Employees Testify About ‘Soulless’ Gov Agency That Tracks Nearly Every Dollar You Spend

The shadowy federal agency that wants to know what you’re buying with your credit card finds itself the subject of wide-ranging discrimination allegations. Employees of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau charge that a culture of sexism, ageism, and racism permeates the quasi-governmental agency. Two CFPB whistleblowers recently testified before the House Financial Services Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. There have been reports of pervasive racial comments, and some cases of extreme gender-compensation inequality. Employees testified that the CFPB’s atmosphere is “soulless” and that their complaints have fallen on deaf ears for several years. Ironically, one of CFPB’s core functions is to enforce laws that “outlaw discrimination and other unfair treatment in consumer finance.” **Privacy Concerns** The bureau is funded through a direct percentage of Federal Reserve income, not by Congress – and that means there’s no congressional oversight. That hasn’t stopped criticism of the bureau by free-market and privacy advocates for snooping on U.S. consumers and intimidating businesses. A recent report found that the CFPB has accomplished the monitoring of more than 85 percent of all credit card records from U.S. consumers. The agency’s goal is to reach 95 percent of the domestic credit card marketplace. The bureau says it’s all about protecting consumers. But Brian Wise, senior advisor to the free-market advocate U.S. Consumer Coalition, says CFPB’s motivations are more nefarious. “They are literally collecting and monitoring the credit card records of almost every single American consumer that has a credit card,” Wise said. “They know the individual transactions that credit card users are making, where they are happening, and how often you're making those transactions." In many ways, Wise said, the consumer data-mining project is worse than the National Security Agency's surveillance program. "The NSA only knows who you called and when you called them. The CFPB potentially knows where every single dollar of your money has been spent," he said. "The CFPB can realistically know when your wife is pregnant before you do. All the NSA would know is when you called your wife last." The agency is using the information to go after the kinds of businesses the Obama administration doesn't care for – payday lenders, gun merchants, smoking-accessory retailers, and dozens more that have made CFPB's enemy's list. The bureau presided over the U.S. Department of Justice's Operation Choke Point, a campaign to choke off the credit lines of targeted businesses. Wise said now that the DOJ and the FDIC have bailed on the controversial initiative, CFPB has taken over the entire operation and is calling it another name. As more details about the secretive agency become public, it appears more Americans are concerned. A recent U.S. Consumer Coalition poll conducted by Zogby Analytics found a majority of respondents oppose the CFPB's monitoring of consumer credit card purchases. And an overwhelming majority want the agency subject to congressional oversight through the appropriations process. The poll, which has a 1.7 percent margin of error found:

- A majority (55 percent) of respondents believe the CFPB's data collection program is similar to or worse than the controversial NSA monitoring program;
- Only 20 percent of those polled believe the CFPB should be able to collect and review Americans' credit card statements without their knowledge;
- 78 percent of respondents believe the CFPB should have to seek Congressional approval for its budget like other agencies; and
- Nearly 70 percent of those polled believe the government

should not be able to tell consumers how to spend their money or make financial decisions for their families.

“We have a powerful agency unilaterally regulating products and industries while subjecting Americans to an unprecedented invasion of their personal financial data. And it’s clear Americans don’t like it,” said Wise. *Reprinted from* .