



Testimony of

Preston Kennedy
President and CEO
Of
Bank of Zachary
Zachary, LA

On behalf of the
Independent Community Bankers of America

Before the

United States Senate
Committee Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Field Hearing on

“How the Hidden Cost of Federal Regulations Impact Small
Businesses and Economic Growth”

March 30, 2015
Baton Rouge, LA

Chairman Vitter, Congressman Graves, and members of the Committee, my name is Preston Kennedy, and I am President and CEO of the Bank of Zachary in Zachary, LA. I testify today on behalf of the Louisiana Bankers Association as well as the Independent Community Bankers of America and the more than 6,000 community banks they represent nationwide. Thank you for convening today's hearing on "How the Hidden Cost of Federal Regulations Impacts Small Businesses and Economic Growth."

The Bank of Zachary, founded in 1904, is a \$200 million community bank with deep roots in Zachary and the other communities we serve. With three offices and 46 employees, we are a small business and we lend to other small businesses and small business owners. The Bank of Zachary is typical of more than 150 community banks across Louisiana and thousands more across the country. We are locally owned and make decisions locally. We are relationship lenders, as opposed to transactional lenders, and our customer relationships span generations. We rely on direct, personal knowledge of the borrower, local economic conditions, and other "soft data" to underwrite customized loans and other services tailored to the unique characteristics of our customers and communities. This is our competitive advantage over larger banks. We have a traditional business model and a straightforward capital structure. Finally, we are part of the fabric of our community. Our officers, directors and employees are actively involved in nearly every civic and charitable organization in our trade area. We played a critical role in the formation of the Zachary Community School System, which has grown into a model of success. Many other community banks have similar stories to tell.

At the outset of this statement, I would like to recognize you, Chairman Vitter, for your amendment to the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act to ensure community bank representation on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Thanks to your persistence, that amendment is now law. Federal Reserve Board representation will greatly improve monetary and regulatory policy. On behalf of my bank and all community banks, thank you.

Community Banks and Small Business Lending

Community banks are prodigious small business lenders. Though we hold less than 20 percent of U.S. banking industry assets, we hold a disproportionate market share of small business loans – 55 percent – supporting a sector responsible for more job creation than any other. We provide small business credit in good times as well as challenging times. Federal Reserve data shows that while overall small business lending contracted during the recent recession, lending by a majority of small community banks (those of less than \$250 million in assets) actually increased, and small business lending by banks with asset sizes between \$250 million and \$1 billion declined only slightly. By contrast, small business lending by the largest banks dropped off sharply. The viability of community banks is linked to the success of our small business customers in the communities we serve, and we don't walk away from them when the economy tightens.

The type of small business lending community banks do simply cannot be duplicated by a bank based outside the community. As a recent study by scholars at Harvard's Kennedy School noted: "In certain lending markets, the technologies larger institutions can deploy have not yet proven

effective substitutes for the skills, knowledge, and interpersonal competencies of many traditional banks.”¹

Regulatory Overkill Poses a Grave Threat to the Community Bank-Small Business Partnership

The exponential growth of regulation in recent years is suffocating community banks’ ability to serve their small business customers. Compliance has become a major distraction for community bank managers. Any community banker will tell you that their job has fundamentally shifted from lending and serving customers to struggling to stay on top of ever-changing rules and guidance. Every aspect of community banking is subject to new regulation, but the impact is especially severe in the area of mortgage lending.

Banks need more scale to accommodate the increasing expense of compliance which includes hiring, training, software, and other costs. I believe this increase in regulatory burden has contributed significantly to the decrease of 1,342 community banks in the U.S. since 2010. The number of banks with assets below \$100 million shrunk by 32 percent, while the number of banks with assets between \$100 million and \$1 billion fell by 11 percent.² A financial landscape with fewer, larger banks will reduce access to credit for small businesses.

