

COMMENTS OF ART MURRAY

Wingert Recognition Event

September 15, 2017

We have come here tonight to honor Bob Wingert. I'm very proud of his accomplishments AND I'm proud of my judgement in hiring him. Bob has taken our organization from a bare beginning to the honorable and respected organization it is today. It is fitting and proper that we honor Bob because Bob, time and time again, has earned our admiration and respect.

My working relationship with this organization was at its very beginning, its roots if you will. I want to tell you a little bit about those days and the beginning of, what is now, CBAI. Perhaps, with such a meager beginning, you will come to a greater appreciation of what has transpired since, ALL ON BOB'S WATCH.

Let's go back to our beginning. It was December 1972. The Illinois Bankers Association had called a special convention in Chicago for the purposes of changing its bylaws to accommodate the desires of large banks. Since receiving notice of the meeting, a small group of community bankers had bound together, organized and worked diligently against the IBA proposal. The special convention was held January 25 and 26, 1973, and the hard work of the community bankers became apparent. 1130 delegates, representing more than 950 banks, attended. The IBA proposal was defeated by a vote of 639 opposed to 317 in favor.

We were an agitator group within the Illinois Bankers Association, but, despite our best efforts we could not get IBA leadership to support their charter, one bank, one vote. Our failure to influence IBA leadership led us, in May of 1973, to formally organize under the name Independent Community Banks in Illinois (ICBI). That organization was formally incorporated on February 27, 1974.

In early 1974 the Illinois Bankers Association crafted a new constitution which was to be presented to the membership at their convention in May. We reviewed that proposed constitution and suggested several changes to their wording. Despite repeated attempts, the IBA rejected all of our recommendations. We then prepared a brochure comparing their language to our suggestions. The IBA Convention was held in May in Peoria. Bill Smith from the Durand Bank who worked tirelessly with me at this convention, and I stood at the entrance to the business portion of the convention handing out these brochures. At the end of the day the Illinois Bankers Association delegates approved all of our recommended amendments. At that convention Bill and I also hosted an ICBI hospitality suite and conducted an ICBI meeting of the members present.

We continued to skirmish with the leadership of the Illinois Bankers Association and the Association for Modern Banking in Illinois and, in January of 1975, convened our first statewide ICBI meeting in Springfield. This was a pivotal meeting because it resulted in getting fresh blood into the leadership of our organization. This renewed our spirits and allowed us to share the load. People like Chip Backland, Jack Marantz, Jim White and several others came forth, accepted significant responsibility and performed admirably. At that meeting we also decided that we needed to hire our first full-time employee. Chip Backland recommended a friend of his son, Bob Wingert, a recent graduate of SMU. Bob was trying to eke out a living in the, somewhat depressed, real estate business in Dallas. Chip called him in January of 1975. I hired Bob in February, and he was occupying an ICBI office in March. Also in March there were hearings in the Senate on bank structure issues at which both Bob Wingert and I testified. Bob had an office at 100 W.

Jefferson Street, a temporary secretary, (a Kelly girl I believe) and he was off and running. In fact, I know of no other organization that hit the ground running as rapidly as the Independent Community Banks of Illinois later renamed the Community Bankers Association of Illinois (CBAI).

Our organization exists to represent the best interests of our communities and our community banks. We, as community bankers have a vital role to play in our communities, our state and our nation. To say bank is a bank is like saying a surgeon is a surgeon. Really? Do you think a tree surgeon and a brain surgeon are alike? Community Banks must be in the battle and we must be strong. Our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our communities and our nation depend on our success. One law or regulation does not fit all when it comes to the laws and regulations we work under,

Today, CBAI is a thriving and effective voice for community banking in Illinois. Bob has set the standard for all of the CBAI staff in being consistently loyal and committed to our causes, the causes of community banks. Bob and CBAI have as their goal to see to the betterment of our circumstances and not to the building of personal empires. In all things change is inevitable and, in itself, is neither good nor bad. In each instance CBAI has provided its members with the tools and knowledge necessary to manage and, hopefully, benefit from those inevitable changes. Our organization has provided input to that change and has helped control the pace of change. In government relations when laws and regulations are considered and crafted, CBAI is in the conversation. When laws and regulations are considered CBAI is constantly and effectively representing you, the community banker. As changes are being implemented CBAI is in your corner by providing education to understand and implement and benefit, as much as possible, from that change. If you have legal questions CBAI uniquely is in able to provide consulting on whatever legal issue you face. CBAI has a list of preferred providers. Each of these providers have been vetted by CBAI staff and are there for your consideration when you decide on how to tackle a particular task. On any banking issue community banks are well represented both in the state and, in cooperation with the ICBA, in the nation. Remember the depth of this organization was Bob's vision, his creation and its leader. CBAI and its achievements are in large measure due to the undying and skillful efforts of Bob and the excellent staff that he assembled. Bob and all of us should be proud. I employed Bob as our new Executive Director Lobbyist and Janitor. He was impressive then and, with his myriad of accomplishments on our behalf, he is even more impressive today. Because of his diligence, unswerving loyalty, consistence and hard work our organization has been successful.

As we have paid homage to Bob and to our past, we must now turn our eyes and energy to the future. I would suggest that there is no greater tribute that we could pay Bob and other CBAI leaders, members and staff, both past and present, than to rekindle their spirit and commit ourselves, at this time and this place, to continue to encourage the development of our communities and our community banks. These efforts will provide maximum banking choices as well as economic growth and employment opportunities for our organization, our membership, and all citizens of Illinois.

(To paraphrase from Abe Lincoln) Community Bankers will little know nor long remember what we say here but you can never forget what Bob has done here.

Thank you Bob! Well done! Well done!