



# FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TODAY

April 2026

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*News and topics of interest to financial institutions regulated by the  
Department of Banking and Finance*

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## DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL CHANGES



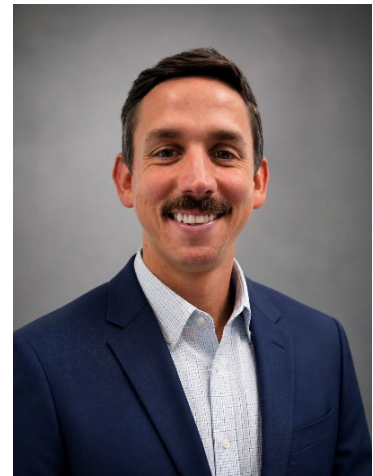
District Director Janet Bryan retired from the Department of Banking and Finance (Department) on April 30, 2026, following 30 years of dedicated service. Janet began her career with the Department in May 1996 and was promoted to District Director for the Southeast District in October 2013. Janet has been an invaluable employee who consistently demonstrated leadership and provided mentorship to numerous colleagues. Janet's contributions to the Department and the financial industry in Georgia will be sincerely missed.

Thank you and congratulations, Janet! We wish you the best in retirement.

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Chris Ward has been promoted to District Director of the Southeast District. Chris joined the Department in 2011 as an Assistant Financial Examiner and ascended through the examiner ranks to the role of Supervisory Examiner in 2019. Throughout his career he has served in several specialty examination areas including credit unions, trust companies, holding companies, capital markets, Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism, and information technology.

Chris holds a BBA in Accounting from Georgia College and State University and is a 2022 graduate from the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University. Chris is also a Certified Examinations Manager. Congratulations Chris!



## AGENCIES FINALIZE CHANGES TO COMMUNITY BANK LEVERAGE RATIO

The federal bank regulatory agencies jointly finalized a rule to modify the community bank leverage ratio (CBLR) consistent with existing regulatory authority. This change provides community banks with greater flexibility to use a simpler measure of capital adequacy and reduce regulatory burden. The final rule considers the unique business models and risk profiles of community banks.

The final rule is being adopted without change from the [proposal](#) issued in November 2025. The rule will lower the CBLR from nine percent to eight percent, which will provide more flexibility for community banks to opt in to the framework. The final rule also extends the grace period from two quarters to four quarters for a community bank that temporarily falls out of compliance. The framework continues to simplify regulatory capital requirements for community banks by allowing them to adopt a relatively simple leverage ratio to measure capital adequacy, rather than calculating and reporting risk-based capital ratios.

Community banks that opt in to the framework will be subject to a capital requirement that continues to promote safety and soundness. Under the framework, banks must maintain a leverage ratio that is significantly higher than the leverage ratio standard otherwise applicable to community banks.

The change will take effect on July 1, 2026. The Financial Institution Letter, including a link to the final rule, can be accessed [here](#).

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## CORE CONVERSION CONSIDERATIONS

Core service providers supply a mission-critical function for financial institutions for centralized operations and data management, operational efficiency and automation, digital integration, security and compliance, and reliability. When a financial institution makes a strategic decision to convert to a new core service provider, fundamental considerations, plans, and execution are vital to ensure data integrity, accessibility, and functionality. Sound governance dictates that adequate planning, resources, and technical competence should be deployed during the states of planning, migration, and post-conversion. Thorough due diligence is paramount and needs to be supported with regular reporting and approval from the Board of Directors. Full consideration should be given to all aspects of the end-to-end process from inception.

### Core Conversion Project Planning

The process of core conversion should begin with a thorough project plan that acts as governance for the full conversion process. The project plan should identify current core system strengths, weaknesses, pain points, and limitations. Management should configure the new system to address the financial institution's specific requirements. The newly considered core service provider should be evaluated based on this assessment, and the project plan should fully incorporate the financial institution's goals and outcomes for the new system. A project manager

should be dedicated and lead a cross-functional conversion team with technical skills necessary to successfully oversee the conversion process. The team should develop and execute an effective communication plan to consider all stakeholders including employees, board members, customers, vendors, regulators, and any other impacted group.

A thorough evaluation and development of a realistic budget and financial impact analysis should be performed for the new core, ancillary systems, deconversion, and other support costs necessary with ongoing operations and sunsetting of systems to be replaced. Timing of sunsetting the existing platform and running on the new platform should be evaluated to ensure there will be no break in core provider services. A review of the fidelity bond coverage for system errors, interruption of service, errors, etc. should also be performed.

