

# ‘HELPING TO BUILD CONNECTIONS’

DIRECTORS PROVIDE LEADERSHIP, INSIGHT  
ON TENTH DISTRICT COMMUNITIES

*As designed by Congress in 1913, the Federal Reserve is an innovative blending of public and private institutions. While the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., is a government agency with broad oversight responsibilities, there are 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks located throughout the United States that are under the direction of local Boards of Directors. In addition to oversight responsibilities for their respective Reserve Banks, the regional Fed directors serve as a critical conduit between their local communities and the nation’s central bank, offering critical insight and counsel on the economy drawn from their own expertise and contacts.*

*This system of the independent regional Reserve Banks, which also have affiliated Branch offices, are in direct recognition of the value Americans place on limiting influence and ensuring broad representation. Prior to the Federal Reserve, the United States had made two attempts at a central bank, but large areas of the country, especially along the frontier and in the South, felt the institutions were too closely aligned with the power centers of the Northeast, and the institutions were abandoned.*

*Here’s a closer look at four Tenth District directors:*



PHOTO BY MICHELLE KANE

MARK GORDON  
KANSAS CITY DIRECTOR

## MARK GORDON

Mark Gordon's ranch is about as far away from Wall Street as one can get.

This is wide open Wyoming, home to livestock, land and sky. About 4,000 people live nearby in Buffalo, the nearest town and the seat of a county that has more than twice the land of the entire state of Delaware but less than 1 percent of its population.

Gordon, who joined the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's Board of Directors in 2009, also serves on his local school board. In addition to his ownership of Merlin Ranch, he is a partner in the 48 Ranch Partnership in Kaycee, Wyo.; a partner in Buffalo Movie Theater, LLC; and an officer of Willow Park Reservoir Company.

He says that before he joined the Kansas City Board, he was among those looking in from the outside that saw the central bank as a place that "seemed academic—folks who crunched numbers."

Now, not only has he gained an appreciation for the Fed's structure, but also he believes that the central bank's contacts with America's Main Streets will play a pivotal role as the Fed works to boost the economic recovery.

"It will put more emphasis on my colleagues and others across the Federal Reserve System who have extensive experience on what it's going to take to get an economy really working," he says. "It's not just the academics."

And, from his perspective, that will involve small business.

"I don't think we have any medium-sized businesses in the state," Gordon jokes. "I feel a very strong responsibility to my region, my state—those are both overreaching—but I feel a strong responsibility for our small businesses."

## ROSE WASHINGTON RENTIE

In Tulsa, Rose Washington Rentie understands concerns about small business.

Rentie, a director on the Board of the Kansas City Fed's Oklahoma City Branch since 2009, is executive director of the Tulsa Economic Development Corporation. Founded in 1979, TEDC has provided or located more than \$156 million to help nearly

300 small businesses start or expand.

Rentie calls her job "ground zero" in one of the most important facets of the U.S. economy.

"At any given time, I'm side-by-side with small business owners who are making tough decisions: Make payroll or pay taxes. Reduce or discontinue employee benefits because of rising cost or eliminate another expense. Buy a fixed asset or lease," she says.

This provides her with a high level of insight in regard to both what is going on in the local economy, but also an up close look at emerging issues.

"These business owners anticipate expected hiccups in the industry in real time," she says. "They are purchasing commodities, planning capital expenditures, hiring, anticipating expansion or retraction based on expected





orders. I am able to challenge them and pick their brains.”

And sharing that insight is a job Rentie takes seriously.

“I feel that my responsibility is not to share my personal opinion, but to bring the voice of Main Street to the Federal Reserve,” she says. “The Federal Reserve ensures that many people from all walks of life are able to participate. My responsibility is to share real-time perspectives of those who otherwise may never have an opportunity to provide feedback.”

## JOANN MARTIN

Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City President Tom Hoenig often talks about how the directors are especially valuable in his preparations for meetings of the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee because their insight is extremely timely while economic data is, by its nature, backward looking.

JoAnn Martin, CEO of Ameritas Life Insurance in Lincoln, Neb., and a member of the Kansas City Fed’s Omaha Branch Board of Directors since 2008, says looking at only the available economic data “is like looking out the rearview mirror as you are driving 70 miles an

hour down a road.

“What insight we can bring as directors is what the scenery looks like that we are in at that moment.”

And it is a wide view.

“It is a compilation of experiences and views we gain as we talk to Main Street, but it is also specific industry knowledge,” says Martin, whose firm offers both insurance products and financial services through subsidiaries and agents nationwide.

She says that, as a director, she sees firsthand “the importance of having Federal Reserve Banks across the United States and (Reserve Bank) Branches across the Districts.”

The regional structure, she says, brings in input from a full spectrum of industries of all sizes as well as the views of the consumer. In a large nation, she says, there can be significant differences between different parts of the country, and the Federal Reserve is able to factor those disparities into national policy.

“While we are all part of one country, we have very diverse economic drivers. The Federal Reserve’s structure allows input to be received from many different industries, many different size businesses and the consumer.”

## BRUCE ALEXANDER

In Colorado, Vectra Bank CEO Bruce Alexander says the role of being a Fed director has changed since he joined the Kansas City Fed's Denver Branch Board of Directors in 2006.

"With all the attacks on the Federal Reserve and how its leadership is selected, the role of director is much more profound than it was five years ago when I started," he says.

Today he is not only bringing the insight gained from his business contacts to the Fed's policy deliberations, but he is also helping the public understand the Fed during a time of economic turmoil and when some have called for changes in the central bank's structure.

Those two roles, he says, are of equal importance.

He says that he believes it is absolutely critical for local leadership and insight to be involved in the Federal Reserve. In fact, he notes, in the current environment, that view from beyond Wall Street and Washington might be even more important. Alexander is able to gain insight from Vectra's 39 locations

in Colorado and New Mexico.

"The flow of information from across the country is just so critical in these times," he says. "In addition to our own business expertise, we get to look at the economy from so many of the eyes of our customers and directly see their position on the economy."

He says that he is now also often called upon by local community leaders wanting to get a better understanding of the Federal Reserve and its role in serving the nation. From his perspective, Alexander describes his responsibility as a Fed director very succinctly:

"I'm helping to build connections."



FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Kansas City Fed's directors, bios and more, visit [KansasCityFed.org/aboutus/leadership](http://KansasCityFed.org/aboutus/leadership).



BRUCE ALEXANDER  
DENVER DIRECTOR

PHOTO BY GARY BARBER