

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2010

The Honorable Ben S. Bernanke
Chairman
Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
20th Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20551

Dear Chairman Bernanke:

We write to request information about a distressing interpretation of Federal Reserve Regulation B by a Federal Reserve examiner in Oklahoma. This interpretation appears to be without precedent, to possibly contradict other US laws, and to violate fundamental Constitutional protections enjoyed by every citizen of the United States.

A state-chartered bank in Perkins, Oklahoma recently underwent a consumer compliance examination. During the course of the examination, the examiner demanded that the bank remove a link on its website to Bible verses. The bank has a section of its website dedicated to "helpful links," including, among others, links to weather reports, a local newspaper, and a "verse of the day." The bank was told by the Federal Reserve examiner that providing a link to the Bible verse constituted a violation of Regulation B, pursuant to the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.

For your convenience, the relevant section of Regulation B states:

(b) Discouragement. A creditor shall not make any oral or written statement, in advertising or otherwise, to applicants or prospective applicants that would discourage on a prohibited basis a reasonable person from making or pursuing an application.

In addition to demanding removal of the link, the Federal Reserve examiner demanded that all religious items or religious-themed messages within customer view in the bank's lobby be purged. This demand included personal items of religious expression placed on the counter near bank tellers' workplaces and an individual's religious-themed personal jewelry. The bank was told that failure to comply would result in referral of the matter to the Department of Justice for further enforcement actions.

Mr. Chairman, in our years of public service we have seldom encountered a more alarming case of heavy-handed interpretation and enforcement of Federal regulations to the exclusion of any other consideration or law, including the Supreme Law of the Land. We respectfully request an immediate response to the following:

- 1) Does the Federal Reserve examiner's interpretation of Regulation B herein described reflect the policy of the Federal Reserve System, any of its Regional Banks, or any other Federal department or agency involved in enforcing financial laws and regulations?
- 2) Do you agree with us that the Federal Reserve examiner's interpretation of Regulation B is troubling from the perspective of the fundamental rights the citizens of this country enjoy?

We thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration and response.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe,
United States Senator



Frank D. Lucas,
Member of Congress

C: Thomas Hoenig, President
Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General of the United States