Legislative Solutions Are Needed

The good news is that there are readily available legislative solutions to this pending crisis. Working with community bankers from across the nation, ICBA developed its Plan for Prosperity, a platform of legislative recommendations that will provide meaningful relief for community banks and allow them to thrive by doing what they do best – serving and growing their communities. Each provision of the Plan was crafted to preserve and strengthen consumer protections and safety and soundness. I encourage the members of this Committee to review the Plan, which is attached to this statement.

While the Plan contains nearly 40 separate legislative recommendations, they are organized around three pillars: Relief from mortgage regulation to promote lending; improved access to capital to sustain community bank independence; and reforming oversight and examination practices to better target the true sources of risk. Each of these pillars helps small businesses by preserving and strengthening the community banks that partner with them. I will note a few of the recommendations under each pillar.

Mortgage Reform for Community Banks

Every aspect of mortgage lending is subject to new, complex, and expensive regulations that are upending the economics of this line of business. In ICBA’s 2014 Community Bank Lending Survey, which surveyed over 500 community banks nationwide, 44 percent of respondents said that they made fewer first lien residential mortgage loans in 2014 when the CFPB’s qualified

¹ “The State and Fate of Community Banking.” Marshall Lux and Robert Greene. Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government at the Harvard Kennedy School. February 2015.

² Parsons, Richard J. Bank Think. American Banker, Feb. 16, 2015.

mortgage rules were in effect than they made in 2013. The improved housing market should have created more loans, not fewer. More troubling, 73 percent of respondents said that regulatory burdens were preventing them from making more residential mortgage loans.

Small business owners often use home equity loans to finance their businesses. However, small business owners may have difficulty complying with the income documentation requirements under the ability-to-repay rule, despite their excellent credit. The underwriting requirements of the “qualified mortgage” (or QM) rule – which shields lenders from litigation under the ability-to-repay rule by defining mortgages that are deemed to comply with the rule – are inflexible and do not afford the lender discretion to use judgment or to weigh compensating factors such as high net worth in making credit decisions. You hear the same story again and again from community bankers all over the country.

Key provisions of the Plan for Prosperity are designed to keep community banks in the business of mortgage lending and to give them more flexibility in extending credit. Plan provisions include:

- “Qualified mortgage” status under the CFPB’s ability-to-repay rules for any mortgage originated and held in portfolio for at least three years by a lender with less than \$10 billion in assets.
- An exemption from any escrow requirements any first lien mortgage held in portfolio by a lender with less than \$10 billion in assets.

The principal rationale for these provisions, and the reason they can be safely enacted, is they apply only to loans originated and held in portfolio by community banks. As relationship lenders, community bankers are in the business of knowing their borrowers and assessing their ability to repay a loan. What’s more, when a community bank holds a loan in portfolio it holds 100 percent of the credit risk and has an overriding incentive to ensure the loan is well underwritten and affordable to the borrower. In a typical community bank portfolio, even a small number of defaults can put a bank at risk. Community bank portfolio lenders ensure they understand the borrower’s financial condition and structure the loan accordingly. If the borrower has trouble making payments due to job loss or other unforeseen circumstances, a community bank portfolio lender will work with the borrower to restructure the loan and keep the borrower in their home. By the same token, portfolio lenders will protect their collateral by ensuring borrowers remain current on tax and insurance payments. For this reason, the escrow requirement, which must be outsourced at a relatively high cost by community banks with a low volume of mortgages, is an unnecessary burden when a loan is held in portfolio.

Access to Capital

The second pillar of the Plan for Prosperity is capital access and preservation for community banks. A number of the provisions are dedicated to strengthening community bank viability by creating new options for capital raising and capital preservation.

One such provision would provide relief for community banks under \$1 billion in asset size from the internal control attestation requirements of Section 404(b) of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. Since

community bank internal control systems are monitored continually by bank examiners, they should not have to incur the unnecessary annual expense of paying an outside audit firm for attestation work. This provision will substantially lower the regulatory burden and expense for small, publicly traded community banks without creating more risk for investors.

