consumer reporting statutes were not “unconstitutionally vague” just because there happened to be some circumstances in which both applied to the same conduct. (The appeals court said in those circumstances an employer must comply with both laws).

Class actions for defective products. A number of consumer organizations, including Consumer Action, filed an amicus brief in an appeal of a consumer class action against the global building and roofing company Owens Corning. The nationwide class action alleged defective roof shingles. However, the Western District of Pennsylvania rejected the class action, stating that consumer complaint cases should be brought individually. Consumer Action and its allies argued that this would close the door on justice for consumers who could

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not afford to bring individual lawsuits.

Wireless data throttling. Consumer Action joined a dozen consumer groups in an amicus brief urging a reexamination of the Federal Trade Commission's 2014 wireless data-throttling suit against AT&T Mobility LLC for failing to inform "unlimited" data customers that it would reduce internet speeds for heavy data users. The court dismissed the suit, saying that AT&T fell under the Federal Communications Commission's decision to reclassify broadband providers as common carriers and, therefore, the FTC has no jurisdiction.

Consumer training and outreach

Consumer Action provides publications, workshops, training tools and technical assistance to enable a network of nearly 7,000 community-based organizations (CBOs) to deliver in-language consumer and personal finance education to low-to-moderate-income and underserved individuals and families across the country.

In addition to training CBO staff and volunteers, our trainers give presentations to consumers; participate in coalitions, conferences and resource fairs; grant interviews in English, Chinese and Spanish; and work directly with community groups, government agencies and advocates to ensure that critical consumer information reaches those who need it.

During the 2016-2017 fiscal year, Consumer Action's outreach team traveled nationwide to eight cities to conduct train-the-trainer events for 242 CBO staff members. In doing so, our team taught community group representatives how to use our educational materials to assist their clients and mem-

bers; another 394 CBO staffers were trained in 10 webinars. The CBOs attending our events serve servicemembers and veterans, youth, low-to-moderate-income families, the disabled, seniors, new immigrants, re-entry and workforce development clients, and others.

Outreach staff traveled to another 10 cities to conduct presentations for nearly 2,100 individual consumers, providing our free multilingual publications and encouraging them to improve their financial literacy.

The team began the fiscal year with two Money Management 1-2-3 (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_money_management_1-2-3) train-the-trainer events, in Visalia, CA, and Phoenix, AZ. The module covers all aspects of money management, from building a strong financial foundation to achieving financial goals and planning a secure financial future. Court awards to conduct consumer education funded both trainings.

In the second quarter, staff conducted a training in San Diego on our Economic Survival Guide for Servicemembers and Veterans module (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_military_money), sponsored by Visa Inc. as part of its Veterans Financial Coalition project, of which Consumer Action is a member organization. Also during that period, Consumer Action and the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) cohosted webinars to introduce network partners to NEFE's Smart About Money, My Retirement Paycheck and Financial Workshop Kits resources.

In the third quarter, Consumer Action's staff conducted two more Economic Survival Guide trainings, in Killeen, TX, and Jersey City, NJ. Consumer Action and Capital One

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also co-hosted a couple of webinars to introduce network partners to Ready, Set, Bank, a free online and in-person blended learning program designed to help seniors bridge the “digital divide” by learning about online and mobile banking. Most webinars and videos can be viewed on Consumer Action’s YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFnGGfEiqPS2GhsJCKyZv_Q).

Empowerment Conference

Each November, we host our National Consumer Empowerment Conference, in Rosemont, IL.

The 7th annual conference, an invitation-only, two-day event, brought together 63 consumer educators, counselors and advocates from around the country to address critical consumer issues, learn from subject matter experts and agency representatives, and share best practices in consumer and financial education. The conference was free to attendees thanks to the support of more than a dozen sponsors: Capital One, TracFone, Bank of America, 1-800 Contacts, Citi, Comcast NBCUniversal, FICO, Microsoft, Enterprise, American Express, Visa, Walmart and Dezenhall Resources.

The 2016 conference included presentations on repayment options for student loans; investor education in the low- and moderate-income community; tools to prevent financial crimes and consumer scams; protecting online privacy; detecting predatory loans; free and low-cost broadband access for consumers; payday loan alternatives; regulatory actions on behalf of consumers; affordable housing options; and innovative financial education programs and tools.

During the fourth quarter, Consumer Action and FICO co-hosted two webinars to introduce network partners to the FICO Score Open Access for Credit and Financial Counseling program. The program enables credit and financial counseling providers in the U.S. to share FICO scores they purchased with their clients for free. Our staff closed the fiscal year with a training on debt collection (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_debt_collection) in Monterey, CA. The training included a presentation on California debt collection consumer protections by Joe Jaramillo, senior attorney for Housing Economic Rights Advocates (HERA).

In addition to planning train-the-trainer events, managing the training evaluation program and working to get trainings accredited through the Association for Financial Counseling & Planning Education (AFCPE), Consumer Action’s associate director of outreach and training, Audrey Perrott, conducted trainings locally for individual consumers and community agencies; participated in calls to implement an investor education initiative in Ohio; and helped community partners select educational modules to incorporate into their education programs, identify potential funding, obtain HUD housing counseling certification and integrate financial technology into their existing financial education and housing counseling programs.

