[hed] The human touch

It’s only August, but I’ve already logged several trips to Washington. Whether it was to testify before Congress, attend ICBA’s Capital Summit or meet with officials from the Treasury and White House, and even the president himself, making the journey from Corpus Christi to Washington is becoming second nature to me. I know the flight plan well.

One of the things that strikes me about Washington is that whether you’re the president of the United States, the Treasury secretary or a member of Congress, you are also a real person. You aren’t just someone who is seen on the news or who we read about online or in the papers throughout the country. Sometimes it takes going to the nation’s capital to see that politicians are just like you, even if they seem to live in a far-off world.

I say this because our community bank customers often see us through those rose-colored lenses as well. Community bankers are viewed as upstanding leaders in the community. They are held in high regard and occupy a place of power within the community. While we as community bankers take this role seriously, we can’t forget that it’s always important to humanize ourselves and show our customers and our staff that we are real people, too.

That’s why I’m thrilled that *Independent Banker* is showcasing community bankers across the country who aren’t afraid to show their true colors—things like their favorite fast food and dream retirement location. I also appreciate that the magazine is looking at banks that are ahead of the curve and those that run innovative community service programs. These are great stories that we can all learn from.

Each community bank and community banker brings something new to the table and that’s something that customers can appreciate. Who wants to be a number, anyway?

That’s why this August, I encourage you to show off your bank to those who are home from Washington for the congressional recess. Your member of Congress needs to see the real people and hear the real stories that will bring change to Washington. That meaningful connection is what this time should be all about for them: reconnecting with their community so they can take what they learn back to Washington and make a real difference.

As community bankers, we are often so focused on the day to day and what’s happening in the community. While that is important, we must never forget to always look at the big picture and find ways to make real change on the national stage as well.

Your member of Congress will appreciate the hometown welcome and will want to know how Washington policy affects your local community and customers. If you haven’t set up a meeting yet, I encourage you to do so. If you have questions about how to arrange a meeting, I encourage you to take advantage of ICBA’s vast grassroots resources, including the association’s new guide, “Meeting on Main Street: Host Your Legislators at Your Community Bank.” The guide provides a step-by-step process on scheduling, conducting and promoting in-district meetings with members of Congress for community bank visits by lawmakers and staff. The guide also offers social media tips and a sample letter to request a meeting or bank visit.

So don’t be a stranger to your member of Congress. Go ahead and schedule that meeting. Now is your time to shine!