



# A Brief History of Deposit Insurance in the United States

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Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

## Acknowledgments □

This document draws heavily from *Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation: The First Fifty Years*, a 50th anniversary history published by the FDIC in 1984. In particular, this paper relies on sections of that book written by former FDIC Chairman William Isaac, William R. Watson, Director, Division of Research and Statistics (DRS) and Detta Voesar (DRS). Gratitude again is extended to all who contributed to the 1984 publication. Information also was derived from staff work produced in support of the assessment rate-setting process and related policy issues, including contributions by Christine Blair (DRS) and Frederick Carns, Division of Insurance. Editing and new material were provided by James McFadyen (DRS). Cathy Wright (DRS) lent her considerable secretarial skills, and Geri Bonebrake (DRS) provided assistance with graphics and production.

Division of Research and Statistics  
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation  
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**Cover Photo:** On June 16, 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Banking Act of 1933, a part of which established the FDIC. At Roosevelt’s immediate right and left were Senator Carter Glass of Virginia and Representative Henry Steagall of Alabama, two of the most prominent figures in the bill’s development.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

*“After all, there is an element in the readjustment of our financial system more important than currency, more important than gold, and that is the confidence of the people.”*

These words were spoken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his first “fireside chat” to the people of the United States on March 12, 1933. In announcing an end to the bank holiday he had proclaimed six days earlier, President Roosevelt was exhorting the people to remain calm and avoid the panicked withdrawals that had crippled the nation’s banking system in the first months of 1933. However, despite the federal government’s newly adopted plans to reorganize many closed but viable banks, some 4,000 banks that had closed earlier in 1933 or during the bank holiday never reopened.

The confidence of the people still was shaken, and public opinion remained squarely behind the adoption of a federal plan to protect bank depositors. Opposition to such a plan had been voiced earlier by President Roosevelt, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. They believed a system of deposit insurance would be unduly expensive and would unfairly subsidize poorly managed banks. Nonetheless, public opinion held sway with the Congress, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation was created three months later when the President signed into law the Banking Act of 1933. The final frenetic months of 1933 were spent organizing and staffing the FDIC and examining the nearly 8,000 state-chartered banks that were not members of the Federal Reserve System. Federal deposit insurance became effective on January 1, 1934, providing depositors with \$2,500 in coverage, and by any measure it was an immediate success in restoring public confidence and stability to the banking system. Only nine banks failed in 1934, compared to more than 9,000 in the preceding four years.

In its seventh decade, federal deposit insurance remains an integral part of the nation’s financial system, although some have argued at different points in time that there have been too few bank failures because of deposit insurance, that it undermines market discipline, that the current coverage limit of \$100,000 is too high, and that it amounts to a federal subsidy for banking companies. Each of these concerns may be valid to some extent, yet the public appears to remain convinced that a deposit insurance program is worth the cost, which ultimately is borne by them. The severity of the 1930s banking crisis has not been repeated, but bank deposit insurance was harshly tested in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The system emerged battered but sound and, with some legislative tweaking, better suited to the more volatile, higher-risk financial environment that has evolved in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 2 of this document focuses on the antecedents to federal deposit insurance, and Chapter 3 relates developments in the 1930s leading to the establishment of the FDIC. Chapters 4 and 5 chronicle the early years of the FDIC and its experience during World War II and the prosperous decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter 6 spans a 20-year period of fundamental changes in the banking industry that culminated with the worst banking crisis since the early 1930s and an insolvent deposit insurance fund. Chapter 7 describes the recovery of the banking industry in the 1990s, the rebuilding of its insurance fund and the legislative safeguards that were put in place to protect the fund in the future. The final chapter includes a discussion of some current deposit insurance issues facing the FDIC, the Congress and the banking industry. FDIC financial tables are found in the Appendix.

This document focuses on the insurance function of the FDIC. The agency also serves as the primary federal supervisor for state-chartered nonmember banks and has backup supervisory authority over all other insured depository institutions; and the FDIC manages the receiverships of failed insured banks and thrifts. These supervisory and receivership-management functions are not fully addressed here. The document also does not directly address the savings-and-loan crisis of the 1980s. The FDIC only began insuring the deposits of savings associations in 1989, as a result of the legislation that resolved the S&L crisis.

## Chapter 2 Antecedents of Federal Deposit Insurance

### Insurance of Bank Obligations, 1829 – 1866

During the years immediately following the organization of the federal government in 1789, banks were chartered by special acts of state legislatures or the Congress, usually for a limited number of years. Initially, bank failures were nonexistent. It was not until 1809, with the failure of the Farmers Bank of Gloucester, Rhode Island, that people realized that such an event was even possible.<sup>1</sup> Any notion that this failure represented an isolated incident was dispelled after the first wave of bank failures occurred five years later. The ensuing economic disruptions caused by these and subsequent bank failures fueled demands for banking reform.

In 1829, New York became the first state to adopt a bank-obligation insurance program.<sup>2</sup> New York's program was devised by Joshua Forman, a Syracuse businessman. The insurance concept embodied in his plan was suggested by the regulations of the Hong merchants in Canton.<sup>3</sup> The regulations required merchants who held special charters to trade with foreigners to be liable for one another's debts. Writing in 1829, when bank-supplied circulating medium was largely in the form of bank notes rather than deposits, Forman noted:

The case of our banks is very similar; they enjoy in common the exclusive right of making a paper currency for the people of the state, and by the same rule should in common be answerable for that paper.<sup>4</sup>

The plan conceived by Forman had three principal components: (1) the establishment of an insurance fund, to which all banks had to pay an assessment; (2) a board of commissioners, which was granted bank examination powers; and (3) a specified list of investments for bank capital.

The first two provisions were adopted virtually intact; the proposal pertaining to the investment of bank capital initially was rejected. Upon reconsideration during the 1830s, the bank capital proposal was modified and subsequently enacted.

From 1831 to 1858, five additional states adopted insurance programs: Vermont, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Iowa. The purposes of the various plans were similar: (1) to protect communities from severe fluctuations of the circulating medium caused by bank failures; and (2) to protect individual depositors and noteholders against losses.

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<sup>1</sup>Carter H. Golembe, "Origins of Deposit Insurance in the Middle West, 1834-1866," *The Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. LI, June, 1955, No. 2, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>The term "bank obligation" refers to both circulating notes and deposits.

<sup>3</sup>*Assembly Journal*, New York State, 1829, p. 179.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 179.

Available evidence indicates that the first of these, concern with the restoration of the circulating medium *per se*, predominated.<sup>5</sup>

***Nature of plans.*** In striving to meet these insurance goals, the states employed one of three approaches. Following New York's lead, Vermont and Michigan established insurance funds. Indiana did not; instead, all participating banks were required mutually to guarantee the liabilities of a failed bank. The insurance programs adopted by Ohio and Iowa incorporated both approaches. Although participating banks were bound together by a mutual guaranty provision, an insurance fund was available to reimburse the banks in the event special assessments were necessary immediately to pay creditors of failed banks. The insurance fund was replenished from liquidation proceeds.

Table 1 summarizes the principal provisions of the six programs which operated between 1829-1866.

***Coverage.*** In the first four programs adopted, insurance coverage primarily extended to circulating notes and deposits. New York later restricted coverage to circulating notes. In the case of Ohio and Iowa, insurance coverage from the outset only extended to circulating notes. None of the six programs placed a dollar limit on the amount of insurance provided an individual bank creditor.

The extension of insurance coverage to bank notes in all of the six programs reflected their importance as a circulating medium. Because it was common practice for banks to extend credit by using bank notes, nearly one-half of the circulating medium before 1860 was in this form. In those states that limited insurance coverage to bank notes, the belief was that banks affected the circulating medium only through their issuance. Additionally, it was believed that depositors could select their banks, whereas noteholders had considerably less discretion and thus were in greater need of protection.<sup>6</sup>

***Methods used to protect creditors of banks in financial difficulty.*** *Ad hoc* measures frequently were taken in some of the six states to protect creditors of banks in financial difficulty. Faced with the possible insolvency of several banks in 1837, New York State's Comptroller began redeeming their notes from the insurance fund. This action prevented the banks from failing and they eventually were able to reimburse the insurance fund. In 1842, New York faced a more serious crisis after the failure of eleven participating banks within a three-year period threatened the solvency of the insurance

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<sup>5</sup>Carter H. Golembe, "The Deposit Insurance Legislation of 1933: An Examination of Its Antecedents and Its Purposes," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. LXXV, No. 2, June, 1960, p. 189.

<sup>6</sup>Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1952 (1953), p. 61.



**Table 1**  
**Principal Provisions of Bank-Obligation Insurance Programs in Operation 1829 – 1866**

State	Period of Operation <sup>1</sup>	Obligations Insured	Banks Participating	Assessments; Size of Fund	Payment of Bank Creditors
<b>New York</b>	1829 – 1866	1829-42, all debts <sup>2</sup> 1842-66, circulating notes <sup>3</sup>	All banks established or rechartered subsequent to passage of act <sup>4</sup>	Annually ½ of 1% of capital stock to maximum of 3%. If fund reduced, annual assessment not to exceed above rate until fund restored to maximum.	After completion of liquidation of failed bank.
<b>Vermont</b>	1831 – 1866	All debts <sup>2</sup>	All banks established or rechartered subsequent to passage of act <sup>5</sup>	Annually ¾ of 1% of capital stock to maximum of 4 ½%. If fund reduced, annual assessments not to exceed above rate until fund restored to maximum.	After completion of liquidation of failed bank.
<b>Indiana</b>	1834 – 1866	All debts <sup>2</sup>	Branch banks <sup>6</sup>	No specific amount; special assessments as necessary.	Within one year after failure, if liquidation proceeds and stockholder contributions are insufficient
<b>Michigan</b>	1836 – 1842	All debts <sup>2</sup>	All banks established or rechartered subsequent to passage of act	Annually ½ of 1% of capital stock to maximum of 3%. If fund reduced, annual assessment not to exceed above rate until fund restored to maximum.	After completion of liquidation of failed bank.
<b>Ohio</b>	1845 – 1866	Circulating notes	Branch banks	Single assessment prior to opening of bank: 10% of amount of circulating notes. Thereafter, assessments at above rate applicable only to circulating notes, if any, issued by bank.	Immediately, through special assessments on solvent branch banks. Assessments to be repaid from insurance fund, and fund repaid from proceeds of liquidation of assets of failed bank.
<b>Iowa</b>	1858 – 1865	Circulating notes	Branch banks	Single assessment before opening of bank: 10% of amount of circulating notes. Thereafter, assessments at above rate applicable only to circulating notes, if any, issued by bank.	Immediately, through special assessments on solvent branch banks. Assessments to be repaid from insurance fund, and fund repaid from proceeds of liquidation of assets of failed bank.

(continued)

## Table 1 (continued)

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> In a number of cases, the law was repealed subsequent to the terminal date shown above. In some of the states, closing dates may have preceded the date shown by one year.

<sup>2</sup> Included circulating notes, deposits and miscellaneous liabilities; excluded capital accounts.

<sup>3</sup> Act of April 12, 1842.

<sup>4</sup> Free banks, which were authorized in 1838, did not participate in insurance.

<sup>5</sup> Free banks, which were authorized in 1851, did not participate in insurance. In 1842, participating banks were authorized under specified conditions to withdraw from insurance.

<sup>6</sup> Branch banks were essentially independent banks that had their own officers, distributed earnings to their own stockholders and collectively constituted the "State Bank" in these states.

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Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1952 (1953), pp. 62-63.

fund. The legislature authorized the State Comptroller to sell bonds sufficient to meet all claims against the insurance fund. The bonds later were redeemed from subsequent payments into the fund by participating banks.

Other states similarly grappled with the question of whether to assist or close a distressed bank. On several occasions, authorities in Ohio kept a number of distressed banks from closing by levying special assessments upon healthy participating banks. Indiana and Iowa also granted financial assistance to distressed banks.

***Method of paying creditors of failed banks.*** Only the programs of Ohio and Iowa provided for immediate payment of insured obligations. Necessary funds were made available in those two states through special assessments levied on the sound participating banks. Creditors in New York, Vermont and Michigan were not paid until the liquidation of a failed bank had been completed. Indiana's program provided that creditors were to be paid within one year after a bank failed if liquidation proceeds and stockholder contributions were insufficient to cover realized losses.

***Role of bank supervision.*** Bank supervision was an essential element of the insurance programs that operated prior to 1866. The function of supervision was essentially twofold: (1) to reduce the potential risk exposure of the various insurance programs; and (2) to provide some measure of assurance to well-managed banks that the unsound banking practices of badly managed banks would not go completely unchecked.<sup>7</sup> Table 2 summarizes the principal provisions relating to bank supervision in the six insurance states.

Better supervision of banks was achieved by the programs with mutual guaranty than by the simple insurance fund programs.<sup>8</sup> Under the mutual guaranty programs in Indiana, Ohio and Iowa, supervisory officials were largely selected by, and accountable to, the participating banks. The officials were given wide latitude to check unsound banking practices because the participating banks were keenly aware that the cost of lax supervision ultimately would be borne by them.

During the Indiana program's 30 years of operation, not one state-chartered bank failed. Indiana's success principally was attributable to the quality of bank supervision.<sup>9</sup> A strong supervisory board was the cornerstone of the program. The board, which included four members appointed by the Indiana General Assembly and one

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<sup>7</sup>Carter H. Golembe and Clark Warburton, *Insurance of Bank Obligations in Six States* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 1958), pp. I-9 – I-10.

<sup>8</sup>Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1953 (1954), p. 59.

<sup>9</sup>Golembe and Warburton, p. I-18.

**Table 2**  
**Principal Provisions Relating to Supervision of Banks Participating in Bank-Obligation Insurance Programs,**  
**Six States, 1829 – 1866**

State	Supervisory Agency	Bank Examination	Condition Reports	Supervisory Enforcement Powers
<b>New York</b>	1829-37: Three Bank Commissioners; one appointed by Governor, two by banks. 1837-43: Three Bank Commissioners appointed by Governor. 1843-51: State Comptroller. 1851-55: Banking Department; Superintendent appointed by Governor.	1829-43: Each bank three times per year; additional examinations if requested by three participating banks. 1843-66: Examination only when bank was believed to be insolvent or to have submitted false condition report.	1829-43: Annually to Bank Commissioners. 1843-66: Quarterly to Comptroller or Superintendent of Banking Department. Content expanded.	If bank insolvent or had violated law, could apply to court of chancery for injunction against continued operation.
<b>Vermont</b>	1831-37: Three Bank Commissioners; one appointed by legislature, two by banks. 1837-58: One Bank Commissioner appointed by legislature.	Each bank once per year; additional examinations if requested by a stockholder or bank debtor.	Annually to Bank Commissioners.	If bank insolvent or had violated law, could apply to court of chancery for injunction against continued operation.
<b>Indiana</b>	1834-55: Board of Directors of the State Bank of Indiana; President and four directors appointed by legislature and one director by each Branch Bank. 1856-65: Board of Directors of the Bank of the State of Indiana; four directors appointed by legislature, one director by each Branch Bank and President by Board.	Each bank twice per year; additional examinations if requested by directors of a bank.	Monthly to Board.	If bank insolvent, had violated law or was mismanaging its affairs, could close bank. Could regulate dividend payments. <sup>1</sup> Could establish ratio, between specified limits, of loans and discounts to capital for any or all banks. Loans of deposited funds exempted.
<b>Michigan</b>	1836-37: One Bank Commissioner appointed by Governor. 1837-40: Three Bank Commissioners appointed by Governor. 1840-42: Attorney General.	1836-40: Each bank three times per year; additional examinations if requested by three participating banks. 1840-42: At Governor's request.	Annually to Bank Commissioners or Attorney General.	If bank insolvent or had violated law, could apply to court of chancery for injunction against continued operation.

(continued)

**Table 2 (continued)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Supervisory Agency</b>	<b>Bank Examination</b>	<b>Condition Reports</b>	<b>Supervisory Enforcement Powers</b>
<b>Ohio</b>	Board of Control of the State Bank of Ohio; one member appointed by each Branch Bank; President elected by Board from outside its membership.	Left to discretion of Board; policy was to examine each bank annually.	Quarterly to Board; policy to require monthly reports to Board.	If bank insolvent, had violated law or any order of Board, could close bank. Could order any bank to reduce its circulation or liabilities to whatever level was considered safe. Could determine proportion of reserve to be in vault cash. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Iowa</b>	Board of Directors of the State Bank of Iowa; three directors appointed by legislature; one director by each Branch Bank; President by Board.	Left to discretion of Board; policy was to examine each bank twice per year.	Monthly to Board.	If bank insolvent, had violated law or any order of Board, could close bank. Could regulate dividend payments. Could order any bank to reduce its circulation or liabilities to whatever level was considered safe.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Not stipulated in law but assumed by agency.

*Source:* Carter H. Golembe and Clark Warburton, *Insurance of Bank Obligations in Six States* (Washington, DC: The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 1958), pp. 1-8, 1-9.

representative from each of the participating banks, could close any member bank. The causes for closing a bank were: (1) insolvency; (2) mismanagement; and (3) refusal to comply with any legal directive of the board. The board's power was absolute since there was no provision for appeal to the courts or to any other state agency.

Supervisory authorities in Ohio and Iowa could issue cease-and-desist orders, as well as require banks to be closed. Ohio had four banks fail: one in 1852 because of defalcation and three in 1854 because of asset deterioration. While none failed in Iowa, it should be noted that Iowa's program operated during a period of more favorable economic conditions.

*Assessments and the insurance funds.* Insurance fund assessments were levied on capital stock or insured obligations. To provide a basis for comparison with later assessment rates under federal deposit insurance, previous researchers have computed the equivalent average annual rate on total obligations (*i.e.*, deposits plus circulating notes) levied by the five states that had insurance funds (Table 3). On this basis, Michigan's annual rate of one-tenth of 1 percent most closely approximated the statutory rate of one-twelfth of 1 percent (before credits) in effect under federal deposit insurance from 1935 through 1989. Other rates were substantially higher, ranging from one-fifth of 1 percent in Vermont to almost 2 percent in Iowa.

Three insurance programs had positive fund balances at the time of their closing (Table 3). The Vermont and Michigan insurance funds were deficient by \$22,000 and \$1.2 million, respectively. In both states the first failures occurred before the insurance funds were adequately capitalized. Michigan's program collapsed under the strain. Although Vermont's fund subsequently recovered, it had a negative balance at the time the program closed because of the payment of unauthorized refunds to banks previously withdrawing from the program.

*Demise of the insurance programs.* Two primary factors contributed to the eventual collapse of the state insurance systems. The first factor was the emergence of the "free banking" movement in the 1830s. This movement developed in response to the void created by the closing of the Second Bank of the United States in 1836. To fill this void, many states enacted laws designed to ease bank entry restrictions. The movement produced an alternative for insurance of bank notes, which permitted a bank to post bonds and mortgages with state officials in an amount equal to its outstanding bank notes. Banks taking advantage of this alternative were excluded from insurance.<sup>10</sup> As the number of "free banks" increased, participation in state insurance programs declined. Consequently, the original intent to include all banks in the individual state insurance programs was thwarted.

