FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TODAY

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

CSBS RELEASES 2026 ANNUAL SURVEY OF COMMUNITY BANKS REPORT, FEATURING JIM EDWARDS OF UNITED BANK

The 2026 Conference of State Bank Supervisors' (CSBS) Annual Survey of Community Banks was released at the beginning of October. This year, 330 institutions across 35 states, each with less than $10 billion in total assets responded to the survey. The survey captures community bankers' views on a variety of key risks, including technology, competition, compliance costs, liquidity and funding, and credit. This year's survey report includes additional insights from a Georgia banking leader. Jim Edwards, CEO of United Bank, Zebulon, Georgia, and former Georgia Bankers Association Chairman, is one of five bankers interviewed for the survey (pages 35-36). Edwards reports solid loan demand and credit quality in central Georgia, particularly among building trades, while noting some weakness in trucking and transportation. He also discusses United Bank's investments in digital banking and AI-powered fraud prevention, its cautious approach to tokenized deposits, and the importance of lasting regulatory relief. Five key takeaways of the survey are:

- Deposit pressures persist. Nearly 80% of respondents identified net interest margin pressure as a major risk, followed by core deposit growth at 79%.
- Cybersecurity tops internal risks. Nearly 95% of respondents rated this as a major concern, followed by technology implementation and costs, cited by 75% of respondents.
- Adoption of Artificial Intelligence is growing. About 62% of respondents are already piloting or using AI in some capacity.
- Digital assets are on the radar. Nearly 18% of respondents plan to offer tokenized deposits within 12 months, while 16% plan to introduce stablecoin services.
- Regulatory concerns are easing. The share of respondents identifying regulation as a major external risk fell to 62%, down from 89% in 2024.

The complete 2026 CSBS Annual Survey of Community Banks report can be found here.

THIRD QUARTER 2026 COMMUNITY BANK SENTIMENT INDEX RELEASED

CSBS released the third quarter 2026 Community Bank Sentiment Index (CBSI) results on October 5, 2026, which reflected data collected from community banks across the nation during the month of September. The results showed a sentiment index of 120 points, which is a decline of nine points from the previous quarter.

The CBSI surveys community bankers nationwide in the final month of each quarter to gauge their views on future economic conditions across seven areas. A reading of 100 indicates a neutral sentiment. Anything above 100 indicates a positive sentiment, and anything below 100 indicates a negative sentiment.

For more on the third quarter 2025 CBSI, visit https://www.csbs.org/cbindex.

EMERGENCY AND DISASTER PREPARATION FOR GEORGIA STATE-CHARTERED BANKS

The Department of Banking and Finance (Department) wants to remind each state-chartered financial institution to review their emergency preparedness plan that outlines how the institution will respond to various scenarios in the event of a disaster or emergency. The plan should be tested regularly and updated as needed. The Department developed the Emergency and Disaster Preparation Information for Georgia State-Chartered Financial Institutions to assist with planning considerations related to branch closures, declarations issued by the Governor, temporary locations, Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency re-entry credentials, emergency preparedness considerations, utilization of the Emergency and Strategic Communication Portal, and post-emergency considerations. The primary goals are to reduce and mitigate operational disruptions of financial institutions, enable continued access to financial products and services, and facilitate the recovery of affected communities in emergency and disaster situations.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Senior Deputy Commissioner Melissa Sneed will be participating as a guest panelist during the webinar, Borrow Smart: Dodging the Predatory Lending Trap, hosted by the Georgia Secretary of State's office, on November 16, 2026. Additional information, including registration, can be found here.

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 To Acquire A Financial Institution

Survivor	Merged Institution	Approval Date	Effective Date
Community First Credit Union of Florida Jacksonville, Florida	First Southern Bank Waycross, Georgia	06/02/2026	10/02/2026

Applications For Financial Institution Mergers

Survivor	Merged Institution	Approval Date	Effective Date
Robins Financial Credit Union Warner Robins, Georgia	Harris Employees Credit Union Cordele, Georgia	07/14/2026	10/31/2026

Applications To Establish A Branch Office

Financial Institution	Branch Office	Approval Date	Effective Date
Loyal Trust Bank Johns Creek, Georgia	2260 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard Suite 110 Duluth, Georgia 30097	12/29/2025	08/10/2026
American Pride Bank Macon, Georgia	1621 West Sitka Street Tampa, Florida 33634	06/03/2025	10/05/2026
American Pride Bank Macon, Georgia	2033 Main Street Suite 101 Sarasota, Florida 34237	07/10/2026	10/05/2026
PrimeSouth Bank Blackshear, Georgia	10245 Centurian Parkway North Suite 300 Jacksonville, Florida 32256	08/21/2026	10/15/2026
First Port City Bank Bainbridge, Georgia	450107 State Road 200 Callahan, Florida 32011	06/25/2026	10/19/2026
Bank of Dudley Dudley, Georgia	515 Bass Road Suite A Macon, Georgia 31210	08/24/2026	10/22/2026

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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, foreign 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 and payment stablecoin issuers.

In addition, the Department has regulatory and/or licensing authority over mortgage brokers and lenders, mortgage loan originators, consumer installment loan companies, check cashers, money transmitters, and litigation finance companies.

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