

Consumer Protection Basics: Know Your Rights

In today's financial landscape, understanding your rights as a banking consumer is more important than ever. National Consumer Protection Week, observed each March, serves as a reminder of the safeguards in place to protect you from fraud, ensure transparency, and empower you to make informed financial decisions. Knowing your rights gives you confidence as a consumer. Whether it's protecting yourself from fraud or understanding account terms, awareness is your first line of defense. Here are some essential consumer protections to keep in mind.

Fraud protection for unauthorized transactions – Federal regulations, such as the Electronic Fund Transfer Act (EFTA), or Reg. E, limit your liability for unauthorized electronic transactions if you report them promptly. Notify your bank immediately if you suspect fraud. In general, according to the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\)](#), if unauthorized transfers are reported within 60 days of the date of the first statement which includes the unauthorized transfer, consumer liability is limited. However, delays in reporting may result in higher liability. Also, be sure to review bank statements and set up transaction alerts for early detection of suspicious activity.

Transparent loan disclosures – The Truth in Lending Act (TILA), or Reg. Z, ensures that you receive clear and consistent information about loan terms before signing. Understand key terms by looking for the annual percentage rate (APR), total loan amount and repayment schedule in loan documents. If terms are unclear, don't hesitate to seek clarification from your lender.

Clear account terms and fees – The Truth in Savings Act (TISA) requires banks disclose important details about account terms, such as fees, interest rates and overdraft policies. It's important to read these account agreements to understand potential charges and how they apply. Be sure to ask about alternative account types that may better suit your needs.

Protecting Your Financial Future

Being an informed consumer isn't just about understanding your rights – it's about using that knowledge to protect your financial well-being. Take advantage of resources, such as your bank's customer service team or online consumer protection guides, to stay educated and prepared.