In June 2016, Perrott was among the 700 advocates, policymakers, bankers, financial technology innovators and other industry professionals who gathered in New Orleans for the American Banker and Center for Financial Services Innovation (CFSI) EMERGE Financial Health Forum.

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Our three community outreach managers, Jamie Woo, Nelson Santiago and Linda Williams, covered a lot of ground in the course of the year.

Woo continued to raise awareness in the Chinese community by conducting 10 media interviews and issuing 15 news releases about timely consumer protection topics and Consumer Action events. Woo also translated Consumer Action publications into Chinese and conducted Chinese in-language trainings for individual consumers and the staff of community agencies.

Santiago conducted various presentations for consumers, including ones on identity theft at the Sherman Oaks branch of the Los Angeles Public Library and for staff of the Independent Living Resource Center of San Francisco, and others on money management and good credit at the Torres Martinez Tribal TANF office. As one of Consumer Action's bilingual educators, he continues to contribute to our Spanish-language library of materials and website, and provides in-language assistance to Spanish-speakers who contact our advice and referral hotline.

Williams continued to work closely with the military community throughout the year, conducting eight trainings on ID theft, debt collection and prepaid cards. She also attended training events for veterans advocates and service providers and staffed a table at the Military Saves event at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, CA. Williams participated in coalitions and events that address issues on homelessness, veterans services, payday and car title loans, consumer justice and small business development.

Editorial and social media activities

Publications

Over the course of the year, Consumer Action filled 1,382 requests for 392,897 free, printed copies of our multilingual publications. Of these, 149,911 copies were for our newly updated and expanded Money Management 1-2-3 module. Community-based organizations nationwide rely on these and other materials to educate their clients and community members on a wide range of consumer and personal finance topics. Another 92,682 copies, mailed at no charge to recipients, were for the materials in our Social Media and Online Video Privacy module, which includes the brochures *What's not to 'Like'?* and *Watch out! Online video and your privacy*. The creation, printing and distribution of this module was funded by the Rose Foundation.

Throughout the year, Consumer Action's editorial staff produces new publications, creates new training modules and updates and/or expands existing materials. Unless otherwise noted, we funded these activities with cy pres awards (class action residuals) received from consumer lawsuits.

The central message in Consumer Action's new *Insurance Checkup: Assessing and adjusting your coverage* (<https://www.consumer-action.org/english/articles/insurance-checkup>), published at the start of the fiscal year, is that insurance is not a "buy it and forget it" product. The fact sheet encourages readers to revisit their insurance policies annually (or sooner, if life events warrant), because most people couldn't bounce back from the loss of their home or

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a liability lawsuit without adequate insurance coverage.

By mid-2016, Consumer Action had completed a major update and overhaul of its three-part Money Management 1-2-3 educational module (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_money_management_1-2-3), originally created in 2010. While the fundamentals of personal finance have remained the same, an update was called for to reflect the many new consumer financial planning resources and online tools available; the implementation of government programs (like the Affordable Care Act and the Treasury's myRA retirement account); adjustments to important figures (such as the amount you can contribute to retirement accounts); and changes in certain marketplace practices (credit checks are now required on reverse mortgage applicants, for instance).

Welcome changes to the Military Lending Act (MLA) necessitated an update of our *Economic Survival Guide for Servicemembers and Veterans* fact sheet (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/articles/economic_survival_guide_for_servicemembers_and_veterans) and Military Money module (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_military_money), published in 2014 with funding from Visa. The materials were created as a tool for helping servicemembers, veterans and their family members recognize and avoid scams and unfair credit terms, identify better borrowing and banking options and learn about special consumer protections available to them. Amendments to the MLA, most of which went into effect in October 2016, provide greater protections for servicemembers and close loopholes that allowed predatory lenders to skirt the regulations.

To help the millions of people each year who must deal with the consequences of delinquent debt, we revisited our two multilingual debt collection publications, *Debtors' Rights: Protecting yourself from debt collection lawsuits* and *The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act: How it restricts collectors and protects consumers*, updating both where needed and revising and expanding *Debtors' Rights*. We also created a PowerPoint presentation and companion lesson plan with class activities to be used by consumer groups conducting education in their communities. The complete training module is available as a free download at the Consumer Action website (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_debt_collection). A third debt collection publication (not part of the module), *When a Collector Calls: An insider's guide to responding to debt collectors*, funded through a partnership with the Consumer Relations Consortium, was translated and made available in Spanish (https://www.consumer-action.org/spanish/articles/when_a_collector_calls_insiders_guide_to_responding_to_debt_collectors_sp) in early 2017.

Having a broadband internet connection at home has become indispensable, yet 33 percent of U.S. households lack this essential tool. In response, Consumer Action partnered with Comcast to create a free, multilingual educational guide to let those who can't afford a standard monthly service plan know that they still have options for a high-speed home internet connection.

Published in late 2016, *Getting up to speed: Broadband internet for low-income households* lays out the many benefits of broadband internet and gives an overview of available low-income programs that can help consumers in many parts of the coun-

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try get online for \$10 or less per month. The guide is available on our website (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_low_cost_internet), along with a packet of companion flyers (in English) that provide detailed descriptions of specific programs that offer low-income households affordable access to the internet.

Consumer Action created two guides full of tips and resources for resolving current problems and avoiding issues with online orders. In *Savvy Online Shopping: Tips for trouble-free transactions*, consumers learn how to enjoy the many advantages that internet shopping offers—such as access to goods that might not be available locally, and competitive pricing and convenience—while reducing the likelihood of problems.

