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For Immediate Release

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Free Resources Aim to Help Consumers Protect Their Finances

WASHINGTON, September 24, 2009...While Congress and other policymakers debate ways to improve protections for financial services customers, the American Financial Services Association Education Foundation (AFSAEF) has introduced two new resources to help borrowers take steps on their own to protect their finances.

AFSAEF's new publication, *Protecting Your Credit*, lists warning signs to watch out for – such as offers for quick fixes that cost a lot of money upfront – and provides tips to help people avoid negative situations. Among the foundation's tips:

- Research thoroughly. Give yourself ample time to review borrowing options, even if it means delaying your purchase.
- Set a budget and stick to it. Know what you can – and can't – afford. Get started with AFSAEF's budget calculator at www.afsaef.org/budgetplanner.cfm.
- Don't sign a contract until you have read it, your questions have been answered, and all blank spaces have been filled in.
- Don't allow a sales representative to rush or pressure you into making a decision. If you feel uncomfortable, leave.
- Check your credit report regularly by visiting www.annualcreditreport.com.

“As the consumer protection debate continues in Congress, people can be proactive and take steps now that will help them avoid many fraudulent and abusive practices,” said Susie Irvine, AFSAEF's president and chief executive officer. “Putting together a budget, conducting research, asking questions, and keeping financial documents in a safe place are simple things that any consumer can – and should – do.”

In addition to its free, downloadable brochure, the foundation has a new Consumer Protection Web page at www.afsaef.org/consumer_protection.cfm. The page features a consumer credit “scam alert” and links to government agencies and other organizations that can offer assistance when problems arise.

Based in Washington, D.C., AFSAEF's (www.afsaef.org) mission is to help consumers realize the benefits of responsible money management, understand the credit process and seek help if credit problems occur. It is affiliated with the American Financial Services Association (www.afsaonline.org), the national trade association for the consumer credit industry, protecting access to credit and consumer choice.

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