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Sent: Thursday, April 08, 2004 2:05 PM
To: Comments OTS
Subject: EGRPRA Review of Consumer Protection Lending Related Rules

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April 8, 2004

Dear OTS:

As a community banker, I greatly welcome the regulators' effort on the critical problem of regulatory burden. Community bankers work hard to establish the trust and confidence with our customers that are fundamental to customer service, but consumer protection rules frequently interfere with our ability to serve our customers. The community banking industry is slowly being crushed under the cumulative weight of regulatory burden, something that must be addressed by Congress and the regulatory agencies before it is too late. This is especially true for consumer protection lending rules, which though well intentioned, unnecessarily increase costs for consumers and prevent banks from serving customers. While each individual requirement may not be burdensome itself, the cumulative impact of consumer lending rules, by driving up costs and slowing processing time for loans from legitimate lenders, helps create a fertile ground for predatory lenders. It's time to acknowledge that consumer protection regulations are not only a burden to banks but are also a problem for consumers.

Truth in Lending (Federal Reserve Regulation Z)

Right of Rescission. One of the most burdensome requirements is the three-day right of rescission under Regulation Z. Rarely, if ever, does a consumer exercise the right. Consumers resent having to wait three additional days to receive loan proceeds after the loan is closed, and they often blame the bank for "withholding" their funds. Even though this is a statutory requirement, inflexibility in the regulation making it difficult to waive the right of rescission aggravates the problem. If not outright repealed, depository institutions should at least be given much greater latitude to allow customers to waive the right.

Finance Charges. Another problem under Regulation Z is the definition of the finance charge. Assessing what must be included in - or excluded from - the finance charge is not easily determined, especially fees and charges levied by third parties. And yet, the calculation of the finance charge is critical in properly calculating the annual percentage rate (APR). This process desperately needs simplification so that all consumers can understand the APR and bankers can easily calculate it. Constant changes and modifications has required the United Community Bank of North Dakota to outsource our compliance training, at a very high cost.

Credit Card Loans. Resolution of billing-errors within the given and limited timeframes for credit card disputes is not always practical. The rules for resolving billing-errors are heavily weighted in favor of the consumer, making banks increasingly subject to fraud as individuals learn how to game the system, even going so far as to do so to avoid legitimate bills at the expense of the bank. There should be increased penalties for frivolous claims and more responsibility expected of consumers.

Equal Credit Opportunity Act (Federal Reserve Regulation B)