**>>FLOURISH**

**“Your character, integrity and strong reputations will continue to serve you well.”**

Rebeca Romero Rainey

President and CEO, ICBA

With the 10th anniversary of the Wall Street financial crisis just behind us, let us not forget the wrongdoings of the nation’s largest and most systemically important banks—wrongdoings that led to the Great Recession and the undoing of one too many American dreams.

What’s amazing to me is that 10 years later, nearly to the day, the megabanks are doubling down. As policymakers continue to review financial services regulations, the largest banks are working to roll back rules that were designed to mitigate the risks they pose to the financial system.

Regulators have issued a proposed rule to reduce capital levels for global systemically important bank holding companies and their federally insured subsidiaries. Meanwhile, some members of Congress are asking the Federal Reserve to eliminate a capital surcharge on the megabanks.

First things first: Washington needs to slow down and reevaluate. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes that contributed to the 2008 financial catastrophe, which community bankers remember all too well. Policymakers should not be swayed by the largest and riskiest institutions to weaken vital safeguards on our financial system, especially when megabank misbehavior remains on full display.

Americans deserve better from their financial institutions. As relationship lenders, we community bankers pride ourselves on providing the best possible products and services to our customers—all while adding the personal touch that only community bankers can bring. This marked difference between us and the megabanks is yet another opportunity for us to tell the story of how community banks work differently from the transactional, take-a-number approach of the nation’s largest and most systemically risky institutions.

As you go through your working day, I encourage you to note the differences in the way you conduct your business locally. Every time you think of something that makes your bank unique, whether it’s going one step further to make a loan happen or making a decision that will shore up your capital position, write it down. These examples are at the heart of what makes the community bank business model different. Share those stories with ICBA, your local community and your regulators to show that banks can be successful by doing right by their customers.

This commitment to customers is one of the reasons why ICBA and community bankers were able to make generational regulatory relief a reality after years of advocacy (see cover story on page X). So thank you, community bankers. Thank you for doing what’s right and for taking the high road in financial services. Your character, integrity and strong reputations will continue to serve you well in meeting the needs of your customers, and in ensuring more balanced, tailored and appropriate regulatory oversight.

[Where I’ll be this month]

In October, I’ll be traveling to Memphis to visit Vining Sparks and CRA Partners. I’ll also be speaking at the Tennessee Bankers Association convention… just to name a few.