The second publication, *Savvy Online Shopping: How to resolve a dispute*, guides shoppers through the resolution process. The two consumer fact sheets—both in English and Spanish—as well as training materials for community educators are available for free download on the Consumer Action website (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/module_online_shopping). The Savvy Online Shopping module was created with support from eConsumer Services.

Consumer Action again updated its popular Earned Income Tax Credit publication, *Get Credit for Your Hard Work* (https://www.consumer-action.org/english/articles/get_credit_for_your_hard_work_eng/), in five languages. The updates were available in plenty of time for taxpayers preparing their 2016 returns to learn more about the EITC and make sure that they took advantage of it if eligible. (We also participated in an “end of tax time” promotion with the Consumer Federation of America, the National Consumer Law Center and others reminding

consumers that only a few states regulate paid tax preparers and educating them on how to choose a qualified tax professional.)

We closed out the fiscal year with the publication of our multilingual *Guide to Finding the Right Job Training School* (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/articles/job_training_schools), designed to help anyone considering a job training program or vocational school make an informed choice, recognize the difference between legitimate training schools and fraudulent programs, avoid excessive or unwarranted student loan debt, and know where to turn if they believe they are a victim of for-profit school fraud. The module (https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/job_training_schools) also includes *Questions and Answers About Job Training (Vocational) Schools*, a Student Loan and Education Resource List, and a PowerPoint presentation and companion lesson plan with activities to be used by community educators.

Consumer Action actively promotes and distributes new publications to our network of nearly 7,000 community-based organizations as soon as they become available.

Issues of *Consumer Action News* for the 2016-2017 period focused on retirement planning (Summer 2016), the CFPB complaint database (Fall 2016), language access in consumer and financial services (Winter 2016-2017) and consumer protection rules at risk of repeal under the newly elected administration (Spring 2017). Find them all online (https://www.consumer-action.org/news/ca_news).

Our monthly *INSIDER* newsletter, in its seventh year, continued to chronicle Consumer Action’s activities. Read the newsletters online (<https://www.consumer-action.org/news/insider>).

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Consumer Action continued to publish and disseminate our monthly *SCAM GRAM* e-newsletter, launched in 2015, to a growing email list of more than 130,000 allies (as of the end of the fiscal year).

SCAM GRAM alerts readers to the latest in tech fraud, credit card scams, ID theft and general con-artistry. The timely newsletter has been very popular, garnering monthly feedback from consumers who are both grateful for the tips offered and eager to share their own. We draw from a variety of news stories, coalition efforts and federal agency alerts (IRS, FTC, etc.) to highlight the most egregious and relevant scams and frauds each month.

During the year, *SCAM GRAM* writer Lauren Hall was interviewed about the newsletter's alerts on award-winning consumer reporter Michael Finney's KGO 810 San Francisco "Consumer Talk" radio show. Read *SCAM GRAM*, published on the 15th of each month, online (<https://www.consumer-action.org/news/scam-gram>). You can have *SCAM GRAM* delivered to your email in-box by signing up for our email list on our home page (<https://www.consumer-action.org>).

Websites

For FY2016-2017, Consumer Action's family of eight websites drew 2,227,063 total page views, an increase of 27 percent over the previous fiscal year.

Our main website, Consumer-Action.org, claimed the greatest portion of the increased access, with 1,999,441 page views (by 733,262 visitors), an increase of 48 percent in page views over the previous year.

Popular sections of the site included our Class Action Database, with 693,024 unique page views, an increase of 212% over the

previous year. Our perennial favorite *How to Complain* guide was viewed 8,310 times (a 228% increase) and downloaded 2,041 times.

In April of 2017 we closed the MoneyWi\$e website after 15 years due to loss of funding. (*Thank you, Capital One, for your long-time support of the MoneyWi\$e project!*)

We have moved all MoneyWi\$e materials to our Managing Money Project website (as well as our main Consumer Action website, and Consumer Action's Managing Money Project is now the funder. We have been working to update and consolidate the MoneyWi\$e training modules under new branding. (Here is an example of our updated guide, "Micro business: Preparing for success [https://www.consumer-action.org/english/articles/micro_business].)

Consumer Action staff continued to post daily news headlines and consumer alerts on our website. Over the past year we've featured alerts on everything from deportation scams in light of the administration's threats to immigrants to tips for switching banks in response to news of widespread anti-consumer practices. Some of our alerts were translated to reach a wider audience.

Social media

Our use of Twitter and Facebook continues to grow, reflecting the importance of social media as a tool for sharing information in real time. Our email constituent list, which numbers about 120,000, sent a total of more than 35,000 communications to their elected officials in Congress on a number of issues, including:

Opposing a U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission proposal to eliminate the current default requirement for mutual funds

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to send shareholder reports and other important information to investors in paper form. This change would have disadvantaged millions of investors—the majority of whom have already expressed a preference for paper-based investment materials.

Urging the Department of Education to clarify and strengthen some protections for defrauded federal student loan borrowers and to better protect students and taxpayers from fraud and other misconduct by unscrupulous colleges.

Protecting the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau from attacks by GOP members of Congress who would like to see the CFPB run by a commission and funded by Congressional appropriations instead of its effective one-person leadership and independent funding.

