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Good morning, and thank you!

It is an honor to be your chairman and a challenge to follow in the footsteps of my good friend, Art Johnson. Art has served our industry with distinction and with tireless energy.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Art Johnson, Kell Kelly, our chairman-elect, and Bill White, our treasurer.

Gentlemen, on behalf of ABA, let me thank you for your outstanding service in an extraordinary time.

Art, thank you for your leadership and your friendship.

As a measure of our respect and appreciation, ABA has written a testimonial in honor of your service. Let me read a few lines.

“During one of the most challenging years in banking history, this life-long community banker from Grand Rapids, Michigan, led our industry over treacherous and uncertain economic and public policy terrain and put us on a new course into the future.

“His genuine love of banking and his high regard for bankers have always been clear. He has an unwavering belief that bankers gathered together in common purpose can and will develop solutions to seemingly insurmountable or intractable problems.

“He inspired those who heard him as he traveled the length and breadth of the nation.

“In recognition and appreciation of his leadership and dedication, the members of the American Bankers Association, convened in Boston this 19th day of October 2010, offer this testimonial.”

Art, you have served us well. Thank you.

Let me also acknowledge the extraordinary service that Ed Yingling has given this industry over the past quarter century. Ed, we thank you for your long and exceptional service. You have truly given us your all.

In the year ahead, I'm looking forward to working with a great team of bankers in our leadership --- Kell Kelly, Matt Williams, and Bill White.

I know I have your support and theirs, and that of my family. Let me take a moment to introduce them. My partner, my friend, my wife, Diana; and our children and grandchildren – our son, Scott, and his wife Nicole, their son Jude, and daughter, Saige. Our son, Brett, his wife, Megan, and their daughter, Natalie, and their son, Taylor. Our daughter, Kara Wilson Roll, and her husband, Nick Roll. I'd also like

to introduce my father, Howard Wilson, who inspired me to become a banker, and my mother, Grace Wilson, who inspired me in life. Thank you all very much.

When I think about banking, I think about ABA – about its unmatched scope and scale and its extraordinary people. ABA is driven to bring about positive change. We energized the industry to fight back and we were able to stop many of the bad ideas put forward in the name of regulatory reform. ABA demonstrated that it is the industry’s champion, standing up for banks of all sizes and charters with a breadth and depth of resources and expertise to make all of us more successful. This past year the staff has worked 24/7 on our behalf. Please join me in showing our appreciation.

It’s been a very difficult year. But ABA members pulled together, and together we made a difference. We gained strength through our diversity.

And no matter what kind of bank we run --- you and I are very much alike.

I am a Banker.

I am a National Bank Banker.

I am a Community Banker.

I am a second generation Banker.

I am a Banker because I like the positive impact I can have on my community.

I am a Banker because the mission component of banking allows me to help my neighbors.

I am a Banker who is not afraid or hesitant to say “no” -- when that is the right answer to help my customer succeed.

I am an angry Banker, because we have been made the villain in the name of regulatory reform.

I am a Banker who is frustrated that the national media have not taken the time to understand who we are and what we really do for our community.

Our banks are the traditional, regulated banks that run the engines that drive the economy. And, don’t let the naysayers and the professional critics tell you otherwise.

I am proud of what we do. I am proud of our industry and the two million men and women who work in our banks. I am proud of what we do for our customers, and what we give back to the communities we serve.

I chose to be a banker and to follow my father’s example. He was an Ohio banker for nearly 40 years. His life is all about service and participation, a life of commitment, and, yes, a life of honor and respect. He showed me what a banker can do for a community.

His long-term perspective served the bank well. He refused to be driven by quarter-to-quarter results. He always did what was best for the long run. Like so many community

bankers, he was all about balancing the interest of the shareholders, customers and the employees.

In those days, the public believed that to be a banker was a noble profession, a position of honor and trust in a community.

That was then. And this is now. But I believe that our generation of bankers deserves that trust.

My goal as your chairman is to restore pride throughout the banking industry – and to restore our damaged reputation.

I remember the kind of pride my father had when he was a banker. And the kind of respect our industry enjoyed when I became a banker 35 years ago.

Just about that time, a Gallup Poll found that Americans had confidence in the banking system. Today, that confidence has fallen to a modern day low.

If there is any consolation, Congress ranks at the very bottom on the confidence chart. Dead last. And banks come out ahead of HMOs . . . ahead of organized labor . . . and TV news.

After years of attacks on our profession, it's time for all of us to work together to restore public confidence in banking. One way to do that is to restore pride in our profession.

We build the future one customer at a time, one dream at a time, one family at a time, one business at a time --- and we do that every single day. We should feel good about that. We need to have a high regard for what we do so the public can regain confidence in our industry.