Three capital provisions of the Plan for Prosperity would amend Basel III for banks with assets of \$50 billion or less to restore the original intent of the accord which was intended to apply only to large, internationally active banks.

ICBA also recommends reforming Regulation D, which governs private offerings of shares, so that anyone with a net worth of more than \$1 million, including the value of their primary residence, would qualify as an “accredited investor.” The number of non-accredited investors that could purchase stock under a private offering should be increased from 35 to 70.

Reforming Bank Oversight and Examination to Better Target Risk

The third pillar of the Plan for Prosperity is improving the exam environment for community banks. This includes three provisions as described below.

Call Reports

The quarterly call report filed by community banks now comprises 80 pages of forms and 670 pages of instructions. Implementation of the new Basel III capital standards may add nearly 60 additional pages to the already burgeoning call report. In September, nearly 15,000 community bankers representing 40 percent of all community banks nationwide signed an ICBA petition to the regulatory agencies calling for more streamlined quarterly call report filings. ICBA’s recent Community Bank Call Report Burden Survey empirically demonstrates this problem. Eighty-six percent of survey respondents said the total cost of preparing the quarterly call report has increased over the last 10 years.³ Thirty percent said it had increased significantly. A typical \$500 million asset community bank spends close to 300 hours a year of senior level, highly-compensated staff time on the quarterly call report.

Only a fraction of the information collected is actually useful to regulators in monitoring safety and soundness and conducting monetary policy. The 80 pages of forms contain extremely granular data such as the quarterly change in loan balances on owner-occupied commercial real estate. Whatever negligible value there is for the regulators in obtaining this type of detail is dwarfed by the expense and the staff hours dedicated to collecting it. To put things in perspective, consider this contrast: some large credit unions filed a less than 30 page call report in the first quarter of 2014. Surely, regulators can supervise community banks with significantly less paperwork burden than they currently demand.

For this reason, ICBA is calling on the agencies to allow highly-rated community banks to submit a short form call report in the first and third quarters of each year. A full call report would be filed at mid-year and at year-end. The short form would contain essential data required by

³ 2104 ICBA Community Bank Call Report Burden Survey.
<http://www.icba.org/files/ICBASites/PDFs/2014CallReportSurveyResults.pdf>

regulators to conduct offsite monitoring, including income, loan growth, changes in loan loss reserves, and capital position. In the recent survey noted above, community bank respondents overwhelmingly agreed that instituting a short-form call report in certain quarters would provide a great deal of regulatory relief. Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated the relief would be substantial.

Extended Exam Cycle

Under current agency rules, a bank with assets of less than \$500 million that has a CAMELS rating of 1 or 2 is eligible for an exam cycle of 18 months. Banks that do not meet these criteria are examined on a 12 month cycle. The extended exam cycle allows examiners to focus their limited resources on the banks that pose the greatest systemic risk. In order to more fully reap the benefit of risk-focused exams, the exam cycle can and should be further extended to 24 months and available to banks with assets up to \$2 billion, provided they have a CAMELS rating of 1 or 2. Preparations for bank exams, and the exams themselves, distract bank management from serving their communities to their full potential.

Strengthen Accountability in Examinations

The trend toward oppressive, micromanaged regulatory exams is an ongoing concern to community bankers nationwide. ICBA believes that the best means of creating a more balanced exam environment is to create a workable appeals process. ICBA's Plan for Prosperity calls for the creation of an independent body to receive, investigate, and resolve material complaints from banks in a timely and confidential manner. The goal is to hold examiners accountable and to prevent retribution against banks that file complaints.

The current appeals process is arbitrary and frustrating. Appeals panels, or other processes, routinely lack the independence and market expertise necessary to reach a fair, unbiased decision.

