



We Care for Credit Unions

When Bethex was chartered in 1970, 100 members were all you needed, and one million was a large credit union. NCUA protected small credit unions from encroachment by large ones.

There was a lot of help available from Leagues and Examiners. In fact you were encouraged to take advantage of it.

Somewhere along the way, help disappeared and small credit unions became too small – not in their own eyes, but in the eyes of the movement. We began to hear references to irrelevance; shrinking membership; old board members; poor operation; time to merge or liquidate, not even worth bringing to Washington to help fight taxation. Once upon a time we were bussed to Washington whenever we were considered the convincing image of credit unions that would impress Congress.

Bethex was about 28 million in 2009, big sister you might say to the others, we watched what was going on with anger and fear. As each credit union disappeared, we said: “Soon we’ll be next”. We decided we have to somehow stop what’s happening, so we sent out a call to the little credit unions in NYC, largely church credit unions, put the shrinking numbers on the table and said, “Remember how hard it was to get your charter? That’s how hard you are going to fight to keep your charter now”. Let’s meet every month. Let’s invite people from all over to speak to us. Forget about merging, you were not born to merge, and don’t let anybody say you are old. I’m probably older than everyone in this room. Don’t let my brown hair fool you, and I have no intention of retiring. Thus, We Care for Credit Unions was formed. Besides learning what was new and reviving what was old, the biggest problem was money to pay a bookkeeper and upgrade the computer system.

BETHEX
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

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Bethex came up with an idea. It would sell participation loans to the We Care for Credit Union Members and pay the same interest it was earning.

They would be business loans and SBA guaranteed. We would charge 1/4% for servicing fee and credit unions could buy as little as \$5,000 amounts. The very smallest credit union could benefit. (Our smallest credit union is \$289,000 in assets)

It was a wonderful idea and NCUA had no objections. Unfortunately, for some reason we don't understand, after three years the program has been discouraged by examiners although this have been no losses. 26 credit unions have participated, earning as little as \$20 and as much as \$700 dollars monthly.

But, We Care for Credit Unions continues. In its three years of existence there has been only one merger in our organization and there is now an interest in church credit unions reaching out to neighborhood churches that currently have no credit unions.

We Care for Credit Unions has no funding nor does it charge dues, so we have submitted a 501-c3 to IRS in the expectation of persuading people to make donations. Plans for the use of the money have not been decided. It will be up to our members.



Qué será? ...Sera!