

Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs. Among other duties and responsibilities, members of the Council may petition the full Council to set aside a rule (or a part thereof) issued by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection if that rule threatens the safety and soundness of the U.S. financial sector or our system of depository institutions.

It bears noting that the NCUA Chairman is a designated member of the Consumer Financial Protection Oversight Board in the House-passed measure. If adopted, I believe your amendment would help harmonize the House and Senate bills with respect to oversight of the Consumer Financial Protection Agency or Bureau, particularly in regard to the credit union system.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important matter and for the opportunity to review and comment on your amendment.

Sincerely,

DEBBIE MATZ,
Chairman.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
FEDERAL CREDIT UNIONS,
Arlington, VA, May 5, 2010.

Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
U.S. Senate, Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS: I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Federal Credit Unions (NAFCU), the only trade organization exclusively representing the interests of our nation's federal credit unions, in support of your amendment to the Restoring American Financial Stability Act of 2010 (S. 3217) that would add the Chairman of the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) to the Financial Stability Oversight Council established in the underlying bill.

We applaud your efforts to ensure that the voices of credit unions are heard by placing NCUA on the oversight council. As you know, this is an issue of fairness and will enable the NCUA to petition for the review of a rule issued by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection. Without passage of this amendment, credit unions would not have the ability to appeal rule making that could have a detrimental effect on the credit union industry.

We thank you and your staff for your work on this amendment as the Senate takes up comprehensive financial regulatory reform. If we can answer any questions or provide you with further information on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me or NAFCU's Director of Legislative Affairs Brad Thaler at (703) 522-4770.

Sincerely,

B. DAN BERGER,
Executive Vice President,
Government Affairs.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL PUBLIC GARDENS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this May 7 is National Public Gardens Day, a day for us to celebrate the important role public gardens play in our communities and throughout our Nation. Across this great country, more than

500 public gardens are keeping our Nation connected to our natural world, our history, and our culture. These public gardens include arboreta, botanical gardens, zoos, historic landscapes, college campuses, and children's gardens. Together they form a web that preserves the beauty and complexity of plants and animals and humanity's interaction with them.

There is a great thirst for the knowledge and experiences public gardens can provide. Gardening is the most popular hobby in the United States, and more than 70 million people visit public gardens annually. People from all backgrounds, age groups, and geographic regions regularly share in the beauty and serenity of natural spaces such as our public gardens.

Here in Washington, DC, just across the street from the Capitol, is the U.S. Botanic Garden. Called "America's Garden," it is a gateway for people to enjoy the beauty of plants while learning about the role plants play in commerce, culture, and kinship. The United States Botanic Garden is also responsible for helping to preserve and maintain the Capitol Grounds, which are enjoyed by over 3 million people who visit the Capitol every year.

In my own home State of Illinois, our 32 public gardens include wonderful and varied institutions, such as the Morton Arboretum and the Quad City Botanical Center, places such as the Cantigny Foundation and the Skokie Northshore Sculpture Park.

Among Illinois' valued public gardens is the Chicago Botanic Garden, which serves nearly 1 million visitors annually. Its classes are attended by 57,000 visitors, well over half of them school-age children. Millions of schoolchildren have been educated by public gardens about the wonders of nature and the important role of plants in our everyday lives, from the food we eat, to the clothes we wear, to the homes we live in. The Chicago Botanic Garden has hosted 22,000 children on field trips in the past year, providing opportunities for them to interact with nature—a special opportunity for some who may never otherwise get to see a real meadow or visit a lake.

Public gardens are not only committed to growing plants; they are committed to growing minds. As a result, public gardens everywhere are partnering extensively with local schools, colleges and universities, non-profit organizations, and civic associations. Together they have worked on projects ranging from habitat restoration to landscape beautification, as well as on school-based education programs, public health education programs, and community and school gardens.

The Chicago Botanic Garden is a wonderful example of the partnerships occurring between our public gardens and our colleges. Its Windy City Harvest program partners with City Colleges of Chicago to provide summer jobs and hands-on training for teen-

agers at sustainable agriculture sites within Chicago. Through this partnership, participants are trained in producing high-value organic produce, which is sold at retail outlets and is made available to local residents. Program participants not only gain important entrepreneurial skills, they learn where their food comes from and the value in nurturing plant life.

We can rely on public gardens to deliver timely and critical resources for plant and water conservation, ecosystem management, green space preservation, and environmental stewardship. Visitors to public gardens have the opportunity to view regionally appropriate landscapes that preserve our precious natural resources—and give them ideas for creating their own.

Public gardens also serve as repositories for rare and endangered plant species. The research conducted by public gardens on these endangered plant species can be crucial to their survival.

Through their conservation and propagation efforts, many plants that would have been lost to us forever through extinction have been saved.

Therefore, this May 7 we should celebrate our public gardens and the many contributions they make to our communities.

SECRET HOLDS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I am pleased to be joining an effort spearheaded by the Senator from Missouri, Mrs. McCASKILL, to put an end to the practice of Senators secretly holding up legislation or nominations. Senators who want to block a bill or nomination should be willing to state their objection on the record. Many of us thought we had addressed that problem when Congress approved the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. Unfortunately, the problem of secret holds persists, and the new rule needs to be tightened.

As with any Senator, there are times when I object to passage of a bill or confirmation of a nominee. It has not been my practice to try to keep my objection secret, however. For example, when the Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, and I objected to confirmation of the nomination of John Sullivan to a term on the Federal Election Commission last year, we released a statement publicly stating our action and our reasons. We made clear that, until the White House nominates replacements for the two other commissioners whose terms have expired, we would not consent to Mr. Sullivan's confirmation. The FEC is currently mired in anti-enforcement gridlock, and the President must nominate new commissioners with a demonstrated commitment to the existence and enforcement of the campaign finance laws.

Similarly, when I had concerns about legislation introduced by the Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, S. 132, I discussed my concerns directly with