



## A One-Two Punch

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### Industry Advocacy

**Banding together, Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) and state community banking associations are delivering a broad-based grassroots advocacy message to Congress**

*By James Richter and Tim Cook*

It was a valuable opportunity, and a request from an influential lawmaker. Rep. Maxine Waters (D- Calif.), the new ranking Democratic member on the U.S. House Financial Services Committee, approached the Independent Community Bankers of America this past spring to organize an informal sit-down meeting to talk with community bankers in her home state.

Waters, a veteran, liberal Democratic lawmaker with a long history of bellicose confrontations with big-bank executives, said she wants to reach out as part of her new leadership post on the committee. She wants to learn more about the everyday operations and concerns from the Main Street side of the banking world. Recognizing the Golden State's opportunity—with a powerful legislator in Washington—to shine a light of more understanding, ICBA turned to its grassroots expert in the field, **David Haithcock**, for help.

**David Haithcock**, CIB's executive director, helped organize the meeting. An informal roundtable gathering with 10 community bankers from around the area was scheduled at Malaga Bank in Water's Los Angeles district. A bit gingerly at first, the bankers shared real-world stories about how community banks continue to invigorate their local economies and support the financial dreams of families and small businesses. But the bankers also spoke honestly about formidable obstacles emanating from Washington, including costly and micromanaged regulatory red tape and hypercritical bank examinations.

Open and sympathetic to community bankers' personal stories and viewpoints, Waters pledged to use her new position in Washington—when she could—to speak out for and support Main Street community banks. The meeting was successful, **Haithcock says**; Waters and the community bankers developed lots of common ground and mutual understanding.

"One of the [bankers] I was kind of worried about in the beginning actually stood up at the end and said, 'You being here gives us hope that something can be done,'" **Haithcock recalls.**