

## Is That Really Your Credit Union Calling?



### Learn to spot fake calls and protect yourself.

Every day, thousands of people fall victim to fraudulent emails, texts, and calls from scammers pretending to be from their financial institution. While these scams get more sophisticated every day, credit unions and banks have also increased their sophisticated security measures to help their customers stay one step ahead. Learn how to spot fake phone calls, what to do if you speak to a scammer, and how to react if you've been scammed.

### Signs A Phone Call Might Be Fake

Sometimes it's hard to tell a legitimate phone call from a scam. Here are a few hints that an incoming call might be from a scammer pretending to be from your credit union or bank.

- **Is the call from an unknown number?**

By itself, this isn't a sure sign of a scam call, but it should raise your awareness if you decide to answer the phone. Your safest action is to only answer calls from numbers you recognize and let the rest go to voice mail or your answering machine.

- **Does the caller ID seem odd?**

Have you ever looked at your home or cell phone and seen your own number or even your own name in the description? Or maybe you've seen what looks like a real phone number that seems to be from your area code or a government agency? This is called caller ID spoofing and it's when a scammer falsifies the text that shows up in your caller ID. Scammers do this to make you think the call is valid so you'll pick up. Another reason is because it prevents call blocking. Again, your best bet is to never answer a call if you don't recognize the caller ID.

- **Did your phone ring one time only?**

This is called a single-ring call. The goal is to tempt you to return the call which, most of the time, is to a number outside the United States. The scammers use the return calls to charge you for international or toll calls. Callers may also leave voice mails asking you to return the call. The best advice is to never call back a number you don't recognize.

- **Is the call unexpected?**

If a caller says they are from your credit union or bank. Does the caller ID match where the person claims to be from? Does the caller give you a full name and the name of your bank? Is the call being made during the bank's normal operating hours? Be wary of any call that you weren't expecting. Add up all the clues—time of day, nature of the call, demeanor of the caller, the stated purpose of the call—and act based on that information. If you are suspicious, hang up and call the credit union directly.

# A Message from the CEO



Spring is officially here, as this year the spring equinox fell a couple of weeks ago on Friday, March 20. And while we experienced some warm weather days in early March, spring typically signals more consistent warmer days. Easter is another annual indicator that we can start to transition our wardrobe from cold coats to lighter jackets.

Fun fact (and one that I was not aware of) - did you know that

there is a relation and that the moon has a bearing on when we celebrate Easter? The full moon after the spring equinox – known traditionally as the paschal moon – will occur on Thursday, April 2. Easter must fall on the Sunday after the paschal moon, so this year Easter will be celebrated on April 5.

Now that we have officially entered the spring season and the first three months of 2026 are behind us, what's happening with the economy? The U.S. economy has remained in an expansion phase since mid-2020 - the low-point of the COVID pandemic. Some economists suggest we are in the continuation of the watch-and-wait economy, and which events might tip the economic environment one way or the other remains to be seen (think Iran conflict and the impact on gas prices in just a short period of time since early March).

Historically, we've experienced business cycles of economic expansions that reach a peak before some external occurrence or series of events turns the peak downward into a phase of contraction. Then eventually, the cycle bottoms out and it gives way to a period of expansion. The recent expansion period has been relatively consistent and sustainable. Perhaps the U.S. economy has grown large enough to become immune to any one specific shock - be it political uncertainty (both at home and abroad), a spike in energy prices, or financial market disruption. However, it could also indicate a similar immunity to all but the most severe of events that we're achieving strong growth in such a sizable economy.

What we have seen recently is the Federal Reserve holding interest rates, with some pundits suggesting fewer rate declines in 2026 than originally anticipated a year ago. The average 30-year fixed rate mortgage has stabilized just above 6%, representing a drop from over 7% a year ago. Generally, lower mortgage rates make buying a home more affordable, however, low inventory and high demand (prices) continue to negatively impact home buying affordability.

Consumer confidence is mixed and cautious, showing concerns with the cost of groceries and high prices on other living essentials. Combined with a strong stock market, the divide

between higher-income and lower-income households appears to be increasing. From a positive perspective, as of March tax filers are seeing 15-20% higher income tax refunds this year, resulting in an average \$3,800 refund or \$1,000 higher due to tax code changes.

Regardless of whether you are a high, middle or low-income household, using an income tax refund or any other financial windfall is an opportunity to improve your financial health. Some things you might consider include paying down high-interest debt like credit cards, or by investing in your future through an IRA or 401(k) savings plans. Additionally, with fewer than half of all Americans having savings to cover a \$1,000 emergency and approximately 28% having no emergency savings at all, using an income tax refund to build an emergency fund with that extra \$1,000 makes a lot of sense. And if you already have an emergency savings fund, consider adding to it. If that's of interest to you, come talk with us, we have solutions and different options.

At Patriot, we continue to position for growth of our branch network. After opening two new Patriot full-service branches in 2025 - one on Williamsport Pike near Spring Mills High School in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and another on Antrim Way in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, we just broke ground on the construction of our second Berkeley County, West Virginia branch, this one on Winchester Avenue in Inwood in the Butler's Crossing retail center.

Both of our 2025 branches have been very successful providing additional financial options for the community and enhancing convenience and service to our members residing in and around those communities. The Inwood branch will resemble the layout and design of those two new buildings, and we expect to open the Inwood facility in the fall of 2026 if all goes as planned.

While physical branches provide personal engagement and enable members to conduct a variety of transactions, many consumers manage their money through online and mobile banking. Branches support the delivery of financial guidance and advice along with managing more complex transactions. Plus, they serve as a daily reminder to local residents that there's a nearby option the next time a financial need arises.

