



Claude Clarke Political Inspiration Award

This award recognizes outstanding efforts to increase awareness of credit unions and credit union issues among public policymakers and lawmakers. The award will be presented during the Ohio Credit Union League ZENITH10, April 15-16, in Cincinnati.

Claude Clarke, a Cleveland attorney, was hired by Roy Bergengren in 1928 to help create and pass credit union legislation in Ohio. Together, Clarke and Bergengren worked for three years to craft and refine proposed state credit union legislation and in 1931 the Ohio Credit Union Act was signed into law by Governor George White.

During the four years that followed, Clarke represented the Credit Union National Extension Bureau (which would become CUNA) in Ohio and spread the credit union story. Clarke was among the credit union officials to journey to Estes Park, Colorado, to establish a national credit union movement.

The Ohio Credit Union League was created in 1934 and Clarke served as the part-time managing director without pay.

In 2009, Catherine Herring of Communicating Arts CU and Seven Seventeen CU won the individual and credit union categories, respectively.

Purpose:

The Claude Clarke Political Inspiration Award formally recognizes the leadership of an individual, a credit union, and/or a chapter for state and national political activism and involvement on behalf of the Credit Union Movement.

Process:

The award will be considered annually, and all procedures established by the Ohio Credit Union League must be followed. An individual, a credit union, or a chapter must be nominated in writing for the Claude Clarke Political Inspiration Award. Any individual nominated must be a staff member of a League-affiliated credit union or serve as an active volunteer of a League-affiliated credit union; and any credit union nominated must be a League-affiliated credit union.

Nominations are due by noon on Feb. 26, 2010.

Entries are limited to one per credit union.

Award Categories:

A committee appointed by the Ohio Credit Union League Board of Directors will select winners from each of the following categories:

- Individual
- Credit Union
- Chapter

Qualifications:

1. Nominee must currently be employed by a League-affiliated credit union or serve as an active volunteer of a League-affiliated credit union; be a League-affiliated credit union; or be a chapter of the League.
2. Nominee must be dedicated to and believe in the importance of continued credit union political advocacy.



Credit Union Nomination Form

Credit Union: Seven Seventeen Credit Union

CEO: Gary Soukenik

Address: 3181 Larchmont Avenue, NE

City: Warren

Zip: 44483

E-Mail: mhalliday@sscu.net

Telephone: (330) 372-8197

Contact: Eric Lanham, Marketing Manager

(Name of person the League should contact with questions.)

Describe in detail and provide examples of the credit union's political activities in the following areas. .

- 1. Describe the credit union's involvement with local and state policymakers and lawmakers such as mayors, city council members, state senators and representatives, and the governor. Include descriptions of involvement. For example, initiated and hosted meetings with a policymaker or lawmaker at the credit union to discuss credit union issues, visited officials in their offices, attended fundraisers, wrote letters, active in and visible at community events attended by elected officials, etc.**

Seven Seventeen regularly hosts state legislators at the credit union's Corporate Operations Center in Warren as well as various branch offices, and participates in legislative visits at other area credit unions. In addition to providing information on the value of credit unions and the credit union movement, and sharing thoughts on issues impacting credit unions, Seven Seventeen provides visiting legislators with statistics on the number of Seven Seventeen members living in the officials' district. Some of the most recent legislative visits that Seven Seventeen participated in included visits with State Senators Joseph Schiavoni and Capri Cafaro and State Representative Tom Letson.

Seven Seventeen employees initiated and continue to play an active role in the planning of the Mahoning Valley Chapter's annual Legislative Golf Outing and Dinner. This event usually includes lawmakers at the local, state and federal level. The event provides a full day in which credit union leaders can discuss issues facing the credit union movement in a casual setting.

Several local and state politicians are invited each year to attend Seven Seventeen's annual meeting. Participation among the invitees is typically very strong with representatives from local, county, state and even federal government in attendance.

Seven Seventeen Credit Union's president, Gary Soukenik currently serves on the Ohio Division of Financial Institution's Credit Union Council as appointed by Governor Ted Strickland. This advisory body makes recommendations to the Division and the Governor on matters relating to credit union business and the laws that govern the financial cooperatives. Gary, other senior managers and volunteers built a positive relationship with Strickland through legislative visits to Seven Seventeen and in Washington when Strickland served as a U.S. Representative.

Seven Seventeen employees have been responsive to sending emails and writing letters of support to state lawmakers regarding legislation impacting credit unions. Most recently, Seven Seventeen senior managers have been soliciting legislative support for HB317 which would provide public entities the choice to deposit funds in Ohio Credit Unions.

The Board of Directors has a legislative committee headed by Director Bill Skeliski who is extremely active in the local Democratic Party which dominates Mahoning Valley politics. The relationships built by Bill and the committee have opened the doors to many of the legislative visits and other interactions between Seven Seventeen and political leaders.

Additionally, Seven Seventeen is actively involved with the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce which provides opportunities for regular interaction with local political leaders. Furthermore, Gary Soukenik is a member of the Chamber's Board and serves on the organization's Government Affairs Committee.