Eliminate Burdensome Data Collection

The Plan for Prosperity calls for exempting banks with assets below \$10 billion from the new small business data collection requirements. This requirement, which is in statute but has yet to be implemented by the CFPB, requires the reporting of information regarding every small business loan application. Adding to the complexity, records of applications must be kept separate from records of the responses to applications and must be kept separate from the underwriting process. In other words, the requirement creates a separate bureaucracy within the bank that cannot be integrated with lending operations. This is especially inefficient, and may not be feasible in organizations that are too small to accommodate fire wall structures. Further, data collected by community banks and subsequently made public by the CFPB could compromise the privacy of applicants in small communities where an applicant's identity may be easily deduced, despite the suppression of personally identifying information.

ICBA is grateful to Chairman Vitter and Senator Brown for including in the **Too-Big-To-Fail Act** of the last Congress a provision that would exempt banks with assets of \$10 billion or less

from the new small business data collection requirement.

ICBA hopes that the Plan for Prosperity will serve as a guide to this Committee and the Senate.

Introduced Legislation

The 114th Congress provides a unique opportunity to provide meaningful regulatory relief for community banks. ICBA urges this Committee and all Senators not to let this opportunity slip. We're encouraged by the bills that have been introduced in the Senate and House so far, several of which are noted below.

The Community Lending Enhancement and Regulatory Relief Act of 2015 (the "CLEAR Act", S. 812), introduced by Senators Jerry Moran and Jon Tester, advances three priority provisions of Plan for Prosperity: qualified mortgage status and an escrow exemption for any mortgage held in portfolio by a community bank with less than \$10 billion in assets, and relief from the SOX 404(b) internal control assessment mandate for community banks with less than \$1 billion in assets.

The Financial Institutions Examination Fairness and Reform Act (S. 774), introduced by Senators Moran and Joe Manchin, would go a long way toward improving the oppressive examination environment by creating a workable appeals process. This legislation would improve the appeals process by taking it out of the examining agencies and empowering a newly created Independent Examination Review Director, situated in the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, to make final appeals decisions. Though we favor additional measures to bring a higher level of accountability to the regulators and their field examiners, we are pleased to support the provisions this legislation.

The Privacy Notice Modernization Act of 2015 (S. 423), introduced by Senators Moran and Heidi Heitkamp, would eliminate redundant mailings of annual privacy notices when a financial institution's privacy policy has not changed. A similar bill introduced in the 113th Congress garnered a broad list of 75 bipartisan cosponsors. Under Gramm-Leach-Bliley, financial institutions are required to mail annual privacy notices to customers even when their policies have not changed. S. 423 would eliminate this requirement when no change in policy has occurred, while ensuring customers have continued access to their institution's current privacy policy. Annual notices, when no change in policy has occurred, do not provide useful information to customers and are often a source of confusion to them. What's more, they represent an unproductive expense for community banks that could be better directed toward serving consumers.

ICBA urges the members of this Committee to cosponsor the bills noted above.

Closing

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. ICBA hopes this testimony, while not exhaustive, gives the Committee a sense of the sharply increasing resource demands placed on community banks by regulation and examination and the destructive impact they have on small

business lending. ICBA hopes to work with this committee to craft urgently needed legislative solutions.

ATTACHMENTS

- ICBA Plan for Prosperity



INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY
BANKERS of AMERICA

One Mission. Community Banks.®

Plan for Prosperity



**A Pro-Growth Agenda to Reduce the Onerous
Regulatory Burden on Community Banks and
Empower Local Communities**

2015

Plan for Prosperity: An Agenda to Reduce the Onerous Regulatory Burden on Community Banks and Empower Local Communities

America's 6,500 community banks are vital to the prosperity of the U.S. economy, particularly in smaller towns and rural communities. Providing more than half of all small business loans under \$1 million, as well as customized mortgage and consumer loans suited to the unique characteristics of their local communities, community banks serve a vital role in ensuring the economic recovery is robust and broad based, reaching communities of all sizes and in every region of the country.

