

the government began collecting the data in 1959. Shockingly, about half of adults—49 percent—say they are concerned they have not paid enough attention to managing their finances as they should have and 48 percent are concerned they don't know enough about financial planning; 4 out of 10 American workers are not saving for retirement. Public, community-based, and private sector organizations throughout the United States are working to increase financial literacy rates for Americans of all ages and walks of life through a range of outreach efforts, including media campaigns, Web sites, and one-on-one counseling for individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members of Congress in a time of economic crises and brink of economic recession, to promote literacy in all aspects of finance. I support the goals and efforts established by the National Council on Economic Education, the JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, its State affiliates, and its partner organizations for supporting the goals and ideals of Financial Literacy Month, including raising public awareness about financial education. I recognize the importance of managing personal finances, increasing personal savings and reducing indebtedness in the United States. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation that requests the President to issue a proclamation calling on the Federal Government, States, localities, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, other entities, and the people of the United States to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities with the goal of increasing financial literacy rates for individuals of all ages and walks of life.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1079.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

FINANCIAL CONSUMER HOTLINE ACT OF 2007

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4332) to amend the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council Act to require the Council to establish a single telephone number that consumers with complaints or inquiries could call and be routed to the appropriate Federal banking agency or State bank supervisor, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4332

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Financial Consumer Hotline Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. CENTRALIZED INTAKE OF CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES MADE TO FEDERAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTION REGULATORY AGENCIES.

The Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council Act of 1978 (12 U.S.C. 3301 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 1009A the following new section:

"SEC. 1009B. CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES.

"(a) SINGLE TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES.—

"(1) CALL INTAKE SYSTEM.—The Federal financial institution regulatory agencies, coordinating through the Council, shall establish a single, toll-free telephone number for consumer complaints and inquiries concerning institutions regulated by such agencies and a system for routing such calls to the Federal financial institution regulatory agency that primarily supervises the financial institution, or that is otherwise the appropriate agency to address the subject of the complaint or inquiry.

"(2) ROUTING CALLS TO STATES.—To the extent practicable, State agencies may receive appropriate call transfers from the system established under paragraph (1) if—

"(A) the State agency's system has the functional capacity to receive calls routed by the system; and

"(B) the State agency has satisfied any conditions of participation in the system that the Council, coordinating with State agencies through the chairperson of the State Liaison Committee, may establish.

"(b) REPORT TO THE CONGRESS.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of the Financial Consumer Hotline Act of 2007, the Federal financial institution regulatory agencies shall submit a report to the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate describing the agencies' efforts to establish—

"(1) a public interagency Web site for directing and referring Internet consumer complaints and inquiries concerning any financial institution to the Federal financial institution regulatory agency that primarily supervises the financial institution, or to the Federal financial institution regulatory agency or State agency that is otherwise the appropriate agency to address the subject of the complaint or inquiry; and

"(2) a system to expedite the prompt and effective rerouting of any misdirected consumer complaint or inquiry documents between or among the agencies, with prompt referral of any complaint or inquiry to the appropriate Federal financial institution regulatory agency, and to participating State agencies."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 4332, the Financial Consumers Hotline Act of 2008, which has received strong bipartisan support from the Financial Services Committee.

The bill establishes a single toll-free telephone number that consumers can call if they have a problem with their bank and want to speak to someone who can help them.

Given that depository institutions in the United States can be regulated by any of five Federal regulators or a State regulator, consumers often don't know what entity to call if they have a problem with their account.

In a hearing in my subcommittee, the regulators and consumer groups testified that customers often end up calling their Attorney General. Since State authority over national banks has been preempted by the Federal OCC, AGs can't help in this category.

This legislation builds on a suggestion that Comptroller Dugan put forward to provide consumers with a single number to call to get help with their banking issues, and we drafted it in close consultation with all five regulators.

As the OCC, the FDIC, and the OTS all testified, this legislation will be cost efficient as well as consumer friendly. I should note that CBO came out with an estimate last week. The bill would have no significant effect on direct spending or revenues. So this legislation can help our constituents without spending any money.

Right now, each of the agencies has a Web site and provides a phone number for consumers to call with questions and has a staff to follow up on complaints or inquiries, some of which may be unique to their responsibilities. For example, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation has systems in place to respond to consumer inquiries about deposit insurance and bank failures.

This bill would not replace these existing consumer response systems, but helps consumers find them. It adds a simple one-stop routing method to minimize confusion for consumers who are unclear about where to call for help and directs them to the right agency for specialized assistance. The establishment of a single toll-free number will help encourage greater use of the agency's resources to help their consumers.

Establishment of a single toll-free number will also assist the banking regulators in compiling consumer complaints and inquiries so that better information would be available about problems or issues that cut across the institutions that the various agencies supervise. It would help governments spot developing problems. Congressional legislation and oversight would

also be better informed by such centralized statistics.

