



### Dear Friends,

Here we are in Colorado Springs spending a few days looking at our industry – not from behind the window, but from a national perspective. Since our association was founded by a handful of visionary check cashers more than 20 years ago, our efforts to influence the national debate have also changed us as an industry. We are more professional now, more sophisticated, and more mindful of the need to be part of the national discussion on improving the financial lives of the people we serve. This conference affords us with an opportunity to further our thinking about the big picture.

In the past, we had sought to keep a low profile and just go about our business. This strategy no longer serves us well, if it ever did. We have a story to tell – and a good one. For more than 60 years, we have endured in our communities while, from time to time, banks have swept in with great fanfare, troubled the waters, then slunk back out when the numbers weren't there. It's not rocket science. Our business model works better than the bank model. I never get tired of reminding anyone that will listen; we do it faster, better, and cheaper than banks can.

We must make the image the world has of us come into line with reality. We must expose 'reputational risk' for what it is – a threadbare prejudice without foundation. Our main tools to spread the truth are public relations, political action, outreach to government and non-government organizations, and the support of independent research. If creditable people look at what we do in a fair and unbiased way, they will see that we are the good guys.

But while we work to get the true story out there, we must also work to get our own house in order. Many of us have put money, time, and hard work into branding and improving the look of our stores. Our industry owes a debt of thanks to those who have done so. We must encourage all members to do the same, and try to ensure that every storefront in every community is a positive addition, not detraction, to the image we are fighting so hard to improve.

We know we are good – we just have to make sure we are looking good. Let's continue to keep up the drum-beat, and I believe that one day we will take our rightful place at the national table whenever low-income financial services are on the agenda.

Enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Joe Coleman in black ink.

Joe Coleman  
Chairman