

Rob Nichols Washington Update
December/January

Opportunities ahead: The outlook for banks in 2026

It's been a truly remarkable year for America's banks. After spending the past several years grappling with a tsunami of regulation, the tide has finally turned.

With new leadership in Washington, our industry has seen a busy and very productive twelve months of regulatory right-sizing. We've secured significant rewrites of several rules that stand to significantly affect the way banks do business, and succeeded in getting several of ABA's legislative priorities over the finish line, including key tax provisions, a bill banning "trigger leads," a overturn of the CFPB's controversial overdraft rule, and, for the first time ever, a version of the Access to Credit for our Rural Economy (ACRE) Act.

As we turn the calendar page to 2026, bankers are energized and ready to seize the opportunities before us and work constructively to address the novel challenges that face our sector.

After years of playing defense on so many issues, we now have new opportunities to work alongside policymakers with whom we share strong alignment on the need for well-tailored and sensible regulations governing the banking sector. With the continued support and engagement of bankers like you, we will leverage these constructive working relationships to bring about positive changes, not just for our sector, but for businesses and families, women and men, all across America.

We'll do this using the same formula that has guided our policy work for decades: by working with anyone and everyone who shares our goal of a thriving American economy, and a vibrant, competitive banking sector. As the leading voice of the nation's banks, ABA will continue to seek consensus on the critical issues—working with other trade groups, with our partners in the State Association Alliance, and with policymakers from both parties in Washington.

While the regulatory tides have certainly turned, we also recognize that it won't be all smooth sailing ahead. At this moment in time, we have more battles with other industrial sectors on the horizon than we have had in recent memory, and it will take our entire industry standing up and speaking up to call attention to some of these important issues.

With interest in cryptocurrencies and digital assets intensifying, ABA is standing up to the crypto firms looking to undermine traditional financial service providers without having to meet the same rules and requirements. As 2025 drew to a close, we were hard at work urging policymakers to close a loophole in stablecoin legislation that could lead to deposit flight and a drop in bank lending and economic activity.

Elsewhere, we face challenges from credit unions that have grown far beyond their intended scope and scale; telecom companies that are failing to do their part to stop illegal spoofing and scams on their platforms leading to millions of American at risk of fraud; and big-box retailers attempting to ram through misguided policies like the so-called Credit Card Competition Act (essentially the Durbin Amendment for credit cards). Rest assured, ABA and our members will be doing everything we can in 2026 to safeguard the integrity of the traditional banking system and protect our customers from these threats.

But we need your help.

With so many opportunities—and no shortage of challenges—on the horizon, we need your help to tell our industry’s positive story. We need you engaged in advocacy, at the local, state and federal level, to help lawmakers understand the vital role banks play in their communities. I encourage you all to mark your calendars to attend ABA’s Washington Summit in March. It will be a valuable opportunity to make your voice heard by the people who have direct say over the laws and regulations governing our sector.

We can move the industry forward in 2026 to an even brighter future, but we will need to work together.

Email Rob at nichols@aba.com

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