

SMALL BUSINESS **BIG** OPPORTUNITYSM

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Columbus, Ohio



L to R: Rose Roman, Vice President & Community Development Officer, Commerce National Bank; Michael Echols, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Martin Golden, U.S. Small Business Administration; Joan Woodward, Travelers Institute; and Greg Overmyer, Overmyer Hall Associates.

Columbus small business owners talk cybersecurity and regulatory relief at event featuring Ohio Lt. Gov. Mary Taylor

The Travelers Institute brought its *Small Business – Big Opportunity*SM symposia series to Columbus, Ohio, March 13, 2015, with a message to small business owners: Be aware of your cyber risks and take measures to protect your business.

“By the time a small business sees the signs of a data breach, it could very well be on its way to being out of business,” said speaker **Michael Echols**, Director, Joint Program Management Office, National Protection and Program Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Columbus small business owners turned out for the symposium, held in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland Cincinnati Branch and the Columbus Chamber of Commerce. The event was part of a national tour, *Small Business – Big Opportunity*, led by the Travelers Institute, convening leaders of the small business sector across the U.S. to discuss potential solutions to challenges affecting the country’s entrepreneurs. The Columbus symposium featured Echols; **LaVaughn Henry**, Vice President and Senior Regional Officer from the Cincinnati Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland; and speakers from the U.S. Small Business Administration; Overmyer Hall Associates; Commerce National Bank; and Ohio Lieutenant Governor **Mary Taylor**.

“Without you [small business owners], the economy’s recovery would not be underway,” said **Joan Woodward**, President of the Travelers Institute and Executive Vice President of Public Policy at Travelers.

Yet, Echols warned that a data breach could devastate these drivers of economic growth. “Small businesses are the main target for cyber breaches,” he said, adding, “A breach doesn’t have to be malicious.”

Echols revealed an experiment where blank USB drives were dropped in company parking lots. Some individuals were seen plugging these drives into their work computers.

“If those [USB] drives had malware or viruses, you’re done,” Echols said, adding that there are third-party vendors and free online resources that are available to train employees and establish a safe cyber culture. Echols recommended anti-virus software from vendors like McAfee and Symantec, and information on FCC.gov and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security website, us-cert.gov, which can all be used to help establish a framework of your cyber risks.

“There are huge exposures associated with having sensitive data online,” said **Greg Overmyer**, CEO of Overmyer Hall Associates. A panelist at the Travelers Institute’s event, Overmyer explained how cyber insurance can help a business bounce back after a security breach.

“We had a client who had a laptop stolen out of his car,” Overmyer added. “There were social security numbers of their customers across numerous states on that laptop, and when it came time to notify the customers and adhere to the different state’s regulatory requirements, their cyber liability policy stepped in to cover losses.”



LaVaughn Henry of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland gives the keynote address.



Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor discusses Ohio's Common Sense Initiative on regulatory reform.

Turning to the economy, 68 percent of the audience indicated that their company's revenues have increased in the past year. In fact, according to Henry, small business loans have stabilized at pre-recession levels. **Martin Golden**, District Director of the SBA's Columbus District Office, added that Columbus is in the country's third-largest region for loans under \$50,000.

Henry's research on the regional economy provided even brighter signs. "One thing that really helps the local economy is that it is a highly educated economy," Henry said. "One in three Columbus residents has a college degree. That helps move the economy forward." Henry and the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland expect this trend to continue.

Taylor closed the symposium with a focus on regulatory reform, recounting how the state's Common Sense Initiative had reviewed more than 5,500 regulations impacting business and had amended or rescinded more than half. She shared the story of a company that made marsala wine and was struggling with state liquor laws.

"They were opening individual bottles of wine and pouring them into these thousand pound vats of sauce one bottle at a time. You can imagine – that meant extra people, extra hours, and extra cost," she said. Under the Common Sense Initiative, the state was able to pass a bill in four months that allowed food manufacturers to purchase alcohol wholesale.

So, the news is positive: Ohio's unemployment rate is at its lowest in a decade, and the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council placed Ohio ninth in its annual "Small Business Policy Index" rankings, making it one of the friendliest states for small business owners. Yet, Taylor cautioned, "There's always work to do. You can't take your foot off the gas, otherwise we'll fall behind."

To learn more about the *Small Business – Big Opportunity* symposium series, visit travelersinstitute.org/smallbusiness.

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