**Independent Banker**

**February 2019**

**Flourish**

[pull quote/headline] While I know many of these successes took years, our efforts are paying off.

[body]

It never ceases to amaze me how powerful we are when we work together, community bankers.

Since sharing our advocacy successes with you in early December, I’ve been thrilled to see more hard-fought victories come our way. And it’s not by luck—it’s through years of telling our unique stories and making our voices heard.

First and foremost, we have a new farm bill—something that is good for American agriculture and for community bankers’ ability to provide credit to support their local economies. The adoption of the ICBA-backed legislation is remarkable given we were told that the most likely outcome would be a one-year extension, thus pushing the legislation’s enactment into the next Congress.

The new law includes important commodity price protections that will provide producers and community banks with greater business-planning certainty over the next five years. This is essential during an era of low commodity prices, sharply lower net farm income and foreign trade uncertainties. It also maintains a strong crop insurance program, increases USDA guaranteed farm loan limits to $1.75 million and provides for the possible increase in guaranteed USDA rural development loans—all of which are ICBA and community bank priorities.

But the good news doesn’t stop there. Appraisals are also on the table.

As a community banker in Taos, N.M., I know appraisals are not always clear cut. So, I was thrilled to see that the regulatory agencies are aiming to improve appraisal regulations. As you may have seen in our Main Street Matters blog, the agencies responded to industry requests with a proposed rule to increase the threshold where bankers could use a property evaluation in lieu of a full appraisal—completed by a licensed or certified appraiser—for mortgage loans they retain in portfolio. The agencies are proposing to increase this threshold from $250,000 to $400,000.

And while S.2155 provided for similar relief for banks in rural markets, the agencies’ proposed rule would expand that relief to all institutions and markets. That’s a meaningful result for all community banks!

While I know many of these successes took years, our efforts are paying off. As we begin to work with the new Congress, know that ICBA is here for you every step of the way. Together, we will continue to do great things for our great industry.

**Where I’ll Be This Month**

I’ll be heading to the Wisconsin Bankers Association and the Independent Bankers Association of Texas regional meetings.