

Build on the political strength you've earned.

## Become a Mile Wide, And a Mile Deep

DANIEL A. MICA



HAPPY NEW Year! Yes, I realize it's March. But here, in my last column in this space as Credit Union National Association (CUNA)

president/CEO, I want to share my own sense of optimism for credit unions in the coming year.

All credit unions deserve a brighter outlook—especially after last year's challenges. There's every reason to look up, rather than down.

Let me offer the following:

- ▶ **Credit union** membership expanded substantially—more than 2% in 2009. That's the greatest annual growth in a decade, and it shows every sign of continuing in 2010;
- ▶ **Positive press** about credit unions graces the front pages of national and local newspapers and fills television and radio broadcasts—particularly when credit unions are compared with banks—all because of the work you do every day putting service to members above everything else;
- ▶ **We're making gains** in Congress, fighting off threats and building support for key initiatives, such as expanded business lending capacity;
- ▶ **Despite the harsh costs** exacted to stabilize the corporate credit union system, the vast majority of credit unions maintain net worth in excess of the "well-capitalized" level—and offer their expanding memberships the best in financial services.

And on that, I've heard from more than one credit union directly that they couldn't participate in a

CUNA event—such as attending the Governmental Affairs Conference—because of the costs heaped on them by the corporate situation. Please believe me when I say, "I get it." But you can rest assured that CUNA is doing everything possible to minimize the ultimate costs of the corporate resolution on credit unions.

*No matter what  
I do, or where  
I go, I'll always  
believe in and  
support CUs.*

When I arrived at CUNA 14 years ago this July, it was in the midst of crisis: A federal appeals court had just overturned federal credit unions' ability to add select employee groups to their fields of membership. It was a potential death blow to the movement.

But we pulled ourselves together, called upon the movement's renowned passion and commitment, and convinced Congress—after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against us on appeal—to allow credit unions to continue building their memberships in this way (and in doing so, we handed the banking industry a rare defeat on Capitol Hill).

I found out through that effort, however, that credit unions were a mile wide in grassroots support, but only an inch deep in their ability

to actually rally that support. We promised ourselves: never again, and pledged to become a political power.

Today we're very close to the final goal. We're now a mile wide, and several feet deep. Through the commitment of credit unions, leagues, and CUNA, we've become one of the strongest political organizations in the nation's capital. I applaud you for that.

Let me leave you with three thoughts:

1. **Build** on the political strength you've earned. Strive to become "a mile wide *and* a mile deep." Our country will be stronger for it.
2. **Resist** efforts by those who would make the credit union movement "partisan" in any way. I've become firmly convinced: The credit union movement isn't a Democratic or Republican institution—it's an American institution, standing for all Americans from every walk of life.
3. **Embrace** efforts by those who call for the credit union movement to speak, and act, as one. It's too expensive, and too divisive, to do otherwise.

So, Happy New Year! You're on the right track and have nowhere to go but up in 2010, and beyond.

And thank you for letting me be a part of your great movement during these past 14 years. No matter what I do or where I go, I'll always believe in and support credit unions. ☺

DANIEL A. MICA is president/CEO of the Credit Union National Association.

Editor's Note: For an in-depth interview with Mica, see p. 34.



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