Just as our “tax time” social media and education campaign was ending, we launched an “April Is Financial Literacy Month” social media campaign to draw consumer attention to our many valuable resources, from home-buying guides to tips for communicating with debt collectors.

In July of 2016, as the CFPB turned five years old, Consumer Action and other members of the Americans for Financial Reform coalition engaged in a “Happy birthday to the CFPB” tweet storm detailing the Bureau’s many accomplishments since its inception.

Also in July, Consumer Action joined AFR in promoting “Shark Week” on both Twitter and Facebook to educate the public on predatory lenders and the CFPB’s pending rule to rein in these types of loan sharks. The social media campaign encouraged consumers to contact the CFPB and write

a comment in support of a strong payday lending rule.

In September, Consumer Action live-tweeted the Senate’s hearing on the massive Wells Fargo fraud case and also hosted a tweet chat on the problems with for-profit schools, which we encouraged the public to participate in under the hashtag #ForProfit-Fails.

Soon after, Consumer Action joined news channel ABC15 in Phoenix, AZ, to participate in one of its popular, recurring Facebook Live sessions—this one focusing on the pros and con of home warranties. Consumers can follow our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/consumeraction/>) for information on the date and time of future sessions.

Ushering in 2017, Consumer Action again joined the Americans for Financial Reform coalition in a social media blitz, this time for a #DefendCFPB tweetstorm and thunderclap, educating the public on the importance of the watchdog agency in fighting for consumer rights and publicizing the many upcoming targeted attacks to weaken it under the new administration. The action was so popular that it “trended” on Twitter in Washington, DC, that day.

In March, as our fiscal year closed, we participated in a #RightsAtRisk social media campaign that spanned more than a week. The campaign sought to highlight all of the many consumer protections at risk if the new Congress used the Congressional Review Act (essentially a loophole in the law) to gut dozens of consumer-friendly rules and regulations that had been passed under the Obama administration.

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Administration

Consumer Action's administration team performs essential tasks that keep the organization running smoothly. From our San Francisco headquarters, the team handles the crucial behind-the-scenes activities that support our staff and enable each office and every department to be productive, effective and responsive.

Over the course of the fiscal year, the team managed the printing, promotion and distribution of hundreds of thousands of copies of our free multilingual educational materials and quarterly consumer newsletter. It also ensured that new and updated publications were posted on our website, translated and made available in Spanish, Chinese, Korean and/or Vietnamese and promoted to the members of our network of community-based organizations and individual consumers. The team conducted 14 mass e-mailings about our new publications and training materials.

In addition to managing the translation of Consumer Action's own publications, the staff continued to provide translation services to corporate, non-profit and government clients that serve diverse populations.

The administration team was also responsible for maintaining multiple databases to keep track of our nearly 7,000 community-based network members, hundreds of donors and training participants, and nearly 1,400 requests for about 400,000 copies of our publications. These databases maintain information that is crucial to our outreach, advocacy and fundraising efforts.

In support of the outreach and training component of our work, the department made thousands of calls and sent dozens of mailings to recruit attendees for more

than a dozen community train-the-trainer events and conferences, and compiled the more than 400 packets of training materials needed for these events. It provided similar support for our fundraising efforts, including our annual Consumer Excellence Awards and anniversary celebration in Washington, DC.

The admin team also is charged with handling human resources functions, including administering payroll and employee benefits, and managing our technology needs for eight websites, several dozen employee/office computers and company servers, and multiple network, backup and email systems. Team members manage the consultants we hire to run our local network, conduct daily backups, manage our email systems and do the other highly technical work needed to keep us online and secure.

In FY2016-2017, we trained and hired new staff, and updated Consumer Action's Employee Handbook to reflect changes in internal policies and practices and/or employment law.

Complaint Hotline

The Hotline staff, based in our San Francisco office, respond to consumer questions and complaints with referrals, non-legal advice and, when appropriate, educational materials. During the April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017 period, we received 6,984 consumer complaints and communications, with 63 percent arriving via our website (<https://www.consumer-action.org/helpdesk/>) and the rest coming in by phone from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The top five states with consumer complaints were, again, California, Florida, New York, Texas and Georgia. Four of the top five complaint categories remained the same as the last

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year: customer service, refund/overcharges, deceptive ads/offers and defective goods. This year, home construction/repair complaints overtook tenant/landlord issues. Our multilingual hotline counselors served mostly English-speaking consumers, followed by Chinese- and Spanish-speaking individuals.

The Hotline team also maintains our Class Action Database (www.consumer-action.org/lawsuits/), which helps consumers learn

about class actions they might be eligible to join and settlements for which they can submit claims. During the 2016-2017 fiscal year, 158 class action settlements were open to claims, and the database webpage logged 693,024 total views. (It is the No. 1 most visited page on our main website.) The hotline received 78 inquiries about the database and about class actions in general.

2016 Consumer Excellence Awards

Consumer Action's annual Consumer Excellence Awards, held in mid-October at Verizon's headquarters in Washington, DC, recognized outstanding efforts in consumer protection and advocacy and raised critical funds for our free, multilingual consumer assistance and referral hotline and our *Consumer Action News* and *INSIDER* newsletters. The event garnered over \$230,000 from our generous supporters.