The second factor in the collapse of the state insurance systems was the establishment of the national bank system in 1863. In 1865, Congress levied prohibitive

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<sup>10</sup>This exclusion did not apply in Michigan.

**Table 3**  
**Insurance Funds and Assessments for States with**  
**Bank-Obligation Insurance Programs, 1829 – 1866<sup>1</sup>**  
**(\$ Thousands)**

	New York 1829 - 1866	Vermont 1831 - 1866	Michigan 1836 - 1842	Ohio 1845 - 1866	Iowa 1858 - 1865
Average fund size	\$192	\$19	\$0.3	\$759	\$196
Fund as a percent of –					
Total obligations	0.6%	2.0%	0.09%	7.7%	8.4%
Average insured obligations	1.0%	2.0%	0.09%	11.5%	21.4%
Balance or (deficiency) at close of program	\$13	( \$22 )	( \$1,198 )	\$815 <sup>2</sup>	\$338 <sup>2</sup>
Assessments and income available for insurance operations:					
Assessments paid <sup>3</sup>	\$3,221	\$63	\$3	\$1,567	\$338
Interest received <sup>4</sup>	3,120	63	3	1,567	338
	101	--	--	--	--
Used for insurance operations	3,208	44	--	722 <sup>5</sup>	--
Refunded to banks or state <sup>6</sup>	13	19	--	845	338
Assessments necessary to cover insurance costs	\$3,208	\$68	\$1,198	\$722 <sup>5</sup>	--
Equivalent average annual rate of assessment on total obligations	0.24%	0.2%	0.1%	0.8%	1.8%

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> In Indiana the insurance system was one of mutual guaranty with no refund.

<sup>2</sup> Amount in fund in last year of full operation of insurance system.

<sup>3</sup> Assessments paid and used for insurance operations other than administrative expenses except in Michigan, where amount paid was completely absorbed by such expenses.

<sup>4</sup> In excess of amounts used to pay administrative expenses and amounts paid to banks. In Vermont, Ohio and Iowa, such expenses absorbed the whole of investment income.

<sup>5</sup> Total of special assessments used to redeem notes of failed banks or aid operating banks, plus estimated amounts secured from assets in insurance funds of failed banks. Recoveries from other assets of such banks by insurance system are not known.

<sup>6</sup> In New York, paid into Treasury; in Vermont, refunded to six banks withdrawing prior to close of system; in Ohio, refunded to one bank withdrawing prior to close of system and to all banks at close of system; and in Iowa, refunded to all banks at close of system.

Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1953 (1954), p. 58.

tax on state bank notes causing many state-chartered banks to convert to national charters in order to escape the tax. As conversions increased, membership in the state insurance systems declined, eventually to the point where these programs ceased to exist.

## **Guaranty of Circulating Bank Notes by the Federal Government**

National bank notes were collateralized by United States bonds. More importantly, the primary guaranty for the notes was the credit of the federal government rather than the value of the posted collateral. Holders of notes of a failed national bank were to be paid immediately and in full by the U.S. Department of the Treasury regardless of the value of the bonds backing the notes. As the Comptroller of the Currency stated in his first report to Congress.

If the banks fail, and the bonds of the government are depressed in the market, the notes of the national banks must still be redeemed in full at the treasury of the United States. The holder has not only the public securities, but the faith of the nation pledged for their redemption.<sup>11</sup>

So long as national bank notes retained their relative importance in the circulating medium, bank-obligation insurance was considered unnecessary. However, bank deposits soon overtook and then eclipsed national bank notes in importance. By 1870, deposits were about twice, and by the end of the century seven times, circulating notes. It was against this backdrop that efforts were renewed to provide for deposit insurance. Various proposals to that effect were introduced at the federal and state levels. Although the first attempts were made in Congress as early as 1886, the states took the lead.

## **State Insurance of Bank Deposits, 1908 – 1930**

From 1908 to 1917, eight states adopted deposit insurance programs. Seven of the eight states were located west of the Mississippi in predominantly agricultural areas. Table 4 summarizes the principal provisions of the eight programs.

*Coverage.* Insurance coverage in the eight states extended only to deposits. Although the insurance programs were commonly known as “deposit guaranty” programs, the guaranty was that of a fund derived from assessments on the participating banks. In no instance did the state explicitly guarantee the deposits.

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<sup>11</sup> U.S., Comptroller of the Currency, *Annual Report*, November 28, 1863 (1864), p. 58.



**Table 4**  
**Principal Provisions of Deposit Insurance Programs**  
**Adopted by Eight States, 1907 – 1917**

State	Deposits Insured	Banks Participating <sup>1</sup>	Assessment on Insured Deposits <sup>2</sup>	Payment of Depositors
<p><b>Oklahoma</b></p> <p>Act of 1908<sup>3</sup> as amended or modified 1909, 1911, 1913</p>	<p>All deposits not otherwise secured and on which rate of interest was within limits specified by law.</p>	<p>Compulsory for all state banks and trust companies.</p>	<p>Annually 1/5 of 1% until fund equaled 2% of base. If fund reduced, special assessments at same rate annually.<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>In cash by Bank Commission immediately upon taking possession of bank. If fund insufficient, in 6% certificates of indebtedness to be paid in order of issue. After 1913, certificates sold at not less than par for purpose of securing cash for depositors.</p>
<p><b>Kansas</b></p> <p>Act of 1909 as amended or modified 1911, 1921, 1923</p>	<p>All deposits not otherwise secured and on which rate of interest was within limits specified by law.</p>	<p>Voluntary for all incorporated state banks. Trust companies and private banks excluded. Banks organized after passage of Act eligible to apply after operating one year.</p>	<p>Annually 1/20 of 1% of base less capital and surplus until fund equaled \$1 million. If fund reduced below \$500,000, special assessment for amount necessary.</p>	<p>In interest-bearing certificates of indebtedness, reduced as proceeds of liquidation become available. Deficiency, if any, paid from fund.</p>
<p><b>Nebraska</b></p> <p>Act of 1909 as amended or modified 1911</p>	<p>All deposits except money deposited on a collateral agreement or condition other than an agreement for length of time to maturity and rate of interest.</p>	<p>Compulsory for all incorporated state banks.</p>	<p>Semiannually 1/20 of 1% until fund equaled 1½% of base. If fund reduced below 1%, assessment renewed and special assessments if necessary not to exceed 1% of base in any one year.</p>	<p>In cash from fund immediately after determination by the court of amount due depositors, less cash immediately available to the receiver for such payments.</p>

(continued)

**Table 4 (continued)**

State	Deposits Insured	Banks Participating <sup>1</sup>	Assessment on Insured Deposits <sup>2</sup>	Payment of Depositors
<p><b>Texas</b>  Act of 1909 as amended or modified 1921, 1923</p>	<p>Noninterest-bearing deposits not otherwise secured. Excluded public deposits, secured deposits, certificates of deposit, deposits made for the purpose of converting a loan into a deposit covered by the fund, and certificates of deposit converted to noninterest-bearing deposits within 90 days of failure.</p>	<p>All state-chartered banks required to choose between guaranty fund system or bond security system.</p>	<p>Annually ¼ of 1% of base until fund equaled \$5 million. If fund reduced below \$2 million, or below level of preceding January 1, special assessments not to exceed 2%.</p>	<p>In cash immediately, out of cash in failed bank and fund.</p>
<p><b>Mississippi</b>  Act of 1914</p>	<p>All deposits not otherwise secured nor bearing interest exceeding 4% per annum.</p>	<p>Voluntary until May 15, 1915. Thereafter, compulsory for all banks operating under state law, including trust companies and savings banks.</p>	<p>Annually 1/20 of 1% of average guaranteed deposits, less capital and surplus, until fund approximated \$500,000 over and above initial contribution. If fund depleted, special assessments at same rate not to exceed five in any one year.</p>	<p>In interest-bearing certificates of indebtedness, reduced as proceeds of liquidation become available. Deficiency, if any, paid from fund.</p>
<p><b>South Dakota</b>  Act of 1915 as amended or modified 1921</p>	<p>All deposits not otherwise secured. Deposits could not pay interest in excess of 5% unless authorized by the depositors guaranty fund commission, and in no case greater than 5 ½% per annum.</p>	<p>Compulsory for all state and private banks.</p>	<p>Annually ¼ of 1% until fund equaled 1½% of base. Resumed whenever fund reduced to 1% of base.</p>	<p>In cash immediately from fund. If fund deficient, Commissioner to issue certificates of indebtedness at 5% and not to exceed 7% if sold to secure cash for depositors.</p>

(continued)

**Table 4 (continued)**

State	Deposits Insured	Banks Participating <sup>1</sup>	Assessment on Insured Deposits <sup>2</sup>	Payment of Depositors
<b>North Dakota</b> Act of 1917 as amended or modified 1923	All deposits not otherwise secured and on which interest was within limits specified by law.	Compulsory for every corporation in business of receiving deposits or buying and selling exchange, except national banks.	Annually 1/20 of 1% until fund equaled 2% of base. If fund reduced to 1½% of base, assessments resumed. Special assessments at same rate at option of Bank Commissioners, not to exceed four per year.	In cash from fund after certification of net amounts due depositors. If fund deficient, in certificates of indebtedness.
<b>Washington</b> Act of 1917 as amended or modified 1921	Deposits subject to check or other forms of withdrawal and not otherwise secured. Payment of interest at rates higher than authorized by guaranty fund board subjected bank to loss of insurance.	Voluntary for all state banks including trust companies but excluding mutual savings banks.	Annually 1/10 of 1% until fund equaled 3% of base. If fund reduced, special assessments not to exceed ½ of 1% in any one year.	In warrants on fund issued on proof of claim. If fund deficient, warrants to bear 5% interest until paid.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> National banks were prohibited from participating in state insurance plans by ruling in July 1908 by Attorney General of the United States.

<sup>2</sup> In terms of percentage of average daily insured deposits for preceding calendar year, unless otherwise noted. Excludes initial payments or contributions where applicable.

<sup>3</sup> The banking laws of Oklahoma were codified, revised and reenacted May 25, 1908, with little change in guaranty law.

<sup>4</sup> Special assessments in addition to regular annual assessments authorized 1914–1916.

Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1953 (1954), pp. 68-69

***Methods of paying depositors of failed banks.*** In Kansas and Mississippi the depositors of a failed bank received interest-bearing certificates. Dividends on these certificates were paid from liquidation proceeds. Upon final liquidation of all assets, the balance due on the certificates was paid from the insurance fund. Mississippi law stipulated that if the insurance fund was insufficient to pay the depositors, they were to be paid *pro rata*, and the remainder paid from subsequent assessments.

In the remaining six states the deposit insurance law provided for immediate cash reimbursement by the fund, either in full or to whatever extent was practical. In most instances provision also was made for the issuance of certificates of indebtedness in the event there was insufficient money in the fund.

***Role of bank supervision.*** A majority of the eight states granted authority to regulate banks.<sup>12</sup> Semiannual bank examinations were the norm. Banking officials could enforce capital requirements and issue cease-and-desist orders to bring about correction of various infractions. In four of the states, supervisory authorities could order the removal of bank officials for just cause.

Despite the powers granted to banking authorities, supervision often proved to be lax. Because of understaffing and insufficient funding, examiner workloads frequently were untenable. In other instances, banking authorities were thwarted when they tried to enforce existing laws. In a few cases, the authorities were the root of the problem. Oklahoma provided the worst example in that the bank commissioner's office itself became corrupt after 1919.

***Assessments on participating banks.*** All of the insurance programs derived the bulk of their income from assessments. Both regular and special assessments were based on total deposits. The assessments levied ranged from an amount equivalent to an average annual rate of about one-eighth of 1 percent in Kansas to about two-thirds of 1 percent in Texas. Some states permitted participating banks to retain their insurance assessments in the form of deposits, subject to withdrawal by order of the insurer. Other states provided for the physical collection of assessments by the insurer or the state treasurer.

***Adequacy and termination of insurance funds.*** The state insurance funds were unable to cope with the economic events of the 1920s. The depression of 1921, and the severe agricultural problems that persisted throughout much of the decade, resulted in numerous bank failures. The resultant claims on the various insurance funds generally exceeded their size. Although the Texas fund was able to meet all claims, the insured deposits in the other states that were never paid from any source ranged as high as 70 percent.

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<sup>12</sup>An in-depth discussion of the role of bank supervision appears in Clark Warburton's study, *Deposit Insurance in Eight States During the Period 1908-1930* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 1959).

The first fund to cease operations was Washington's in 1921. By early 1930, all of the funds had ceased operation, including the Texas fund, which became insolvent after most of the participating banks withdrew.

## **Congressional Proposals for Deposit Insurance, 1886 – 1933**

A total of 150 proposals for deposit insurance or guaranty were made in Congress between 1886 and the establishment of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in 1933. Financial crises prompted the introduction of many of these proposals. In the 60<sup>th</sup> Congress, following the panic of 1907, more than 30 proposals for deposit guaranty legislation were introduced. Similarly, in response to the developing banking crisis, more than 20 bills were introduced in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Congress, which opened in 1931.

Another group of bills, similar in principle to deposit insurance, proposed to authorize national banks to issue circulating notes on the basis of various types of assets or as general obligations of the banks, backed by a guaranty or insurance fund to which all national banks would contribute. These proposals were numerous during the 30 years preceding establishment of the Federal Reserve System in 1913.

Three general methods of providing depositor protection were proposed in the bills. Of the 150 bills, 118 provided for the establishment of an insurance fund out of which depositors' losses would be paid, 22 provided for United States government guaranty of deposits, and 10 required banks to purchase surety bonds guaranteeing deposits in full.

Most of the deposit insurance bills introduced prior to establishment of the Federal Reserve System authorized participation of national banks only. After 1913, approximately one-half of the deposit insurance bills provided for participation of all members of the Federal Reserve System (national and state member banks). Only a few provided for coverage of deposits in nonmember banks, and then participation usually was optional.

Nearly two-thirds of the bills introduced prior to establishment of the Federal Reserve System provided for administration of the insurance system by the Comptroller of the Currency. After 1913, some of the proposals provided for administration by the Federal Reserve Board or by the Federal Reserve Banks under supervision of the Board. Other proposals called for the establishment of a special administrative board to oversee the insurance system.

Eighty percent of the bills provided for insurance or guaranty of all, or nearly all, deposits. The bills that provided for only partial coverage of deposits contained a variety of limitations. Generally, all liabilities not otherwise secured were to be protected by the insurance or guaranty system.

In nearly one-half of the bills, the entire cost of deposit insurance, and in about one-fourth of the bills the major part of the cost, was to be met by assessments based upon total deposits or average total deposits. The rates of assessment ranged from one-fiftieth of 1 percent to one-half of 1 percent per year, while in a number of cases assessments were to be adjusted to meet the total cost. The most common rate was one-tenth of 1 percent. Many of the bills provided for special initial assessments, or for assessments as needed, in addition to those collected periodically.

In a number of bills, assessments upon the banks were to be supplemented by appropriations from the United States government or, particularly in the bills introduced in the later years, by levies on the earnings or surplus of the Federal Reserve Banks. In several cases the cost was to be met solely by the United States government. In cases where the insurance was in the form of surety bonds, the cost of the bonds was to be borne by the banks.

Many of the bills called for a limit on the accumulation of funds by the insurance or guaranty system. In a few bills, assessment rates were to be adjusted by the administrative authority and were required to be sufficient to meet all losses to depositors or to maintain the fund at a given size. In some proposals, the fund was authorized to borrow if necessary, and in others to issue certificates to unpaid depositors if the fund were depleted.

## **Summary**

The disruption caused by bank failures was a recurrent problem during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Numerous plans were proposed or adopted to address this problem. Many embodied the insurance principle.

Insurance of bank obligations by the states occurred during two distinct periods. The first began in 1829 with the adoption of an insurance plan by New York. During the next three decades five other states followed New York's lead. Except for Michigan's insurance plan, which failed after a short period of operation, these plans accomplished their purposes. Nevertheless, the last of these insurance programs went out of existence in 1866 when the great majority of state-chartered banks became national banks.

Insurance of bank obligations was not attempted again by the states until the early 1900s. Eight states established deposit guaranty funds from 1908 to 1917. In contrast to the earlier state insurance systems, those adopted from 1908 to 1917 were generally unsuccessful. Most of the eight insurance plans were particularly hard hit by the agricultural depression that followed World War I. The numerous bank failures spawned by that depression placed severe financial stress on the insurance funds. By the mid-1920s, all of the state insurance programs were in difficulty, and by early 1930 none remained in operation.

The federal government, in turn, sought to secure the safety of the circulating medium through direct guaranty by the Treasury of national bank notes, beginning in the

1860s. However, the subsequent rapid growth of bank deposits relative to bank notes once again aroused concern regarding the safety of the circulating medium in the event of a bank failure. Consequently, 150 proposals for deposit insurance or guaranty were introduced into Congress between 1886 and 1933.

The basic principles of the federal deposit insurance system were developed in these bills and in the experience of the various states that adopted insurance programs. These principles included financing the federal deposit insurance fund through assessments; the use of rigorous bank examination and supervision to limit the exposure of the fund; and other elements, such as standards for failed-bank payoffs and liquidations, intended to minimize the economic disruptions caused by bank failures.

## Chapter 3

# Establishment of the FDIC

The adoption of nationwide deposit insurance in 1933 was made possible by the times, by the perseverance of the Chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Currency, and by the fact that the legislation attracted support from two groups which formerly had divergent aims and interests—those who were determined to end destruction of circulating medium due to bank failures and those who sought to preserve the existing banking structure.<sup>13</sup>

### **Banking Developments, 1930 – 1932**

An average of more than 600 banks per year failed between 1921 and 1929, which was 10 times the rate of failure during the preceding decade. The closings evoked relatively little concern, however, because they primarily involved small, rural banks, many of which were thought to be badly managed and weak. Although these failures caused the demise of the state insurance programs by early 1930, the prevailing view apparently was that the disappearance of these banks served to strengthen the banking system.

This ambivalence disappeared after a wave of bank failures during the last few months of 1930 triggered widespread attempts to convert deposits to cash. Many banks, seeking to accommodate cash demands or increase liquidity, contracted credit and, in some cases, liquidated assets. This reduced the quantity of cash available to the community which, in turn, placed additional cash demands on banks. Banks were forced to restrict credit and liquidate assets, further depressing asset prices and exacerbating liquidity problems. As more banks were unable to meet withdrawals and were closed, depositors became more sensitive to rumors. Confidence in the banking system began to erode and bank “runs” became more common.

During this period, the Federal Reserve did little to ease the liquidity problems of banks. The failure of the Federal Reserve to adopt an aggressive stance with respect to either open market purchases of securities or its discount window operations has been ascribed to several factors.<sup>14</sup> Most notably, it was generally believed that bank failures were an outgrowth of bad management and, therefore, were not subject to corrective action by the Federal Reserve. Concern within the Federal Reserve also was muted because most failed banks in 1930 were nonmembers for which Federal Reserve officials felt no responsibility.

