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Northwest Credit Unions' Advocacy Army Help S. 2155 Cross the Finish Line
Passage of legislation is seen as the biggest win in 20 years for credit unions, 110 million members

SEATAC, WA, TIGARD, OR, & BOISE, ID—The Northwest Credit Union Movement celebrated the passage of the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act (S. 2155) today as the first significant legislation targeted towards helping credit unions and their members since 1998.

Credit union advocates from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington rallied particularly hard for S. 2155, which has strong ties to the Northwest. Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) introduced the bill last November. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) initiated a key provision of the landmark legislation – the “Credit Union Residential Loan Parity Act.” The parity provision will classify credit union loans on 1-4 unit rental housing as “real estate” loans instead of business loans, freeing up more capital for loans to Main Street businesses.

“This simple solution will make about \$85 million available at OnPoint, which can be used to meet the needs of more local businesses in our community,” said Veronica M. Ervin, SVP/Chief Compliance Officer at Portland, OR-based OnPoint Community Credit Union.

“Passage of S. 2155 is a milestone that could not have happened without Northwest credit union advocacy,” said Troy Stang, President and CEO of the Northwest Credit Union Association (NWCUA). “Congratulations to credit unions for their tenacity in making the case for this consumer-friendly legislation, and then working so hard to seeing it across the finish line.”

Stang lauded Sen. Crapo’s leadership, and Sen. Wyden’s parity section of the legislation. “Northwest credit unions have \$1.3 billion invested in loans on 1-4 unit rental housing, which will now be available in the form of more loans. Think of the potential for that kind of capital infusion into local, small business loans,” Stang said.

“This bill is an important piece of legislation that we’re excited about for many reasons,” said Jennifer Kutcher, President/CEO of Bellingham, WA-based WECU. “This bill will allow us to approve more home loans for members dreaming of homeownership, make mortgage processing easier, and increase our ability to lend to small businesses.”

For consumers in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, the legislation streamlines the already-stressful mortgage process, and reduces more than 5,000 hours of onerous paperwork for their credit unions. Paperwork that is not serving the consumer.

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Valerie Brooks, President/CEO of Caldwell, ID-based Simplot Employees Credit Union, was a strong advocate for the legislation.

“Increasingly burdensome regulations forced us, as a small credit union, to stop offering mortgages,” Brooks said. With the passage of the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act, Brooks noted that, “we may be able to make home loans again.”

“This bill has been years in the making, and is broadly supported for good reason,” said Sen. Crapo. “Many of the post-crisis rules that were intended for the largest financial institutions have had a negative effect on the smaller ones. As a result, our communities are sometimes deprived of important financial services. The Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act right-sizes regulation so that our local financial institutions can do what they do best—taking deposits and making loans to consumers, homebuyers, and small businesses. Troy Stang, the Northwest Credit Union Association, and credit union members have proven that grassroots efforts and advocacy can lead to successful, commonsense reform.”

S. 2155 is now headed for President Trump’s desk.

“We urge President Trump to sign this bill that has been passed by the Senate and the House,” said Kent Oram, CEO, Chubbuck, ID-based Idaho Central Credit Union. “Idaho’s own Sen. Mike Crapo led the effort to revise regulations pertaining to Main Street financial institutions. We believe this effort leads to a better competitive environment for community focused institutions like Idaho Central Credit Union.”

Credit unions have not seen a federal legislative “win” this monumental since the unforgettable day the Credit Union Membership Act – H.R. 1151—passed in 1998. Shane Berger, President/CEO of Rexburg, ID-based Beehive FCU, was in the House the day that bill passed, and feels today is just as important.

“Not since then,” Berger said, “have we been able to pass significant legislation that benefits our effort to reduce unnecessary and burdensome regulations that impact our ability to serve members. S. 2155 is a good start, and with the continued leadership of Sen. Crapo, I hope we can build on this success.”

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The [Northwest Credit Union Association](http://www.nwcu.org) is the not-for-profit trade association representing over 180 credit unions in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, and their 6.5 million consumer members. Northwest Credit unions are not-for-profit cooperatives, owned by their members. Credit unions help members achieve their financial goals. All earnings in excess of operating expenses and required reserves are returned to members in the form of lower loan rates, fewer fees, and higher interest paid on savings. For information on how to join a credit union, please visit <http://www.asmarterchoice.org>.