2. Describe the credit union's involvement with national policymakers and lawmakers such as U.S. Representatives and Senators. Include descriptions of involvement. For example, initiated and hosted meetings with a policymaker or lawmaker at the credit union to discuss credit union issues; visited officials in their Washington, D.C., or district offices; attended fundraisers; wrote letters; etc.

Seven Seventeen has also worked to build relationships with legislators at the national level. Legislative visits have been made to Seven Seventeen by U.S. Representative Tim Ryan, and Congressman Ted Strickland, before he became Governor.

Congressman Ryan regularly attends the Mahoning Valley Legislative Golf Outing and Dinner as has Representative Charlie Wilson.

Congressman Ryan and/or his local office manager also regularly attend Seven Seventeen's Annual Meeting. At these events, senior managers and board members take the opportunity to discuss credit union values and voice concerns about issues that may negatively impact credit union members.

Senior managers and board members of Seven Seventeen are also familiar with Washington, D.C. having participated in numerous "Hike the Hill" meetings and events. These individuals are also regular attendees of the Government Affairs Conference (GAC). Seven Seventeen President Gary Soukenik and several board members, along with the OCUL's Paul Mercer and John Florian, had dinner with U.S. Representatives Tim Ryan, John Bocchieri and Charlie Wilson during the 2009 GAC to express concerns about proposed mortgage cramdown legislation among other topics.

3. Describe the credit union's involvement in election campaigns.

Senior management regularly provides updates to all employees about legislative matters that affect credit unions in Ohio and across the country. As part of those updates, employees are informed about which legislators are supportive of credit unions and the credit union movement.

On occasion where a legislator has introduced new legislation favorable to credit unions, Seven Seventeen has provided information in our member newsletter.

Legislative visits to Seven Seventeen are followed up with news releases to local media and articles are placed on the Seven Seventeen website.

All of these efforts are designed to show employees, members and the public which legislators are supportive of the credit union movement in the hope that individuals will take that into consideration when going to the polls.

4. Describe the credit union's involvement in Political Action Campaign fundraising. Include specific events coordinated or participated in, as well as amounts raised for the OCUL Political Action Committee, the Ohio Credit Union Legislative Action Committee, or to individual election campaigns.

Seven Seventeen employees have become very involved and supportive of raising funds to support the credit union movement through PACs. Employees of Seven Seventeen are provided legislative updates on a regular basis to keep informed about legislators and legislation that could have an impact on credit unions. Senior management has an OCULPAC campaign kickoff with all employees each year to emphasize the work that is done with these funds.

For employees that find it difficult to make a one time contribution, Seven Seventeen allows for weekly contributions through payroll deduction. In addition to the regular contributions Seven Seventeen employees are given the opportunity to wear Ohio State University or University of Michigan apparel the Friday prior to the “big game” for an additional contribution to OCULPAC. Seven Seventeen also participated in the Matching Gift Program to provide extra incentive to employees to contribute by making a contribution on their behalf to a local non-profit organization.

With these efforts, contributions have increased from \$4,700 in 2005 to more than \$9,900 in 2009. In addition to the regular OCULPAC campaign, Seven Seventeen began efforts to raise funds early in 2010 by allowing contributing employees to wear NFL themed apparel the Friday before the Super Bowl.

When State Senator John Bocchieri, a strong supporter of credit unions, decided to run for the U.S. Congress, a fundraiser hosted by Gary Soukenik was held at Seven Seventeen Credit Union. Contributions of \$2,100 were generated to aid in his successful bid.

5. Describe the credit union’s involvement with regulators – state or national. Include description of interactions with regulators such as initiating and hosting meetings with a regulator to discuss regulatory issues, visiting regulators in their offices, writing letters, making phone calls, etc.

Being a state chartered credit union, Seven Seventeen has a strong, long standing rapport with the Ohio Division of Financial Institutions and its leadership. Seven Seventeen hosted John Reardon, Superintendent of the Division, and then Deputy Superintendent of Credit Unions, Rose Bartolomucci, to discuss regulatory issues.

And, again, with Gary Soukenik’s appointment by Governor Strickland in 2008 to serve on the Division of Financial Institution’s Credit Union Council, he has a regular opportunity to provide input and insight into issues affecting credit unions throughout Ohio.

Additionally, Gary’s many past and current roles within the Ohio Credit Union League include serving as Chair and Trustee of the Ohio Credit Union Legislative Action Committee, Chair of the Ohio Credit Union League Political Action Committee, and member of the Governmental Affairs Committee.

Being federally insured and believing strongly in the broader credit union movement, Seven Seventeen also believes in maintaining positive relationships with federal regulators. To keep on top of issues facing the credit union industry on a national level and to remain engaged, Gary has served as a member of the Credit Union National Association’s Supervisory and Examination Committee and Credit Union Round Table, and is a state liaison for the National Association of State Credit Union Supervisors (NASCUS). In these roles, Gary has worked to stress the importance of dual charter options, insurance options, and other issues of consequence.