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<sup>13</sup>Golembe, “The Deposit Insurance Legislation of 1933,” p. 182.

<sup>14</sup>A discussion of the Federal Reserve System’s attitude appears in Milton Friedman and Anna J. Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960* (Princeton, New Jersey: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1963), pp. 357-359. Much of the discussion relating to the events preceding the nationwide bank holiday is based on this source.



In all, 1,350 banks suspended operations during 1930 (Table 5).<sup>15</sup> Bank failures during the previous decade had been confined primarily to agricultural areas; this no longer was the case in 1930. In fact, the Bank of United States, one of the nation's largest banks based in New York City, failed that year. The large jump in bank failures in 1930 was accompanied by an even greater increase in depositor losses.

**Table 5**  
**Commercial Bank Suspensions, 1921 – 1933**  
**(\$ Thousands)**

Year	Number of Suspensions (1)	Deposits (2)	Losses Borne by Depositors (3)	Losses as a Percent of Deposits in All Commercial Banks (4)
<b>1921</b>	506	\$172,806	\$59,967	0.21%
<b>1922</b>	366	91,182	38,223	0.13
<b>1923</b>	646	149,601	62,142	0.19
<b>1924</b>	775	210,150	79,381	0.23
<b>1925</b>	617	166,937	60,799	0.16
<b>1926</b>	975	260,153	83,066	0.21
<b>1927</b>	669	199,332	60,681	0.15
<b>1928</b>	498	142,386	43,813	0.10
<b>1929</b>	659	230,643	76,659	0.18
<b>1930</b>	1,350	837,096	237,359	0.57
<b>1931</b>	2,293	1,690,232	390,476	1.01
<b>1932</b>	1,453	706,187	168,302	0.57
<b>1933</b>	4,000	3,596,708	540,396	2.15

*Sources:* Columns (1), (2) and (3), FDIC; column (4), Friedman and Schwartz.

As liquidity pressures subsequently eased during the early months of 1931, the number of bank failures declined sharply, but the decrease proved to be short-lived. Bank failures again rose between March and June as the public resumed converting deposits into currency and banks sought to meet withdrawal demands. During the second-half of the year, another, more serious, liquidity scramble occurred.

Once again, the Federal Reserve failed to inject sufficient liquidity into the banking system. In 1931, policymakers were primarily preoccupied with international monetary matters. The abandonment by Great Britain of the gold standard in September

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<sup>15</sup>The terms “bank suspensions” and “bank failures” often are used interchangeably. For the most part, this practice is followed throughout the chapter. Technically, however, “suspensions” include all banks that are closed because of financial difficulties, whereas “failures” are limited to those suspended banks that were placed in the hands of receivers and liquidated. Some of the suspended banks were reorganized or restored to solvency and resumed operations. In either instance, the assumption is that the suspended bank actually failed, though rehabilitation later occurred.

1931 aroused general fears that other countries might follow. These fears caused many foreigners with U.S. bank accounts to convert deposits to gold in the New York money market. To stem the ensuing gold outflow, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York sharply increased its rediscount rate. Although this action achieved the desired effect, no steps were taken to augment already depleted bank reserves through extensive open market purchases of securities. By ignoring domestic financial considerations, the Federal Reserve added to the banking industry's woes.

The effects of these liquidity crises were reflected in the bank failure statistics. About 2,300 banks suspended operations in 1931. The number of failures thus exceeded the average number for the 1921-1929 period by almost threefold. Losses borne by depositors in 1931 exceeded losses for the entire 1921-1929 period.

In an attempt to ease bank liquidity problems, the National Credit Corporation was organized by private-sector bankers in October 1931 to extend loans to weakened banks. However, the corporation failed within a matter of weeks. Business leaders appealed to the federal government for assistance. The Hoover Administration responded by recommending two measures. The first resulted in the creation, in January 1932, of a new major federal lending agency, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). One of its primary functions was to make advances to banks. By the end of 1932, the RFC had authorized almost \$900 million in loans to assist over 4,000 banks striving to remain open. The RFC might have assisted more banks had Congress not ordered it to disclose publicly the names of borrowers, beginning in August 1932. Appearance of a bank's name on the list was interpreted as a sign of weakness and frequently led to runs on the bank. Consequently, many banks refrained from borrowing from the RFC.

The second measure supported by the Hoover Administration – the Glass-Steagall Act of February 27, 1932 – broadened the circumstances under which member banks could borrow from the Federal Reserve System. It enabled a member bank to borrow from a Federal Reserve Bank upon paper other than that ordinarily eligible for rediscount or as collateral for loans. Although the amounts subsequently borrowed were not large in the aggregate, the measure did aid individual banks.

The generally improved banking situation during the ensuing months was marked by a significant drop in both the number of bank failures and depositor losses. However, other signs suggested that the industry's troubles were far from over. Waves of bank failures still occurred during the year. Another disquieting sign was the emergence of bank moratoria. Initially, they were declared by individual local communities. Later that year, Nevada proclaimed the first statewide moratorium when runs on individual banks threatened to involve banks throughout the state. Similar moratoria were to play a role in the events that culminated in the nationwide bank holiday of 1933.

### **The Banking Crisis of 1933**

During the winter of 1932-1933, banking conditions deteriorated rapidly. In retrospect, it is not possible to point to any single factor that precipitated the calamitous

events of this period. The general uncertainty with respect to monetary and banking conditions undoubtedly played the major role, although there were specific events that tended to increase liquidity pressures within the system. Banks, especially in states that had declared bank moratoria, accelerated withdrawals from correspondents in an attempt to strengthen their position. Currency holdings increased significantly, partially in anticipation of additional bank moratoria.

Additional liquidity pressures were brought about by concern relating to the future of the dollar. With the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in November 1932, rumors circulated that the new administration would devalue the dollar, which led to an increase in speculative holdings of foreign currencies, gold and gold certificates. Unlike the period of international monetary instability in 1931, a significant amount of the conversions from Federal Reserve notes and deposits to gold came from domestic sources. These demands placed considerable strain on New York City banks and, ultimately, on the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

It was the suddenness of the withdrawal demands in selected parts of the country that started a panic of massive proportions. State after state declared bank holidays. The banking panic reached a peak during the first three days of March 1933. Visitors arriving in Washington to attend the presidential inauguration found notices in their hotel rooms that checks drawn on out-of-town banks would not be honored. By March 4, Inauguration Day, every state in the Union had declared a bank holiday.

As one of his first official acts, President Roosevelt proclaimed a nationwide bank holiday to commence on March 6 and last four days. Administration officials quickly began to draft legislation designed to legalize the holiday and resolve the banking crisis. Early in their deliberations they realized that the success of any proposed plan of action primarily would hinge on favorable public reaction. As noted by Raymond Moley, a key presidential adviser who attended many of the planning sessions:

We knew how much of banking depended upon make-believe or, stated more conservatively, the vital part that public confidence had in assuring solvency.<sup>16</sup>

To secure public support, officials formulated a plan that relied on orthodox banking procedures.

Few members of Congress knew what was contained in the Administration's bill when they convened in extraordinary session at noon on March 9. In fact, Henry B. Steagall, Chairman of the Committee on Banking and Currency, purportedly had the only copy of the bill in the House. Waving the copy over his head, Steagall had entered the House chamber, shouting, "Here's the bill. Let's pass it."<sup>17</sup> After only 40 minutes of debate, during which time no amendments were permitted, the House passed the bill,

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<sup>16</sup>Raymond Moley, *The First New Deal* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), p. 171.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

known as the Emergency Banking Act. Several hours later, the Senate also approved the emergency legislation intact.

The Emergency Banking Act legalized the national bank holiday and set standards for the reopening of banks after the holiday. The Act expanded the RFC's powers as a means of dealing with the crisis then threatening the banking system. It authorized the RFC to invest in the preferred stock and capital notes of banks and to make secured loans to individual banks.

To ensure an adequate supply of currency, the Act provided for the issuance of Federal Reserve Notes, which were to be backed by U.S. government securities. The Federal Reserve Banks were empowered to advance the new currency to member banks without requiring much collateral. After the Act was signed into law, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing promptly went into 24-hour production to manufacture the currency.

The President subsequently issued a proclamation extending the holiday in order to allow time for officials to reopen the banks. In his first "fireside chat," delivered on March 12, President Roosevelt reviewed the events of the past several days and outlined the reopening schedule. Following proper certification, member banks in the 12 Federal Reserve Bank cities were to reopen on March 13. Member banks in some 250 other cities with recognized clearinghouses were to reopen on March 14. Thereafter, licensed member banks in all other localities were to reopen. The President indicated that the Secretary of the Treasury already had contacted the various state banking departments and requested them to follow the same schedule in reopening state nonmember banks. Before concluding his radio address, the President cautioned that he could not promise that every bank in the nation would be reopened. About 4,000 banks never reopened either because of the events of the previous two months or the bank holiday itself.

The task of implementing the Emergency Banking Act primarily was the responsibility of the Secretary of the Treasury. Under the Act, licenses for all member banks, both national and state, were to be issued by the Secretary. (State nonmember banks were to be licensed by the state banking departments.) The Treasury, however, demanded that each of the Federal Reserve Banks approve of the reopening of banks in their respective districts. The Federal Reserve Board balked at this demand, preferring instead that the Treasury Department shoulder the entire burden of reopening member banks. The controversy was resolved in the Treasury Department's favor. It was agreed that licenses would be issued by the Secretary of the Treasury upon the recommendation of the district Federal Reserve Bank, the chief national bank examiner and the Comptroller of the Currency. Several hundred banks soon reopened for business on the certification of the Treasury. As the reopening proceeded, public confidence increased significantly and widespread hoarding ceased.

## Federal Deposit Insurance Legislation

After some semblance of order had returned to the financial system, efforts were renewed in Congress to enact deposit insurance legislation. Although a deposit insurance bill had been passed by the House in 1932, the Senate had adjourned without acting on the proposal. Insurance proponents hoped that legislative efforts would prove successful this time, since the banking crisis was still fresh in the public's mind. In their view, recent events had shown that a system of federal deposit insurance was necessary to achieve and maintain financial stability.

One of the chief proponents of federal deposit insurance in Congress was Representative Steagall. He has been credited with proposing the legislation that created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, leading the fight for its adoption in the House and helping to effect a compromise when chances for passage of the bill appeared doomed. Steagall's achievement was all the more remarkable in view of the formidable opposition confronting the proponents of deposit insurance. Opposition emanated from the Roosevelt Administration, segments of the banking industry and from some members of Congress.

Arguments offered against deposit insurance reflected both practical and philosophical considerations. Opponents asserted that deposit insurance would never work. They pointed to the defunct state-level deposit insurance programs to substantiate their argument. Another widely held view was that deposit insurance would remove penalties for bad management. Critics also charged that deposit insurance would be too expensive and that it would represent an unwarranted intrusion by the federal government into the private sector.

Within the Roosevelt Administration, the Secretary of the Treasury Woodin was strongly opposed to the idea of federal deposit insurance. While historians have asserted that the Secretary's views were partially responsible for President Roosevelt's opposition to deposit insurance, accounts differ regarding the nature and extent of Roosevelt's opposition. However, the Administration was not of one mind on the issue. Support was voiced by Vice President John Nance Garner and Jesse H. Jones of the RFC, among others. Prior to Roosevelt's inauguration, Garner, then-Speaker of the House, had appealed to the President-elect to support deposit insurance. When Roosevelt declined, stating that it would never work, Garner predicted that deposit insurance legislation eventually would be passed.<sup>18</sup>

Banking interests, particularly those representing the larger banks, generally viewed federal deposit insurance with distaste. The President of the American Bankers Association declared that deposit insurance was "unsound, unscientific and dangerous."<sup>19</sup> The banking industry's views had only limited effect since banking at that time was held in low esteem. The industry's already tarnished image was not helped by disclosures of

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 318-319.

<sup>19</sup>"Wires Banks to Urge Veto of Glass Bill," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1933, p. 14.

unsavory security market dealings on the part of certain New York banks which came to light when deposit insurance was being considered in Congress.

More formidable opposition to deposit insurance came from several influential Congressmen. One of the most vociferous opponents was Carter Glass of Virginia, Chairman of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. He had been Roosevelt's initial choice to serve as Secretary of the Treasury, but declined the Cabinet offer. Although Senator Glass was intent on passing banking reform legislation, federal deposit insurance was not one of the reforms he supported or sought. In opposing federal deposit insurance, Glass pointed to the record of the defunct state insurance programs. Nevertheless, he subsequently allowed bank deposit insurance to be written into a banking bill that he had sponsored. One business journal during the period reported that Glass simply had yielded to public opinion:

It became perfectly apparent that the voters wanted the guarantee [deposit insurance], and that no bill which did not contain such a provision would be satisfactory either to Congress or to the public. Washington does not remember any issue on which the sentiment of the country has been so undivided or so emphatically expressed as upon this.<sup>20</sup>

In mid-May both Senator Glass and Representative Steagall formally introduced banking reform bills, which included provisions for deposit insurance. The two bills primarily differed with respect to the conditions for membership in the deposit insurance corporation that was to be created. Whereas membership in the Federal Reserve was a precondition for obtaining deposit insurance under the Senate bill, it was not a prerequisite in the House version. Both bills incorporated the demands made by the Roosevelt Administration that (1) deposit coverage be based on a sliding scale, and (2) there be a one-year delay in the start of the insurance corporation.

Later that month, however, the Glass bill was amended to incorporate Senator Arthur Vandenberg's proposal calling for the creation of a temporary deposit insurance fund. Vandenberg opposed a delay in the start of deposit insurance because "the need is greater in the next year than for the next hundred years."<sup>21</sup> On the day Vandenberg introduced his proposal, Vice President Garner was presiding over the Senate, which was sitting as a court of impeachment in the trial of a district judge. Garner had heard that Vandenberg had formulated a deposit insurance plan that would accomplish the same goals as those contained in an insurance bill which Garner had pushed through the House in 1932. Desiring that deposit insurance be implemented as soon as possible, Garner therefore approached Vandenberg during the impeachment proceedings and inquired whether he had the deposit insurance amendment in his possession. After Vandenberg responded affirmatively, Garner instructed him to introduce the amendment when signaled. Several minutes later, Garner suspended the court proceedings and ordered the Senate into regular session to consider more banking legislation. With Garner sitting by

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<sup>20</sup>"Deposit Insurance," *Business Week*, April 12, 1933, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>"Bank Bill Debate to Open in Senate," *The New York Times*, May 19, 1933, p. 4.

his side, Vandenberg then offered his deposit insurance amendment, which was overwhelmingly adopted.

The amendment stipulated that, effective January 1, 1934, the temporary fund would provide insurance coverage up to \$2,500 for each depositor and would function until a permanent corporation began operations on July 1, 1934. If demands on the temporary fund exceeded available monies, the Treasury would be obligated to make up the difference. The amendment also provided that solvent state banks could join the fund.

The inclusion of the Vandenberg amendment in the Senate bill almost resulted in the defeat of deposit insurance in Congress. When the banking reform bills that had been passed by both houses were sent to a joint conference committee for resolution of differences, an impasse promptly developed. The House conferees opposed the Vandenberg amendment contained in the Senate version of the bill, particularly the provision calling for the immediate establishment of a temporary insurance corporation. Another issue that split the conferees was whether Federal Reserve membership should be a precondition for obtaining deposit insurance.

A compromise finally was reached on June 12, after the Senate conferees threatened to remove all deposit insurance provisions from the bill. They feared that the impasse over deposit insurance could endanger all of the banking reform measures contained in the bill. In order to save the bill, the House conferees reluctantly accepted the Senate's version as well as an additional provision desired by the Senate conferees to liberalize the branching restrictions governing national banks. This provision reflected widespread public disillusionment with the failure-prone independent banking system. Proponents of branch banking maintained that geographic diversification of lending risks and the deposit base would result in a lower bank failure rate.

The bill agreed to by the conferees passed both houses of Congress on the following day. Some opponents of deposit insurance had not yet thrown in the towel, though. The American Bankers Association wired its member banks, urging them to telegraph President Roosevelt immediately to request his veto of the legislation. Nevertheless, Roosevelt signed the measure, known as the Banking Act of 1933, into law on June 16, 1933. Section 8 of the Act created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation through an amendment to the Federal Reserve Act. The Banking Act of 1933 also created the Federal Reserve Open Market Committee and imposed restrictions on the permissible activities of member banks of the Federal Reserve System.

### **Deposit Insurance Provisions of the Banking Act of 1933**

Section 12B of the Federal Reserve Act as amended created the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and defined its organization, duties and functions. It provided for two separate plans of deposit insurance: a temporary plan which was to be initiated on January 1, 1934, and a permanent plan which was to become effective on July 1, 1934.

Capital necessary to establish the FDIC was to be provided by the United States Treasury and the 12 Federal Reserve Banks. The Treasury was to contribute \$150 million. Each of the Federal Reserve Banks was required to subscribe to Class B capital stock in an amount equal to one-half of its surplus as of January 1, 1933.

Management of the FDIC was vested in a Board of Directors consisting of three members. The Comptroller of the Currency was designated a member *ex officio*; the other two members were to be appointed by the President for six-year terms with the advice and consent of the Senate. One of the two appointive directors was to serve as Chairman of the Board, and not more than two members of the Board could be members of the same political party.

The temporary plan of deposit insurance initially limited protection to \$2,500 for each depositor. Banks admitted to insurance under the temporary plan were to be assessed an amount equal to one-half of 1 percent of insurable deposits. One-half of the assessment was payable at once; the rest was payable upon call by the FDIC.

All Federal Reserve member banks licensed by the Secretary of the Treasury under terms of an Executive Order of the President, issued March 10, 1933, were required by law to become members of the temporary fund on January 1, 1934. Other banks were authorized to join the fund upon certification of their solvency by the respective state supervisory agencies and after examination by, and with the approval of, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

The original permanent plan, while it never took effect and was superseded by a new permanent plan in the Banking Act of 1935, contained certain features of historical interest. Banks participating in insurance under the original plan were to subscribe to capital stock of the FDIC and be subject to whatever assessments might be needed to meet the losses from deposit insurance operations. The plan provided for full protection of the first \$10,000 of each depositor, 75 percent coverage of the next \$40,000 of deposits, and 50 percent coverage of all deposits in excess of \$50,000. In order to retain their insurance, all participating banks were required to become members of the Federal Reserve System within two years. Thus, with regard to financing, degree of protection and supervisory provisions, the original plan differed significantly from both the temporary plan and the permanent plan that became effective with the Banking Act of 1935.

## **Formation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation**

One of the first tasks facing the FDIC was the formation of an operating organization. As provided in the Banking Act of 1933, the Comptroller of the Currency, J. F. T. O'Connor, was designated as a director. He served as the FDIC's chief executive until the appointment of the other two directors.

In September, the President appointed as the other directors Walter J. Cummings, then-special-assistant to Secretary of the Treasury Woodin, and E. G. Bennett, a



Republican banker and businessman from Utah. The directors organized on September 11, 1933, and elected Cummings to serve as Chairman of the Board. As was his intent, Cummings' chairmanship lasted only through the initial organization of the FDIC. In January 1934, he left the FDIC to assume the chairmanship of Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Company in Chicago.