This legislation directs the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council to set up the hotline. The Council is an existing interagency body established by statute to prescribe uniform principles and standards for financial institutions and to otherwise coordinate regulatory activity among the Federal banking regulators. The Federal Reserve, FDIC, NCUA, OCC, and OTS are all members of the Council.

The legislation also directs the Council to work with State banking regulators to integrate them into the hotline service. And, the Conference of State Bank Supervisors testified that they have already started to implement such a plan. The act also requires the Council to report to Congress 6 months after enactment on the agency's efforts to establish a public interagency Web site, likewise directing and referring consumer complaints and inquiries received on the Internet concerning any financial institution to the appropriate Federal or State financial institution regulatory agency.

I should note that not only the OCC but the Council as a whole has taken some steps in this direction on its own initiative, with an eye to both cutting costs and improving service to consumers. Last summer, the Council formed a working group to study ways in which the separate consumer complaint handling systems of each regulator could be streamlined and leveraged to better and more efficiently serve consumers.

With this legislation, we give consumers a statutory mandate and a timetable to support and guide these efforts, as well as a framework for congressional oversight.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. I thank the Chair and the ranking member and subcommittee Ranking Member BIGGERT and many others for their help on this legislation. I urge a "yea" vote.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to thank the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), the Chair of the Financial Institution Subcommittee, for her hard work on this bill, and I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bill and urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, if you are a consumer and you have a complaint or a problem of a financial nature, which regulator are you going to call, the FDIC, the Federal Reserve, the OCC, the CFTC, FTC, OFHEO, HUD, Treasury, OTS, NCUA, the SEC? In these challenging times, consumers should not have to have a Ph.D. in finance to quickly and easily get in touch with the appropriate State and Federal banking regulators.

Given the complexity of our banking system and the various regulators that work in this area, consumers may not

know where to turn when they have a dispute with their institutions. This legislation creates a single hotline that can help steer consumers in the right direction. Federal regulators currently have had an informal system in place to redirect misplaced consumer complaints, and regulators are constantly trying to improve the system. But this bill will ensure that no consumer complaint falls through the cracks. Consumers should not have to make 12 phone calls to find the right regulator.

Again, I am pleased that this bill will ensure that consumer complaints are heard and that regulators are responsive. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4332.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SENSE OF HOUSE ESTABLISHING NATIONAL WATERMELON MONTH

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the resolution (H. Res. 578) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National Watermelon Month, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 578

Whereas watermelon production constitutes an important sector of the agricultural industry of the United States;

Whereas, according to the January 2006 statistics compiled by the National Agricultural Statistics Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States produces 4,200,000,000 pounds of watermelon annually;

Whereas watermelon is grown in 49 States, is purchased and consumed in all 50 States, and is exported to Canada;

Whereas evidence indicates that eating 2.5 to 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily as part of a healthy diet will improve health and protect against diseases such as cancer, high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease;

Whereas proper diet and nutrition are important factors in preventing diseases such as childhood obesity and diabetes;

Whereas watermelon has no fat or cholesterol and is an excellent source of the vitamins A, B6, and C, fiber, and potassium, which are vital to good health and disease prevention;

Whereas watermelon is also an excellent source of lycopene;

Whereas lycopene, an antioxidant found only in a few red plant foods, has been shown to reduce the risk of certain cancers;

Whereas watermelon is a heart-healthy food that has qualified for the heart-check mark from the American Heart Association;

Whereas watermelon has been a nutritious summer favorite from generation to generation;

Whereas it is important to educate citizens of the United States regarding the health benefits of watermelon and other fruits and vegetables; and

Whereas July would be an appropriate month to establish as National Watermelon Month: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National Watermelon Month to recognize the health benefits of watermelon and the importance of watermelon to the agriculture industry of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H. Res. 578 that will establish a National Watermelon Month.

Watermelon has been enjoyed over the years as one of our country's favorite foods. As Mark Twain said, "It is chief of this world's luxuries, king by the grace of God over all the fruits of the earth. When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat."

According to the United States Agriculture Department statistics, the United States produces 4.2 billion pounds of watermelon annually. This summertime staple ranges in size from 5 pounds to over 40 pounds, and is grown in 49 States. Many towns in the U.S. strive to become the Watermelon Capital of the World; however, Cordele, Georgia has won this title repeatedly by producing the biggest, best, and most abundant watermelons in the country. Watermelon may be eaten in a variety of ways and is also often used to flavor summer drinks, including sweet red wine.

And lest anyone accuse us of dealing with a frivolous subject, let me call attention to a serious matter. In a time where we have all become aware of the benefits of good nutrition, it is fortunate watermelon provides an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B, and vitamin B1. Additionally, many other beneficial minerals are