ALASKA
CREDIT UNION LEAGUE

OP-ED for S. 2155

In Alaska, credit unions and small banks help our communities thrive and our small businesses grow.

The backbone of Main Street is this collection of small institutions that provide for the community of Alaska consumers and small business owners. It's no surprise that their primary lenders are credit unions and small banks. And those same credit unions and small banks are who the community turn to when they need mortgages and auto loans.

But these local financial institutions are facing challenges brought on by Washington bureaucrats. Now's the time to loosen the regulatory restrictions that are limiting their ability to help their communities.

That's why a group of Senators from both sides of the aisle have put together a common-sense piece of legislation that delivers on what it promises: to better allow credit unions and small banks to serve consumers. The common-sense fixes in S. 2155, the bipartisan Economic Growth bill, would be a boon to Main Street while retaining tough protection for consumers from Wall Street.

Provisions in this bill would ease mortgage lending and free up capital for small businesses, two essential ways to grow an economy that has suffered from both a financial crisis and the regulations put in place in response to it. By granting credit unions parity with banks on certain types of apartment loans, $4 billion in capital will become available to Main Street businesses to expand operations, hire additional staff and invest in their communities. Imagine what America's small business can do with access to an extra $4 billion in capital.

The regulatory relief this bill provides is a major step forward in moving away from a system that treats credit unions and small banks the same as the biggest banks, and into a more tailored regulatory climate that gives credit unions, the original consumer protectors, ways to more efficiently serve their members.

Adjusted reporting thresholds for credit unions and small financial institutions means less time and resources tied up in reporting data and more time and resources for member service and consumer-friendly products and services. It makes it easier for creditors to extend a second offer of a mortgage loan as soon as it becomes available, giving consumers better and more efficient ways to purchase a home.

It will help to protect seniors vulnerable to elder financial abuse and pushes the Treasury to study ways to better combat cybercrime.

And, perhaps most importantly, this bill strengthens consumer protections while leaving those put into place by the Dodd-Frank Act that instituted reforms for Wall Street. This bill is the farthest thing from the 'gift to Wall Street' as some opponents' claim it is. Nothing in it helps the big banks. Nothing in this bill takes away important consumer protections put in place due to the actions of Wall Street and other bad actors.

Washington doesn't seem to agree on much, but the fact that close to thirty Senators from both sides have signed onto this bill show that regulatory relief isn't a Democrat vs. Republican issue, it's a Main Street vs. Wall Street issue.

And this bill is a much-needed win for Main Street financial institutions.