

Central Region

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Chicago, IL 60606

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Consumer Affairs:
Handled by
Southeast Region
404-888-8443
404-888-8599 - FAX

Applications:
Don Gignac
312-917-5021
312-917-5001 - FAX

Number of thrifts:
205

Total thrift assets:
\$131.7 billion

Number of employees:
121

**Number of new
employees in FY 2007:**
14



Thomas A. Barnes
Regional Director



The OTS Central Region is the newest OTS region, recently formed from five states in the upper Midwest that all touch one or more of the Great Lakes. The region encompasses the dairy farms of rural Wisconsin, the beer brewing history of Milwaukee, the transportation hub of Chicago, the automobile industry of Michigan and the farmlands across the flatlands of southern Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. It is home to old industrial sites of former “smokestack” industries, but it is also home to a revitalized Cleveland waterfront that contains the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

Chicago, the “Windy City” on the southern tip of Lake Michigan, is the bustling financial center of the region and the location of the OTS regional headquarters office. Here, in a downtown skyscraper, OTS officials have been busy making additions to the staff, renewing contacts with each thrift institution in the region and

setting up the infrastructure of systems, administration and procedures to make the new operation operate smoothly.

Much of the staff has worked in Chicago for the OTS for years, but answered to regional offices elsewhere. For the new region, the challenge is to pull these seasoned employees together into a cohesive unit, build on their existing relationships with thrift executives and add needed expertise to round out the regional workforce.

The goal is to establish a region that is approachable for the industry, efficient in conducting examinations and supportive of its staff.

OTS leaders established the OTS Central Region to improve service by concentrating agency resources and senior decision-makers more closely to the regulated thrift institutions in an important part of the country. OTS officials in Chicago are closely connected to the issues of the region. They are well attuned to the economic challenges in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana, as well as the state of regional industries, such as the auto industry and the galaxy of parts suppliers and related businesses throughout the region that it supports. The Chicago office is also more convenient for visits by thrift executives in the region than OTS regional offices in Dallas, Atlanta or Jersey City, where regulation of the institutions was previously dispersed.

The region has many small community banks whose business models center on home mortgages, auto loans, commercial real estate and agriculture. The region also includes large thrifts, such as GE Money Bank,

AmTrust Bank (formerly Ohio Savings Bank), Flagstar Bank and State Farm Bank.

Regional officials strongly support the agency's move toward electronic examinations. Under this process, a thrift institution sends electronic copies of requested records to OTS for examiners to review off-site before the institution's exam date. This approach

reduces regulatory burden on the institution by minimizing the time required for examiners to be on site and by cutting back sharply on time and costs for copying paper records. The next steps in going electronic include generating each "Report of Exam" electronically and

keeping the exam-related data in a database for analysis. The OTS Central Region promises to bring better service and oversight for thrifts in its five-state area by enhancing the agency's presence, regulatory relationships and communication in the Great Lakes region ■

