

# The MLTA Commitment

MARYLAND'S NEWS SOURCE FOR TITLE PROFESSIONALS

## LOBBY DAY 2017



# Commitment

## January 2017

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Your feedback is appreciated.

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### Want to Write an Article?

The MLTA Commitment Committee is seeking people to write articles and contribute items for the next issue. Articles and contributions submitted should inform the MLTA membership of topics affecting the title industry in Maryland. As an added benefit for those working toward earning the Certified Land Title Professional (CLTP) designation, submission of articles can be used toward points for the CLTP designation. Contact MLTA at [MLTA@mdlta.com](mailto:MLTA@mdlta.com).

### Did you know?

- The Weekly Legislative Update is available for all members. Request it from [MLTA@mdlta.com](mailto:MLTA@mdlta.com) or register as a member on our website, [MDLTA.org](http://MDLTA.org)
- If you would like to renew your MLTA Membership, [click here](#).
- For members, MLTA offers free online and take-home CE credit classes, including two 3-hour Ethics courses. [Click here](#) to see our catalog.

The Maryland Land Title Association (MLTA) is a professional organization working on behalf of title industry service providers and consumers. We hope that you will consider joining the many title insurance agents, abstractors, attorneys, and underwriters who already have benefited from their membership.

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## President's Message

**Richard N. Harvey, Esq.**



I would be remiss if I did not begin this message by expressing my gratitude to you, the members of the Maryland Land Title Association (MLTA), for allowing me to serve as the 2016-17 MLTA President. I would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to the volunteers who serve on the Board of Directors, Committee chairs and members, and Chapter chairs and members. I would like to thank our Immediate Past President, Wanda DeBord, for her service and congratulate her on a job well done. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank our Executive Director, Margaret Webb, and our lobbyist, Bill Pitcher, for their extremely valuable service and dedication to our organization.

For those of you who attended the MLTA Fall Convention in Ocean City this past September, this message will sound familiar to you, so I will apologize in advance. During that meeting, I spoke of two underlying themes for the coming year.

The first theme is "Defining the Moment." The COO of my company talks a lot about defining moments. There are certain defining moments that arise during one's lifetime, whether they occur in your career path, in running your business, or in your personal life. You can either let these moments define you, or you can take charge and define the moment. One of those defining moments occurred in October, 2015, with the implementation of CFPB's TRID Rule. It could have been very possible to let that moment define us. We could have allowed others in the real estate industry to define who we are, as title professionals, and what we do. But, we do not want others who don't understand what we do to try to define it for us. I don't think we allowed that. I think that the title industry, through ALTA and MLTA, stepped up. We let our voices be heard, and we defined the moment.

We are still defining the moment. As you all know, one of the parts of the Rule that greatly affects us is the requirement to show owner's title insurance as "optional" on the new forms. "Optional" is not ideal, but it is better than the original "Not Required" description that the CFPB wanted. In an effort to keep defining the moment, this past September, the MLTA participated in the Maryland Association of Realtors (MAR) Convention. We contacted the MAR and requested to appear on their convention agenda. They agreed, and we provided a three-person panel to discuss the importance of owner's title insurance. Additionally, we provided an exhibitor's booth staffed by MLTA volunteers to disseminate information and answer questions realtors may have regarding title insurance. This is a concrete example of the MLTA working for, and providing a direct benefit to, our membership.

The second theme we discussed in September was "Taking Ownership." The MLTA is your organization. It is your trade association. I would ask each of you to take "ownership" in it and become involved in some way, whether it is through a committee or chapter, or by recruiting additional members. We definitely appreciate all of our dues-paying members; but, we could achieve so much more if our members played an active role in the operations of the organization.

continued on following page

If you have a cause or an issue that you feel strongly about, and you wish that the MLTA would do something about, please bring it to our attention. We likely will ask you to take ownership of the cause, and we will give you the support you need to bring about change. As long as it's not something crazy. At the convention, I mentioned a couple of examples of members taking ownership of an issue. When our Immediate Past President, Wanda DeBord, joined the Board of Directors, she noticed that the attention we were getting from the MLTA's former financial advisors was less than adequate. So, she took this cause upon herself, did the legwork, and found a group more willing to work closely with us. The MLTA Board made the change and, in my opinion, it has been greatly beneficial. Our current Treasurer, Bill O'Connell, did the same thing. He recognized a need in Maryland to codify requirements regarding quiet title actions. So, he assumed ownership of this issue two years ago and, with the MLTA's support, was able to get legislation passed that will help the title industry in Maryland.