Bank examination consumed nearly all of the FDIC's efforts in the months before the establishment of the temporary fund on January 1, 1934. The hastily assembled examination force had to examine almost 8,000 state-chartered nonmember banks in three months in order for the FDIC to meet its responsibilities under the Banking Act of 1933. The task of completing these admission examinations was largely accomplished as intended by the end of 1933. Of the 7,834 applicant nonmember banks, 83 percent were approved for insurance, 12 percent were rejected, 4 percent were still pending decisions, and less than 1 percent remained to be examined.

## **The Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund**

*Admission standards.* Actual insurance of bank deposits became effective on January 1, 1934. The Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund opened with 13,201 banks insured (or approved for insurance). Of these, 12,987 were commercial banks and 214 were mutual savings banks. These represented 90 percent of all commercial banks and 36 percent of all mutual savings banks.

The lower participation rate among savings banks was attributable to several factors. Many savings banks questioned whether they needed deposit insurance. Unlike commercial banks, savings banks had not been seriously affected by bank runs since they legally could restrict deposit withdrawals. In several states mutual savings banks legally could not subscribe to stock in the FDIC. In other instances, savings banks objected to FDIC membership on philosophical grounds. As summed up by one savings banker, "I for one want none of this FDIC. If it's New Deal, that damns it as far as I'm concerned."<sup>22</sup>

Pursuant to the intent of Congress, the FDIC accepted for insurance all banks that it found to be solvent. However, it was recognized that a great many banks lacked sufficient capital, which posed a huge risk for the insurance fund. Some banks were admitted upon a commitment to increase their capital, either from the RFC or local interests. A program of reexamination and rehabilitation was carried on throughout the year by the FDIC.

*Organizational changes.* Following the departure of Walter J. Cummings, E. G. Bennett served briefly as acting chairman of the FDIC. In February 1934, Leo T. Crowley, a 46-year-old bachelor, became chairman. As former owner of several Wisconsin banks during the Depression, he had organized and headed the Wisconsin Banking Review Board. In December 1933, he journeyed to Washington, D.C., seeking

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<sup>22</sup>Oscar Schisgall, *Out of One Small Chest* (New York: AMACOM, 1975), p. 146.

aid for several hundred Wisconsin banks so they could qualify for deposit insurance. His role in restoring the health of Depression-struck banks in his native state brought him to the attention of the Roosevelt Administration.

The appointment of Crowley proved to be especially felicitous. An imposing man, he possessed both a witty personality and exceptional administrative skills. He left an indelible imprint on the FDIC during his 12-year term as chairman.

*Legislative developments.* The Banking Act of 1933 provided for termination of the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund and the inauguration of the permanent insurance plan on July 1, 1934. However, in the early part of 1934, FDIC officials recommended that the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund be extended for another year and that the law be amended in certain minor respects to facilitate administration. It was considered advisable to give the states additional time to adopt legislation to enable state banks to enjoy the full benefits of federal deposit insurance. FDIC officials also desired to gain more experience with the administration and operation of an insurance plan prior to the inauguration of the permanent plan. Moreover, the capital rehabilitation program for banks could not have been completed by July 1934, as required, to permit all banks insured with the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund to qualify for insurance under the permanent plan.

On June 16, 1934, Congress extended the life of the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund, and the effective date of the permanent plan was postponed one year, to July 1, 1935.<sup>23</sup> Insured nonmember banks were allowed to terminate their membership in the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund on July 1, 1934, provided they gave adequate notice to the FDIC. Provision was made for refunding the assessments collected from the banks that withdrew. Only 21 commercial banks elected to withdraw from the fund.

There had been some doubt as to the legality of some mutual savings banks qualifying as members of the permanent plan of deposit insurance. Furthermore, many mutual savings banks considered themselves preferred risks and wished to avoid assessment at the same rate as commercial banks. For these and other reasons, 169 mutual savings banks withdrew from the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund at the end of June 1934. Of these, 133 were located in New York State. Only two New York mutual savings banks, Emigrant Savings Bank and Franklin Savings Bank, kept their insurance with the FDIC.

Effective July 1, 1934, insurance protection was increased from \$2,500 to \$5,000 for each depositor at an insured institution, except in the case of certain mutual savings banks. Insurance protection remained at \$2,500 for each depositor at a mutual savings

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<sup>23</sup>The life of the temporary plan subsequently was extended for an additional two months. The second extension was approved June 28, 1935, while the Banking Act of 1935 was under consideration, and was designed merely to continue the temporary plan until that Act could be approved.

bank except that any mutual savings bank could, with the consent of the FDIC, elect to be insured up to \$5,000.

At the discretion of its Board of Directors, the FDIC was authorized to set up a separate fund for mutual savings banks to be known as the Fund For Mutuals. The Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund was not to be subject to the liabilities of the Fund For Mutuals, and *vice versa*. A separate Fund For Mutuals was established by the Board of Directors on July 14, 1934, effective July 1, 1934. Upon inception of the permanent plan in 1935, this fund and the fund for commercial banks were consolidated.

Under the previously existing law, insured nonmember banks were required to apply to become members of the Federal Reserve System on or before July 1, 1936, in order to continue their insurance. With the one-year delay in the establishment of the permanent fund, this requirement was changed by pushing the date back to July 1, 1937.

Banks in the territories of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Alaska and the Virgin Islands were made eligible for insurance. In addition, the language authorizing the FDIC to act as receiver in the case of failed insured banks was clarified. By a new provision of the law, each insured bank was required to display signs to the effect that its deposits were insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The intent of this practice, which continues today, was to make the absence of such a sign conspicuous.

## **Deposit Insurance and Banking Developments in 1934**

Total deposits in insured and uninsured licensed commercial banks increased during 1934 by about \$7.2 billion dollars, or 22 percent. This growth in deposits had rarely been equaled in the past and restored to the banking system approximately half of the decline in deposits that had occurred during the preceding three years.

The growth in bank deposits was accompanied by changes in the character and quality of the assets held by insured banks. Cash, amounts due from other banks and holdings of direct obligations of the United States government increased considerably. The average quality of the assets of insured commercial banks improved as large amounts of worthless and doubtful assets were written off. Increased earnings and new capital, which was obtained from the RFC and local interests, maintained banks' capital positions. At the close of 1934, insured banks held 98 percent of the assets of all licensed commercial banks.

The liquidity buildup undertaken by banks during 1934 caused FDIC officials some concern. They feared that excessive holdings by banks of cash and government securities could stifle economic recovery. Speeches given by the FDIC's directors during that period frequently contained exhortations urging bankers to expand their loan portfolios.

Only nine insured banks and 52 uninsured licensed banks suspended operations during 1934. All but one of the insured banks and most of the uninsured licensed banks

that failed during 1934 were small institutions. More than 900 banks that were not licensed after the holiday were placed in receivership or liquidation. More than half of these banks had a part of their assets and liabilities taken over by successor banks.

In its 1934 *Annual Report*, the FDIC rather modestly attributed the small number of failures of licensed banks to factors other than deposit insurance. It noted that many banks were able to survive because they had received necessary financial assistance from the RFC and other governmental agencies. Secondly, events during 1933 had weeded out many weak banks. Third, improved economic conditions also had played a role in keeping down the failure rate. The FDIC warned that the low rate of failures could not be expected to continue.

During 1934, the fierce opposition of the banking industry faded in the face of the success of deposit insurance. The industry's changed attitude was reflected in the public endorsement of the temporary insurance plan by the Executive Council of the American Bankers Association in April of that year. Public sentiment continued to support deposit insurance.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Early Years: 1934 – 1941**

#### **Background**

The history of the FDIC cannot be considered apart from changes in economic and banking conditions. The early years of the FDIC's existence were not a period of risk-taking by banks. Caution marked the attitudes of both the supervisory agencies and the industry itself. For their part, the supervisory agencies viewed the events that culminated in the nationwide bank holiday as a banking rather than a monetary phenomenon. The prevailing philosophy was that unfettered competition in the past had resulted in excesses and abuses in banking. Consequently, the supervisory agencies followed what the FDIC later termed as a policy of keeping banks and banking practices within the bounds of rightful competition.

The attitude of bankers was similarly circumspect. Those who survived the Depression were chastened by that experience. The effect of the Depression experience on the industry was reflected in the subsequent massive liquidity buildup undertaken by banks. By 1937, for example, cash and holdings of U.S. government securities comprised about 52 percent of the industry's total assets, or more than twice the proportion held in 1929. To the dismay of would-be borrowers, banks continued to stress liquidity for many more years.

Legislation enacted in the 1930s to insulate banks from competing with one another too aggressively also restrained bank behavior. The Banking Act of 1933 outlawed the payment of interest by member banks on demand deposits. The Act also authorized the Federal Reserve Board to set a ceiling on time deposit rates offered by member banks in order to forestall ruinous competition among banks. In addition, the 1933 law ordered the separation of investment from commercial banking to be completed by mid-June 1934.

The Banking Act of 1935 similarly incorporated provisions designed to limit bank behavior. The Act expanded the FDIC's supervisory powers and set more rigorous standards for admission to insurance. The 1935 law required the FDIC to prohibit the payment of interest on demand deposits in insured nonmember banks and to limit the rates of interest paid.

While the effects of a still-depressed economy also engendered caution on the part of bankers and regulators, conditions improved from the low point reached in 1933. Unemployment declined significantly, real GNP increased at an average annual compound growth rate of 9.5 percent between 1933 and 1937, and price increases were moderate. The recession of 1937-1938 interrupted this pattern of economic expansion. Owing to the continuous improvement in the banking system that had occurred since the bank holiday of 1933, however, banks were able to meet without difficulty the strains

resulting from the decline in business activity that ensued. Following the recession, economic conditions improved once again as real GNP rose and unemployment abated.

## **Capital Rehabilitation**

After the initial admission examinations had been completed, in early 1934 the FDIC shifted the emphasis of its examination function from determining minimal acceptability to the strengthening of weaker banks, particularly in the area of capital adequacy. It was determined that minimal safety required banks to have net sound capital equal to at least 10 percent of deposits. Net sound capital was defined as equity, capital notes, debentures and reserves, less assets classified as worthless or of doubtful value, including bond depreciation. Based upon admission examination findings, all banks not meeting this standard were reexamined during the first six months of 1934.

The same cooperation accorded to banks initially rejected for deposit insurance was given to those banks requiring capital rehabilitation. Of the state nonmember banks admitted to the fund, 35 percent were found to be undercapitalized. Subsequent examinations and rehabilitative efforts reduced this ratio to just 13 percent by the end of 1934. Many other banks recorded significant improvements though they still fell short of the 10 percent standard. For example, 20 percent of the initial applicants had net sound capital of less than 5 percent, but by year-end 1934, only 3 percent were under this level. This improvement in capital was achieved despite the fact that insured nonmember banks wrote off adversely classified assets equal to 20 percent of their total capital. The RFC supplied most of the funds used to offset these write-offs, while the remainder was supplied by local interests and retained earnings.

By the end of 1934, the concept of federal deposit insurance was generally accepted, even by most of its detractors. As one measure that public confidence had been restored, bank runs were no longer a significant problem, although they did not disappear altogether. Local concerns about the solvency of an individual bank still gave rise to occasional bank runs. In some instances, fears were aroused when it was felt that bank examiners had overstayed their “normal” visit to a bank, although these fears were usually groundless.<sup>24</sup>

## **Safety-and-Soundness Examination Policy**

After completing its first two examination tasks – admissions and capital rehabilitation – the FDIC again shifted its examination focus and concentrated on developing permanent examination policies and procedures. The purposes of these examinations were fivefold:

1. Appraise assets in order to determine net worth;
2. Determine asset quality;

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<sup>24</sup>Interview with Neil Greensides (former Chief, FDIC Division of Examinations), Washington, DC, August 16, 1983.

3. Identify practices that could lead to financial difficulties;
4. Appraise bank management; and
5. Identify irregularities and violations of law.

In addition to completing and reviewing its own examinations, in 1936 the FDIC began reviewing examination reports of national and state member banks because the FDIC had an insurance exposure for these banks supervised by the Comptroller of the Currency and the Federal Reserve.

Some analysts came to the conclusion that supervisory policies in the 1930s were unduly harsh, and that recessionary periods were not the time to pressure banks to sell depreciated assets and reduce risk. Such practices, it was felt, would lead to a restriction of credit as well as otherwise unnecessary bank liquidations and forced mergers. These concerns had been expressed to the Comptroller of the Currency in 1931, but policy directives at that time were generally ineffective.

A sharp recession had begun in 1937, rekindling these criticisms of bank examination policy, and in 1938 Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau called for a conference of bank examiners. This time around, policy changes were strictly translated into examination procedures, resulting in more lenient asset valuation techniques. It was agreed that most bonds would be appraised at book value rather than market value, a policy believed to be more reflective of long-term investment quality. Moreover, a larger portion of classified assets were to be included in the capital ratio calculation. These policy shifts caused only a slight increase in aggregate capital-to-assets ratios – 12.8 percent under the new method *versus* 12.6 percent under the old – but the difference at individual banks, particularly marginal performers, could be critical.

The 1938 conference also led to a revision of the nomenclature of asset classification, establishing the four groups that have remained essentially unchanged: (I) not mentioned, (II) substantial and unreasonable risk, (III) loss is probable and (IV) uncollectible (immediate charge-off). Since 1949, categories II, III and IV have been referred to respectively as substandard, doubtful and loss.

## **The Banking Act of 1935**

During the 20 months that the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund was in operation, the banking situation improved significantly. Attention was shifted to the specific insurance provisions of the 1933 Act. Most of those who had originally opposed deposit insurance legislation apparently had been convinced that the existence of the FDIC was a major contributing factor to the drastic reduction in bank failures. However, various provisions of the original permanent plan were viewed as not being appropriate in the new environment.

The banking industry did not like the potential for virtually unlimited assessments and generally felt that the assessment rate should be set at a relatively low level. Large banks took exception to shifting the assessment base from insured to total deposits,

contending that they would be unduly penalized because of the relatively large proportion of uninsured deposits held in larger institutions. State-chartered nonmember banks objected to mandatory membership in the Federal Reserve System as a precondition for retaining deposit insurance coverage.

***FDIC recommendations.*** For its part, the FDIC was faced with a dilemma. Although the bank failure rate had dropped precipitously and the capital rehabilitation program of the RFC and the FDIC had been moderately successful, the banking system was not strong and the prospects for bank earnings were not bright. Additionally, the fears and uncertainties regarding the bank failure rate had not been dispelled by 1934 and indeed would not recede for more than two decades. The FDIC thus was faced with the problems of protecting the earnings of insured banks until capital and reserve positions could be rebuilt while, at the same time, conserving what was by historical standards a modest deposit insurance fund.

During 1934, FDIC staff began drafting what was to become Title I of the Banking Act of 1935. In hearings beginning in February 1935 before the House Committee on Banking and Currency, FDIC Chairman Leo Crowley articulated his plan for the future of federal deposit insurance. The FDIC had calculated that during the period 1865-1934, an annual average assessment rate of about one-third of 1 percent of total deposits would have been required to cover the actual losses on deposit balances in failed banks. However, if certain “crisis” years in which losses were unusually high were eliminated, the necessary rate would have been lowered to about one-twelfth of 1 percent. Adoption of the lower rate was justified on the grounds that many banking reforms and improvements had occurred to strengthen the banking system and prevent bank failures.

In addition to an assessment rate lower than historical experience would suggest, Crowley’s plan consisted of a combination of stricter entrance standards for new banks and expanded authority over the actions of existing banks, expanded powers regarding the handling of failing banks, a reduction in insurance exposure (*i.e.*, retaining the \$5,000 insurance coverage rather than the higher limits envisioned in the original permanent plan) and other provisions that would tend to conserve the deposit insurance fund. From a practical point of view, the program advocated by Crowley consisted of attempting to strengthen the banking system, while using every legal means available to conserve FDIC financial resources. This philosophy dominated FDIC behavior until the mid-1960s.

***Enactment.*** By early August, the two houses of Congress resolved their differences on changes in the assessment rate, accepting the rate recommended by the FDIC. A compromise also was reached on the Federal Reserve membership issue. In the final conference report, which was accepted by both houses on August 19, only insured banks with more than \$1 million in deposits would be required to join the Federal Reserve System, beginning in 1941. The membership requirement was rescinded altogether in 1939.

The Banking Act of 1935 became effective August 23, 1935. The deposit insurance provisions of the Act, with few exceptions, were identical to the draft



legislation prepared by the FDIC. From a financial point of view, one of the most significant revisions to the original permanent plan related to the calculation of assessments levied on insured banks. The 1935 Act provided that assessments were to be based on a flat annual rate of one-twelfth of 1 percent of *total* (adjusted) deposits. The effect of this change was to shift the relative burden of the deposit insurance system to the larger banks while protecting the level of assessment income to the FDIC.

***Admissions.*** The Banking Act of 1935 provided for the automatic admission to insurance under the permanent plan of all banks insured at the close of the temporary funds, except banks which signified, within 30 days, their intention to withdraw from insurance and those banks that had failed to file the required certified statement of deposits and to pay the required assessments.

Thirty-four banks insured under the temporary plan withdrew within 30 days after the close of the temporary funds. One other bank had its insurance status terminated by reason of failure to file the certified statement. Automatically admitted to insurance under the permanent plan were 14,219 banks. Of these, 14,163 were commercial banks insured in the Temporary Federal Deposit Insurance Fund and 56 were mutual savings banks insured in the Fund For Mutuals.

The 1935 Act set more rigorous standards for admission to insurance. In acting on insurance applications from new banks, the FDIC was required to consider the adequacy of the bank's capital, its future earnings prospects, the quality of its management and its usefulness in serving the convenience and needs of the community.

The revised law, moreover, provided that any balances to which an insured bank was entitled, upon termination of the temporary federal deposit insurance funds, were to be credited toward the assessment to be levied under the permanent insurance plan. These balances consisted of the unused portion of assessments collected under the temporary plan. Since investment income of the temporary funds was sufficient to pay all of the operating expenses of the FDIC and cover deposit insurance losses and expenses, insured banks received a credit for the full amount of the assessments they had paid.

***Supervisory powers.*** Insured nonmember banks were required to obtain the FDIC's approval before opening new branches or reducing their capital. The Act required all insured banks to obtain approval before merging or consolidating with noninsured institutions. The FDIC was empowered to require any insured bank to provide protection and indemnity against burglary, defalcation and other similar insurable losses. If an insured bank was found by the FDIC to have continued unsafe or unsound practices, the practices were to be reported to the appropriate supervisory authorities. A bank's insurance status could be terminated if the practices were not corrected.

In order to strengthen the banking system, the FDIC was given the right to make a loan to, or purchase assets from, an open or closed insured bank to facilitate its merger or consolidation with another insured bank, if the merger would reduce the risk or avert a

threatened loss to the FDIC. This power, which was first granted on a temporary basis, later was made permanent.

