



Communities United For Action

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My name is Marilyn Evans, Executive Director of Communities United For Action

Communities United For Action (CUFA) is a 30 year community organization in Cincinnati Ohio that brings people together of multiple incomes, races and cultural backgrounds to work on common issues that affect our communities. I am here today to talk our CUFA's involvement with CRA and getting access to loans in our neighborhoods and our concerns about the current law.

I have worked on issues related to the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) for the last 30 years. By the way, the people who created CRA wrote it on a church floor some thirty something years ago. It was a law that came from the people. The reason why we created CRA was because our neighborhoods were targeted and high risk and were redlined by the Banks and Insurance companies. Banks and Insurance companies had stopped investing in our communities.

I lived in a community called South Cumminsville in Cincinnati Ohio. My community in South Cumminsville reminds me a lot of the community on TV, Mayberry. One morning I woke up and my next door neighbor for the past twenty years lost her home and had to move. Then we began to see this trend happening all over the neighborhood and all over the country. They were redlining our communities. For this reason people came together from all over the country was to create CRA (Community Reinvestment Act)

After CRA came into effect, we saw it not just on paper but we saw and heard the sounds of CRA working in our communities. We heard the sound of saws and hammers building new homes and rehabbing old homes. New families were moving in. We began to get a handle on crime. That was thirty years ago.

We must have left the back door open because bad money started coming into our communities through predatory lending, sub prime loans, and payday lending. Thirty years later, our communities are back in the same position that we were in. We not only have bad/predatory

loans, but people are losing their homes due to foreclosure. With more empty foreclosed house, our neighborhoods are going down and crime has increased.

We need for CRA to be improved. We need CRA regulations not only for banks but for bank affiliates as well as lenders who were not previously regulated by CRA. We need for banks and their affiliates to not only give good loans but also quality services and that their performance be rated based on how they meet certain criteria. We need banks products on Consumer Lending (Small personal loans) and Small Businesses need access to small business loans. Other services that we need include check cashing and quality services from the bank whose cost is affordable for people on a fixed income on a small budget.

Our leadership experienced problems when we went down to a branch office of US Bank recently to look at their CRA file. Even though US Bank has many branches in Cincinnati and makes many loans, we were shocked to find that the only material that they had available was from the years of 2003-2005 with only one paragraph about their activity in Hamilton County and nothing about housing loans. If US Bank's home office is located in another city, we should not have to travel to their home office to get information. This is why we need every geographic area covered by CRA. Banks need to have a plan that covers every city they serve and do business in not just their home office.

We need for Banks and their affiliates and branches to reinvest affordable loans in our communities and provide quality services. We only demand that they provide us with the same services that other communities receive and provide services and products that meet our needs. We need for the Community Reinvestment Act to be improved to make sure that this happens. We want the grading system. When we were in school, we only received an A when we did good work and an F when we did poor work. How can banks get an A for poor work?