In the interest of both convenience and relevance, Patriot recognizes that we need to provide members with the access that they need and expect where and when they want it. As part of our commitment to you, we are continuing to invest in digital channels to ensure that we keep pace with the latest digital-banking capabilities. Earlier this year we transitioned to a new online bill pay platform, and in the coming weeks we will introduce a new payment platform to make paying a Patriot loan easier and faster through an online portal. Later this year we will

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be upgrading our online banking and mobile banking channels. We're excited to continue to grow and serve your needs however you choose to access your credit union. Watch for more information as we approach the roll-out dates of these enhancements. Lastly, I want to extend my appreciation and recognition to the Team Patriot staff, our members, and the community. It is an honor and a privilege to serve you and earn your trust and confidence. As we make improvements and changes to better serve your needs now and in the future, we appreciate your patience and understanding.

Please share your feedback with us – positive or not so well done. Should we slip and fail to meet your service expectations, we would ask for the opportunity to address it and make it right. Likewise, if we exceed your expectations, please let your friends, family and others know about your Patriot experience.

**Sincerely,**  
**Ron Celaschi, President/CEO**

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### Here are some details these scammers may ask for:

- Full Account number
- Debit or Credit Card Personal Identification Number (PIN)
- Full Social Security number
- Online/mobile banking log on credentials (username and/or password)

**NEVER provide this information to anyone who randomly calls you.  
If you're suspicious, hang up and call your credit union or bank directly.**

### What To Do If You've Been Scammed

Anyone can have an off day. Scammers depend on it. They hope to catch you when your guard is down. Here's what you should do if you suspect you've been scammed via a phone call.

- **Change your password.**  
If a scammer convinced you to reveal your password, change it immediately.
- **Call your financial institution immediately.**  
If you shared personal information with a scammer over the phone (or clicked a fraudulent link in an email or answered a suspicious text), let your bank know immediately.
- **Stop payments.**  
If a scammer persuaded you to send money, stop the transaction if you can. Speed is of the essence, so do this quickly. This may include calling your financial institution or money transfer service to stop payment.
- **Set up credit report monitoring.**  
The three major U.S. credit bureaus are Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Contact each to freeze your credit report, which helps stop scammers from opening fraudulent accounts in your name. Currently, credit freezing is a free service.

As a reminder, Patriot Federal Credit Union will NEVER ask you to share your full social security number, online banking credentials (username and password), or debit card Personal Identification Number (PIN) over the phone. To learn more about common scams, how to spot them, and what you can do to protect yourself from being a victim, visit: [www.patriotfcu.org/online-security/](http://www.patriotfcu.org/online-security/)

### Save time—no need to wrap your coins!

Members are welcome to bring unwrapped coins to any branch for easy processing. While rolled coins are still accepted if you prefer, bringing coins unwrapped helps us count them more quickly using our coin machines.

Depending on the number of coins, we may be able to count them while you wait. If not, your coins will be counted and deposited into your account as soon as processing is complete.



## Fee Schedule Updates – Designed with Our Members in Mind

We've recently updated our Consumer, Business, and Non-Profit Fee Schedules to simplify services and enhance convenience. Some fees have been eliminated, and new options have been added to provide faster service when needed.

### Consumer Accounts

- Removed: Christmas Share Early Withdrawal Fee
- Removed: Payment by Phone/Online (from non-Patriot accounts) Fee
- Added: Optional Bill Pay Rush Delivery service for expedited payments – \$45.00

### Business & Non-Profit Accounts

- Removed: Christmas Share Early Withdrawal Fee
- Removed: Payment by Phone/Online (from non-Patriot accounts) Fee
- Added: International Outgoing Wire Transfer service – \$45.00
- Added: Optional Bill Pay Rush Delivery service for expedited payments – \$45.00

These updates are part of our ongoing effort to provide flexible, convenient banking solutions. If you have questions about how these changes may affect you, our team is always happy to help.



Patriot recently broke ground on a new branch on Winchester Ave in Inwood, WV which set to open this fall 2026—our 12th full-service location!

***"With nearly 8,000 members in the Eastern Panhandle, opening our second Berkeley County location at Butler's Crossing in Inwood further reflects our continued commitment to serving this growing community and making our services more convenient and accessible," said Ron Celaschi, CEO.***

Located in at the Butler's Crossing shopping center in Inwood the 2,900 sq. ft. branch will offer personal service, financial consultations, mortgage loans, and business services. Features include:

- Traditional banking services & private consultation spaces
- Tech bar with financial resources
- Comfortable waiting area with refreshments
- Two drive-up lanes & SMART ATM with multilingual options and flexible withdrawals (\$5, \$10, \$20)

We're excited to expand and better serve you—stay tuned for updates!

## Is Your Rainy Day Fund Ready? Why Now Is the Time to Start Saving



Life has a way of surprising us with things like car repairs, medical bills, home maintenance, or unexpected job changes can happen when we least expect them. That's why financial experts recommend having at least three months of income set aside in a dedicated emergency fund. But here's an important question: do you even have one month saved? If not, you're not alone. The good news is you can start building that cushion today. Even setting aside a small amount consistently can make a meaningful difference over time and help you feel more confident and in control when the unexpected happens.

With tax return season here, now is the perfect opportunity to jump-start your rainy day savings. Consider committing to deposit some, or even all of your refund into a separate savings or money market account, away from your everyday spending funds. Keeping it separate reduces the temptation to dip into it and allows your balance to grow with purpose. Start small if you need to, but start now. Your future self will thank you when that rainy day comes and you're prepared.