The Banking Act of 1935 required the FDIC to prohibit the payment of interest on demand deposits in insured nonmember banks and to limit the rates of interest paid on savings and time deposits. The FDIC also was required to prohibit insured nonmember banks from paying any time deposit before its maturity, except as prescribed by the FDIC.

In granting these and other regulatory powers to the FDIC, Congress sought to prevent unsound competition among banks. The prevailing philosophy was that unfettered competition in the past had resulted in excesses and abuses in banking as well as other industries. The restrictive powers contained in the Banking Act of 1935 were thus consistent with the tenor of other New Deal legislative programs.

***Borrowing authority.*** The FDIC was authorized to issue notes or other obligations in an amount not to exceed \$975 million, and the RFC and the Secretary of the Treasury were directed to purchase up to \$500 million of these notes if the funds were needed for the payment of depositors. The FDIC never borrowed under this provision of the Act. The Act also deleted the requirement for initial and subsequent capital subscriptions by insured banks, and the payment of dividends on capital stock held by the U.S. Treasury was eliminated.

## **Insured-Bank Failures**

The Banking Act of 1933 authorized the FDIC to pay up to \$2,500 to depositors in insured banks that failed. The only procedure to be used to pay depositors was a Deposit Insurance National Bank (DINB), a new national bank chartered without any capitalization and with limited life and powers. During the period of the temporary deposit insurance plan, January 1, 1934 to August 23, 1935, 24 insured banks were placed into receivership and their depositors paid off through a DINB. The first FDIC-insured bank to fail was the Fondulac State Bank in East Peoria, Illinois, which was closed by the state in May 1934. Mrs. Lydia Lobsiger received the first federal deposit insurance payout, a check for \$1,250 dated July 3, 1934. This was the only bank to fail while the \$2,500 coverage limit was in effect.

The 1935 Act gave the FDIC the authority to pay off depositors directly or through an existing bank, and once that authority was granted, the FDIC ceased using the DINB for the next 29 years. The DINB provides a vehicle for a slow and orderly payout, and its use in recent years has been confined to situations where only limited banking services were available in the community or where a regular payoff would have been substantially delayed.

In addition to broadening the ways in which a payoff could be effected, the 1935 Act gave the FDIC the authority to make loans, purchase assets and provide guarantees to facilitate a merger or acquisition. This authority had been sought by the FDIC because of

its concern that many of the banks that had been granted deposit insurance might not survive, and paying off insured depositors in these banks would be too expensive. In addition, most banking observers felt that there were too many banks in operation and that it would be desirable if the FDIC could facilitate an orderly reduction in their number through increased mergers.

The FDIC handled 370 bank failures from 1934 through 1941, an average of more than 50 per year. Most of these were small banks. Without the presence of federal deposit insurance, the number of bank failures undoubtedly would have been greater and the bank population would have been reduced. The presence of deposit insurance also may have limited the necessity for some banks to merge, and may have indirectly encouraged retention of restrictive state branching laws. Insurance losses totaled nearly \$23 million during this period. The FDIC had positive net income in all but its first year of operation, though, and the insurance fund continued to grow. The year-end 1941 fund balance was \$553.5 million. This resulted in a ratio of the fund to insured deposits of 1.96 percent, which remains the highest reserve ratio in the history of the FDIC.

The end of 1941 marked the completion of eight years of successful operation of the system of federal insurance of bank deposits. It also marked the close of a period of economic recovery under peacetime conditions, which provided especially favorable circumstances for the establishment of deposit insurance and for improvement in the financial condition of banks.

## **Chapter 5**

### **War and Recovery: 1942 – 1970**

During World II, government financial policies and private-sector restrictions produced an expanding banking system. Total bank assets at the end of 1945 were nearly double the \$91 billion total at the end of 1941. Large-scale war financing of the federal government was the primary factor contributing to the rise in bank assets. Banks played a major role in financing the war effort by lending to other bond buyers, by handling the bulk of the war loan campaign sales volume, and by purchasing government obligations themselves. At the end of 1945, holdings of those obligations accounted for 57 percent of total bank assets.

Loan losses were practically nonexistent during the war years and bank failures declined significantly. Only 28 insured banks failed in the period 1942-1945. The decline in the number of troubled banks can be ascribed primarily to the highly liquid state of bank assets, the absence of deposit outflows, and vigorous business activity.

As the war drew to a close and ended, the transfer to peacetime conditions raised questions whether the economy would enter another recession or experience disruptive inflation. Many individuals feared that unemployment, declining income and business failures would ensue. However, inflation rather than deflation ensued. The public had a large volume of liquid assets, there was a tremendous demand for goods, and the immediate problem was one of inadequate production rather than of unemployment.

#### **Effects of the War on the FDIC**

The participation by the United States in World War II affected both the FDIC and the state banks it supervised, and some of those effects carried on well past the 1940s. The short-term effects included such things as moving some headquarters personnel to Chicago to vacate Washington office space for the war effort. The FDIC also suffered the same personnel shortage felt by many government agencies resulting from military enlistments and transfers to defense-oriented programs. A shortage of examiners meant that the FDIC was unable to fulfill its policy of annual bank examinations. Even after the war, government hiring restrictions and rapid growth of the economy led to a shortfall of qualified examiners, and it was not until 1951 that the FDIC again was able to examine all of its banks annually.

Another temporary effect of the war effort was the transfer to the FDIC of responsibility for the supervision and examination of about 4,000 federal credit unions, though the FDIC did not insure their deposits. Federal credit unions previously had been supervised by the Farm Credit Administration. In 1948, after six years of FDIC supervision, this responsibility was transferred to the Federal Security Agency.

FDIC Chairman Leo Crowley had come to be regarded by President Roosevelt as one of the best administrators, in or out of government, and he accepted numerous

wartime responsibilities. While retaining his FDIC post, Crowley held nine separate government positions, including those of Alien Property Custodian and head of the Foreign Economic Administration, the latter a cabinet-level post that included the lend-lease program. Thus, all foreign economic dealings, and assets and authorizations totaling more than \$40 billion, were administered from Crowley's FDIC office in the Press Building on Fourteenth Street.

A more lasting effect of the war was a rapid decline in bank capital ratios, due primarily to the growth of banks' assets. However, the same process that led to rapid bank expansion – government financing – reduced the riskiness of bank portfolios. By the end of 1944, cash and U.S. government obligations had grown to 79 percent of bank assets. Between 1934 and year-end 1944, the aggregate capital-to-assets ratio of banks had declined from 13.2 percent to 5.9 percent. Despite the decline in capital ratios, bank examiners were not particularly critical of bank behavior because of the quality and liquidity of bank assets.

## **Post-World War II Developments**

The banking industry had emerged from World War II in very liquid condition and was in a favorable position to finance the spending spree that was poised to occur. Yet, many individuals expressed doubts whether banks were up to the task of resuming their traditional lending function. These concerns proved groundless. In 1947 alone, bank lending increased from 16 percent to 25 percent of the industry's assets. Lending subsequently reached 40 percent of assets in the mid-1950s, and 50 percent in the early 1960s.

This resurgence of lending did not produce a concomitant increase in loan losses. Throughout this period, loan losses remained relatively small. Net charge-offs averaged considerably less than one-tenth of 1 percent of outstanding loans during the 1950s. Several factors accounted for the relatively low level of loan losses during the postwar years. First, banking behavior by present standards continued to be very conservative. In addition, the economy remained strong. Recessions were reasonably mild and short. This was a period of general prosperity, with a secularly increasing real GNP and relatively low unemployment.

Bank lending had increased, but banks were still operating within traditional markets, and risks to the soundness of the banking system and to the deposit insurance fund were minimal, even during recessionary periods. Bank failures that did occur often received a great deal of attention, including Congressional hearings in some instances. This concern was reflected in the strict supervisory posture that prevailed during this period, but most bankers were content to accept tight regulation in exchange for the restraints it placed upon competition among banks and with nonbank competitors.

During the late 1940s and 1950s there were no more than five bank failures in any single year. However, the low incidence of failures was regarded by some as a sign that the bank regulators were overly strict, operating with policies and practices rooted in the

banking crises and economic chaos of the 1930s. In a speech marking the dedication of the headquarters building of the FDIC in 1963, Wright Patman, then-Chairman of the House Banking and Currency Committee, declared:

. . . I think we should have more bank failures. The record of the last several years of almost no bank failures and, finally last year, no bank failure at all, is to me a danger signal that we have gone too far in the direction of bank safety.

Until about 1960, banks continued to operate in this safe, insulated environment. Then banks gradually began to change the way they operated. The Depression experience ceased to be a dominant influence on bank management. The new generation of bankers who came to power in the 1960s abandoned the traditional conservatism that had characterized the industry for many years. Instead, they began to strive for more rapid growth in assets, deposits and income.

Intensified competition and higher costs of funds put pressure on interest margins, and greater risks were assumed in order to increase portfolio yields. The trend was particularly pronounced among large banks. These banks also began pressing at the boundaries of allowable activities. They expanded into fields considered by some to involve more than the traditional degree of risk for commercial banks. Banks in general had become more susceptible to the effects of business downturns (as reflected in loan-loss rates) and interest-rate fluctuations.

Before the 1970s, banks were not noticeably harmed by the movement toward increased risk-taking. Generally favorable economic conditions enabled many otherwise marginal borrowers to meet their obligations. With the exception of relatively mild recessions, the economy produced high levels of production, employment and income during most of the period.

There were other changes during the 1960s that had an effect on banking. States began to liberalize branching laws. The use of the bank holding company corporate structure was expanded as an alternative form of multioffice banking and as a means to enter new product markets. With the introduction of the large, negotiable certificate of deposit, banks' reliance on purchased money increased. In addition to the bank regulatory agencies having to monitor these developments, federal legislation gave them additional enforcement responsibilities in the areas of securities disclosure, antitrust and consumer protection.

As banking entered the 1970s, it was on a new course that had brought it out of the period of post-war stability and into a period of increasing volatility and change.

## **Insured-Bank Failures**

After 20 insured banks failed in 1942, fewer than 10 banks failed in each of the next 32 years. In 1962, one insured bank failed, but it required no disbursement by the FDIC, the only year in the FDIC's history with no failure-related disbursements. Because most of the banks that failed during the period 1942 to 1970 were small institutions, insurance

losses remained low. In just four of these years did losses exceed \$1 million, and losses averaged only \$366,000 per year.

## **Financial Operations**

The deposit insurance fund continued to grow during the 1940s, surpassing \$1 billion at year-end 1946. Because of the highly liquid condition of the banking industry, the legislation passed in the 1930s to reduce risks in many sectors of the economy and the low bank failure rate, many observers felt that a \$1-billion fund was sufficient to cover almost any economic contingency. Apparently, Congress also felt that the fund was adequate at that time and legislatively mandated repayment of the original capital subscriptions. The \$150 million contributed by the Treasury and the \$139 million in capital stock purchased by the Federal Reserve Banks was fully repaid by the end of 1948.

Bankers also had voiced concern that the assessment rate was too high. By 1950 the fund had reached a balance of \$1.2 billion, despite the repayment of capital completed two years earlier. Assessment income had been growing at a high rate, reflecting the rapid growth in bank deposits during the war and post-war years. Moreover, because of low interest rates during this same period, bank earnings lagged increases in prices and deposit insurance expenses.

The FDIC was reluctant to support a permanent reduction in the basic assessment rate. There still was concern that accumulated earnings would be insufficient to handle the increased rate of bank failures that many thought would occur during the 1950s. This fear was reinforced by the decrease in capitalization of the banking industry because of low earnings and rapid asset expansion since 1940.

As a compromise, deposit insurance charges were effectively reduced by the Federal Deposit Insurance Act of 1950. Rather than lowering the basic assessment rate, however, the reduction was accomplished through a rebate system. After deducting operating expenses and insurance losses from gross assessment income, 40 percent was to be retained by the FDIC, with the remainder to be rebated in the form of assessment credits to insured banks. This procedure meant that losses were to be shared by insured banks and the FDIC on a 60/40 basis. This procedure tended to stabilize FDIC earnings despite periods of fluctuating loss experience.

From 1934 to 1949, insured banks had paid an assessment rate of one-twelfth of 1 percent, or 8.3 cents per \$100 of assessable deposits. As a result of the 1950 Act, the effective assessment rate fell to 3.7 cents per \$100. In 1960, the rebate scheme was modified slightly to adjust for a change in the calculation of an institution's assessable deposits, and the rebate proportion was increased from 60 percent to 66-2/3 percent. From 1950 to 1980, the effective assessment rate stayed in the range of 3.1 cents to 3.9 cents per \$100 of assessable deposits, except for a slight blip in 1974 (4.4 cents). Higher insurance losses after 1980 soon eliminated the assessment credits, restoring the effective rate to 8.3 cents (see Chapter 6).

The 1950 Act also required the FDIC to reimburse the Treasury for interest foregone on the initial capital contributions by the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banks. This requirement was the result of an exchange between FDIC Chairman Maple T. Harl and Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois during hearings on the 1950 Act. The exchange went as follows:

Senator Douglas: ...Mr. Harl, on page 2 [of your prepared statement] you speak of making final payment to the Treasury on August 30, 1948, when you paid the Treasury out in full for the loans [capital] which were advanced. Do I understand that to be your statement?

Mr. Harl: We paid them for the money advanced.

Senator Douglas: Would that include the interest upon the Government loan which was made?

Mr. Harl: It did not. The law provided that there should be no dividend upon the capital stock.

Senator Douglas: In practice, the Government has made an advance to the FDIC which has not been repaid; namely, the interest on the bonds which the Government issued, but for which it was not reimbursed.

...

Mr. Harl: ...This Corporation stands ready to reimburse the Government, or anyone else, provided it is legally authorized to do so.

Senator Douglas: You are ready to pay the interest, is that right?

Mr. Harl: If we have an obligation we are ready to pay it.

...

Senator Douglas: That is a possible source of revenue that I had not thought of. This brief conversation, which I at first thought was going to be unprofitable, might yield the Government as much as \$40,000,000. I first thought it was love's labor lost. It may turn out there was gold in "them there hills."<sup>25</sup>

The amount estimated by Senator Douglas was somewhat low. During 1950 and 1951, the FDIC paid approximately \$81 million to the Treasury for the interest foregone on the initial contribution of both the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banks.

An interesting benchmark was passed in 1961 when investment income (\$73.9 million) surpassed assessment revenue (\$73.4 million) for the first time. This remained so until the late 1980s, when insurance losses had eliminated assessment credits, thus increasing assessment revenue, and depleted the fund's investment portfolio and earnings.

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<sup>25</sup> U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Banking and Currency, *Hearings before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency on Bills to Amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act*, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2d sess., January 11, 23 and 30, 1950, pp.27-29.



With the low insurance-loss experience of the 1950s and 1960s, and despite the implementation of the assessment credit program in 1950, the insurance fund continued to grow, reaching \$4.4 billion at the end of 1970. The fund's growth rate trailed that of insured deposits, though, and the reserve ratio declined to 1.25 percent by the end of 1970.

There were three increases in the insurance coverage limit during the years 1942 to 1970. Coverage was raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in 1950, to \$15,000 in 1966 and to \$20,000 in 1969.

## Chapter 6

### A Costly Evolution: 1971 – 1991

The economic environment affecting banks began to change during the 1970s and the pace of change accelerated during the 1980s. Also, the market for financial services became far more competitive as nonbanking companies began to encroach on traditional banking markets and banks sought to enter new product markets. As a result, banking became a riskier and more demanding business than ever before. The ramifications of unforeseen market developments or bad decisions were greatly magnified. This chapter documents some major changes in the banking environment that occurred from 1971 to 1991, a period that included record insured-bank failures and insurance losses and ended with the Bank Insurance Fund technically insolvent by \$7 billion.

#### **Key Economic Variables**

*Foreign exchange-rate volatility.* The period of remarkable post-World War II stability came to an end in the 1970s. An important change resulted from the movement to a floating exchange-rate system from a fixed-rate system that occurred in 1973. As international trade expanded in the post-World War II era, the maintenance of fixed exchange rates required adjustments to trading relationships and domestic economic policies of trading nations that were not optimal. With the Smithsonian Agreement (Washington, DC, 1971), exchange rates among all of the major currencies of the world were realigned and permitted to float without upper and lower bounds. This development predictably gave rise to considerably greater exchange-rate volatility at a time when world trade was expanding rapidly.

Since 1970, there have been periods of relative calm in the exchange rates – for example, 1976 and 1977 – interspersed with periods of substantial volatility, some considerably extended, and periods with volatility varying among currencies. Markets for forwards and futures exchange-rate contracts were developed to permit firms to manage foreign exchange-rate risk more effectively. For example, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange formed the International Money Market in 1972 and began offering the first foreign exchange futures contracts on major currencies. Without well-developed markets for forwards and futures contracts for foreign exchange, this volatility would be less manageable and would significantly lessen foreign trade.

*Interest-rate volatility.* Interest-rate volatility also increased considerably in the 1970s. Oil embargo shocks in 1973 and 1978 resulted in accelerating inflation and contributed considerably to interest-rate volatility. The Federal Reserve dramatically changed monetary policy in October 1979 by switching from an interest-rate target to a monetary aggregates target, such as nonborrowed reserves, with the objective of reducing inflation. The result of this policy was a highly volatile interest-rate period from October 1979 until late 1982.

Interest-rate volatility can give rise to volatility in bank earnings to the extent that banks face gaps between interest-sensitive assets and interest-sensitive liabilities. The causes of this volatility in interest rates have been linked to expectations of changes in future short-term interest rates, fed by the volatility in the rate of inflation and inflation expectations. The yield curve – *i.e.*, the relation between interest rates and maturity – has been volatile and at times has become inverted, such as 1972 through late 1974 and early 1978 through 1982, when the one-year Treasury bond yield was higher than the 10-year yield. This required considerable caution in funding long positions in long-term assets or fixed-rate assets with short-term, variable-rate liabilities. This was a particularly difficult period for FDIC-insured savings banks, which held proportionately more fixed-rate, long-term assets (residential mortgages) than did the typical commercial bank

***Economic conditions.*** Volatility in the 1970s and 1980s also arose from general economic activity. To a considerable extent, the volatility in general economic activity can be traced to real shocks, such as the oil embargoes of the 1970s, wars, dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the fiscal and monetary policies of the major industrialized nations. These shocks caused considerable volatility in commodity prices and real output. The record inflation of the late 1970s was followed by a period of slower inflation, but greater commodity-price volatility. The 1980s also witnessed a surge in the number of newly issued commercial bank charters, which began operations at a time when inexperience was a distinct liability.<sup>26</sup>

The volatility of prices and general economic activity can have a substantial effect on banking performance, as the experience of the 1980s made clear. The sectoral inflation and subsequent deflation of agricultural prices in the late 1970s and early to mid-1980s were major contributors to the failure of hundreds of agricultural banks. Similarly, the boom and subsequent collapse of oil prices caused significant problems for banks in states whose economies had important energy sectors. The declines in real-estate markets in the 1980s and early 1990s caused major problems for many banks. These problems can be traced in part to unanticipated changes in regional economic conditions, as the behavior of real-estate prices departed sharply from past patterns.

