

## Public Affairs

**T**he OTS has a multi-faceted public affairs program that takes a coordinated approach to strong and effective two-way communication with the thrift industry, the news media, Congress, trade associations, consumer groups, community organizations and the public.

Since taking the helm of the agency in 2005, Director Reich has worked to make the thrift charter and the OTS more visible, particularly at industry conferences and conventions. The Director has led by example by expanding his schedule for speeches and other appearances.

In the fall of 2006, the OTS unveiled several booths for use at conventions and trade shows. Since then, agency representatives have crisscrossed the country to attend events by state banking executives, national trade associations, consumer groups and community organizations. At the events, OTS staff members discuss issues related to housing and mortgage finance, explain the distinct advantages of the thrift charter and OTS supervision, and cultivate important relationships.

The OTS booths were exhibited at 31 events during fiscal 2007, including the annual conferences of America's Community Bankers, American Bankers Association and National Bankers Association, as well as state banking conferences from Hawaii to Vermont and states in between. The OTS also displayed the booths at widely-attended meetings of the National Council of La Raza, the

Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and AARP.

On Capitol Hill, Director Reich and other agency leaders testified before Congressional committees on subjects such as nontraditional mortgages, subprime lending, predatory lending, industrial loan companies, credit card lending, consumer protection, discrimination in mortgage lending and financial institutions' handling of accounts holding Social Security benefit payments.

OTS officials also met regularly with Congressional leaders and their staffs about legislative priorities and responded to Congressional requests for information.

In December 2006, the OTS hosted a National Housing Forum that featured as speakers U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson, Jr., the former Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, Michael Oxley, and current Chairman Barney Frank. The forum featured several panels of experts from the financial services industry and community groups.

Director Reich later commented that the forum reestablished the prominence of OTS as a leading participant in the national debate on housing. He noted, "The National Housing Forum is one part of OTS's overall strategy of highlighting the importance of the thrift industry both to housing and the larger domestic and international financial services markets" ■