Yes, too much pride is considered a sin. But too little is also dangerous.

Without respect for our country, our community, our family, our job and ourselves, where are we?

Are you proud of your profession? I know you are. Are your employees proud of what they do?

As their leaders, we must make certain that they are. If they have confidence in themselves and their bank, they will be better employees.

How can we instill self-esteem in our employees? How can we make certain that they understand the role that they and the bank play in their community. Whether they are cashing checks in the teller line, working in the call center, or writing loans, they are helping to provide a fundamental economic service to the community – and the community needs them if it's going to thrive. A town without a bank has a difficult future. A town with a bank full of employees who understand that what they do is important is building a solid future.

It's time to retake the high ground – where a healthy sense of worth in who we are and what we do will strengthen our industry and our economy.

Restoring pride in our profession is a mission that begins with each of us. Yes! I'm proud to be a banker and I know you are, too. So I invite you to join me in wearing this button – and there should be one for you on your seat. It tells everyone that we are not just bankers . . . we are proud bankers.

To put my top priority into action, I am establishing an image committee to be led by vice-chair Matt Williams, and my good friend, Bick Weissenrieder, who is chairman and CEO of The Hocking Valley Bank in Athens, Ohio. They will be co-chairs. This committee will be charged with working with bankers and the ABA staff to rebuild our image community by community. And to provide the material necessary to support you with interviews, speeches, and media placement.

We must convince our communities of the value of having a traditional regulated bank whose success is tied to the community's success. That's who we are and what we do.

We hear about it almost every day at ABA as members from across the country tell us what they're doing to make their communities better. Whether it's working with the local Habitat for Humanity to build homes, or hosting the town picnic, or donating a scoreboard to the high school, or sponsoring school programs, or lending to small business, community bankers are building their communities. And we're making America stronger.

As a community banker, you are the unsung hero of your hometown. You make a difference in creating jobs, building homes and strengthening communities. I am proud of what you do. Those who criticize banking overlook the immense good that bankers do for our financial system, for our communities and for our country.

We need to tell that story because we stand a far better chance of winning in the political arena when we are also winning in the arena of public opinion.

So in addition to talking to your employees, I am asking you to reach out and talk to the media. Get to know reporters on the business beat. When a story about banking breaks, you want to be the first person they call for perspective and comment.

We cannot afford to let the media write our story without us. We have to be their "go-to" person. We have to tell our story, and that includes the good things we do at our banks, as well as what we cannot do because of Dodd-Frank.

But it doesn't stop there. This is no time to let your fears get the best of you. Most of us know the officers at our local Rotary and the Chamber. You want to be invited to speak to their members and get your story out to community opinion leaders. This is something we can all do.

Now, I know that there are some bankers who will say that this is ABA's job. Some of it is. ABA can provide us with toolboxes to help us talk with our employees and stakeholders. It can provide us with information to help the media understand what we're about. And it can give us a forum where we share ideas on what we're doing and how we're doing it.

But we're the CEOs. We're the ones who have to talk to our employees, spend time with the local media and talk to Rotary. Employee relations, media relations, community relations must join political activity as part of our job.

My second priority, and Kell Kelly's first priority, will be to ride herd on all the new

regulations. To work with ABA staff to identify unintended consequences and educate regulators and bankers alike on the mountain of new regulations we will face in the next year. Over 230 new regs are to be written – and that’s just the ones we know about. We have to be at the table and we have to be heard.

For my part, I will personally write or call the CEO of any bank running negative ads against other banks and ask them to stop.

I will encourage every committee and council within ABA to identify bad actors and bad practices and to establish best practices for serving our customers.

I am asking you to do three things as soon as you get back to the bank.

First, make plans to meet with every employee, talk to them about your bank, about the community and their role in helping make things better.

Second, set up meetings with the reporters for the newspapers, radio and TV stations that cover your area. Talk to them about your traditional banks. Get to know them and let them get to know that you are their go-to person when banking news breaks. Make certain they know how to reach you day and night.

And third, reach out to the service and business groups in your town and volunteer to speak to their members about what needs to be done to create jobs in your community, and the role your bank can play. We have to win the battle at the community level.

The biggest risk we face today is neither credit risk nor interest rate risk. It is political risk. And we must manage it every way we can.

The stronger our reputation at home, the more effective we will be in Washington, and in your state capitols. And then we can convert good will into favorable action.

We are a diverse industry. But there is one common denominator. We are open for business. And our business is helping our customers and communities grow. And that’s how banks – all banks -- help our country grow.

We are the traditional banks of America, and that is a noble and honorable pursuit. Together we will restore our industry to its rightful status. And most important, we will rebuild public confidence as we help our communities create new jobs for a stronger economy and a stronger America.

Thank you.

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