

which Vijaya worked to raise money for. She was a tireless advocate for peace, a Hindu, and a follower of the teachings of Gandhi. She was instrumental in bringing in Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, to speak at One World Day at Rockefeller Park last year. Another aspect of Vijaya's quest for world peace was her participation in Toastmasters International. She appreciated Toastmasters founder Ralph Smedley's belief that if people could communicate better with one another, they could break barriers to peace. Vijaya was an active member of the Crossroads Toastmasters club in Strongsville and Toastmasters District 10 in Northern Ohio. She received the one of the highest honors last year when she received the Advanced Communicator Silver award by the Toastmasters International.

Vijaya used her communication skills to advocate peace not only among nations, but among families. She bravely broke her own silence about domestic violence, which even today is not widely discussed among immigrant families. After her own experience, she counseled other immigrant wives and girlfriends trapped in abusive relationships. She brought together fellow community activists in Cleveland's international community to form a coalition to confront domestic violence in immigrant communities.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in remembrance of one of Cleveland's great champions of peace, Vijaya Emani. She developed her skills as a communicator and community organizer to bring peace in the home and peace in the world. The Greater Cleveland community will surely miss the presence of Vijaya at community events, but the passion and commitment she brought to everything she did will never be forgotten. Our condolences go out to her daughters Sujata and Nirmla, and her extended network of family and friends around the world.

INTRODUCING THE INACTIVE ACCOUNT CLOSURE NOTIFICATION ACT

HON. SUSAN A. DAVIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Inactive Account Closure Notification Act, which protects consumers from having their credit cards closed and their credit scores lowered against their will.

Under current law, credit card companies can close an inactive account without providing any prior notification to the customer.

Often, the customer does not know his or her credit card account is being closed until after the fact.

Because of the way credit scores are calculated, unilateral account closures can lower the credit scores of consumers.

In addition, because credit card companies are only closing inactive accounts that do not carry a balance and do not incur fees or finance charges, the consumers that are seeing their credit scores penalized are likely to be the most responsible borrowers.

Just the other day, I heard from a woman in my district who recently had her credit card terminated for inactivity.

She had never missed a payment on her card and had excellent credit prior to her account being closed.

Her credit card company gave her no early warning that it was planning to terminate her account.

Had she received notification that the company was planning to close her account due to inactivity, she would have been more than happy to use the card again.

She even called the company to see if it would be willing to reopen her account if she used her card, but was told no.

These stories are not unique to my home district of San Diego. Consumers all over the country are going through the same exact experience.

I request permission to enter into the RECORD an article from the Wall Street Journal from March 11 of this year detailing the havoc these account closures are wreaking on the credit scores of consumers across our nation.

The bill I am introducing today—the Inactive Account Closure Notification Act—will protect consumers by requiring credit card companies to provide customers with a 60-day notification before they can close their accounts for inactivity.

During this 60-day period, customers can use their credit cards to prevent their accounts from being closed.

If an account has been closed for inactivity, a customer will still have 30 days to contact the credit card company requesting that his or her account be reopened.

With lenders dramatically tightening their standards in the current economic climate, even a small dent in a consumer's credit score can severely impact his or her ability to take out a mortgage, start a small business, buy a car, or pay for college.

Responsible consumers deserve to have advance warning that their credit cards will be closed and their credit scores will be lowered.

Help me protect our consumers.

I urge the adoption of the Inactive Account Closure Notification Act and yield back my time.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Mar. 11, 2009]

CREDIT CARD ISSUERS: BUY SOMETHING OR ELSE!

(By Kelli B. Grant)

One of the biggest causes of the financial crisis was that Americans were borrowing (and spending) more money than they could afford to pay back.

So how are credit-card issuers reacting to consumers' attempts to live a more financially responsible lifestyle? They're threatening to cut their credit cards off if they don't spend enough.

Loretta Maxwell of Troy, Mich., thought her credit score of 790 buffered her against most of the fallout of the credit crunch. When Chase closed her \$6,000-limit card in December without warning after two years of inactivity, she called to fight it. She was unsuccessful. "If you're not using it, they entice you to do so, and then the moment you don't spend enough, they cut your limit," she says. (Chase says it is standard practice is to review inactive accounts. "Inactive cards with large open credit lines present a real risk of fraudulent use and large potential liabilities for Chase," says spokeswoman Stephanie Jacobson.)

Maxwell's experience is far from an isolated incident. Most major issuers, including Chase, Bank of America, American Express and Citibank have been slashing credit lines and closing the accounts of those who don't

spend on their card regularly. While these issuers are required to notify you in writing of an account closing, there's no requirement that they do so in advance. Even when they do give early notice, the only way a cardholder can stop their account from getting shut down is to start spending again.

