



## **MBA Regional Meetings Provide Many Lessons**

By: Paul J. Thompson- President and CEO of Country Club Bank, and MBA Chairman

The 2008 MBA Regional Meetings were a rousing success providing a number of “lessons” to bankers and candidates alike. I’m excited to report that, according to the MBA staff, this year’s turnout was the largest in recent memory.

### **Lesson in Government:**

Are you aware that there were more than 2,000 bills filed in the most recent Missouri legislative session?

As Lincoln noted in his Gettysburg Address, we are to be a government “of the people, by the people and for the people”.

Indeed it is. Missouri legislators are farmers, nurses, retirees, lawyers, doctors, teachers—even bankers—to name but a few. But how is it humanly possible for our elected officials—people from every walk of life—to understand the minute details and consequences of these bills without some additional assistance? I submit that it is not possible. Instead, they rely on their (loyal and trusted) constituents and lobbyists to help them understand these proposed laws.

I am pleased to report that your Association’s lobbyists—Bill Ratliff, Craig Overfelt and Chris Lepper—maintain such a trusted relationship with Missouri legislators.

Without exception, at every regional meeting the legislators commented on how important the MBA staff has been to them in ferreting out the nuances and implications of proposed legislation.

### **Lesson in Politics:**

The relationship that the MBA has with the legislators has never been as important as now due to term limits. Beginning in 2002, House members may serve a maximum of four, 2-year terms. That means by the end of the 2010 election year, approximately 100 of the 163 members of the Missouri House will be replaced—even more if some aren’t re-elected.

Establishing similar trusted relationships with the legislators filling those vacancies will be a formidable challenge but one that, I believe, your MBA staff is capable of accomplishing. We bankers need to lead the way by supporting candidates that possess a more sympathetic ear to our issues and ideology with our votes and our pocketbooks.

Yes, legislators need and rely upon our financial resources as well. Like it or not, in today’s political environment, it costs significant dollars to run a successful campaign so they need our financial support in addition to our support at the ballot box.

At the Regional Meetings the legislators also asserted that their most reliable and trusted source of information pertaining to economic and financial matters is their local banker. They appreciate—in fact, they need and implore—your feedback on legislative issues.

Think about it: who is a more trusted resource to legislators than their local banker who has the financial acumen and genuine interest in the well-being and growth of their community?

All of their comments reinforced the MBA Target Banker and Contact Banker Programs. If you haven’t signed up to participate in these programs, or the trip to Washington, D.C., please consider doing so.

Your involvement will result in better government, better legislation and a better working relationship with your legislators.

### **Lesson in Geography:**

The trek to attend all seven regional meetings required traveling through 34 Missouri counties and driving approximately 1,175 miles.

### **Lesson in Friendship:**

Many of the professional associations one makes in becoming involved in the MBA results in life-long friendships. Please indulge me as I give a “shout-out” to the Spencer and Curry families who opened their homes to me for which to stay and to enjoy home-cooked dinners while I was traveling on the road.

I also want to thank Chairman-Elect Susan Barrett and husband Rob for attending nearly all of the Regional Meetings. Susan kept me on task and filled in the gaps when I forgot to cover an agenda item. Her energy boost makes her my Sarah Palin!

### **Lesson in Leadership:**

Kudos to the Young Bankers Chair Luanne Cundiff and her board (Reba Gales, David Gohn, Scott Perkins, Jeff Smith, Chan Crooker, Craig Dunn, Jon Robertson, Jessica Green, Aaron Wyatt, Jim Childress, Tom Klebba, Travis Stroppel, Wes Rothove, Courtney Bonnell and Kyllie Durant) for assembling 70+ Young Bankers at the regional meetings. These young men and women will positively influence the Missouri banking industry for years to come.

**Lesson in Life:**

Just prior to the start of the MBA Regional Meetings, Max Cook's mother, Madonna, passed away at the age of 89. I was privileged to attend her memorial service in Oklahoma City so as to provide condolences to Max and his family on behalf of myself, the MBA staff and bankers across Missouri.

Although there is no way I could adequately capture the many facets of her wonderful life here, in his eulogy Reverend Rose summarized three lessons he learned from Madonna by the manner in which she conducted her life:

1. It's okay to be opinionated as long as you have shared your heart with others before you have shared your mind;
2. Don't tolerate complacency. If you see something that can be improved today, don't wait until tomorrow to do something about it;
3. Love the ones your with today because you may not have the opportunity to be with them tomorrow.

Rest in peace, Madonna.