The theme of this 45th anniversary celebration was "Celebrating Consumer Champions"—an opportunity to focus much deserved attention on the efforts of dedicated and committed advocates who, through their leadership, have forged significant change for consumers. During the cocktail reception, attended by our staff, government officials, community partners, fellow advocates and industry representatives, we celebrated the individuals and groups whose efforts have benefited countless consumers and also honored our award recipients.

The awards, which recognize individuals and groups for their outstanding contributions to the education and welfare of consumers nationwide, went to:

Ken Harney, author of "The Nation's Housing" column, syndicated by the Washington Post Writers Group and carried by newspapers nationwide;

National Fair Housing Alliance, the only national organization dedicated solely to ending housing discrimination; and

Richard Cordray, director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, who has led the Bureau's educational, supervisory and enforcement efforts since 2012.



Ruth Susswein of Consumer Action presents Richard Cordray, director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, with a 2016 Consumer Excellence Award. (Photo: Stephen Baranovics)

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Did you know?

That the year ending March 31, 2017, Consumer Action...

Maintained a diverse staff of 25 in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Washington, DC, that collectively speaks 15 languages and/or dialects

Traveled to eight cities and trained 242 community group representatives in person, with another 394 learners participating in our webinars

Responded to 6,984 complaints and communications to our hotline on a variety of issues, with the top five areas of complaint being: customer service, refunds/overcharges, deceptive ads/offers, defective goods, and home construction/repair issues

Ended the fiscal year with 3,189 followers on Twitter and 4,169 Facebook followers

Posted 239 Chinese, 279 Spanish and 1,036 English news headlines on our websites

Participated as a member of more than 60 national and state coalitions that amplified the voice of consumers on issues ranging from maintaining the FTC's ability to challenge deceptive multi-level marketing programs and pyramid schemes to opposing legislation that would deny justice for asbestos exposure victims

Had a total of 2,227,063 page views across the eight websites we have developed and maintain, an increase of 27 percent over FY2015-2016

Posted 158 cases open to claims in our Class Action database, which drew 693,024 unique page views, an increase of 212 percent over the previous year

Translated approximately five dozen publications, posted 103 new or updated publications to our online library, and printed more than 514,300 copies of free materials

Filled 1,382 bulk order requests from community-based organizations across the country for 392,897 copies of our free, multilingual publications

Had about 120,000 subscribers to our email list, 3,689 of whom composed their own email messages to their elected officials on topics of their own choosing

Generated 35,176 emails from our subscribers to policymakers on a variety of topics, from urging the Federal Trade Commission to adopt an updated Contact Lens Rule to supporting the Federal Communications Commission's broadband privacy rule

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Staff profiles

Vickie Tse

Vickie Tse joined Consumer Action in the organization's San Francisco office in the spring of 2009 as a part-time employee supporting the administrative team. Eventually, she transitioned to full-time, taking on greater responsibility, first as an administrative assistant and then in her current position as development coordinator.

Tse's role as development coordinator consists primarily of supporting the executive director's fundraising activities. Specific duties include receiving and recording donations and grants, maintaining a database of membership and corporate donations, organizing the fundraising component of Consumer Action's annual anniversary reception, providing grant writing assistance, and preparing and retaining project contracts.

Tse also provides general support to the business manager in the areas of audit review and recordkeeping, and to the administrative team in coordinating translation and printing of the organization's multilingual consumer publications.

In her own words

As the first of four children to two hardworking immigrant parents, there were times when I felt equally blessed and stressed. My parents raised my siblings and me with the goal that our childhood would be better than theirs had been. But as the eldest, the responsibility to help raise the younger ones fell on me, along with the pressure to always be on my best behavior and set a good example.

Upon finishing my undergraduate studies, I found myself in the midst of the 2008 financial crisis that rocked our country. My liberal arts degree was effectively useless, and I knew I had to return to school for a more practical degree. At the same time, I needed money to attend graduate school to study accounting. Consumer Action provided me with the opportunity to earn an income to support my educational endeavors and to learn many of the skills I need to perform my job today. When I received my degree, everyone at Consumer Action expected me to pursue a career in public accounting. But I had grown to consider everyone at Consumer Action a part of my family, and I enjoy being a part of the effort to help those who don't have the same resources and opportunities as I did. So I decided to stay!

Since graduating with my accounting degree, I have been able to apply that education within Consumer Action. I am able to use what I learned in my audit courses to help our business manager prepare for the annual visit from our auditors. And just recently I was given the opportunity to use my knowledge of taxes, acquired through school and as a volunteer helping low-income families file their annual income tax returns, to help create a tax supplement to one of our publications. I hope to have more opportunities to create content using my knowledge and experience, while helping Consumer Action continue its work and expand with the changing economy and technology.



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Staff profiles

Alegra Howard

Alegra Howard began working with Consumer Action's advocacy team in Washington, DC, in 2011, while a graduate student at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy in College Park. As a national priorities associate, Howard is the main researcher for quarterly surveys of banking, mobile, privacy, technology and other consumer services. She is a regular contributor to *Consumer Action News*, and works on behalf of the organization on student loan issues, joining coalitions that focus on national student lending reform and regulation.

