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OCC RECEIVES 1997 HAMMER AWARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) will be recognized by the Clinton Administration at the Department of the Treasury's 1997 Hammer Award Ceremony this afternoon, when OCC Ombudsman Samuel P. Golden, national bank examiners Leigh Hoge and Melinda Goodnight, and staffers Charlotte Klafka and Mae Denmond accept an award for their outstanding and innovative agency appeals process.

"This is really an award for the entire agency," says Ombudsman Golden, "because a program like ours can't work without support from the Comptroller and everyone else in the organization."

Golden was named OCC Ombudsman in July 1993, when the office was created. Since then, the office has resolved 110 formal appeals from national banks, and facilitated resolutions in 359 additional cases. Golden and his staff are responsible for ensuring that the OCC appeals process provides a fair and speedy review of disagreements on agency findings or decisions. The Ombudsman reports directly to the Comptroller of the Currency, and with the consent of the Comptroller, has the discretion to supersede any agency decision or action during the resolution of an appealable matter.

The Administration's National Performance Review (NPR) first recognized the OCC's appeals effort in 1993, and has since then selected the Ombudsman process as a benchmark for other federal agencies. As a direct result of the success of the OCC's process, Congress mandated in the Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994 that all federal financial regulatory agencies establish an

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Ombudsman function. The Office of Thrift Supervision, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Federal Reserve System and National Credit Union Administration, which combined regulate approximately 22,000 commercial banks, thrifts and credit unions, now also have similar processes.

The Hammer Award is authorized by the Vice President of the United States, to recognize people who have participated in a team effort that has contributed dramatically to improving the way government works through achievements in at least one of the four principles of reinventing government: putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees to get results, or cutting back to basics.

Two other OCC teams -- the Regulation Review Group and the Community Bank Procedures Task Force -- received Hammer Awards

in 1995. The actual award parodies the legendary \$600 hammers previously purchased by the federal government and consists of a \$6 Hammer (purchased at a local hardware store), ribbon and a note from Vice President Gore, all in an aluminum frame. Its significance in identifying the OCC as a leader in government far outweighs its monetary significance.

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The OCC charters, regulates and supervises approximately 2,800 national banks and 66 federal branches and agencies of foreign banks in the U.S., accounting for more than half the nation's banking assets. Its mission is to ensure a safe, sound and competitive national banking system that supports the citizens, communities and economy of the United States.