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Comptroller Forms National Access Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Comptroller Eugene A. Ludwig today announced the formation of a National Access Committee at the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC). The Committee will support OCC research, policy development, and outreach efforts to meet OCC's objective of improving access to financial services for all Americans, and support banks' exploration of new customer bases and new product and geographic markets.

"Expanding consumer and commercial business access to a broad range of credit, deposit, and other financial services is one of the OCC's primary objectives," said Comptroller Ludwig. "The National Access Committee will establish an institutional structure at the OCC to assist national bank exploration of new business opportunities and further advance the agency's commitment to full and fair access to financial services for all Americans, including women, minorities, low- and moderate-income households, and small business owners."

Specifically, the Comptroller directed the Committee to:

- Conduct research on access to financial services using data from OCC compliance examinations and other sources;
- Oversee an initiative to extend the frontiers of banking to households who are not now bank customers through educational forums, dialogue, and policy research, including coordinating the OCC's support of the Treasury Department's efforts to increase access to financial services, particularly EFT 99;
- Conduct research on the impact of credit scoring on consumer access to banking services;
- Conduct an analysis of how on-line banking may be used to facilitate access to financial services.

The National Access Committee will meet quarterly beginning in late March. It will be chaired by Bert A. Otto, Assistant Deputy Comptroller for Compliance Management, and includes 12 members drawn from throughout the OCC, including OCC safety-and-soundness examiners, compliance examiners, economists, attorneys, district community reinvestment/development specialists and the director of community relations.

"The diverse composition of the committee will bring a wide range of skills and experience to oversee access-related research and outreach helpful to national banks, the public, and OCC staff," Ludwig added.

The formation of the National Access Committee is one way in which the OCC has responded to a request by the President's Interagency Council on Women to fulfill recommendations of the

1994 U.S. Fourth World Conference on Women.

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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.