Howard holds a bachelor's degree from Villanova University and a master's degree from the University of Maryland, College Park. Before joining Consumer Action, she was a campaign consultant for EMILY's List, where she worked on Annise Parker's 2003 Controller race in Houston, and during the 2004 presidential election spent a year working for America Coming Together (ACT) in its Ohio state headquarters. She then joined the labor movement, working with the International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers, Local 21 (AFL-CIO) on several organizing campaigns around the San Francisco Bay Area. As a senior development associate with the youth sports-focused non-profit Positive Coaching Alliance between 2006 and 2009, Howard procured funding from corporate and private donors in the Bay Area and New York City. Prior to leaving the Bay Area for Washington to attend graduate school, she worked with the Silicon Valley-based technology company Cisco Systems, supporting its global marketing office as an organization development specialist.

Howard currently lives in New York City with her husband and their goldendoodle pup. If she's not tweeting about student loan policy, she's tweeting Bravo's Andy Cohen about the latest episode of *Real Housewives*. The couple welcomed their first child in the fall of 2017. *(Continued on next page)*



2016-2017

In her own words

Working for Consumer Action during grad school was an invaluable experience. I was able to gain firsthand experience in the real-life procedures and strategies associated with crafting public policy at the national level and learn from two very devoted and highly regarded consumer advocates, Linda Sherry and Ruth Susswein. Working on consumer-facing policies seemed like a perfect fit for me. While I always had an interest in politics and legislation, I started my career in campaigns and grassroots organizing. I enjoyed speaking with voters around the country and listening to the issues that were important to them and their families. Now, while working on behalf of consumers, it's nice to be able to remember those conversations, and call on new ones, when making recommendations to Congress and the current administration regarding the various protections and regulations needed to empower consumers to financially flourish.

I consider myself a generalist, so being able to research an array of consumer-facing issues, including the latest trends in technology and privacy, personal finance, predatory lending and student loans, is very gratifying. Being an advocate for student loan borrowers has been challenging and eye-opening. As a Xennial (yes, this is a real term—look it up!), I've seen firsthand how rising tuition costs, Congress' insufficient funding of Pell Grants, and low-wage part-time jobs have pushed our country's youth into costly student loans. Realizing how for-profit institutions and loan servicers rig the system to increase their profit margin and disadvantage student loan borrowers is infuriating. As someone who is navigating student loan repayment for my own school loans, it's troubling to learn how difficult it can be to actually repay your debt—annual income-driven repayment renewals and miscommunication from servicers are just a couple of the issues I've dealt with personally in the last six months.

One of the projects I'm most proud of is our Finding the Right Job Training School module [https://www.consumer-action.org/modules/job_training_schools], which my colleagues and I wrote as a response to the tens of thousands of students being defrauded and misled by for-profit colleges with big marketing budgets. These schools take advantage of some of our communities' most vulnerable populations, including veterans, single parents and those who are the first in their family to attend college. Our intent was to highlight many of the misleading recruitment practices vocational schools and job training programs are known to exercise, and arm would-be students with the information needed to find out just how valuable and worthwhile an education at a particular school might be. These students are attempting to make their futures better through education, and deserve the best chance at doing so.

While the political environment has definitely cooled for consumer advocates under the new administration, I feel our work is now more important than ever. I value the opportunity to help consumers navigate the ever-changing regulatory policies relating to their financial health and to speak up on their behalf when their best interests are threatened by corporate greed.

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Feedback from CBOs

Thank you again for everything that you do to make the Consumer Action conference go smoothly! I was impressed with the speakers that you gathered for this year and always feel like I learn something new and make new connections when I attend!

—Bill Druliner, GreenPath Financial Wellness, TX

[Your annual conference offers an] incredible opportunity to network, hear from top-notch speakers & people “in the know.” I always gather so much new information that helps my professional development!

—Nancy Reigelsperger, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Steuben County, NY

Thank you for the opportunity to attend your training session for the “Economic Survival Guide for Servicemembers and Veterans”...in Jersey City. The class explored a wide range of laws, regulations and opportunities that aim to protect and benefit military servicemembers.

—Steven Drulis, NJSaves Campaign Coordinator, New Jersey Coalition for Financial Education, NJ

The energy and passion of presenters [at the recent servicemembers and veterans event in San Diego] was very good. Keep it that way. I was very engaged with the training and look forward to getting this information out to my Marines.

—Lt. Nancy Crews, USN Chaplain, 5th Battalion, 11th Regiment,
1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, CA

I just wanted to say “THANK YOU” for the wonderful information and resources you shared at yesterday’s Money Management workshop! I truly appreciate all of the info and can’t wait to see how we can share it with the families we work with that are in the public housing and Section 8 programs.

—Lilia Sanchez-Gonzalez, Direct Services Program Specialist,
Maricopa County Human Services, Phoenix, AZ

Thank you for the English and Chinese Elder Fraud presentations on March 14. Our seniors loved them and think that the information was very helpful.

—Ellen Trinh, Woolf House, San Francisco, CA

[Your credit scoring webinar] was an excellent and informative presentation and I was glad to hear that the information is also available in Spanish.

—Anna Enriquez, Bilingual Finance Counselor,
Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Northern Illinois, Inc.

The economic landscape appears to be changing and not in a good way, so I thought it was timely for Consumer Action to have alerted us when we needed to act, for example with the healthcare policy alert that I received recently. I sent it to our nonprofit grantees so that they could also be aware. Thank you for the work that you do.

—Doris Lee, Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development, San Francisco, CA

Thank you for the opportunity to attend [your Debt Collection training]. It was a great class. The presenters and guest speakers were knowledgeable and provided great information. I am able to return to work with tools to help my clients.