## **Developments in the Banking Industry**

The business of banking changed considerably during this period. As noted above, risks increased as interest rates, exchange rates and commodity prices became more volatile and as economic shocks were transmitted more widely *via* the globalization of markets. Meanwhile, competition in the financial marketplace greatly intensified. The traditional intermediation function of banks assumed a smaller role in aggregate economic activity, largely because financial and technological innovations increased the funding options for firms that formerly were restricted to bank loans. Banks were forced to seek new sources of income and to implement untested business strategies, and such experimentation carried inherent risks.

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<sup>26</sup> George Hanc, “The Banking Crisis of the 1980s and Early 1990s,” *FDIC Banking Review* 11, no. 1 (1998), p. 19.

Dramatic evidence that banking became riskier is evident in the annual rates of bank failures. Although annual bank failures exceeded single digits only rarely between 1940 and 1980, failure rates rose rapidly thereafter, to a record high of 280 in 1988. A similar picture emerges from the data on FDIC insurance losses relative to insured deposits. Annual insurance losses were quite stable and extremely low, on average, before 1980, at less than half a basis point (0.005 percent) of insured deposits. Losses for the period from 1980 to 1991 averaged nearly 16 basis points (0.16 percent) and were highly variable.

Net loan charge-offs as a percent of average total loans trended upward beginning in the early 1970s and accelerated rapidly in the 1980s. This ratio was 0.34 percent in 1970 and 0.37 percent in 1980 before soaring to a peak of 1.59 percent in 1991. Over the same period, bank stocks substantially underperformed the Standard & Poor's 500 index.

The effects of increased competition and innovation are inextricably intertwined. Both played a role in the banking industry's declining share of financial-sector credit-market assets since 1971. U.S.-chartered commercial banks held a 37.6-percent share in 1971, but this share declined to 23.2 percent by the end of 1991. Many larger companies found that they could raise money more efficiently by issuing their own commercial paper. In 1971, outstanding commercial paper equaled just 4 percent of banks' commercial and industrial (C&I) loans, but by 1991 this ratio had risen fourfold, to nearly 17 percent. This development had added significance because many of these larger companies had been banks' most creditworthy, "prime" borrowers. During this period, banks also were losing business borrowers to finance companies. In 1971, finance companies' business loans were 15 percent of banks' C&I loans, but by 1991 this ratio had grown to more than 50 percent.

The growth of asset-backed securities represents another dimension of the competitive pressures faced by depository institutions. By increasing the liquidity and efficiency of the credit markets, securitization produces a narrowing of the spreads available to traditional lenders such as banks and thrifts. The outstanding example of this process occurred in the mortgage market, where the proportion of consumer mortgages that had been securitized grew from about 8 percent in 1971 to more than 40 percent as of year-end 1991.

On the liability side, banks faced increasing competition from many nonbank financial institutions. Foremost among these were the money-market mutual funds ( MMMFs), which rose from obscurity in 1975 to prominence by 1981. Because of interest-rate regulations, banks were unable to match the high, market interest rates offered by these instruments. The ratio of MMMF balances to comparable commercial bank deposits (small time and savings deposits) was virtually zero in the mid-1970s, but reached 36 percent by 1981. Despite the elimination by 1983 of most interest-rate controls, MMMFs had established a durable presence. By 1991, the ratio of MMMFs to banks' small time and savings deposits had risen to 39.5 percent.

These developments forced changes in the strategies of commercial bankers. Faced with diminished opportunities for C&I lending, banks shifted into real-estate lending. This new portfolio composition exacerbated the adverse effects on banks of downturns in regional real-estate markets, including the Southwest in the mid-1980s and the Northeast a few years later. This typified other periodic, large-scale movements in and out of particular types of lending, and these portfolio shifts suggested that many banks embarked on a widening search for new profit opportunities in response to the competitive pressures undermining their traditional niche in the financial marketplace.

The behavior of banks in the regions and sectors that suffered recessions during the 1980s exhibited some common elements. Recessions occurred in the Midwest in the early 1980s, in the Southwest in the mid-1980s, in the Northeast in the late 1980s and in California in the early 1990s. In the economic expansions that preceded these recessions, banks generally responded aggressively to rising credit demands. Banks that failed generally had assumed greater risks, on average, than those that survived, as measured by the ratios of total loans and commercial real-estate loans to total assets. Banks that failed generally had not been in a weakened condition, as measured by equity-to-assets ratios, in the years preceding the regional recessions.<sup>27</sup>

### **Safety-and-Soundness Examination Policy**

In 1936, the problems cited most frequently by bank examiners were inadequate capital, excessive insider lending, excessive volume of poor loans, inadequate credit documentation and incompetent management. In a survey 40 years later (1976), these same problems were cited by examiners, along with inadequate liquidity and violations of consumer credit law. Some people recognized, though, that it was becoming increasingly difficult in the 1970s to effect adequate supervision within the confines of policies and procedures designed for the less diversified, less dynamic industry of previous decades.

Edward Roddy, who served as the FDIC's Director of Bank Supervision from 1971 until his death in 1975, was credited by many as being particularly aware of the changes that were taking place and the growing inadequacy of existing supervisory policies. It was largely through his efforts that policies were overhauled in the early and mid-1970s, the first substantive changes in several decades. In an important shift in FDIC policy, it was decided that smaller, sound, well-managed banks did not require annual full-scope examinations and that it would be more effective to concentrate examination resources on those banks presenting greater risks to the insurance fund. This concept was furthered in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the expanded use of off-site monitoring systems to identify institutions posing unacceptable risks and to target supervisory resources.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-18.

## Insured-Bank Failures

*Open-bank assistance.* In 1971, the FDIC utilized for the first time powers granted under the 1950 Act to provide “open-bank assistance” to a failing insured bank. Section 13(c) of the Federal Deposit Insurance Act authorized the FDIC to provide financial assistance to an insured operating bank in danger of closing whenever, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, the continued operation of such a bank is essential to providing adequate banking services to the community. Unity Bank, with deposits of \$9.3 million, was established in 1968 as a community venture to serve the black community of the Roxbury-Dorchester area of Boston, Massachusetts. The bank received a loan from the FDIC in the amount of \$1.5 million, but Unity did not remain viable and in 1982 was merged into another bank with FDIC assistance.

*Failures.* Many of the economic and banking developments described above encouraged banks to take greater risks, but the new environment also provided harsh punishment for their mistakes. The *number* of bank failures during the 1970s and early 1980s remained within historical parameters, but the failed-bank assets and insurance losses soon began to escalate beyond historical levels. When Bank of the Commonwealth (Detroit, Michigan) failed in 1972<sup>28</sup> and United States National Bank (San Diego, California) failed in 1973, they each had total assets greater than \$1 billion and were by far the largest FDIC-insured banks to fail. Insurance losses for 1973 totaled \$67.5 million, nearly double the losses incurred by the FDIC in its previous 39-year history. However, much larger losses were soon to come.

From 1982 through 1991, more than 1,400 FDIC-insured banks failed, including 131 that remained open only through FDIC financial assistance. In Texas alone, more than 500 insured banks failed. Total insurance losses exceeded \$1 billion in each of these 10 years, topping \$6 billion in 1988, 1989 and 1991. The insurance fund had grown to \$18.3 billion by year-end 1987, but these crushing losses quickly exhausted the fund. At the end of 1991, the balance of the Bank Insurance Fund, excluding loss reserves, was *negative* \$7 billion. A succession and overlapping of regional and sectoral problems combined temporarily to overwhelm the system’s ability to absorb losses.

There was a sharp increase in the number of new charters issued in the 1980s, and these institutions suffered a disproportionately high rate of failure. Of the 2,800 banks chartered from 1980 to 1990, 16.2 percent had failed by the end of 1994. By comparison, of the banks that already were in existence at the beginning of 1980, just 7.6 percent had failed by year-end 1994. In New England in the early 1990s, mutual savings banks that converted to the stock form of ownership suffered a similar high rate of failure. After conversion, these institutions had large amounts of new cash to invest, just at the time the

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<sup>28</sup> Bank of the Commonwealth received open-bank assistance from the FDIC, in consultation with the Federal Reserve Board and the State of Michigan, because of its essentiality in providing banking services to minority neighborhoods in Detroit. In 1984, Bank of the Commonwealth was acquired by another bank, without FDIC assistance.

region was plunging into a recession. Twenty-one percent of stock savings banks failed in the early 1990s, compared to 8 percent of mutual savings banks.<sup>29</sup>

## **Financial Operations**

**Insurance coverage.** In 1974, deposit insurance coverage was increased from \$20,000 to \$40,000, and to \$100,000 for deposits held by states and political subdivisions. Coverage was increased to \$100,000 for IRA and Keogh accounts in 1978. In 1980, despite the reservations of the FDIC, deposit insurance coverage for all accounts was increased to \$100,000 by provisions of the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act. This last increase represented a departure from previous changes in insurance coverage, which generally had been more modest and more or less reflected changes in the price level. The increase to \$100,000 was not designed to keep pace with inflation but rather was in recognition that many banks and savings-and-loan associations, facing disintermediation in a high interest-rate climate, had sizable amounts of large certificates of deposit (CDs) outstanding. The new limit facilitated retention of some of these deposits and attraction of new deposits to offset some of the outflows. In 1980, only time accounts with balances in excess of \$100,000 were exempt from interest-rate ceilings.

**Assessments.** In 1980, the assessment credit percentage was reduced from 66-2/3 percent to 60 percent, the level that had been in effect from 1950 to 1960. At this time, there also was established a range in which the reserve ratio of the fund was to be maintained. The assessment credit percentage was to be adjusted if the reserve ratio either exceeded 1.40 percent or fell below 1.10 percent. Because of mounting losses, reduced assessment credits were paid in 1981 through 1983, and no assessment credits were paid thereafter.

Effective assessment rates generally ranged under 4 basis points during the 1970s. Thereafter, rates grew rapidly as insurance losses mounted throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. When the full statutory rate of one-twelfth of 1 percent (8.3 basis points) proved too low, Congress mandated an increase to 12 basis points in 1990 and gave the FDIC board more flexibility to raise rates. With losses continuing at record levels, rates were increased twice in 1991, first to 19.5 basis points and then to 23 basis points.

**FIRREA.** Congress enacted the Financial Institution Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act (FIRREA) in 1989 in a largely successful effort to resolve the savings-and-loan crisis of the 1980s. Many provisions of FIRREA drastically affected FDIC operations. The former Federal Deposit Insurance Fund was renamed the Bank Insurance Fund (BIF), and the FDIC assumed responsibility for the new Savings Association Insurance Fund (SAIF), which replaced the defunct Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Fund. A third fund was placed under FDIC management – the FSLIC Resolution Fund – which consisted of the remaining FSLIC receivership assets. The FDIC also was charged with organizing and, initially, managing the new Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC),

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<sup>29</sup> Hanc, pp. 18-19.

which was created to resolve failed and failing savings associations and to manage savings association receiverships.

***Investment policy.*** By law, FDIC investments essentially are limited to Treasury securities. Before the mid-1970s, the FDIC assumed a passive role in managing its portfolio, allowing the Treasury to invest FDIC funds in whatever issues the Treasury felt appropriate. About this time, though, the FDIC started to shorten the average maturity of its portfolio and began to achieve a better maturity balance with respect to anticipated bank failures and liquidity needs.



## Chapter 7

### A Remarkable Turnaround: 1992 - 1998

In 1991, the commercial banking industry was struggling. A recession in 1990 and early 1991 had trimmed loan demand, losses related primarily to commercial real estate lingered, and the Bank Insurance Fund was insolvent by \$7 billion. More than 1,000 commercial banks, with aggregate assets exceeding \$500 billion, were on the FDIC's "problem bank" list, many of which were expected to fail. The industry earned a return on assets of just 0.53 percent, well below the profitability benchmark of 1 percent. These hardly were measures of an industry on the verge of an unprecedented run of prosperity, but events already were underway that would reverse banks' fortunes.

Short-term interest rates began to plummet in the latter part of 1990. The three-month Treasury bill had an average yield of 7.75 percent in the second quarter of 1990. The yield fell to 4.54 percent by the end of 1991, and it would continue to fall, remaining near 3 percent throughout 1993. Following the 1990-1991 recession, the U.S. economy began an expansion that continued well into 1998.

#### **Developments in the Banking Industry**

**Performance.** Commercial banks earned an industry record \$32 billion in 1992, compared to \$18 billion in 1991. Their earnings would improve in each of the following five years, reaching \$59 billion in 1997. In 1991, one of every nine banks was unprofitable, but by 1997 that figure had fallen to less than one in 20. Part of this earnings improvement was attributable to the overall growth of the industry: total assets were up from \$3.4 trillion at the end of 1991 to \$5 trillion at year-end 1997. However, banks' average return on assets also improved markedly, surpassing 1 percent in each year from 1993 through 1997, including a record 1.23 percent in 1997. Despite this rapid growth in total assets, the growth of bank capital more than kept pace. The ratio of total equity to assets rose from 6.75 percent in 1991 to 8.33 percent at the end of 1997.

Important changes also were underway in the composition of bank earnings. Banks became less reliant on spread-based revenues (*i.e.*, net interest income) and more reliant on noninterest income. Banks and their holding companies diversified into new activities that were less affected by interest-rate swings than were traditional banking products. In 1997, noninterest income was 60 percent of net interest income, up from 49 percent in 1991.

Banks also used this period to improve the quality of their assets. The proportion of noncurrent loans fell from a crippling 3.70 percent in 1991 to under 1 percent in 1997. The level of foreclosed assets also fell dramatically, from \$28 billion in 1991 to \$4.5 billion by the end of 1997. Banks also maintained a high level of loan-loss reserves. Coupled with the decline in noncurrent loans, banks had nearly \$2 in reserves for each dollar of noncurrent loans at year-end 1997, up from 73 cents in 1991. At the end of

1997, the number of institutions on the FDIC's "problem bank" list had fallen to just 71 banks, with total assets of \$5 billion.

**Consolidation.** The number of FDIC-insured commercial banks remained remarkably constant from 1934 to 1988, ranging from 13,000 to 14,500. In 1989, the number of banks fell below 13,000 for the first time and continued to fall, to 9,143 at the end of 1997. Part of this consolidation was attributable to bank holding companies combining their bank subsidiaries, which was facilitated by the Riegle-Neal Interstate Banking and Branching Efficiency Act of 1994. This Act, which became fully phased in by June 1997, also enabled interstate combinations between unaffiliated banks. The most dramatic effects have been mergers between some of the nation's largest banking companies. Some concerns were raised about the ability of smaller banks to compete with these enormous financial conglomerates, but there are many reasons to believe that well-managed community banks will continue to prosper independently. Additional concerns were raised about the ability of the FDIC to handle the failure of one of the "megabanks." This is addressed in Chapter 8.

## **FDICIA**

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act (FDICIA) was enacted in December 1991 as Congress addressed the insolvent Bank Insurance Fund. The Act was comprehensive in nature, covering both insurance funds and their finances as well as supervisory and resolution practices. Its most important provisions are summarized here.

**Risk-based premiums.** By statute, the FDIC had always charged a flat rate for deposit insurance. FDICIA required the FDIC to have in place by 1994 an assessment system wherein each bank's assessment would be reflective of the risks it posed to its insurance fund. The FDIC had backed such a change and implemented a risk-based premium system on January 1, 1993, a year ahead of schedule.

Assessment rate schedules were adopted separately for the BIF and the SAIF. Each schedule was composed of a nine-cell matrix, with rates ranging from 23 cents per \$100 of assessable deposits to 31 cents. Institutions were categorized according to a capital subgroup (1, 2 or 3) and a supervisory subgroup (A, B or C). Thus, the best-rated institutions were in cell 1A, and the weakest institutions were in cell 3C.

FDICIA set the minimum assessment at 23 basis points until each fund was fully capitalized at 1.25 percent of insured deposits. It required the FDIC to adopt a recapitalization schedule for the BIF to achieve full capitalization with 15 years. Such a schedule was adopted in 1992. Because nearly half of SAIF assessments were diverted by law to other purposes, that fund was expected to take even longer to become fully capitalized. A capitalization schedule for the SAIF was not required until 1998.

**Prompt corrective action.** The law required federal regulators to establish five capital zones ranging from well-capitalized to critically undercapitalized that serve as the

basis for mandatory prompt corrective action by regulators. Increasingly harsh restrictions apply to institutions that are less than well-capitalized. Institutions whose tangible capital ratio falls below 2 percent are critically undercapitalized and face closure if the situation is not corrected within 90 days. It was expected that by closing institutions before their capital was totally depleted, losses to the deposit insurance funds would be mitigated. Until FDICIA, the FDIC did not have the authority to close a failing insured bank; that power rested with the chartering authority, which was the Comptroller of the Currency or the state.

***Least-cost resolution.*** FDICIA required the FDIC to select the resolution alternative for failing institutions that results in the lowest cost to the insurance fund. Previously, the FDIC could select any resolution alternative if it was less costly than a payout of insured deposits and liquidation of assets. Thus, if two resolution alternatives were less costly than a payout, previously the FDIC could have chosen either method; under FDICIA, the FDIC must choose the least costly of the two. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the FDIC had routinely protected all depositors, when possible, by transferring all deposits of a failed bank to an acquiring institution, thus protecting even uninsured depositors. That policy was no longer an option.

***Too big to fail.*** Before FDICIA, the FDIC had the authority under the open-bank assistance provisions of the 1950 Act to determine that a failing institution was so large that its failure could result in a systemic risk to the banking system by undermining public confidence. This authority was used only two times, in 1980 with First Pennsylvania Bank (total assets \$8 billion) and in 1984 with Continental Illinois National Bank (total assets \$45 billion). Both instances required a finding of essentiality.

FDICIA requires that, in situations threatening systemic risk, the FDIC Board, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the President, must agree that the closure of the insured institution would have a serious effect on economic conditions or financial stability. Any loss to an insurance fund under this exception must be recovered through a special assessment paid by members of that fund. This authority has not yet been used.

***Borrowing authority.*** FDICIA also increased from \$5 billion to \$30 billion the amount the FDIC is authorized to borrow from the Treasury to cover insurance losses. Any borrowings were to be repaid through deposit insurance assessments. In 1990, the FDIC was authorized to borrow money for working capital from the Federal Financing Bank. Any borrowings were to be repaid by the sale of receivership assets. These provisions were necessary because when an institution fails, the FDIC has large initial expenses – the payment of insured deposits – and relatively slow recovery through the sale of receivership assets. Working capital borrowings, which amounted to about \$10 billion at year-ends 1991 and 1992, were repaid in full in 1993.

## **Depositor Preference**

The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 included provisions that established a uniform order for distributing the assets of failed insured depository institutions. Previously, federal and state laws often set different priorities in terms of the hierarchical order for payment of receivership claims. Under the national depositor preference law, a failed institution's assets are to be distributed in the following order:

1. The administrative expenses of the receiver;
2. The claims of all depositors, including the FDIC in the place of insured depositors;
3. General creditor claims;
4. Subordinated creditor claims; and
5. The claims of shareholders.

