***Independent Banker***

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“Community banks stand out in today’s financial services space because our business model depends on an ecosystem where the bank only benefits when customers do.”

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This month’s issue of *Independent Banker* focuses on budgeting issues with a special emphasis on the ICBA National Community Bank Service Awards. With that two-pronged concentration, I can’t help but consider the connection between our role of service and the impact regulation can have on our very ability to serve.

Inherent to our business model is a passion to support our communities, one that allows for flexibility to meet the individual needs of our customers. On the other end of the spectrum, rigidity is intrinsic to regulation. That pressurized relationship constantly needs calibration to ensure that our customers and communities remain the priority, and regulators and legislators need to understand that regulatory constraints often limit a community bank’s ability to support its customers.

For example, there’s a lot being discussed about the overdraft rules, how they will get written and what effect they will have on the communities we support. Overdraft is a service we provide to our customers—one that is clearly disclosed and articulated—and our customers choose to derive value from it. Overzealous regulation will limit a product specifically designed to protect their interests.

Doing what’s right for our customers remains our chief priority and our guiding principle, and there’s certainly much we can do outside of our banking services to make that happen. Just look at this year’s Community Bank Service Award recipients. American Savings Bank in Hilo, Hawaii, runs the Kahiau Giving Campaign to benefit local nonprofits. First Community Bank of the Heartland in Clinton, Ky., started its “Make a Difference Program” with the goal of supporting foster children and has expanded it to not only enhance that vision but also to incorporate an added community service focus each month. These honorees exemplify the spirit of community banking, one that we carry with us in our everyday actions on behalf of our communities.

Community banks stand out in today’s financial services space because our business model depends on an ecosystem where the bank only benefits when customers do. That’s why ICBA focuses much of our work on telling those stories to legislators and regulators, making sure they understand how community banks show up for their communities. They need to see that we take care of those we serve.

That’s why I can say with confidence that no matter the regulatory pressures that come to bear, we will continue to thrive. And because we lead with a spirit of service and a focus on doing the right thing by our customers, our communities will flourish as well.

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**Where I’ll be this month**

I’ll be attending the Community Bankers of Georgia Annual Convention and continuing to advocate for community banks here in Washington.