

2018 CONSUMER ASSEMBLY

May 10 and 11, 2018 • Embassy Suites Hotel • 900 10th Street, NW

Consumer Priorities vs. Policymaker Priorities

A leading pollster will provide the latest survey information about how Americans view consumer issues and related political issues. A leading political analyst will discuss the political environment and how it affects the work of consumer advocates.

Legislative and Regulatory Priorities

Leaders from Congress, the Administration, and state government will discuss their consumer priorities and the role of consumer advocates addressing these priorities.

Effective Strategies for Convincing Agencies to Put Consumers First

Congress has created federal agencies mandated to protect consumers from a wide array of fraud, abuse, unfair practices, and unsafe food and products. When agency leaders no longer prioritize consumer protection, consumers suffer and advocates are challenged. What are the most effective strategies for consumer advocates to convince agencies to prioritize consumer protection?

Consumer Protections for Servicemembers & Military Families

The Military Lending Act is perhaps the strongest consumer protection implemented in the last decade. While the MLA protects servicemembers from high cost loans, the circumstances of military life still pose particular challenges around housing and auto loans. This panel will discuss consumer protection challenges unique to active duty servicemembers and discuss how consumer advocates and servicemember advocates can work together to protect active duty consumers as well veterans who have lost active duty protections like the MLA.

Grassroots, Grasstops, and Federal Advocacy

In the past year, consumer advocacy groups at the national, state, and local levels have increasingly joined together to communicate personally with members of Congress. In the future, these united efforts will extend to state legislatures. How can these groups develop and deploy the messages and infrastructure necessary for these joint efforts to be effective?

The Promise and Perils of New Technology on Product Safety

As manufacturers of consumer products innovate and use new technology, there are consequences for consumers and how they use these products. What are these consequences? How can innovation align with product safety? And how can new technology be used to enhance the safety of consumer products?

The Future of Net Neutrality and Universal Service

Consumer advocates have maintained that all consumers should have non-discriminatory, affordable access to broadband services. However, the Federal Communications Commission has repealed rules that would help ensure net neutrality. And advocates have raised questions about whether the subsidies for lifeline phone service are sufficient to ensure affordable broadband access.

Preventing Robocalls and Other Unwanted Calls

Complaints about robocalls and other unwanted calls are increasing while the rights of consumers to limit certain types of calls are being challenged in the courts and in petitions to the Federal Communications Commission. What are the legal and technical issues? What is being done and what more should be done to protect consumers from calls that they do not want to receive?

The Insecure Digital World: Data Breaches and Other Threats to Consumers

Insecure digital technologies can lead to data breaches and invasions of consumer privacy. These threats grow in an increasingly networked world, with consumers installing internet-connected devices in their homes, and their activities being tracked across multiple platforms. How can consumers tell if the digital technologies they use are secure? Who should be responsible for problems caused by insecure products or systems?

A Digital Electric Grid: Consumer Concerns and Opportunities

The expansion and modernization of the digital electric grid provides opportunities to increase energy efficiency and consumer control over energy use. But it also has raised questions about privacy, pricing, and disparate treatment of vulnerable consumers. How can the benefits of this digitization be maximized and costs and risks minimized?

Fintech: Implications for Consumers and Advocates

The term Fintech is increasingly used to describe any digital financial transaction. What is a more precise definition of the term, and what current trends are potentially problematic or positive for consumers? How should consumer advocates discuss Fintech with policy makers in an accessible and effective manner?

Autonomous Vehicles: Bane or Boon to Consumers?

Car manufacturers and tech companies are investing billions of dollars in autonomous vehicles. These AVs have the potential to be a technological vaccine when it comes to reducing death and injury on the nation's roads as well as to transform both the economy and the way consumers interact with cars. AVs also have raised significant safety, privacy, and cyber security concerns. What can consumers expect from AVs and what do advocates need to know to mitigate problems, concerns, and consumer acceptance?

Combating Auto Sales Abuses

Buying a car is expensive, and the process can be confusing. Unsophisticated consumers are particularly vulnerable to misleading sales tactics and predatory financing. What are some of the most common sales abuses that consumers report to state and local agencies? What do consumers need to know to protect themselves? What policies should be adopted to combat these abuses?

The Role of Civil Penalties in Consumer Protection

Consumer protection agencies have numerous enforcement tools at their disposal. One of the most effective is the ability to assess civil penalties for failure to comply with statutory provisions. How are the agencies currently using this tool? Are penalties sufficient to deter future wrongful conduct? What can consumer advocates do to encourage agencies to maximize use of this enforcement tool?

For more information visit www.consumerfed.org