—Rolanda Wilson, NID Housing Counseling Agency, Oakland, CA

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Spotlight on our community-based partners

DebtHelper

Empowering youth to seniors to handle credit, debt and housing

For 20 years, DebtHelper.com (DebtHelper) has worked to educate, advise and empower people from youth to their senior years to handle credit, debt and housing, and to revitalize communities with affordable living opportunities through the acquisition, rehabilitation and sale of residential properties.



DebtHelper offers a wide range of services that include debt management plans, HUD-approved credit and housing counseling, bankruptcy counseling, first-time homebuyer and mortgage readiness programs, information on student loan repayment options, financial coaching, foreclosure prevention help and loan modification assistance.

In 2016, DebtHelper worked with 478 new debt management clients to pay off nearly \$4 million in consumer credit card debt. Through group workshops, one-on-one counseling and online courses, the organization also provided 12,851 households with education on becoming first-time homebuyers, including information on how to access downpayment assistance programs. Also in 2016, through the use of multilingual counselors, and by leveraging technology tools, DebtHelper was able to assist 139 families most affected by the foreclosure crisis to obtain \$2.1 million dollars in home equity and preservation assistance dollars through the organization's participation in Florida's Hardest Hit Program.

Increasing housing costs, wage stagnation and limited housing inventory led DebtHelper to identify



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a need for more affordable housing for low-to-moderate-income households. In response, the organization recently became a Community Buyer in the National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST). Now DebtHelper has access to the NCST's First Look portfolio of newly available properties in target neighborhoods from select financial institutions before those properties are listed publicly for sale. In keeping with the organization's mission to revitalize communities with affordable living opportunities, DebtHelper uses NCST's First Look program to purchase distressed properties, rehabilitate them and provide affordable housing to LMI households.

DebtHelper has been a close partner of Consumer Action for many years. In addition to attending Consumer Action's training events and conferences throughout the years, DebtHelper also incorporates many of the organization's publications, like Money Management 1-2-3, into its credit and housing counseling curriculum. Consumer Action's free, multilingual materials support the organization's efforts to empower clients and community members to achieve financial strength and stability.

To learn more about DebtHelper, visit www.DebtHelper.com.

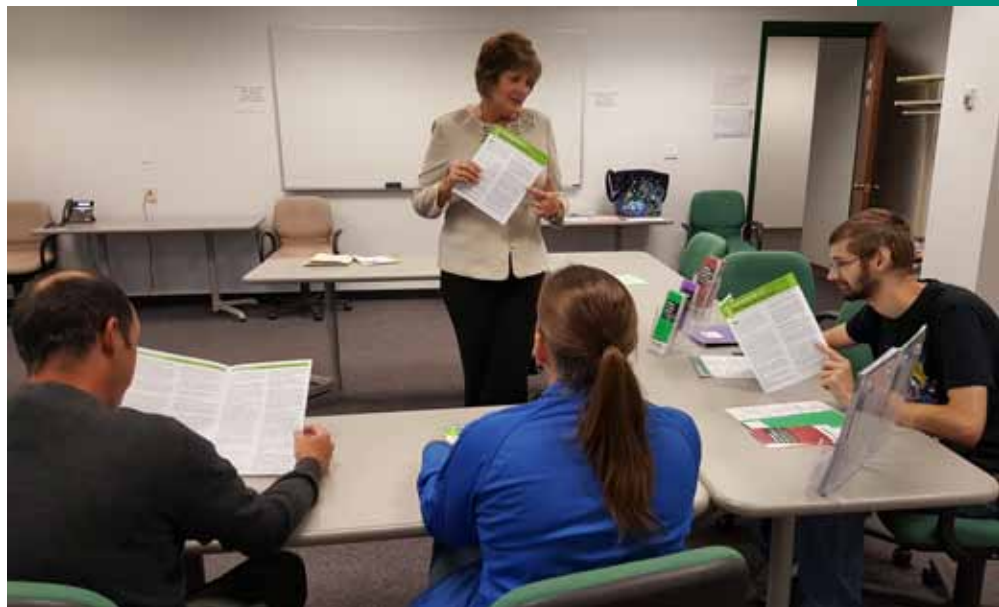
Cornell Cooperative Extension

Putting knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality

Cornell Cooperative Extension is a recognized and trusted local resource for unbiased, research-based financial and resource management information and education in communities across New York State. Campus-based faculty and extension associates, regional specialists and county-based educators all are involved in designing, implementing and evaluating tailored educational efforts to help New York families and communities thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Cornell Cooperative Extension's Family Economics and Resource Management program puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social wellbeing. The educators providing financial management education across the state do so through public workshops and one-on-one coaching, on topics ranging from goal setting, budgeting and saving to building and maintaining good credit and avoiding hazards such as identity theft. In the last year, the program reached over 8,000 participants.

Program success is measured by the number of program participants reporting they are practicing improved money management skills, includ-



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ing shopping wisely, paying bills on time, making more than the minimum required payments, checking their credit reports, reviewing and understanding bills/statements, and making progress toward financial goals such as buying a home, increasing savings, reducing debt and preparing for retirement.

The program's educators emphasize the importance of making wise consumer and personal finance choices, and Consumer Action's materials have been important tools in the effort. Training modules such as Money Management 1-2-3 cover critical education topics, and the take-away materials are excellent resources for participants. Consumer Action's monthly *SCAM GRAM* newsletter is used to inform participants of scams and fraudulent practices they need to be aware of.