The vendor selection process should include a thorough due diligence of the new core system provider. Considerable attention should also be given to the vendor contract. Vendor contracts should receive professional legal review that includes areas such as total cost of ownership, flexibility, functionality, service level agreements, security and compliance, operability with other systems and functionality, termination of the relationship, etc. A thorough risk assessment should be performed for the project. The risk assessment should include the risk of untimely or failed system integrations and contain contingency plans to mitigate identified risks.

Reliable and accurate data is essential for successful conversion. Management should ensure that data is verified for data quality purposes prior to the conversion. Management should also identify all third-party integrations and file mapping in advance. This includes documenting current operational processes with the existing core system to align configurations. Consideration should also be given to access and ownership of the legacy core data.

### Migration

Migration should be guided by a comprehensive data migration plan addressing mapping of all data into a standard format approved by the new vendor. This should include a determination that management has configured the new system to satisfy financial institution requirements. Formal testing plans should include appropriate end users, sufficient load testing, and a formal issue-tracking and resolution process.

Implementation of training plans, socialization and awareness campaigns, and educational materials should continue during this phase for both employees and customers. This includes communication steps to keep customers updated on the conversion progress and addressing questions. Considerations of customer information security, downtime, customer communications, and resolution of processing issues should be thoroughly considered through this stage. Sufficient staff support should be addressed and available for increased customer communication and vendor integration requirements.

Criteria should be defined to pre-determine go-live readiness. Contingency plans should be established if go-live is delayed, including continuation of critical business and/or critical operations without interruption.

## Post Conversion

System validation is vitally important. Management should verify that data has been accurately transferred and the system is functioning as expected for data integrity and consistency. The verification should align with previously established performance and data quality requirements. Monitoring should be continuous after the system is initially implemented. Any unplanned operational issues should be continuously assessed until resolved.

Management should ensure appropriate system security settings are established. This should include reviewing and confirming remote connection access levels; ensuring integrity of default security settings and passwords for all core components; verifying core data-in-transit and data-at-rest is encrypted by default; establishing procedures to ensure core updates, security patches, and other updates are regularly applied; confirming security access level groups and administrators; verifying testing and production environments; and performing a penetration test and vulnerability assessment of the network.

Ongoing support and resources should continue for internal employees and external customers using the new system. An action plan to identify any issues, implement corrective action, track status, and monitor resolution timeframes should be executed. Management should complete a thorough “lessons learned” analysis at the end of the project to gain insights for future projects and create institutional knowledge. Impacted areas to evaluate include an assessment of the conversion causing any unexpected system downtime or any incorrect transactions or fees to post to customer accounts. Key issues should be reported to the core vendor for informational and assistance purposes.

## Additional Resources

While the areas outlined above provide a general overview of key considerations before, during, and after core conversion, these areas should not be viewed as an exhaustive list of factors for the Board and management to evaluate. For additional resources for managing third-party relationships, the Board and management should review the [\*Interagency Guidance on Third-Party Relationships: Risk Management\*](#), which provides sound principles that support a risk-based approach to third-party risk management. Furthermore, the Board and management should also review the [\*FFIEC IT Handbook\*](#) for additional information regarding core conversions and risk management practices.

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## **INVITATION TO COMPLETE 2026 CSBS ANNUAL SURVEY OF COMMUNITY BANKS**

The 2026 Conference of State Bank Supervisors (CSBS) Annual Survey of Community Banks is now open. This survey is a vital component of the Community Banking Research Conference hosted by the CSBS, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). Now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year, the Annual Survey provides a unique opportunity for community bankers to inform researchers, regulators, and policymakers. Survey findings are regularly cited in policymaker speeches and in industry analysis.

The survey takes approximately 25-35 minutes to complete, and responses may be entered during multiple sessions between now and June 30<sup>th</sup>. For reference purposes, a PDF of the 2026 Annual Survey questions is available [here](#). The link to complete the survey is provided [here](#) and below.

To complete the survey, you will be required to provide your FDIC certificate number. If you do not have your FDIC certificate number readily available, you can search for it at the [FDIC website](#). The following topics will be covered:

1. Internal and external risks facing community banks
2. The role of existing and emerging technologies
3. Product and service offerings and competitors
4. Current bank conditions and emerging issues

Survey Link: [https://frbstlspra.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8AJqIQXs2XEAEHc](https://frbstlspra.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8AJqIQXs2XEAEHc)

Survey Close Date: June 30, 2026

Your input is critical to helping ensure a representative view of the community banking landscape. Thank you, in advance, for your time and for the important role you play in supporting your local communities.

If you have questions regarding this survey, please contact Deputy Commissioner Kevin Vaughn at [Kvaughn@dbf.state.ga.us](mailto:Kvaughn@dbf.state.ga.us).

