

NR 98-10  
January 29, 1998

MEDIA ADVISORY

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) today announced it will convene a forum to discuss major issues affecting small business lending and investing on Thursday, February 5, 1998, at the Renaissance Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C.

At the OCC's Small Business Banking Issues Forum, representatives from government agencies, financial institutions and the private sector will address a number of topics, including micro lending, small business acquisition and expansion financing, working capital financing, use of equity options, and minority- and women-owned firms as an emerging market segment.

"This all-day meeting promises to be a unique opportunity to discuss small business lending and to explore innovative ways banks can profitably expand their presence in this growth market," said Comptroller of the Currency Eugene Ludwig. "The forum will build on a series of meetings the OCC held with bankers and minority small business owners in 1997 by exploring a broader range of small business finance and investment issues."

Featured speakers at the Small Business Banking Issues Forum include Comptroller Ludwig; the Honorable Aida Alvarez, Administrator, Small Business Administration; Richard Hartnack, vice chairman, Union Bank of California and chairman, Banking Issues and Strategies Steering Committee, Bank Administration Institute; Michael James, executive vice president, Wells Fargo Bank; Dr. Emma C. Chappell, chairman, president and chief executive officer, United Bank of Philadelphia; Michael Mantle, president, Bank of America Community Development Bank; William J. Dennis, senior research fellow, National Federation of Independent Business Educational Foundation; and, Dr. Margaret Simms, vice president for research, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

The Small Business Banking Issues Forum will begin at 8:30 a.m. on February 5, 1998 at The Renaissance Washington Hotel, 999 Ninth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Reporters are encouraged to pre-register by calling (202) 874-5770.

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The OCC charters, regulates and supervises more than 2,600 national banks and 66 federal branches and agencies of foreign banks in the United States, accounting for 56 percent of 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.