



## The Savvy Consumer's Checklist Check 21

Check 21 is a new federal law that makes it easier and faster for banks and businesses to process your checks. Check 21 reduces the amount of time it takes to process your checks by allowing banks and businesses to use a special electronic image of your checks—called a "substitute check"—instead of having to transport the paper checks through each step of the process. With this complex new law comes new rights and responsibilities for you as a consumer. Here are some tips to help you bank safely and wisely in this new era of electronic check processing.

- J Ask for a substitute check.** You will no longer get your original checks back each month or have access to them. But Check 21 does create a new instrument—the "substitute check"—that has the same legal status as the original check. Ask your bank to return your substitute checks each month, so that you will have the legal protections they afford. If your bank doesn't offer substitute checks or charges too high a fee for them, consider doing business with another bank.
- J Don't sign up for voluntary check truncation.** Your bank might ask you to agree to something called "voluntary check truncation." Say no. Otherwise, you give up your rights to have your substitute checks returned to you.
- J Don't count on "float" time.** While the new law reduces to as little as one day the amount of time it takes your bank to deduct the amount of a check from your account, it does not require your bank to speed up the amount of time it takes to process a check that you deposit. This means that you can no longer count on a pending deposit to cover a check that you write today.
- J Ask for a credit in writing.** You have a limited right to a refund under Check 21, if a bank makes an error in debiting your account. If something does go wrong with your account, be sure to ask for a refund in writing. And remember: You may need a substitute check to prove the error and get your money back.
- J Watch your account closely.** New technology creates new opportunities for errors and fraud. Promptly examine your monthly checking account statement very closely and contact your bank immediately about any errors or questionable withdrawals. Any rights you have to recover your money are limited by time.

*please visit*

[www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov)



### Consumer Fraud Hotlines

**Chicago**  
1-800-386-5438  
TTY: 1-800-964-3013

**Springfield**  
1-800-243-0618  
TTY: 877-844-5461

**Carbondale**  
1-800-243-0607  
TTY: 877-675-9339