In December, Discover reported that it closed three million accounts during 2008 due to inactivity, and plans to cull up to two million more. A Discover spokeswoman says the issuer is constantly reevaluating cardholder's credit and assessing whether they have the most appropriate credit line and product. Capital One is suspending accounts that have been inactive for at least a year, warning account holders they only have 60 days to redeem their rewards. "Some of these accounts had literally never been used," says spokeswoman Pamela Girardo. A spokeswoman for Bank of America, meanwhile, says the bad economy prompted it to close accounts with zero balances that have been inactive for more than a year. American Express spokeswoman Lisa Gonzalez says it periodically reviews inactive accounts for cancellation. Citibank did not respond to requests for comment.

From a business perspective, cutting off certain customers is a smart financial move, says Sanjay Sakhrani, an analyst with investment bank Keefe, Bruyette & Woods. Closing rarely-used accounts lowers a card issuer's risk profile by keeping their potential liabilities (i.e., the amount of credit available they extend to cardholders) from outweighing their assets. Inactive accounts also cost the issuer money to maintain, without providing the benefit of income from interest or merchant fees, he says.

For consumers, however, closing accounts can be devastating—especially to their credit score. Your credit utilization ratio—the amount of your debt in relation to the amount of your available credit—comprises 30% of your score, says Craig Watts, a spokesman for Fair Isaac Corporation, the company that calculates and issues the FICO credit score that most lenders use. So when an account is closed, you have less credit available to you—and the ratio immediately jumps higher. A person with a solid credit score of 720 or so, whose utilization ratio jumps from 35% to 75% after one of their accounts is closed is likely to see their score drop by "several dozen points," to somewhere in the 600s, he says. That's a far cry from the 760 (or higher) consumers need to get the best rates from lenders.

One thing that somewhat softens the blow is that FICO factors in closed accounts when calculating the longevity of your credit history, which accounts for 15% of your score. While lenders may make a note on your report indicating whether the account was closed by them or you, the information isn't used in the scoring formula, says Watts.

Ironically, an excellent credit score can actually serve as more of a bulls-eye than a shield, says Dennis Moroney, a research director and senior analyst for consulting firm Tower Group. He says banks figure they can limit cardholder backlash by targeting consumers with few debts and plenty of other accounts. That way, a closed account won't have as much of a detrimental effect on their creditworthiness.

Even years of loyalty and regular spending won't spare some cardholders. David Good of Houston, used to be devoted to American Express, with which he had two credit cards: an unlimited charge account and a \$7,500 revolving account. Yet a solid credit score, eight years of on-time payments and fairly frequent purchases on the cards—including more than \$100,000 last year alone—weren't enough to save his accounts. In December, Good received a written notice that the

issuer had closed both due to "low activity in the past six months." "I was shocked," he says. "They lost my trust, totally." (American Express declined to comment on Good's or any other individual's accounts.)

New Yorker Veronica Eady Famira was vacationing in Germany when she discovered that her \$1,500-limit Delta SkyMiles card from American Express had been shut down. "I must have spent \$300 in cellphone charges calling banks," she says. "I was pretty stranded." Adding insult to injury, Famira had just earned a free companion ticket on the card valued at up to \$400 for a domestic flight—now she can't redeem the ticket.

CONGRATULATING EUGENIA ARMBRECHT FOR BEING NAMED FIRST LADY OF MOBILE

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride and pleasure that I rise today to honor Mrs. Eugenia Armbricht on the occasion of her being named First Lady of Mobile. The Mobile chapters of Beta Sigma Phi, an international women's network with over 165,000 members, recently bestowed this honor on her.

Known to her many friends as "Gigi," she is a tireless volunteer and has devoted her entire life to improving the lives of countless people who call Mobile and south Alabama home.

Gigi moved to Mobile from Galveston, Texas, just in time for her senior year at Murphy High School. Following graduation, she moved to Tuscaloosa where she attended the University of Alabama and received a bachelor's degree in education. She met her future husband, Conrad Armbricht, in Tuscaloosa, and after graduation, they moved to Mobile where she began teaching first grade.

She soon developed an interest in special education and began working on her first master's degree at the University of South Alabama. Gigi also began giving much of her time as a volunteer for Mobile United, and by 1988, she was a paid employee of the organization. Ten years later, she was recruited to join AT&T, and she now serves as manager of regional and external affairs for the company.

Gigi was also honored this year as a distinguished University of South Alabama alumna and the Junior League of Mobile's Sustainer of the Year.

