

Money at your fingertips with Empower Credit Union's VISA® card.

Getting the money you need is so easy when you apply for Empower CU's VISA® credit card. In our 95th year in business, we offer just the credit card you're looking for. One that doesn't have a bunch of suspicious fine print involved. One that offers a realistic interest rate and no annual fee. And most importantly, one that comes from local people you know you can trust.

So why dig through stacks of credit card offers from all over the country when the solution is right here at Empower CU?

- **No Annual Fee**
- **Low 5.9% APR* 6 month Platinum introductory rate — 10.99% APR* thereafter**
- **25 Day Grace Period for Purchases**
- **High Credit Limits Available - Qualified borrowers can establish a VISA® Platinum account with a credit limit up to \$15,000 (subject to loan policy limits)**
- **Make VISA® payments Online at www.gotomycard.com**

Want to pay off other high-interest rate credit cards? You're in luck! You may be able to transfer balances and save money with an Empower CU VISA® credit card.

Apply today at www.empower-cu.org.

*APR=Annual Percentage Rate. Not all applicants will qualify for lowest rate. Your actual limit and rate is based on your credit history. All loans subject to normal credit standards.



Financial Force

Serving the Employees & Retirees of Wisconsin Energy Corporation, Its Subsidiaries, & Affiliates



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From The Vault

When a Good Credit Score May Not Be Enough

Many people have noticed a tightening of credit with the downturn in the economy. Some have noticed a reduction in their home equity lines-of-credit, or had their credit lines cut off. Applying for new credit has become more difficult in some instances, as lenders are setting tighter lending standards and looking more closely at credit scores and debt ratios.

Some lenders have increased the minimum credit score required to qualify for the best rates. For mortgage loans, borrowers may need more equity or a higher credit score. Appraisal and other documentation requirements are stricter, and often result in higher closing costs. Car buyers with less than stellar credit scores may need a bigger down payment, and people who are applying for a credit card may not get as large a credit line as in the past.

For more information about credit scores, see the inside of this newsletter.

What does this mean for Empower members?

In the case of our mortgage lending programs, credit score and Loan-to-Value minimums have changed in the past year, driven by the requirements of the Secondary Mortgage Market. This means that a member who would have qualified in the past for a mortgage with 10% equity may need to have 20% equity today, or will pay a higher interest rate. The changes for consumer loans are less noticeable, but standards for down payments on auto and other secured loans have also been adjusted, based on the credit score.

The good news is Empower has been very busy this year making loans of every kind. The credit union has money to lend at great rates and convenient terms. Our Reflective Lending Policy enables us to serve more members and make more loans. Recent additions to our mortgage offerings mean that more of our members are able to purchase new homes at Empower's low rates and closing costs.

We have a helpful and experienced team of professionals ready to serve you, whether it is for buying a home or new car, financing a college education, making a home improvement, or getting a low cost credit card for travel and everyday purchases.

To talk to someone about a mortgage loan, contact Jim at 414-221-3616 or Dianna at 414-221-4072. For a home equity or student loan, call Michelle at 414-221-2213, and for auto, credit card, and other consumer credit contact Monica at 414-221-2557.

Jennifer Schilling, President
414-221-2958 • JSchilling@empower-cu.org



Hours:
8:00am - 4:30pm
Monday - Friday

Phone:
414-221-3451

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US POSTAGE
CLASS MAIL
FIRST CLASS

Not Just “Customer” Service

A good rate on a loan or share certificate may be why most people join the credit union, or perhaps because of the ease and convenience of direct deposit or payroll deduction. But **getting great service is another important benefit of being a member**, and one that **differentiates your credit union from many other financial service providers**. We don't want you to feel like just a customer, but like a member and an owner, because that's who you are.

You can call and talk to a real person right at the credit union, not someone in another state. A contact list with phone numbers and email addresses can be found on our website www.empower-cu.org by clicking on “About Us” and then “Staff Contacts”. Or call our general number at **414-221-3451** and we will direct you to the person who can answer your questions.

Your feedback helps us know whether we are on track in providing outstanding member service. Here are some recent member comments:

“I appreciate that the credit union could get back to me with an answer quickly and process my requested loan in one day.”
— SRL

“As time goes on I'll continue to do business with your office. I also want to compliment Monica on how she assists and informs customers about the loan process and credit concerns.”
— TL

“I have told almost everyone at the call center how wonderful and fast and efficient you are...Many thanks to you. You helped me so much.” — SK

\$8,000 Home Buyer Tax Credit ends Nov. 30, 2009!

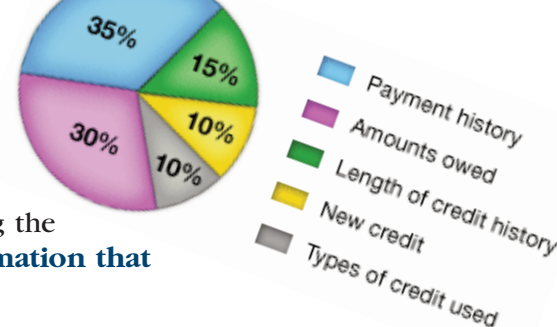
Here is information on how the program works:

- The IRS defines a first-time home buyer as someone who has not owned a principal residence during the three-year period prior to the purchase.
- The credit does not have to be repaid.
- The credit is equal to 10 percent of the home's purchase price up to a maximum of \$8,000.
- The credit is available for purchase of a principal residence before December 1, 2009.
- Single taxpayers with incomes up to \$75,000 and married couples with incomes up to \$150,000 qualify for the full tax credit.