The law was expected to reduce the cost of resolutions and thus conserve the deposit insurance funds.

## **Insured-Bank Failures**

The profitability of the overall banking industry recovered quickly in 1992, but some banks did not survive the travails of the preceding years. One hundred twenty-seven banks failed in 1992, resulting in estimated insurance losses of \$3.6 billion.<sup>30</sup> The industry's financial health was evident in the lower numbers of failures and losses in subsequent years. From 41 failures in 1993, the numbers fell to 13, six, five and one in the years 1994 through 1997, respectively, and insurance losses declined proportionately. The low failure experience has continued in 1998. Through the first eight months of the year, just three commercial banks failed, resulting in estimated losses of \$33 million.

## **Financial Operations**

The Bank Insurance Fund recovered far more quickly than was anticipated from its insolvency at year-end 1991. With declining insurance losses and substantially higher assessment revenue mandated by FDICIA, the fund balance became positive in 1993 and reached full capitalization in May 1995. At midyear 1995, the fund's balance was \$24.7 billion, which represented 1.29 percent of insured deposits.

It is important to note that the recovery of the BIF was aided significantly by a reduction in the reserves previously set aside for anticipated failures. Failures projected by the FDIC and the General Accounting Office in the early 1990s did not materialize as the banking industry went on to seven years of record profits. In 1992, 1993 and 1994, the FDIC recorded *negative* loss provisions totaling \$12.8 billion, which increased net

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<sup>30</sup> Insurance losses for any given year include estimated losses for institutions that failed during that year as well as adjustments to estimated losses for institutions that failed in previous years.

income and the fund balance. Much smaller – though still negative – loss provisions were recorded in 1995 through 1997.

***BIF assessment rates.*** With the BIF recapitalized in 1995, the FDIC was able to reduce deposit insurance assessments for BIF members. In recognizing the legislative safeguards recently implemented, the FDIC Board concluded that the insurance losses of the 1980s and early 1990s were atypical of what could be expected in the foreseeable future. The staff determined that an assessment rate of 4 to 5 basis points would have been sufficient to balance revenues and expenses – and capitalize deposit growth – in the period from 1950 to 1980.<sup>31</sup> However, the Board also wanted to maintain risk-based pricing, so rates were reduced from a range of 23 to 31 basis points to a range of 4 to 31 basis points, effective June 1, 1995. Because of incentives in the risk-based premium system and improvements in the health of the industry, the vast majority of banks – nearly 92 percent – were in the 1A rate cell and qualified for the lowest rate. The average assessment rate was 4.4 basis points, down from 23.2 basis points before recapitalization of the BIF. Also, by increasing the spread from 8 basis points (23 to 31) to 27 basis points (4 to 31), the Board hoped to provide additional financial incentive to weaker banks to improve their condition.

Later in 1995, the Board lowered BIF rates again, to a range of 0 to 27 basis points, effective at the start of 1996. Because of the low level of projected insurance losses and receivership activity, the Board determined that investment earnings would be sufficient to cover the BIF's expenses. To maintain the incentives provided by risk-based pricing, though, it was decided to retain higher rates for banks presenting greater risks to the fund. In 1997, BIF assessment revenues totaled just \$25 million, compared to \$5.6 billion in 1994.

***SAIF assessment rates.*** At the time the BIF became recapitalized in 1995, the SAIF still was substantially short of the designated reserve ratio of 1.25 percent. On June 30, 1995, the fund balance was \$2.6 billion, and its reserve ratio was just 0.36 percent. Therefore, SAIF assessment rates could not be set lower than 23 basis points,<sup>32</sup> and there existed a sizable differential between SAIF assessment rates and the new BIF rates. It soon became apparent that this provided sufficient incentive to SAIF members to shift deposits to BIF insurance. Despite legislative and regulatory prohibitions, some SAIF members succeeded to some extent. Concern arose that if SAIF-assessable deposits continued to shrink, it eventually would not be able to meet its insurance and other financial obligations. Moreover, it was likely to be the stronger institutions that would be successful in shifting deposits, leaving the SAIF with a higher risk profile.

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<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, this was the same exercise undertaken by FDIC staff 60 years earlier, based on the period 1865 to 1934, in recommending an assessment rate when Congress was drafting the Banking Act of 1935. The results were not widely dissimilar.

<sup>32</sup> Under FIRREA, the FDIC Board had the option of reducing SAIF assessment rates to 18 basis points during the period from January 1, 1994 to December 31, 1997. However, the Board opted to maintain the minimum rate at 23 basis points until the SAIF was fully capitalized.

Congress responded with the Deposit Insurance Funds Act of 1996 (Funds Act). It called for a special assessment – later set by the FDIC at 65.7 basis points – on all SAIF-assessable deposits in order to bring the fund to full capitalization. The special assessment brought in \$4.5 billion and raised the fund balance to \$8.7 billion. The SAIF faced another significant problem, however. SAIF assessments of up to \$793 million annually were diverted to cover interest payments by the Financing Corporation (FICO) on 30-year bonds issued in the 1980s in an effort to end the savings-and-loan crisis. This amounted to nearly half of all SAIF assessments and was the primary reason why the fund’s growth lagged behind that of the BIF. Even when fully capitalized, SAIF assessment rates of 12 basis points or more would have been needed to cover expenses and fund FICO interest payments. The Funds Act allocated the FICO expense to all FDIC-insured institutions. Beginning in 1997, BIF members became subject to FICO assessment, though at a lower initial rate than SAIF members. SAIF members’ costs were reduced significantly, and beginning in 2000, all insured institutions will pay a *pro rata* share of the FICO expense, expected to be about 2 basis points annually.

With the SAIF fully capitalized, the FDIC was able to lower SAIF assessment rates to a range of 0 to 27 basis points, the same as paid by BIF members, effective October 1, 1996.

## **Chapter 8**

# **Current Issues in Deposit Insurance**

Federal deposit insurance was an extremely important factor in restoring public confidence in the banking system in the 1930s. Deposit insurance may play a smaller role in today's relatively stable economic environment, but in periods of adversity or change, deposit insurance gains consequence. As recounted in Chapter 6, financial markets in the United States and around the world, in many respects, have become and are expected to remain more volatile than in the past. The effects of this volatility on depository institutions may have been masked, to some extent, by the recent favorable environment, with low and stable interest rates and a prolonged economic expansion. As well, the huge returns earned in the stock market in recent years have reduced for many investors the attractiveness of bank deposits and, thereby, the perceived value of deposit insurance.

Even in this current period of relative stability, however, consumers remain quite concerned about deposit insurance. The FDIC constantly receives inquiries from consumers about certain banks' insurance status, and the Division of Compliance and Consumer Affairs recently added an option to determine "Is my bank insured?" on the FDIC's Web site. Consumers also call frequently to determine the amount of insurance coverage on various types of accounts.

Many banks have reduced the risks that they faced in the past. Interest-rate risk-management has improved, banks in general are less dependent on spread-based income, and bank supervisors have implemented new programs that are expected to be more effective in identifying and addressing emerging risks. Only 16 FDIC-insured institutions have failed since the beginning of 1995, including 15 BIF members and one SAIF member. There is no evidence, though, that the business cycle has ceased to exist, and these improvements in bank and supervisory practices have yet to be tested in an adverse environment. Perhaps more significantly, some behaviors of the past remain unchanged. As an economic expansion wanes, profit margins narrow, competition for creditworthy borrowers increases, and underwriting standards are compromised in many instances.

At the end of 1997, for all FDIC-insured banks and thrifts, insured deposits comprised less than half of total liabilities for the first time. This proportion fell from more than 60 percent earlier in the 1990s to 49.6 percent at year-end 1997. This likely is attributable, in part, to the favorable environment. In a choppy or adverse economic climate, bank deposits in general, and insured deposits in particular, are likely to gain favor. It also has been the FDIC's experience that when an insured institution encounters difficulties, uninsured depositors quickly seek protection. This can be accomplished in many ways, such as by withdrawing uninsured deposits or by obtaining or increasing loans against which to offset uninsured deposit claims in the event of a failure.

Overall, the federal deposit insurance program has served the nation well. However, a number of deposit insurance issues currently face the FDIC, the Congress and the banking industry. The FDIC sponsored a symposium on deposit insurance on January 29, 1998, in order to facilitate a discussion of the role and nature of deposit insurance in the current financial services environment. The symposium addressed the issues related to deposit insurance and financial modernization, in light of the recent rapid pace of banking evolution and the prospect of newly permissible activities for banking organizations; the various deposit insurance reform proposals that would curtail the role of the federal government in protecting depositors; and the right balance between the pursuit of safety and soundness and the need to allow banks to compete and evolve. Some current issues are summarized below.

### **The Year 2000 Date Change**

One of the more immediate deposit insurance issues to be addressed involves the Year 2000 date change. Much needed attention has been focused recently on the potential for computer systems to encounter problems handling the date change into the next century. Many older computer applications stored the year as a two-digit number and, unless corrected, these programs are likely to interpret January 1, 2000, as January 1, 1900. The financial-services industry is viewed as particularly vulnerable to this problem. In addition to making certain their own systems are “Y2K-compliant,” bank regulators have incorporated Y2K standards into the bank examination process. Banks not making adequate progress in evaluating, fixing and testing their systems are subject to regulatory sanctions. Vendors providing information processing and services to banks also are subject to these requirements.

The FDIC expects some number of “technological” bank failures to occur shortly before or after the Year 2000 date change. The actual number of Y2K failures is impossible to predict, however. Because of the uncertainties, the FDIC and the other federal banking agencies must be prepared if the problems and failures become widespread. In addition to other Y2K initiatives, the FDIC has established a Failed Financial Institutions Y2K Action Plan, led by Mitchell Glassman, Deputy Director of the Division of Resolutions and Receiverships. According to Glassman, the problem presents some unprecedented challenges:

Banking is much more interconnected than it was the last time we faced a major crisis. This means, more than ever, that regional problems won't be as typical as they were the last time. This time, a failure in North Carolina could impact institutions in Idaho in a way that was unthinkable a decade ago.<sup>33</sup>

As an example of the potential problems identified by the group, the traditional methods used to verify deposit records could be complicated if a failed bank's computer systems are inoperable or unreliable. A critical need in this contingency planning process is to identify all people within the FDIC with experience in handling failed institutions because, with the decline in failures in recent years, many former resolution specialists

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<sup>33</sup> “Preparing for the Unexpected,” *FDIC News*, August 1998, p. 3.



have moved to other positions. To be prepared for a worst-case Y2K scenario, the group is identifying other FDIC employees with applicable experience, personnel at the other federal banking agencies and contractors.

## **Consolidation and Bank Failures**

The five largest banking company mergers in U.S. history all were announced or completed in 1998. The largest of these – Travelers Group and Citicorp – will result in a company with total assets of approximately \$700 billion, more than double the assets of the largest U.S. banking company at the end of 1997. The combination of NationsBank and BankAmerica will result in a company with total assets of approximately \$525 billion. These and other large, complex financial conglomerates present new challenges to the FDIC and other bank regulators.

The consolidation of banks serving different product and geographic markets can diversify risk and decrease earnings volatility, thereby decreasing the likelihood of failure. Regional recessions and sectoral downturns contributed to many of the bank and thrift failures in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of the institutions that failed or were troubled tended to have either geographic or product concentrations. Broader diversification of risk through mergers of institutions serving different markets can moderate the effects of economic downturns on these institutions. Consolidation of banking organizations also may be able to reduce duplicative back-office and other administrative costs, although the actual value of these cost savings remains uncertain. The resources and broader array of activities of these banks should enable them to compete more effectively in international markets. However, no banking organization is immune to failure.

Certainly, the deposit insurance funds face larger potential losses from the failure of a single large, consolidated institution. Insurance is based on the concept of diversifying risk. If an institution gets too large relative to the industry as a whole, it becomes increasingly difficult to diversify risk. Larger institutions also are more complex and tend to be involved in more nontraditional activities. Large banks pose more challenges when they fail, and the failure of a very large bank has the potential for creating systemic risk, although measures enacted in FDICIA, though as yet untested, were designed to improve the ability of the government to handle situations involving systemic risk. The unprecedented failures of a number of very large financial institutions simultaneously would be more problematic, but it is questionable whether it would be appropriate to maintain insurance funds that are large enough to address an absolute worst-case scenario.

Effective supervisory oversight remains the regulators' most important tool. The recent implementation of risk-focused examinations by the federal banking agencies and the programs already in place for coordinated oversight of large, complex institutions provide a strong foundation for addressing the challenges of industry consolidation. Regulators ensure that proper controls and practices are in place and assess management's ability to identify, measure, monitor and control risk within an institution.

Going forward, the agencies will determine whether examiners need additional training to address new activities and whether supervisory programs need to be modified.<sup>34</sup>

## **Merger of the Insurance Funds**

The Deposit Insurance Funds Act of 1996 contained provisions to merge the BIF and the SAIF, effective January 1, 1999. However, the merger can become effective only if there are no insured savings associations in existence on that date. This condition apparently was included to force consideration of bank and thrift charter issues and the perceived unfair advantages of the thrift charter. Thus, Congress recognized the desirability of merging the two deposit insurance funds, but it tied the merger to largely unrelated issues. Arguments against a merger of the funds emanate primarily from bankers who are opposed to exposing their insurance fund to a repeat of the thrift losses of the 1980s.

The FDIC consistently has supported a merger of the two insurance funds. The FDIC has argued that the SAIF insures far fewer, and more geographically concentrated, institutions than does the BIF and consequently faces greater long-term structural risks. A combined BIF and SAIF would have a larger membership and a broader distribution of geographic and product risks and would be stronger than either fund alone. Currently, both funds are fully capitalized, their members are healthy and profitable, and the BIF and SAIF reserve ratios are very close and are expected to remain so in the near future. This means that a merger of the funds at this time would not result in a material dilution of either.<sup>35</sup>

The FDIC is required to set assessment rates independently for each of the insurance funds. At the present time, the assessment rate schedules for the two funds are identical. However, the funds' memberships have quite different risk profiles, and it is likely that rates will differ at some time in the future. Before the capitalization of the SAIF in 1996, the FDIC had experience with differing rates for BIF- and SAIF-assessable deposits. The result was the shifting of deposits between BIF- and SAIF-insured institutions. Such market distortions have an economic cost as institutions devote resources to countering artificial statutory distinctions. As well, the maintenance of two insurance funds has resulted in additional administrative costs to the FDIC and to the insured institutions that hold both BIF- and SAIF-insured deposits, which must be tracked, reported and assessed separately.

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<sup>34</sup> Testimony of Andrew C. Hove, Jr., Acting Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, on Mergers in the Financial Services Industry before the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, United States House of Representatives, April 29, 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Testimony of Donna Tanoue, Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, on Financial Modernization before the Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, United States Senate, June 25, 1998.

## Definition of the Assessment Base

Assessment rates are set semiannually, and institutions pay assessments at the end of each quarter. The deposit base against which assessments are charged can be defined simply as total domestic deposits, less a downward adjustment for “float.” Since float is more applicable to transaction accounts than to time and savings accounts, commercial banks typically have a larger float adjustment than do thrifts. The float adjustment, which is performed by the FDIC rather than reported by insured institutions, is quite complex. Also, because the assessment base is derived from total domestic deposits, institutions pay assessments on deposits in accounts that exceed the insurance coverage limit, currently \$100,000.

Assessable deposits are measured at the end of each quarter. The FDIC has expressed concern that this gives institutions and their depositors the opportunity to “sweep” deposits out of their accounts on the last day of the quarter and thereby lower the institution’s assessment base. Some insured institutions pass deposit insurance costs directly to business account holders, so the depositors would have incentive to sweep the account each quarter. This practice would be discouraged, or eliminated, if the assessment base were measured using average daily deposits or some similar measure. It also would result in an assessment base measurement more closely correlated with the FDIC’s risk exposure. The FDIC is considering a number of alternatives for measuring the assessment base.

## Optimal Size of the Insurance Fund

The Deposit Insurance Funds Act of 1996 set the Designated Reserve Ratio (DRR) for both insurance funds at 1.25 percent. The FDIC Board has the authority to raise either fund’s DRR for a calendar year if the Board foresees a significant risk of loss. The Act requires the Board to set assessment rates at a level that maintains the reserve ratio at the DRR. If the ratio falls below the DRR and remains there for more than one year, assessment rates must be set at a minimum of 23 basis points until the fund recovers. If the BIF reserve ratio exceeds the DRR, there are provisions to refund assessments to the best-rated banks. There are no refund provisions for the SAIF. As of March 31, 1998, the balance of the BIF was \$28.6 billion and its reserve ratio stood at 1.37 percent. The amount of the “excess” fund above 1.25 percent was \$2.6 billion. However, assessment refunds currently are not possible because the best-rated banks are not paying assessments.

There are two related concerns. First, should the law be modified to permit refunds of amounts above the DRR regardless of assessments paid? Second, is 1.25 percent the appropriate target for the size of the fund?

**Refunds.** If the refund law were liberalized, the result could be a “pay-as-you-go” insurance system. This would permit rates to fluctuate widely during periods of adversity, and banks would be forced to pay significantly higher rates at times when many could least afford it. FDIC staff determined that assessment rates as high as 62

basis points would have been required during the 1980s if such a policy had been in effect. If there were some cushion in the fund above the DRR, assessment-rate increases could be forestalled or lessened when a downturn occurs. Rate increases also could be forestalled or lessened if the FDIC had more flexibility in setting rates when the reserve ratio falls below 1.25 percent.

**Reserve ratio.** In 1980, legislation established 1.25 percent as the midpoint of the range in which the reserve ratio was to be maintained. If the ratio surpassed 1.40 percent, refunds were required; and if the ratio fell below 1.10 percent, additional assessments were required. The 1996 Act eliminated the range and set the specific target at 1.25 percent. This topic has engendered much discussion – and disagreement – among regulators, bankers and analysts. The issue is at the heart of proposals to reform deposit insurance, both by those who wish fundamental changes and those who wish more modest improvements.

Recent FDIC research found that in periods of very high losses, with assessment rates at 23 basis points, there is only a small chance of the BIF becoming insolvent. However, the reserve ratio is likely to fall well below the statutory minimum. It also was determined that increasing the minimum reserve ratio (to 1.50 percent, for example) would not permit substantially lower assessment rates in these circumstances.<sup>36</sup> The paper cautions that the research was based on the BIF’s historical loss experience and that there is no guaranty that future banking crises will mirror historical events, given recent industry consolidation and other developments. If the industry were to encounter severe problems, it may be preferable to allow a deficient insurance fund to recapitalize more slowly and with lower assessment rates than are possible under current law.

## **Bank Practices and Supervisory Ratings**

In the discussion of risk-based premiums in Chapter 7, it was stated that institutions are categorized in the rate-cell matrix according to their capital subgroup and their supervisory subgroup. The former is determined semiannually, using the most recent Report of Condition. The latter is determined primarily from an institution’s most recent examination rating, although other factors sometimes are considered. As required by law, institutions generally are examined every 12 to 18 months. Those undertaking unacceptable risks, therefore, would not be penalized by the assessment system unless and until the risk-taking resulted in a supervisory rating downgrade.

