

April 27, 2020

The Honorable President Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
US House of Representatives
H-323, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Trump, Majority Leader McConnell, and Speaker Pelosi,

As leaders of groups representing millions of consumers, taxpayers, and entrepreneurs, we sympathize with businesses struggling due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and support policies to bring them regulatory and tax relief. We object, however, to policy actions proposed in the name of “relief” that benefit some businesses by massively raising costs on other businesses and consumers.

Specifically, we are concerned by the push by lobbyists for restaurants and other retailers to expand Dodd-Frank’s Durbin Amendment price controls to credit cards as well as debit cards. The Durbin Amendment is not only one of the costliest provisions of the Dodd-Frank financial overhaul of 2010, it is one of the most regressive.

In 2009, the year before Dodd-Frank was enacted, 76 percent of checking accounts were free of charge. By 2011, that share had fallen to 45 percent, and by 2012 to 39 percent, according to Bankrate.com. A 2014 George Mason University study calculates that the Durbin Amendment contributed to 1 million Americans losing access to the banking system—becoming “unbanked”—by 2011.

Extending this policy error to credit cards, particularly during this time of economic fragility, would cause further devastation. Consumers collect roughly \$40 billion in annual rewards from credit cards (\$167 per cardholder according to CFPB), and banks and credit unions’ ability to both provide free credit cards to consumers and consumer rewards could be imperiled. This would harm small entrepreneurs as well, as they use business credit cards as a prime source of financing. And everyone would be hurt if banks and credit unions are forced to forgo investments in cybersecurity due to the sudden revenue shortage these price controls would cause.

We therefore urge you to bring true tax and regulatory relief to Americans in future stimulus bills and not afflict Americans with more destructive red tape in these perilous times.

Sincerely,

Iain Murray
Vice President
Competitive Enterprise Institute

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

Pete Sepp
President
National Taxpayers Union

James L. Martin
Founder/Chairman
60 Plus Association

Saulius "Saul" Anuzis
President
60 Plus Association

Phil Kerpen
President
American Commitment

Brent William Gardner
Chief Government Affairs Officer
Americans for Prosperity

Norm Singleton
President
Campaign for Liberty

Andrew F. Quinlan
President
Center for Freedom and Prosperity

Tom Schatz
President
Council for Citizens Against Government
Waste

Matthew Kandrach
President
Consumer Action for a Strong Economy

Adam Brandon
President
FreedomWorks

James Taylor
President
The Heartland Institute

Carrie Lukas
President
Independent Women's Forum

Heather Higgins
CEO
Independent Women's Voice

Paul Gessing
President
Rio Grande Foundation

RJ Lehmann
Director, Finance, Insurance, and Trade
Policy
R Street Institute

Steve Pociask
President/CEO
The American Consumer Institute

Ashley Baker
Director of Public Policy
The Committee for Justice