Contact our Mortgage Loan Dept. to learn more on how you can take advantage of this great tax break.

What is a FICO score?

FICO stands for Fair Isaac Company, the originator of the standard credit score used by most lenders to make loan and credit card decisions and to set rates. Your score is calculated using the data in the credit report. **There are five general categories of information that are used to determine the score.**



Here is a summary provided by Fair Isaac as to what goes into each category:

- **Payment History** — How you pay various types of accounts, including credit cards, installment loans, a mortgage. A long history of on-time payments is good; recent late payments hurt your score more, and the bigger the delinquency and the greater the number of missed payments, the greater the negative effect on your score.
- **Amounts Owed** — How much you owe on your accounts, the number of accounts you have, the proportion of credit card debt to total credit lines available, the proportion of amount owed on installment loans to the original amount. The rule is to not “max out” your credit card limits; keeping the balance at no more than 30% of your limit is best.
- **Length of Credit History** — The length of time accounts have been opened, and the time since last activity. The longer accounts have been opened, used, and paid on-time, the better your score.
- **New Credit** — The number of recently opened accounts, the number of recent credit inquiries, time since accounts opened. Don't open and close accounts frequently, even to chase a lower interest rate. If you open a new credit card, keep the old one open for awhile until the new account has built up some history.

How you pay your bills and how much you owe are the greatest factors in determining your score.

- **Types of Credit Used** — The greater the variety of credit you have used the better. This includes major credit cards (*VISA, MasterCard*), retail accounts (*Kobls, Target*), auto and other installment loans, and mortgages.

Someone without a long credit history can have a very good score if they open and use a credit card or two (*but avoid too many cards and overusing them*), have a car loan, and are making their payments every month. **To learn more about credit reports and scores, log onto www.myfico.com.**

Good News for Savers

Empower Christmas Club – A great way to save!

Setting aside money each payday throughout the year can eliminate the shock of opening up those post-holiday credit card statements. If you sign up for payroll deduction or have direct deposit, no initial deposit is required. At the end of the club year (October 24th for 2009) the money you have saved plus interest will be transferred to your checking or savings account. If you don't have a Christmas Club account, sign up now; the sooner you start, the more you will have for next year.

Savings insurance coverage of \$250,000 extended through 2013

Congress has extended the \$250,000 limit for insured deposits to December 31, 2013. Your deposits with Empower are insured at the higher limit by the NCUSIF, the federal insurance fund that covers credit unions. Insurance coverage on IRA's, also for \$250,000, is separate from coverage on non-retirement accounts. Members can effectively increase their overall insurance coverage through the use of joint accounts or trust accounts. For more information, visit www.ncua.gov.

IRA's — No Distributions Required in 2009

The big news for members with IRA's was Congress suspending any required distributions in 2009. This move gives people a better chance of recovering some of the losses they might have sustained over the past year. This is not an issue for Empower members, of course, since their credit union IRA's were not subject to the big drops in the Stock and Bond markets.

Anyone reaching age 70½ in 2009 will have to take their first distribution by Dec. 31, 2010. Uncle Sam will consider that officially the “second” distribution, even though it will really be the first withdrawal. Individuals who turn 70½ in 2009 will not be able to wait until April 1, 2011 to take their first withdrawal, as would normally be the case.

Any credit union member who would have had a required distribution this year will not receive one. You can still withdraw from your IRA this year but you will need to contact Carolyne at 414-221-3528.

Back-to-School with Your Credit Union

Whether you're heading off to college or still packing a pencil case, Empower Credit Union makes the grade when it comes to getting you back to school!

Student Loans

If you or your favorite student is relying on Stafford or PLUS student loans to fund education, talk to us about what we have to offer and how we can help you.

Home Equity Loans

If part of your financial planning involves paying for part of your student's education expense with the equity in your home, see us about our low cost Home Equity Loan options.

Personal Loans

One thing that's certain, when your children return to school last year's clothes don't fit! Consider a Personal Loan to help pay for all the back-to-school “stuff” your children need!

Credit Cards

An Empower Visa Credit Card gives you the ease and convenience to pick up books, food, or other essentials anytime during the school year.

Checking and Debit/ATM Card

An Empower Checking account with a VISA Debit/ATM Card and on-line access will give your student all the tools they need to manage their funds easily and conveniently.

Board of Directors News

Members attending Empower Credit Union's annual meeting on May 27th re-elected Betty Ezell, Joe Kopinski and Roger Schaver to three year terms as directors of the credit union.

Officers chosen at the board's reorganizational meeting:

Roger Schaver — Chair
Tim Wachter — Vice-Chair
Lynne English — Secretary
Todd Gordon — Treasurer

Other current board members are Betty Ezell, Joe Kopinski and Patrick Laske. Directors meet monthly and act on behalf of the members in policy making, goal setting and planning for the continued growth and success of your credit union.