

Joint News Release

America's Community Bankers

American Bankers Association

Independent Community Bankers of America

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 22, 2006)- America's Community Bankers, the American Bankers Association and the Independent Community Bankers of America, in a joint letter to Senate Banking Committee leadership, urged adoption of meaningful financial services regulatory relief legislation that would reduce paperwork for community banks and help them to better serve their communities.

"We are pleased that the Senate Banking Committee is poised to act on regulatory relief legislation in the near future," wrote the chairmen of the three trade groups, ACB Chairman F. Weller Meyer, president and CEO of Acacia Federal Savings Bank, Falls Church, Va.; ABA Chairman Harris H. Simmons, president and CEO of Zions Bancorporation, Salt Lake City; and ICBA Chairman David E. Hayes, president and CEO of Security Bank, Dyersburg, Tenn.

"We support a balanced regulatory structure that carefully guards the safety and soundness of the banking system and the interests of consumers through reasonable regulations. However, today banks are subject to a host of laws and regulations, some over a half-century old that do not enhance safety and soundness or provide any meaningful protections for the public," stated the letter, which was sent to the committee's chairman, Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.) and ranking member, Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes (D-Md.).

"The burdens of compliance with such laws add unnecessary costs to the operation of the banking system, stifle innovation and put up barriers to competition. Eliminating unnecessary regulations will free up resources that can be used to serve better the businesses and families that rely on the banking system for loans, investments and other financial services.

"We believe that there is an opportunity to adopt meaningful regulatory relief legislation this year. We urge the Senate Banking Committee to act quickly to send comprehensive legislation to the full Senate for consideration," the joint letter said.

The Senate Banking Committee is scheduled to hold a hearing March 1 on regulatory relief. Testifying on behalf of the three trade groups will be Meyer; Bradley Rock, chairman, president and CEO of Bank of Smithtown, Smithtown, N.Y.; and ICBA chairman-elect Terry J. Jorde, president and CEO of CountryBank USA, Cando, N.D.

America's Community Bankers is the member driven national trade association representing community banks that pursue progressive, entrepreneurial and service-oriented strategies to benefit their customers and communities. To learn more about ACB, visit www.AmericasCommunityBankers.com.

The American Bankers Association, on behalf of the more than two million men and women who work in the nation's banks, brings together all categories of banking institutions to best represent the interests of this rapidly changing industry. Its membership-which includes community, regional and money center banks and holding companies, as well as savings associations, trust companies and savings banks-makes ABA the largest banking trade association in the country.

The Independent Community Bankers of America, the nation's voice for community banks, represents the largest constituency of community banks of all sizes and charter types in the nation, and is dedicated exclusively to representing the interests of the community banking industry.