In order to reach their full potential as catalysts for entrepreneurship, economic growth, and job creation, community banks must be able to attract capital in a highly competitive environment. An end to the exponential growth of onerous regulatory mandates is critical to this objective. Regulation is suffocating nearly every aspect of community banking and changing the very nature of the industry away from community investment and community building to paperwork, compliance, and examination. A fundamentally new approach is needed: Regulation must be calibrated to the size, lower-risk profile, and traditional business model of community banks.

ICBA's Plan for Prosperity provides targeted regulatory relief that will allow community banks to thrive by doing what they do best – serving and growing their communities. By reducing unsustainable regulatory burden, the Plan will ensure that scarce capital and labor resources are used productively, not sunk into unnecessary compliance costs, allowing community banks to better focus on lending and investing that will directly improve the quality of life in our communities. Each provision of the Plan was selected with input from community bankers nationwide and crafted to preserve and strengthen consumer protections and safety and soundness.

The Plan is a set of detailed legislative priorities positioned for advancement in Congress. A subset of these priorities is specifically dedicated to strengthening community bank viability by creating new options for capital raising and capital preservation. A number of regulatory relief measures would be tiered, with different thresholds for Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rules (generally \$10 billion and under) and safety and soundness regulation (generally \$50 billion and under). The recommended thresholds are based on existing levels and statutory provisions, which may vary by provision.

ICBA is committed to advancing and enacting the provisions of the Plan with all due vigilance and the aggressive use of every resource at our disposal. The Plan is a flexible, living document that can be adapted to a rapidly changing regulatory and legislative environment to maximize its influence and likelihood of enactment. Provisions are described below.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL: CREATING NEW OPTIONS FOR THE CREATION AND PRESERVATION OF COMMUNITY BANK CAPITAL

ICBA is proposing a set of options to strengthen community bank viability by enhancing access to capital.

Basel III Amendments: Restoring the Original Intent of the Rule. Basel III was originally intended to apply only to large, internationally active banks. ICBA proposes the following amendments for banks with assets of \$50 billion or less.

- *Exemption from the capital conservation buffer.* The new buffer provisions impose dividend restrictions that have a chilling effect on potential investors. This is particularly true for Subchapter S banks whose investors rely on dividends to pay their pro-rata share of the bank's tax. Exempting community banks from the capital conservation buffer would make it easier for them to raise capital.
- *Full capital recognition of allowance for credit losses.* Provide that the allowance for credit losses is included in tier 1 capital up to 1.25 percent of risk weighted assets with the remaining amount reported in tier 2 capital. This change would reverse the punitive treatment of the allowance under Basel III. The allowance should be captured in the regulatory capital framework since it is the first line of defense in protecting against unforeseen future credit losses.
- *Amend risk weighting to promote economic development.* Provide 100 percent risk weighting for acquisition, development, and construction loans. Under Basel III, these loans are classified as high volatility commercial real estate loans and risk weighted at 150 percent. ICBA's proposed change would treat these loans the same as other commercial real estate loans and would be consistent with Basel I.

Additional Capital for Small Bank Holding Companies: Modernizing the Federal Reserve's Policy Statement. Require the Federal Reserve to revise the Small Bank Holding Company Policy Statement – a set of capital guidelines that have the force of law. The Policy Statement, which makes it easier for small bank and thrift holding companies to raise additional capital by issuing debt, would be revised to increase the qualifying asset threshold from \$1 billion to \$5 billion. Qualifying bank and thrift holding companies must not have significant outstanding debt or be engaged in nonbanking activities that involve significant leverage.