Madam Speaker, I would like to offer my personal congratulations to Mrs. Eugenia "Gigi" Armbricht for being named this year's First Lady of Mobile; truly, no one is more deserving of this high honor. And in so doing, I would also like to recognize Gigi for her lifetime of outstanding professional and philanthropic accomplishments; she is truly a role model for our entire community.

Furthermore, I would ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this respected and dedicated friend to many throughout south Alabama. I know Gigi's family; her husband, Conrad; their two wonderful children, Stewart and Amanda; her granddaughter and her many friends and other family join me in praising Gigi's accomplishments and extending thanks for her never-ending efforts to make south Alabama a better place to live and call home.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BILL PASCRELL, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. PASCRELL. Madam Speaker, I want to state for the record that yesterday, April 1st, I was in my district attending the funeral of my mother Roffie Pascrell, who recently passed away at the age of 95, and I therefore missed the 8 rollcall votes of the day.

Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 175 on the Motion to Table the Resolution—H. Res. 312.

Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 176 On Agreeing to the Resolution Providing for consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 85) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2010 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2009 and 2011 through 2014—H. Res. 305.

Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 177 On Agreeing to the Resolution Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1664) to amend the executive compensation provisions of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 to prohibit unreasonable and excessive compensation and compensation not based on performance standards—H. Res. 306.

Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 178 On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, as Amended End Government Reimbursement of Excessive Executive Disbursements (End GREED) Act—H.R. 1575.

Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 179 On Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree Honoring the lives, and mourning the loss, of Sergeant Mark Dunakin, Sergeant Ervin Romans, Sergeant Daniel Sakai, and Officer John Hege, members of the Oakland Police Department in California who were brutally slain in the line of duty—H. Res. 290.

Had I been present I would have voted "nay" on rollcall vote No. 180 On Agreeing to the Amendment—Bean of Illinois Amendment to H.R. 1664.

Had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 181 On Agreeing to the Amendment—Dahlkemper of Pennsylvania Amendment to H.R. 1664.

Lastly, had I been present I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 182 On Passage To amend the executive compensation provisions of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 to prohibit unreasonable and excessive compensation and compensation not based on performance standards—H.R. 1664.

SALUTING THE SERVICE OF FRED V. KROEGER

HON. JOHN T. SALAZAR

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam Speaker, this evening, the Southwestern Colorado Water Conservation District will bid farewell to a most

dedicated, knowledgeable and remarkable man who has served on its board for 55 years.

Fred V. Kroeger of Durango, Colorado is a devoted man—to his family, his community and water resources.

Fred was born in 1918 in Durango, Colorado and he lived there all his life. He graduated from Fort Lewis College and he made his home there with his beloved wife Eleanor. Fred and Eleanor raised their children in Durango and operated a business there—Kroeger's True Value Hardware.

But Fred's grandfather and father were tied to the rural land and the agricultural economy of the region, and Fred's commitment to the farmers and ranchers who were his neighbors continued throughout his life. That commitment was evidenced by Fred's steadfast support for the Animas-La Plata Project, which was to deliver water to the "dry side" so that those farmers and ranchers could thrive with a more reliable and generous water supply. To this day, Fred bemoans the loss of the irrigation features of the project, which is now nearly complete but is limited to municipal and industrial supplies.

Indeed, the first water meeting Fred attended was with the Southwestern District to discuss the Animas-La Plata Project in 1948. In addition to serving on that board, Fred served on the Animas-La Plata Water Conservancy District board for 24 years, the Colorado Water Conservation Board for 21 years and has been a member of the Colorado Water Congress for 51 years.

That organization bestowed upon Fred the prestigious Wayne Aspinall Water Leader of the Year Award, given in the name of one of my predecessors who chaired the then-House Interior Committee where many of the water projects Fred Kroeger fought for were developed.

Fred was active in his community and its civic and cultural organizations. He always carries a little pocket calendar with him, and it is jammed with meeting commitments to boards, business, family and friends.

At 91, Fred has decided to free up some of those days on the calendar, and so he decided to retire from the Southwestern District board. He richly deserves the recognition he will receive tonight from his colleagues. I offer not only my congratulations to him on his retirement, by a little regret that he will be leaving and a mountain of respect for what he has given to the water resource community.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF ELIZABETH ANN PITTROFF COPELAND

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, the city of Mobile and, indeed, the entire State of Alabama recently lost a dear friend, and I rise today to honor Elizabeth Ann Pittroff Copeland and pay tribute to her memory.

Known to her many friends as Betty, she was a lifelong resident of Mobile. She graduated from The Visitation Monastery and was a lifelong member of St. Pius X Catholic Church. She married her husband of 58 years,