Several of the program's educators have taken advantage of Consumer Action's conferences, webinars and training sessions, benefitting from updated information and materials that they can use in their outreach work. Educators who attend Consumer Action's National Consumer Empowerment Conference in Chicago each year bring back new information and publications to share with colleagues across New York State. Taking advantage of all that Consumer Action offers enhances Extension educators' ability to impact individuals, families and communities.

To learn more about the Cornell Cooperative Extension, visit <http://putknowledgetowork.org/finance>.

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45th Anniversary

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Joy Burwell
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2016-2017

Educational partners

1-800 Contacts

AT&T

Bank of America Charitable Foundation

California Department of Insurance

Capital One

Chargebacks911.com

Comcast NBCUniversal

Consumer Federation of America

Consumer Relations Consortium

Google

Investor Protection Trust

Visa

Cy pres awards

Consumer Action's work is supported in part by cy pres awards from these lawsuits:

Credit/Debit Card Tying Cases

Chase Check Loan Cy Pres

DeLeon v. Bank of America Cy Pres Fund

Griego v. Rent-A-Center

Insurance Brokerage Global Settlement Fund

Mirkarimi v. Cosmopolitan Hotel

Smith v. National Corrective Group

Title and Escrow Consumer Education and Outreach Corporation

Trombley v. Bank of America

Coalitions

Consumer Action partners with these coalitions:

Advocates for Consumer Justice

Alliance for Investor Education

Americans for Financial Reform (AFR)

Auto Financing Coalition (CRL)

Auto Insurance Advocates (CFA)

Bay Area Legal Services Partners

California Consumer Affairs Association (CCAA)

California Latinos for Economic Justice

California Reinvestment Coalition (CRC)

CFPB Consumer Complaint Process Committee (AFR)

CFPB Language Access Issues Committee

CFPB Mortgage Complaints Committee

Coalition for Patient Privacy

Coalition to Protect Patient Choice

Coalition for Quality Credit Counseling (CQCC)

Consumer Federation of America (CFA)

Consumer Federation of California (CFC)

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Task Force (AFR)

Consumer Labor Coalition (National Consumers League)

Consumer Policy Solutions Roundtable

Consumer Relations Consortium

Consumer Video Choice Coalition

Credit Builders Alliance

Digital Due Process Coalition

Digital Privacy and Security Working Group

EPIC Privacy Coalition

Fair Arbitration Now (FAN) Coalition

Fan Freedom Project

For-profit College Loans Reform Working Group

Foreclosure Prevention Task Force (AFR)

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- Fraud Alliance
- Get Older Adults onLine (GOAL)
- Grand Alliance to Save our Public Postal Service
- High Cost Credit/Payday Loan Coalition
- Homeless Coalition
- Identity Theft Prevention Coalition
- Inland Empire Disabilities Collaborative
- Internet Privacy Working Group
- Lifeline Coalition
- Los Angeles Scams Working Group
- Make It Fair Coalition
- Make It Safe Coalition
- Mortgage Reform Task Force (AFR)
- National CAPACD
- National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
- National Consumer Protection Week Partners
- National Cyber Security Alliance
- National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA)
- National Partnership for Women and Families Consumer Privacy eHealth Working Group
- "No Ripoff Clause" Coalition
- Postal Consumer Council
- Privacy Group (Center for Digital Democracy)
- Protect Your Identity Week
- Safe Checking Working Group (Pew)
- Safe Rental Car Coalition
- San Diego Veterans Coalition
- San Francisco Smart Money Network
- Save Our Retirement Campaign
- Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
- Stop the Debt Trap Coalition
- Student Lending Reform Coalition
- Take On Wall Street Coalition
- Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD)
- Univision Consumer Protection Committee
- Veterans Financial Coalition
- We Need to Know

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Statement of Activities

Year ended March 31, 2017

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporarily Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
Support and revenue			
Grants, contributions, cy pres awards	\$ 209,437	\$ 432,421	\$ 641,858
Fundraising event income net of direct expenses of \$42,469 and \$38,147	186,981	-	186,981
Interest and other income	85,662	-	85,662
Net assets released from restriction	2,622,811	(2,622,811)	-
Total support and revenue	<u>3,104,891</u>	<u>(2,190,390)</u>	<u>914,501</u>
Expenses			
Program services	2,519,110	-	2,519,110
Supporting services:			
Administration	585,926	-	585,926
Fundraising	158,098	-	158,098
Total expenses	<u>3,263,134</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,263,134</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(158,243)	(2,190,390)	(2,348,633)
Net assets at beginning of year	<u>699,972</u>	<u>8,563,110</u>	<u>9,263,082</u>
Net assets at end of year	<u>\$ 541,729</u>	<u>\$ 6,372,720</u>	<u>\$ 6,914,449</u>

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- Nani Susanti Hansen
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Associate, National Priorities
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Associate, National Priorities

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Headquarters

1170 Market Street, Suite 500

San Francisco, CA 94102

(415) 777-9648

Fax (415) 777-5267

www.consumer-action.org

info@consumer-action.org

Los Angeles

11901 Santa Monica Blvd, PMB 563

Los Angeles, CA 90025

213-624-4631

Washington, DC

P.O. Box 70037

Washington, DC 20024

(202) 670-3601

dc-office@consumer-action.org