

**Rob Nichols Washington Update Column**  
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**Celebrating a legacy of collaboration**

At the beginning of this year, my travels on behalf of ABA took me to southern California at a time when deadly wildfires were still raging through many neighborhoods in Los Angeles and the surrounding area.

As I sat there in that room full of bankers, friends and colleagues, the sentiment I felt was unmistakable: that when the smoke cleared and the dust settled, bankers would be there, ready to serve their communities and support the recovery—just as they have done throughout American history.

As I reflect on ABA's 150th milestone anniversary in 2025, and as I look at where we are as a nation today, I am reminded that bankers have a long and proud tradition of coming together during hard times to work together and find solutions.

That certainly was true of ABA's founding; in 1873, the United States was facing a financial panic and one of the worst recessions in history. Unemployment and bankruptcies were surging, and 300 banks failed. It was on the heels of this unrest that two young bankers—inspired by the women's suffrage movement and the power of collective action—worked to convene the first-ever meeting of the American Bankers Association in July 1875 in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Since then, ABA has provided a forum for bankers to meet and together develop solutions that make the banking sector stronger, safer, and more accessible.

Just a few examples: We helped mobilize bankers to safeguard bank funds during a string of bank robberies in the 1890s; we pioneered the routing number system that made it easier for customers to move money; and we encouraged bank lending throughout World War II to help finance military operations through bank purchases of government bonds.

In more recent times, ABA has supported banks' role as economic first responders in the wake of major natural disasters (like the recent [floods in Kentucky](#)) and a global pandemic, and we have helped bolster their mission of making sure that the American dream is achievable for *all* Americans, particularly those in historically underserved communities.

As we continue to face a climate of unprecedented challenges, from a deeply divided political landscape to heightened economic uncertainty, our nation's banks remain strong, resilient and ready to respond to whatever comes our way. ABA is standing ready to aid them in their important work.

Despite the many things today that threaten to divide us, much like our founders did 150 years ago, I too believe that we are stronger together. And I hope that in the months and years to come, you'll continue to be an active part of this organization. Continue sharing your voices, your perspectives and your ideas as we work to shape the future of banking policy in this country over the next 150 years.

Together, we can—and will—achieve more.

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