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## **FIRST QUARTER 2026 COMMUNITY BANK SENTIMENT INDEX RELEASED**

The Conference of State Bank Supervisors released the first quarter 2026 Community Bank Sentiment Index (CBSI) results on April 7, 2026, which reflected data collected from community banks across the nation during the month of March 2026. The results show a sentiment index of 131 points, which slipped one point from fourth quarter of 2025 and two points from its record peak six months ago. While community bankers remain optimistic about the future, their outlook on the impact of monetary policies and regulation is waning. The profitability, operations expansion, and franchise value components all increased and remained strongly in the positive territory. However, monetary policy and regulatory burden indicators dropped sharply by 13 points and eight points, respectively.

The CBSI captures, on a quarterly basis, what community bankers nationwide think about the future. Participant answers are analyzed and compiled into a single number; an index reading of 100 indicates a neutral sentiment. Anything above 100 indicates a positive sentiment, and anything below 100 indicates a negative sentiment.

For more information on the first quarter CBSI, visit <https://www.csbs.org/cbindex>.

## **ACTION ON APPLICATIONS FOR THE MONTH**

The following is a summary of official action taken by the Department on certain applications by Georgia state-chartered financial institutions, petitions for certificate of incorporation of financial institutions, and other matters of recent interest:

### Applications For New Financial Institutions

<b>Financial Institution</b>		<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
Private Bank & Trust Gainesville, Georgia		04/10/2026	

### Applications For Financial Institution Mergers

<b>Survivor</b>	<b>Merged Institution</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
Pinnacle Bank Elberton, Georgia	Morris Bank Dublin, Georgia	01/20/2026	04/01/2026
Georgia Banking Company Atlanta, Georgia	Tandem Bank Tucker, Georgia	04/28/2026	

### Applications to Acquire a Financial Institution

<b>Survivor</b>	<b>Acquired Institution</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
Pinnacle Financial Corporation, Inc. Elberton, Georgia	Morris State Bancshares, Inc. Dublin, Georgia	01/20/2026	04/01/2026
Georgia Banking Company, Inc. Atlanta, Georgia	Tandem Bancorp, Inc. Tucker, Georgia	04/28/2026	

## Applications To Establish a Branch Office

<b>Financial Institution</b>	<b>Branch Office</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
Marshland Credit Union Brunswick, Georgia	234 Retreat Village St. Simons Island, Georgia 31522	12/11/2025	04/27/2026
MyGeorgia Credit Union Gainesville, Georgia	5431 South Chestatee Street Dahlonega, Georgia 30533	04/07/2026	
American Pride Bank Macon, Georgia	700 East Morehead Street Suite 150 Charlotte, North Carolina 28202	04/09/2026	
Credit Union of Georgia Woodstock, Georgia	835 Noah Drive Jasper, Georgia 30143	04/23/2026	

## Applications to Change Branch Locations

<b>Financial Institution</b>	<b>Branch Office</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
MembersFirst Credit Union Decatur, Georgia	From: 675 Campbell Hill Street Marietta, Georgia 30060  To: 111 Tower Road Marietta, Georgia 30060	12/29/2025	4/13/2026
Georgia's Own Credit Union Atlanta, Georgia	From: 100-1979 Lakeside Parkway Tucker, Georgia 30084  To: 4650 Hugh Howell Road Tucker, Georgia 30084	04/28/2026	

## Applications to Change Main Office Locations

<b>Financial Institution</b>	<b>Branch Office</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
Southern Bank Sardis, Georgia	From: 731 Charles Perry Avenue Sardis, Georgia 30456  To: 468 East Main Street Spartanburg, South Carolina 29302	03/18/2026	04/14/2026
First Bank of Pike Molena, Georgia	From: 50 Spring Road Molena, Georgia 30258  To: 15 Jackson Street Zebulon, Georgia 30295	Pending	

## Notice of Change in Name

<b>Previous Name</b>	<b>New Name</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
Pinnacle Bank	Vallant Bank	03/31/2026	04/01/2026

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The Department is the state agency that regulates and examines Georgia state-chartered banks, state-chartered credit union, state-chartered trust companies, international banking organizations, and bank holding companies that own Georgia state-chartered financial institutions. The Department also has responsibility for the supervision, regulation, and examination of merchant acquirer limited purpose banks chartered in Georgia.

In addition, the Department has regulatory and/or licensing authority over mortgage brokers, lenders and processors, mortgage loan originators, consumer installment loan companies, check cashers, sellers-issuers of payment instruments, and money transmitters.

**Our Mission** is to promote safe, sound, competitive financial services in Georgia through innovative, responsive regulation and supervision.