Relief from Securities and Exchange Commission Rules. ICBA recommends the following changes to SEC rules which would allow community banks to commit more resources to their communities without putting investors at risk:

- Provide an exemption from internal control attestation requirements for community banks with assets of less than \$1 billion. The current exemption applies to any company with market capitalization of \$75 million or less. Because community bank internal control systems are monitored continually by bank examiners, they should not have to sustain the unnecessary annual expense of paying an outside audit firm for attestation work. This provision will substantially lower the regulatory burden and expense for small, publicly traded community banks without creating more risk for investors.

- Due to an oversight in the 2012 JOBS Act, thrift holding companies do not have statutory authority to take advantage of the increased shareholder threshold below which a bank or bank holding company may deregister with the SEC. Congress should correct this oversight by allowing thrift holding companies to use the new 1,200 shareholder deregistration threshold as well as the new 2,000 shareholder registration threshold.
- Regulation D should be reformed so that anyone with a net worth of more than \$1 million, including the value of their primary residence, would qualify as an “accredited investor.” The number of non-accredited investors that could purchase stock under a private offering should be increased from 35 to 70.

TARGETED REGULATORY RELIEF

Supporting a Robust Housing Market: Mortgage Reform for Community Banks. Provide community banks relief from certain mortgage regulations, especially for loans held in portfolio. When a community bank holds a loan in portfolio, it has a direct stake in the loan’s performance and every incentive to ensure it is properly underwritten, affordable and responsibly serviced. Relief would include:

- Providing “qualified mortgage” safe harbor status for loans originated and held in portfolio by banks with less than \$10 billion in assets, including balloon mortgages.
- Exempting banks with assets below \$10 billion from escrow requirements for loans held in portfolio.
- An exemption from the higher risk mortgage appraisal requirements for loans of \$250,000 or less provided they are held in portfolio by the originator for a period of at least three years.
- New information reporting requirements under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act should not apply to community banks.

Strengthening Accountability in Bank Exams: A Workable Appeals Process. The trend toward oppressive, micromanaged regulatory exams is a concern to community bankers nationwide. An independent body would be created to receive, investigate, and resolve material complaints from banks in a timely and confidential manner. The goal is to hold examiners accountable and to prevent retribution against banks that file complaints.

Reforming Bank Oversight and Examination to Better Target Risk. ICBA makes the following recommendations to allow bank examiners to better target their resources at true sources of systemic risk:

- A two-year exam cycle for well-rated community banks with up to \$2 billion in assets would allow examiners to better target their limited resources toward banks that pose systemic risk. It would also provide needed relief to bank management for whom exams are a significant distraction from serving their customers and communities.
- Banks with assets of \$50 billion or less should be exempt from stress test requirements.
- Community banks should be allowed to file a short form call report in the first and third quarters of each year. The current, long form call report would be filed in the second and fourth quarters. The quarterly call report now comprises some 80 pages supported by almost 700 pages of instructions. It represents a growing burden on community banks without being an effective supervisory tool.

Redundant Privacy Notices: Eliminate Annual Requirement. Eliminate the requirement that financial institutions mail annual privacy notices even when no change in policy has occurred. Financial institutions would still be required to notify their customers by mail when they change their privacy policies, but when no change in policy has occurred, the annual notice provides no useful information to customers and is a needless expense.

Balanced Consumer Regulation: More Inclusive and Accountable CFPB Governance. The following changes would strengthen CFPB accountability, improve the quality of the agency's rulemaking, and make more effective use of its examination resources:

- Change the governance structure of the CFPB to a five-member commission rather than a single Director. Commissioners would be confirmed by the Senate to staggered five-year terms with no more than three commissioners affiliated with any one political party. This change will strengthen accountability and bring a diversity of views and professional backgrounds to decision-making at the CFPB.
- The Financial Stability Oversight Council's review of CFPB rules should be strengthened by changing the vote required to veto a rule from an unreasonably high two-thirds vote to a simple majority, excluding the CFPB Director.
- All banks with assets of \$50 billion or less should be exempt from examination and enforcement by the CFPB; and CFPB backup (or "ride along") authority for compliance exams performed by a bank's primary regulator should be eliminated.