At this time, the FDIC is concerned about eroding underwriting standards and other such practices that often appear late in a business cycle in an effort to sustain high profits. However, this has not yet been reflected in any appreciable movement of institutions out the best-rated, 1A cell of the assessment rate matrix. This may be due, in part, to the unavoidable lag in the examination process. The FDIC is considering ways to

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<sup>36</sup> Kevin P. Sheehan, “Capitalization of the Bank Insurance Fund,” *FDIC Working Paper 98-1*, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Division of Research and Statistics (1998), pp. 29-31.

identify in a more timely manner changes in bank practices that result in greater risks to the deposit insurance funds.

**Appendix**  
**Table A-1**  
**Bank Insurance Fund Failures and Losses, 1934 – 1997**  
(\$ Thousands)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Failed Banks<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Disbursements</b>	<b>Recoveries</b>	<b>Estimated Additional Recoveries</b>	<b>Estimated Losses</b>
1997	1	\$25,546	\$0	\$22,046	\$3,500
1996	5	169,397	112,813	12,888	43,696
1995	6	717,799	599,183	25,382	93,234
1994	13	1,224,797	1,005,791	37,389	181,617
1993	41	1,797,297	1,101,836	45,651	649,810
1992	122	14,084,663	10,024,475	303,402	3,756,786
1991	127	21,412,647	14,439,929	723,233	6,249,485
1990	169	10,816,602	7,946,378	83,079	2,787,145
1989	207	11,445,829	5,193,395	42,748	6,209,686
1988	280	12,163,006	5,211,565	2,244	6,949,197
1987	203	5,037,871	3,012,316	2,559	2,022,996
1986	145	4,790,969	3,008,165	1,062	1,781,742
1985	120	2,920,687	1,913,317	218	1,007,152
1984	80	7,696,215	6,054,326	1,734	1,640,155
1983	48	3,807,082	2,429,941	532	1,376,609
1982	42	2,275,150	1,106,579	0	1,168,571
1981	10	888,999	107,221	0	781,778
1980	11	152,355	121,675	0	30,680
1979	10	90,351	74,246	0	10,867
1978	7	548,568	510,613	0	9,015
1977	6	26,650	20,654	0	2,093
1976	16	599,397	559,430	0	247
1975	13	332,046	292,431	0	16,312
1974	4	2,403,277	2,259,633	0	40
1973	6	435,238	368,852	0	67,487
1972	1	16,189	14,501	0	1,696
1971	6	171,646	171,430	0	193
1970	7	51,566	51,294	0	272
1969	9	42,072	41,910	0	162
1968	3	6,476	6,464	0	12
1967	4	8,097	7,087	0	1,010
1966	7	10,020	9,541	0	245
1965	5	11,479	10,816	0	663
1964	7	13,712	12,171	0	1,541
1963	2	19,172	18,886	0	286
1962	0	0	0	0	0
1961	5	6,201	4,699	0	1,502
1960	1	4,765	4,765	0	0
1959	3	1,835	1,738	0	97
1958	4	3,051	3,023	0	28
1957	1	1,031	1,031	0	0
1956	2	3,499	3,286	0	213
1955	5	7,315	7,085	0	230

(continued)

**Table A-1 (continued)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Failed Banks<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Disbursements</b>	<b>Recoveries</b>	<b>Estimated Additional Recoveries</b>	<b>Estimated Losses</b>
1954	2	1,029	771	0	258
1953	2	5,359	5,359	0	0
1952	3	1,525	733	0	792
1951	2	1,986	1,986	0	0
1950	4	4,404	3,019	0	1,385
1949	4	2,685	2,316	0	369
1948	3	3,150	2,509	0	641
1947	5	2,038	1,979	0	59
1946	1	274	274	0	0
1945	1	1,845	1,845	0	0
1944	2	1,532	1,492	0	40
1943	5	7,230	7,107	0	123
1942	20	11,684	10,996	0	688
1941	15	25,061	24,470	0	591
1940	43	87,899	84,103	0	3,706
1939	60	81,828	74,676	0	7,152
1938	74	34,394	31,969	0	2,425
1937	75	20,204	16,532	0	3,672
1936	69	15,206	12,873	0	2,333
1935	25	9,108	6,423	0	2,685
1934	9	941	734	0	207
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,192</b>	<b>\$106,560,084</b>	<b>\$68,141,200</b>	<b>\$1,304,167</b>	<b>\$37,114,717</b>

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Totals do not include dollar amounts for five open-bank assistance transactions between 1971 and 1980. Excludes eight transactions prior to 1963 that required no disbursements. Also, disbursements, recoveries and estimated additional recoveries do not include working capital advances to and repayments by receiverships.

Sources: 1980–1997, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1997 (1998), p. 104; 1934–1979, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1991 (1992), p. 132.

**Table A-2**  
**Insured Deposits and the Bank Insurance Fund, 1934 – 1997**  
(\$ Millions)

Year	Insurance Coverage	Deposits in Insured Banks		Insurance Fund	Reserve Ratio (%)
		Total	Insured <sup>1</sup>		
1997	\$100,000	\$2,785,990	\$2,055,874	\$28,292.5	1.38
1996	100,000	2,641,797	2,007,042	26,854.4	1.34
1995	100,000	2,478,888	1,951,963	25,453.7	1.30
1994	100,000	2,462,650	1,895,258	21,847.8	1.15
1993	100,000	2,490,816	1,905,245	13,121.6	0.69
1992	100,000	2,512,278	1,945,550	(100.6)	(0.01)
1991	100,000	2,520,074	1,957,722	(7,027.9)	(0.36)
1990	100,000	2,540,930	1,929,612	4,044.5	0.21
1989	100,000	2,465,922	1,873,837	13,209.5	0.70
1988	100,000	2,330,768	1,750,259	14,061.1	0.80
1987	100,000	2,201,549	1,658,802	18,301.8	1.10
1986	100,000	2,167,596	1,634,302	18,253.3	1.12
1985	100,000	1,974,512	1,503,393	17,956.9	1.19
1984	100,000	1,806,520	1,389,874	16,259.4	1.19
1983	100,000	1,690,576	1,268,332	15,429.1	1.22
1982	100,000	1,544,697	1,134,221	13,770.9	1.21
1981	100,000	1,409,322	988,898	12,246.1	1.24
1980	100,000	1,324,463	948,717	11,019.5	1.16
1979	40,000	1,226,943	808,555	9,792.7	1.21
1978	40,000	1,145,835	760,706	8,796.0	1.16
1977	40,000	1,050,435	692,533	7,992.8	1.15
1976	40,000	941,923	628,263	7,268.8	1.16
1975	40,000	875,985	569,101	6,716.0	1.18
1974	40,000	833,277	520,309	6,124.2	1.18
1973	20,000	766,509	465,600	5,615.3	1.21
1972	20,000	697,480	419,756	5,158.7	1.23
1971	20,000	610,685	374,568	4,739.9	1.27
1970	20,000	545,198	349,581	4,379.6	1.25
1969	20,000	495,858	313,085	4,051.1	1.29
1968	15,000	491,513	296,701	3,749.2	1.26
1967	15,000	448,709	261,149	3,485.5	1.33
1966	15,000	401,096	234,150	3,252.0	1.39
1965	10,000	377,400	209,690	3,036.3	1.45
1964	10,000	348,981	191,787	2,844.7	1.48
1963	10,000	313,304	177,381	2,667.9	1.50
1962	10,000	297,548	170,210	2,502.0	1.47
1961	10,000	281,304	160,309	2,353.8	1.47
1960	10,000	260,495	149,684	2,222.2	1.48
1959	10,000	247,589	142,131	2,089.8	1.47
1958	10,000	242,445	137,698	1,965.4	1.43
1957	10,000	225,507	127,055	1,850.5	1.46
1956	10,000	219,393	121,008	1,742.1	1.44
1955	10,000	212,226	116,380	1,639.6	1.41

(continued)



**Table A-2 (continued)**

Year	Insurance Coverage	Deposits in Insured Banks		Insurance Fund	Reserve Ratio (%)
		Total	Insured		
1954	10,000	203,195	110,973	1,542.7	1.39
1953	10,000	193,466	105,610	1,450.7	1.37
1952	10,000	188,142	101,841	1,363.5	1.34
1951	10,000	178,540	96,713	1,282.2	1.33
1950	10,000	167,818	91,359	1,243.9	1.36
1949	5,000	156,786	76,589	1,203.9	1.57
1948	5,000	153,454	75,320	1,065.9	1.42
1947	5,000	154,096	76,254	1,006.1	1.32
1946	5,000	148,458	73,759	1,058.5	1.44
1945	5,000	157,174	67,021	929.2	1.39
1944	5,000	134,662	56,398	804.3	1.43
1943	5,000	111,650	48,440	703.1	1.45
1942	5,000	89,869	32,837	616.9	1.88
1941	5,000	71,209	28,249	553.5	1.96
1940	5,000	65,288	26,638	496.0	1.86
1939	5,000	57,485	24,650	452.7	1.84
1938	5,000	50,791	23,121	420.5	1.82
1937	5,000	48,228	22,557	383.1	1.70
1936	5,000	50,281	22,330	343.4	1.54
1935	5,000	45,125	20,158	306.0	1.52
1934 <sup>2</sup>	5,000	40,060	18,075	291.7	1.61

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Includes only deposits insured by the Bank Insurance Fund; excludes deposits insured by the Savings Association Insurance Fund.

<sup>2</sup> Initial coverage was \$2,500, from January 1, 1934 through June 30, 1934.

*Source:* Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report, 1997 (1998)*, p.106.

**Table A-3**  
**Income and Expenses of the Bank Insurance Fund, 1933 – 1997**  
(\$ Millions)

Year	Income				Assessment Rates <sup>1</sup>		Expenses and Losses			Net Income / (Loss)
	Total	Assessment Income	Assessment Credits	Investment and Other Income	Assessment Rate (BP)	Effective Assessment Rate (BP)	Total	Insurance Losses and Expenses	Admin. and Operating Expenses	
1997	1,615.6	24.7	0.0	1,590.9	0 to 27	0.08	177.3	(427.9)	605.2	1,438.3
1996	1,655.3	72.7	0.0	1,582.6	0 to 27	0.24	254.6	(250.7)	505.3	1,400.7
1995	4,089.1	2,906.9	0.0	1,182.2	4 to 31 <sup>2</sup>	12.4	483.2	12.6	470.6	3,605.9
1994	6,467.0	5,590.6	0.0	8,76.4	23 to 31	23.6	(2,259.1)	(2,682.3)	423.2	8,276.1
1993	6,430.8	5,784.3	0.0	646.5	23 to 31	24.4	(6,791.4)	(7,179.9)	388.5	13,222.2
1992	6,301.5	5,587.8	0.0	713.7	23	23.0	(625.8)	(1,196.6)	570.8 <sup>3</sup>	6,927.3
1991	5,790.0	5,160.5	0.0	629.5	23	21.3	16,862.3	16,578.2	284.1	(11,072.3)
1990	3,838.3	2,855.3	0.0	983.0	12	12.0	13,003.3	12,783.7	219.6	(9,165.0)
1989	3,494.6	1,885.0	0.0	1,609.6	8.3	8.3	4,346.2	4,132.3	213.9	(851.6)
1988	3,347.7	1,773.0	0.0	1,574.7	8.3	8.3	7,588.4	7,364.5	223.9	(4,240.7)
1987	3,319.4	1,696.0	0.0	1,623.4	8.3	8.3	3,270.9	3,066.0	204.9	48.5
1986	3,260.1	1,516.9	0.0	1,743.2	8.3	8.3	2,963.7	2,783.4	180.3	296.4
1985	3,385.4	1,433.4	0.0	1,952.0	8.3	8.3	1,957.9	1,778.7	179.2	1,427.5
1984	3,099.5	1,321.5	0.0	1,778.0	8.3	8.3	1,999.2	1,878.0	151.2	1,100.3
1983	2,628.1	1,214.9	164.0	1,577.2	8.3	7.1	969.9	834.2	135.7	1,658.2
1982	2,524.6	1,108.9	96.2	1,511.9	8.3	7.7	999.8	869.9	129.9	1,524.8
1981	2,074.7	1,039.0	117.1	1,152.8	8.3	7.1	848.1	720.9	127.2	1,226.6
1980	1,310.4	951.9	521.1	879.6	8.3	3.7	83.6	(34.6)	118.2	1,226.8
1979	1,090.4	881.0	524.6	734.0	8.3	3.3	93.7	(13.1)	106.8	996.7
1978	952.1	810.1	443.1	585.1	8.3	3.9	148.9	45.6	103.3	803.2
1977	837.8	731.3	411.9	518.4	8.3	3.7	113.6	24.3	89.3	724.2
1976	764.9	676.1	379.6	468.4	8.3	3.7	212.3	31.9	180.4 <sup>5</sup>	552.6
1975	689.3	641.3	362.4	410.4	8.3	3.6	97.5	29.8	67.7	591.8
1974	668.1	587.4	285.4	366.1	8.3	4.4	159.2	100.0	59.2	508.9
1973	561.0	529.4	283.4	315.0	8.3	3.9	108.2	53.8	54.4	452.8
1972	467.0	468.8	280.3	278.5	8.3	3.3	59.7	10.1	49.6	407.3
1971	415.3	417.2	241.4	239.5	8.3	3.5	60.3	13.4	46.9	355.0
1970	382.7	369.3	210.0	223.4	8.3	3.6	46.0	3.8	42.2	336.7

(continued)

**Table A-3 (continued)**

Year	Income				Assessment Rates <sup>1</sup>		Expenses and Losses			Net Income / (Loss)
	Total	Assessment Income	Assessment Credits	Investment and Other Income	Assessment Rate (BP)	Effective Assessment Rate (BP)	Total	Insurance Losses and Expenses	Admin. and Operating Expenses	
1969	335.8	364.2	220.2	191.8	8.3	3.3	34.5	1.0	33.5	301.3
1968	295.0	334.5	202.1	162.6	8.3	3.3	29.1	0.1	29.0	265.9
1967	263.0	303.1	182.4	142.3	8.3	3.3	27.3	2.9	24.4	235.7
1966	241.0	284.3	172.6	129.3	8.3	3.2	19.9	0.1	19.8	221.1
1965	214.6	260.5	158.3	112.4	8.3	3.2	22.9	5.2	17.7	191.7
1964	197.1	238.2	145.2	104.1	8.3	3.2	18.4	2.9	15.5	178.7
1963	181.9	220.6	136.4	97.7	8.3	3.1	15.1	0.7	14.4	166.8
1962	161.1	203.4	126.9	84.6	8.3	3.1	13.8	0.1	13.7	147.3
1961	147.3	188.9	115.5	73.9	8.3	3.2	14.8	1.6	13.2	132.5
1960	144.6	180.4	100.8	65.0	8.3	3.7	12.5	0.1	12.4	132.1
1959	136.5	178.2	99.6	57.9	8.3	3.7	12.1	0.2	11.9	124.4
1958	126.8	166.8	93.0	53.0	8.3	3.7	11.6	0.0	11.6	115.2
1957	117.3	159.3	90.2	48.2	8.3	3.6	9.7	0.1	9.6	107.6
1956	111.9	155.5	78.3	43.7	8.3	3.7	9.4	0.3	9.1	102.5
1955	105.8	151.5	85.4	39.7	8.3	3.7	9.0	0.3	8.7	96.8
1954	99.7	144.2	81.8	37.3	8.3	3.6	7.8	0.1	7.7	91.9
1953	94.2	138.7	78.5	34.0	8.3	3.6	7.3	0.1	7.2	86.9
1952	88.6	131.0	73.7	31.3	8.3	3.7	7.8	0.8	7.0	80.8
1951	83.5	124.3	70.0	29.2	8.3	3.7	6.6	0.0	6.6	76.9
1950	84.8	122.9	68.7	30.6	8.3	3.7	7.8	1.4	6.4	77.0
1949	151.1	122.7	0.0	28.4	8.3	8.3	6.4	0.3	6.1	144.7
1948	145.6	119.3	0.0	26.3	8.3	8.3	7.0	0.7	6.3	138.6
1947	157.5	114.4	0.0	43.1	8.3	8.3	9.9	0.1	9.8	147.6
1946	130.7	107.0	0.0	23.7	8.3	8.3	10.0	0.1	9.9	120.7
1945	121.0	93.7	0.0	27.3	8.3	8.3	9.4	0.1	9.3	111.6
1944	99.3	80.9	0.0	18.4	8.3	8.3	9.3	0.1	9.2	90.0
1943	86.6	70.0	0.0	16.6	8.3	8.3	9.8	0.2	9.6	76.8
1942	69.1	56.5	0.0	12.6	8.3	8.3	10.1	0.5	9.6	59.0
1941	62.0	51.4	0.0	10.6	8.3	8.3	10.1	0.6	9.5	51.9
1940	55.9	46.2	0.0	9.7	8.3	8.3	12.9	3.5	9.4	43.0

(continued)

**Table A-3 (continued)**

Year	Income				Assessment Rates		Expenses and Losses			Net Income / (Loss)
	Total	Assessment Income	Assessment Credits	Investment and Other Income	Assessment Rate (BP)	Effective Assessment Rate (BP)	Total	Insurance Losses and Expenses	Admin. and Operating Expenses	
1939	51.2	40.7	0.0	10.5	8.3	8.3	16.4	7.2	9.2	34.8
1938	47.7	38.3	0.0	9.4	8.3	8.3	11.3	2.5	8.8	36.4
1937	48.2	38.8	0.0	9.4	8.3	8.3	12.2	3.7	8.5	36.0
1936	43.8	35.6	0.0	8.2	8.3	8.3	10.9	2.6	8.3	32.9
1935	20.8	11.5	0.0	9.3	8.3	8.3	11.3	2.8	8.5	9.5
1934 <sup>6</sup>	7.0	0.0	0.0	7.0	NA	NA	10.0	0.2	9.8	(3.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$75,988.7</b>	<b>\$53,112.7</b>	<b>\$6,709.1</b>	<b>\$29,585.1</b>	--	--	<b>\$47,695.9</b>	<b>\$41,343.2</b>	<b>\$6,352.7</b>	<b>\$28,292.8</b>

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Assessment rates are stated in basis points (1/100 of 1 percent). A rate of 8.3 basis points is equivalent to 8.3 cents per \$100 of assessable deposits.

<sup>2</sup> Effective June 1, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Includes \$210 million for the cumulative effect of an accounting change for certain postretirement benefits.

<sup>4</sup> Effective July 1, 1991. The rate in effect for the first half of 1991 was 19.5 basis points.

<sup>5</sup> Includes \$105 million net loss on government securities.

<sup>6</sup> Includes part of 1933.

*Sources:* 1973 – 1997, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1997 (1998), p.105; 1933 – 1972, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, *Annual Report*, 1996 (1997), p.109.