

We are pleased to present this brief overview of the Illinois Department of Financial Institutions' regulatory oversight responsibilities, as well as the various consumer guidelines highlighted in this brochure.

The Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) was created in 1957 to serve as the state regulator of a diverse array of financial industries. As authorized and directed by the Financial Institutions Code, DFI licenses, examines and regulates thousands of entities, including: all state chartered credit unions, currency exchanges, consumer and sales finance companies, title insurance companies and other financial institutions throughout Illinois.

While diligently executing these regulatory responsibilities, the Department is equally committed to protecting the interest of the depositors, borrowers, shareholders and consumers of these financial institutions conducting business in the State of Illinois.

Should you have a question or need assistance resolving a dispute with one of DFI's licensees, please contact us. For your convenience, information about ways to reach the Department is listed on the back panel of this brochure.

## CONSUMER CREDIT COMPANIES

DFI's Consumer Credit Division is responsible for licensing, regulating, and examining Consumer Financial Institutions/Service that conducts business in the State of Illinois. Among the diverse financial institutions regulated by this Division are: consumer installment lenders (including payday and automobile title loan companies), sales finance agencies, debt management services, money transmitters service, and safe deposit boxes service. In addition to these duties, the Division handles consumer inquiries and investigates complaints against any of these licensees.

### *Consumer Credit Safety Tips:*

- *Before signing for a loan, take the time to read the entire contract.*
- *Be sure that you understand the loan contract.*
- *If something is unclear, ask questions or seek advice from a knowledgeable and trusted financial adviser before signing a contract.*
- *Check to confirm the annual percentage rate (APR) written in the contract is the same rate quoted to you.*
- *Make sure all boxes and blank spaces on the contract are filled in. **Do not** sign a contract with blank spaces.*
- *Make payments on time or you may be subject to penalties and/or legal action.*

## CURRENCY EXCHANGES

More than 900 community and ambulatory currency exchanges are licensed, examined and regulated by DFI's Currency Exchange Division, which administers the Currency Exchange Act. In addition to cashing checks and selling money orders, currency exchanges can obtain authorization to offer many additional services for the convenience of consumers. These may include: processing motor vehicle and title registration forms, accepting utility bill payments and distributing public aid services. Other products and services commonly offered are: money transfers, foreign currency exchange, credit card cash advances, notary public services, public transit passes, photocopying and fax transmission. Because services vary, consumers should contact their local currency exchange for specific information about services available.

### *Currency Exchange Consumer Tips:*

- *Bring proper identification such as a valid driver's license, state-issued ID card, passport, or military identification.*
- *When purchasing a money order, instruct the teller to fill it out completely with the names of the remitter and payee.*
- *Save your yellow money order receipt or stub.*
- *Consider obtaining a "Safety Money Order," such as a money order made out to yourself.*
- *Count your money before leaving the window & secure all money before leaving the currency exchange.*
- *When obtaining a license through a currency exchange save all license paperwork and receipts, including the currency exchange window receipt. Bring these with when picking up the license.*
- *Save all stamped, paid bills and the receipts showing the date and name of the currency exchange.*
- *Before initiating a service ask what the fee is, and check that price against the fee chart in the lobby.*



## STATE CHARTERED CREDIT UNIONS

During 2002, approximately 2.75 million Illinois citizens relied on credit unions to provide their financial services. To safeguard the assets of these members, the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) serves as the regulator of all state-chartered credit unions in Illinois.

DFI's Credit Union Division performs the chartering, examination and regulation of every state chartered credit union as prescribed by Illinois law. The Division examines each of these credit unions to determine their financial condition and to ensure their compliance with the Illinois Credit Union Act and its rules and regulations. In accordance with national standards, DFI examiners use the **CAMEL** Rating System as a regulatory tool to determine each credit union's: **C**apital, **A**sset quality, **M**anagement, **E**arnings and **L**iquidity.

These high standards and the diligent enforcement of statutes ensure the safety and soundness of Illinois' state chartered credit union system.

### **Credit Union Consumer Tips:**

- *If you would like to join a credit union contact several to compare the services offered, hours of operation, location and field of membership requirements.*
- *Obtain a copy of the credit union's annual report to assess the financial condition of the institution.*
- *Carefully read newsletters and notices mailed to you by the credit union. They inform members about changes in fees and interest rates on credit cards and loans. They also tell members the date and location of the credit union's annual members meeting.*

## TITLE INSURANCE

DFI's Title Insurance Division certifies, registers and regulates title insurance companies and their registered title agents that guarantee or insure titles to real estate in the state of Illinois. Title insurance companies are examined annually by the Department to ensure compliance with the Title Insurance Act, acceptable management practices and to verify their financial stability and that there is no financial impairment. The Act also requires the certification of Independent Escrowees which are companies that receive deposits, in trust, of funds or documents, or both, for the purpose of effecting the sale, transfer, encumbrance or lease of property located in Illinois.

### **Title Insurance Consumer Tips:**

- *Title insurance is recommended on all real estate transactions to protect all the parties involved.*
- *Charges for title insurance and related services vary and are competitive. Shop around for the best price and service available.*
- *Remember to always carefully read what you are signing.*

For information or assistance regarding state-chartered credit unions, consumer credit companies, currency exchanges and title insurance companies licensed by the State of Illinois, contact the:

Illinois Department of Financial Institutions  
James R. Thompson Center  
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 15-700  
Chicago, Illinois 60601  
312/ 814-2000 888/ 298-8089 TDD 312/ 814-7138  
or

Illinois Department of Financial Institutions  
500 Iles Park Place, Suite 510  
Springfield, Illinois 62703  
217/ 782-2831 888/ 298-8089 TDD 217/ 785-3022

<http://www.state.il.us/dfi>

## Illinois Department of Financial Institutions

The mission of the Illinois  
Department of Financial  
Institutions is to administer and  
enforce the laws and regulations  
pertaining to those financial  
institutions under its jurisdiction,  
and to protect the interests of the  
people of this State in their  
interaction with the various  
entities regulated by this agency.

Rod R. Blagojevich  
Governor

Michele Latz  
Director