Eliminate Arbitrary "Disparate Impact" Fair Lending Suits. Amend the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the Fair Housing Act to bar "disparate impact" causes of action. Lenders that uniformly apply neutral lending standards should not be subject to frivolous and abusive lawsuits based on statistical data alone. Disparate impact forces lenders to consider factors such as race and national origin in individual credit decisions, which are specifically precluded by law.

Ensuring the Viability of Mutual Banks: New Charter Option. The OCC should be allowed to charter mutual national banks to provide flexibility for institutions to choose the charter that best suits their needs and the communities they serve.

Rigorous and Quantitative Justification of New Rules: Cost-Benefit Analysis. Provide that financial regulatory agencies cannot issue notices of proposed rulemakings unless they first determine that quantified costs are less than benefits. The analysis must take into account the impact on the smallest banks which are disproportionately burdened by regulation because they lack the scale and the resources to absorb the associated compliance costs. In addition, the agencies would be required to identify and assess available alternatives including modifications to existing regulations. They would also be required to ensure that proposed regulations are consistent with existing regulations, written in plain English, and easy to interpret.

Cutting the Red Tape in Small Business Lending: Eliminate Burdensome Data Collection. Exclude banks with assets below \$10 billion from new small business data collection requirements. This provision, which requires the reporting of information regarding every small business loan application, falls disproportionately upon community banks that lack scale and compliance resources.

Preserve Community Bank Mortgage Servicing. The provisions described below would help preserve the important role of community banks in servicing mortgages and deter further industry consolidation, which is harmful to borrowers:

- Increase the “small servicer” exemption threshold to 20,000 loans (up from 5,000). To put this proposed threshold in perspective, the average number of loans serviced by the five largest servicers subject to the national mortgage settlement is 6.8 million. An exemption threshold of 20,000 would demarcate small servicers from both large and mid-sized servicers.
- For banks with assets of \$50 billion or less, reverse the punitive Basel III capital treatment of mortgage servicing rights (MSRs) and allow 100 percent of MSRs to be included as common equity tier 1 capital.

Creating a Voice for Community Banks: Treasury Assistant Secretary for Community Banks.

Economic and banking policies have too often been made without the benefit of community bank input. An approach that takes into account the diversity and breadth of the financial services sector would significantly improve policy making. Creating an Assistant Secretary for Community Banks within the U.S. Treasury Department would ensure that the more than 6,500 community banks across the country, including minority banks that lend in underserved markets, are given appropriate and balanced consideration in the policy making process.

Modernize Subchapter S Constraints. Subchapter S of the tax code should be updated to facilitate capital formation for community banks, particularly in light of higher capital requirements under the proposed Basel III capital standards. The limit on Subchapter S shareholders should be increased from 100 to 200; Subchapter S corporations should be allowed to issue preferred shares; and Subchapter S shares, both common and preferred, should be permitted to be held in individual retirement accounts (IRAs). These changes would better allow the nation’s 2,200 Subchapter S banks to raise capital and increase the flow of credit.

Five-Year Loss Carryback Supports Lending During Economic Downturns. Banks with \$15 billion or less in assets should be allowed to use a five-year net operating loss (NOL) carryback. The five-year NOL carryback is countercyclical and will support community bank capital and lending during economic downturns.

Risk Targeting the Volcker Rule. Exempt banks with assets of \$50 billion or less from the Volcker Rule. The Volcker Rule should apply only to the largest, most systemically risky banks. Proposals to apply the rule to community banks carry unintended consequences that threaten to destabilize segments of the community banking industry.

The Independent Community Bankers of America®, the nation’s voice for 6,500 community banks of all sizes and charter types, is dedicated exclusively to representing the interests of the community banking industry and its membership through effective advocacy, best-in-class education and high-quality products and services. For more information, visit www.icba.org.