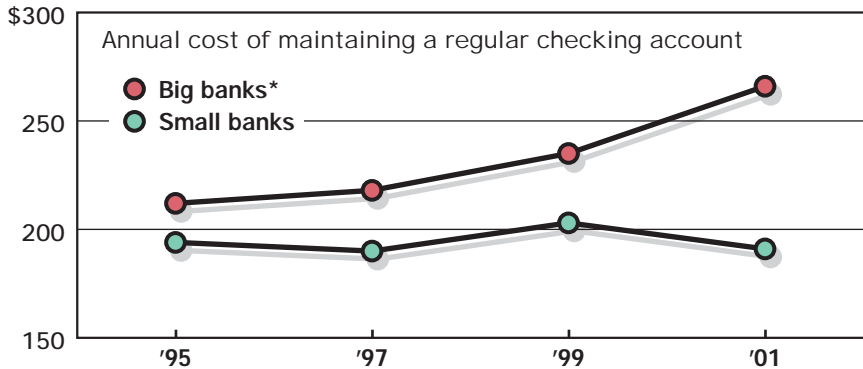


Big banks, big penalties

Since bank deregulation began in the early 1980s, PIRG (state Public Interest Research Groups) has tracked rising consumer-banking fees, which it calls "a critical part" of bank income. Using data from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, PIRG estimates, for example, the average cost to a consumer of maintaining a regular checking account if balance minimums are not met. PIRG also factors in fees for bounced-checks and ATMs. In 2001, the latest year for which figures are available, fees at large banks jumped 13 percent from their 1999 levels. Fees at small banks fell 6 percent for that period. Fees are lowest at member-owned credit unions (\$101 in 2001, down 10 percent) and at some small community banks.



Source: PIRG, using data from FDIC *300 biggest US banks, by deposits

KAREN SCHNEIDER - STAFF