

Remarks of Jonathan V. Gould

Comptroller of the Currency

Ohio Bankers League

October 27, 2026

Good afternoon and thank you for having me.

Throughout our nation's history, Ohio has played a pivotal role in shaping the American financial system. During the Civil War, an Ohio native, Salmon P. Chase, serving as President Lincoln's Treasury Secretary, helped build the national banking system. Lincoln and Chase, recognizing the wartime need for reliable paper money and adequate credit, conceived the national banking system and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency to regulate and supervise it. Another Ohio native, Jay Cooke, born in Sandusky, brought government bonds to ordinary families and asked them to invest in their country, helping to finance the war effort and the preservation of our nation.

Fast forward to the 1970s and '80s, Ohio companies like NCR and Diebold helped put ATMs on street corners across the nation in what represented one of the most significant moments of financial technology evolution.

And in 1985, a crisis in Cincinnati's thrifts reminded us that depositor confidence is the foundation of everything we do.

Two hours south of here is the First National Bank of McConnelsville, which opened its doors in 1863—the same year the OCC was established. Founded with capital of \$75,000, it is today the oldest national bank still operating under the same name and the same OCC charter.

Ohio communities are filled with banks that have persisted and thrived through years of change in the American financial system, consistently adapting to meet customer needs. The OCC supervises 65 Ohio institutions, representing \$5.6 trillion in assets, ranging from some of the nation's largest banks to small community banks.

What better place than this state's capital to acknowledge the past while looking toward the future and the evolution of the financial industry.

Just last week, the OCC released the GENIUS Act final rule, which will help advance President Trump and Treasury Secretary Bessent's vision for American leadership in digital assets. In many ways, implementing the GENIUS Act brings us back to our founding mission. Established in 1860s to ensure a sound national currency backed by quality assets, today we are establishing a regulatory framework to ensure payment stablecoins are similarly backed by high-quality reserves.

There are many parallels between the National Currency Act of 1863, which ended the wildcat banking era of the 1800s, and the GENIUS Act of 2025.

In our Final Rule, we provide a clear, practical framework for payment stablecoin innovation, with strong standards for reserve backing, redemption, and risk management. We are doing so while drawing on our longstanding supervisory expertise to support the responsible growth of, and innovation for, this burgeoning industry.

The OCC has made its position clear: Community banks have a role in the future of payments. Under the final rule, there is a pathway for interested community banks to explore issuing payment stablecoins through a subsidiary. And the requirements are meant to fit the size and risk of the issuer, not to be a one-size-fits-all compliance burden that only the biggest institutions can afford.

That is not just a promise on paper. The rule applies the same standards to bank and nonbank issuers, so community banks are not asked to compete on an uneven field. Smaller issuers can qualify for longer exam cycles, much like the extended cycles some small banks already have. Bank deposits can also serve as reserve assets backing stablecoins.

The GENIUS Act and the OCC's Final Rule go into effect on January 18, 2027. The OCC will soon start accepting and processing applications and waiver requests from prospective permitted payment stablecoin issuers.

Given the infancy of the industry, we will closely monitor its evolution and structure and adjust the supervisory and regulatory framework if necessary.

Just as the GENIUS Act allows Main Street Banks to compete and easily access financial innovation, the Trump Administration's Community Bank Comeback is working to right years of overregulation to help community banks thrive.

Our focus has been to reduce and eliminate unnecessary regulatory burden, so community banks have more time to focus on what they do best, serving the financial needs of their customers, supporting their communities, and helping to drive local economic growth. Some of the OCC's efforts include refocusing supervision on material financial risk. That means spending less time on activities that do not improve safety and soundness and more time on the risks that actually matter.

We have eliminated examination activities that were not required by statute or regulation. That gives our examiners greater flexibility to use their judgment based on the bank's size and risk profile. We have also worked with our fellow banking regulators to reduce compliance burden by expanding the scope of banks eligible for the Community Bank Leverage Ratio. And we reduced the cost of OCC supervision by lowering assessment rates.

Working with the FDIC, we finalized our rule prohibiting our use of reputation risk, making clear that banks should be free to serve customers without regulators relying on subjective notions of reputational risk.

The GENIUS Act Final Rule and the Community Bank Comeback run parallel in that they both help community banks thrive and remain dynamic as the financial industry evolves. Community Banks will be key in helping shape the next generation of payments. As the industry evolves, your institutions will do what they have been doing for centuries: growing and changing to meet the needs of your customers.

Since our creation during the Civil War, the OCC's nationwide banking markets created the economic union necessary to support the political union forged on the battlefields. We at the OCC are proud of our role, and as we celebrate America's 250th anniversary year, we remain committed to supporting the growth and dynamism that have defined our federal banking system since its inception. We will continue to ensure regulatory frameworks and supervision allow for this evolution while maintaining the safety and soundness of the financial system.

Thank you.