

# Debt Cetera...

## Resources

### Credit Bureaus

Equifax  
www.equifax.com  
800-685-1111

Experian  
www.experian.com  
888-397-3742

TransUnion  
www.TransUnion.com  
800-916-8800

### Consumer Protection

Federal Trade Commission  
www.ftc.gov

### Consumer Action

www.consumer-action.org  
415-777-9635

Consumer Action's site features free educational materials in Chinese, English, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Consumer Action also provides advice and suggests appropriate complaint-handling agencies.

### Credit Counseling

www.Intellidebt.org

## Saving Without Sacrifice

By Rory Brannum

"Would you like to super-size those fries for an extra \$146 per year?" Well, if you put it that way, probably not. But that's what an extra 40 cents per day will add up to in a year. Think of it as the difference between a hamburger and a cheeseburger or a medium cup of coffee versus a large one. If you're trying to develop a personal savings program, these are examples of the daily impulse decisions that can subtly derail your efforts.

With America's savings rate at its lowest since the Great Depression, one wonders if it is possible to save regularly without drastic changes? According to the Institute for Financial Counseling, "15 to 20 percent of ...spending can be reduced or eliminated without any noticeable change in lifestyle." In many

### Avoiding Unnecessary Expenses

Saving and budgeting require at least a basic level of discipline. As you are sharpening your pencil, why not start by eliminating a few expenses we can all afford to lose. I'm referring to unnecessary banking fees, such as insufficient funds charges (NSFs)

and credit card late fees. These are budget busters that take a real bite out of our available income. According to CardWeb.com, large credit card issuers, such as Chase, Discover, and Citibank, now charge as much as \$39 for a late payment. And the na-

cases, it's a matter of choosing satisfaction over excess and putting the difference in the bank. It starts with setting a short-term goal of cutting back on something you enjoy, instead of completely eliminating it. When you think about it, many of the products

we purchase come in various sizes. Do we really need the grande gulp? The concept is simple: downsizing, instead of upsizing, is a great way to cut costs without depriving yourself of the things you enjoy.

Try it for a week or two, focusing on just one or two products in the beginning. Be sure to record the price difference, transferring it to savings regularly. As you succeed on these short-term goals, you'll be motivated to continue the practice, focusing on additional items.

Spending wisely is a key when it comes to saving money. And downsizing is a practical spending tool. It's like having your cake and eating it too, but only part of it.

tional average for NSF charges, according to BankRate.com, is \$26.90. Since these fees are 100 percent avoidable, it pays to balance your checkbook regularly and pay all credit card bills on time. For assistance, call 866-761-3328.



**Choosing Satisfaction, Instead of Excess, Keeps the Savings Plan on Track**

INTELLIDEBT

10935 Estate Lane  
Suite 180  
Dallas, TX 75238

Phone: 866-761-3328

## The Intellidebt Mission

To Promote a financially sound community through counseling, educating, and helping clients establish effective debt repayment strategies.



### Schedule a Speaker

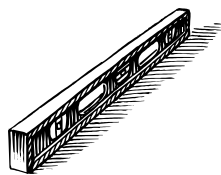
To schedule a speaker for your meeting in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, please contact Intellidebt at 972-234-8700 ext. 102.

Topics include:

- Credit Cards: What You Need To Know
- Debt in America
- How To Budget
- Avoiding Identity Theft
- Avoiding Senior Scams
- And Many More...

## The Counselor's Corner

Email your questions to [TheCounselor@Intellidebt.org](mailto:TheCounselor@Intellidebt.org)



**Question:** *Is there anything I can do to stop the constant late charges on my credit card? I always mail my payment before the due date.*

**Answer:** Many people wrongly assume that as long as a payment is postmarked by the due date, the creditor will post it as an on-time payment. However, the due date refers to the date that your payment must be received by the creditor. To further complicate the issue, many creditors also specify, in the fine print of the agreement, the

time of day that your payment must be received by. Therefore, your payment could arrive by the due date and still be late because the postman didn't deliver it in time.

To avoid a late charge, it is a good practice to mail your payment at least 7 days prior to the due date. Sometimes this just isn't possible. If so, contact your creditor and request a due date that falls later in the month. In many cases, they will be glad to comply, though they may require you to be current before making the change.

Some creditors have a pay by phone or online payment option, allowing you to pay closer to the due date. But beware of credit card companies that charge "convenience" fees for this service. These fees are often as high as \$15.00 and your payment can still take a

day or two to process. When paying online, be sure to read the terms closely. Some creditors require you to schedule a payment at least 2 days out, making it impossible to make an instant payment.

Does it really take a bank 2 days to process a payment made by phone or online? Probably not. The fact is that late fees constitute a growing source of bank revenues and profits. For those who are in the habit of waiting until the last minute, it's getting harder to avoid a late fee.

Another danger in being late is that it can activate the universal default clause on other credit cards, causing your interest rates to go up across the board. This side-effect makes it practically impossible to calculate to true cost of paying late.