I briefly mentioned above the recruitment of additional members. Growing our organization is important for a few reasons. First, there is strength in numbers. The larger our organization is, the more likely our voices are to be heard in Annapolis. Secondly, the more members we have, the more likely we are to have members who have direct relationships with individual legislators. It was Wanda and Bill's direct contact with Delegate O'Donnell that helped move the Quiet Title Bill forward. I think that our lobbyist, Bill Pitcher, would agree that legislators like to assist their constituents, even if they don't completely understand the issue. They like to help because they envision their good will as translating to votes down the road. Thirdly, increased membership guarantees our viability as an organization. There was a time in the not too distant past when we had some serious concerns regarding our long-term viability.

So my challenge to all MLTA members is to take ownership of the Association. I challenge each of you to recruit a new member and/or become active in a Committee or Chapter. I know most of you know a lot of people in our industry, and even if they are competitors of yours, please reach out and ask them to join us. I like to compare it to the Army-Navy football game. They are rivals on the field, but at the end of the day, they are fighting for the same cause. Please reach out to agents, vendors, attorneys, or anyone else who you think might help us and receive some benefit from what we do. One of my specific goals this coming year is to increase our attorney membership. There are attorneys out there who specialize in real estate transactions, and I believe the MLTA can be beneficial to them in different ways than the Bar Association. I anticipate that our new Title Counsel Committee will prove to be a very valuable benefit to attorney members. As additional incentive, we are offering \$50 of "MLTA Bucks" for each new member you bring to the Association! For details, please feel free to contact Margaret Webb at [MLTA@mdlta.com](mailto:MLTA@mdlta.com).

If you cannot convince someone to join, then please consider serving on a committee or getting involved in a regional chapter. We are always looking for fresh ideas on how to move the organization forward in ways that benefit our members. I would encourage you to look at the various committees and chapters we have and see which ones interest you. Committee and chapter participation does not require a large time commitment, as most committees meet by conference call about once a month, and most local chapters meet roughly four to six times per year.

Thank you again and we look forward to a very active and successful year!

## Lobby Day 2017, Annapolis



Susan Zuhowski, Esq.  
Old Republic Title

On Wednesday, January 25, 2017, MLTA members will gather in Annapolis, at the Maryland Inn, with our lobbyist, Bill Pitcher, for the

fourth Annual MLTA Lobby Day. As in years past, we are hopeful for an excellent turnout. Why should you consider participating either again or for the first time? Lobbying provides our elected and appointed officials with the information they need to make the best decisions for their constituencies. The information and education that you can provide may be critical to the decisions legislators make on issues that concern the title industry.

MLTA Lobby Day gives our members an effective way to inform members of the General Assembly about MLTA's positions through personal meetings, ideally with constituents. Participants are asked to provide their home addresses so that we can identify their Senators and Delegates and set up a 10-15 minute appointment to discuss MLTA issues with their representatives. In past years, participants discussed with legislators MLTA's opposition to the Maryland Uniform Real Property Transfer-on-Death (TOD) Act. After strong efforts in opposition to this bill in 2014 and 2015, the bill was not refiled in 2016. MLTA members have successfully lobbied for a bill designed to clarify the difference between title insurance commitments and opinions of title, and to make sure that title agents cannot be found negligent for issuing title insurance commitments and/or policies that may not reveal the true state of the title to a property and for bills to clarify the quiet title procedure in the courts. Bill Pitcher has this to say about participation in MLTA's Lobby Day. "Holding a Lobby Day for MLTA furthers a number of goals of the Legislative Committee. It educates interested members in the top legislative issues facing the industry; marshals their talents to communicate industry positions to the legislators; and develops relationships between individual members and their legislators, which will be useful for future communications. It also is the most effective method of lobbying – personal contact with legislators by their constituents."

Lobby Day begins with a continental breakfast at the Maryland Inn where Bill Pitcher and others will discuss some ideas for how to effectively lobby the Delegates and Senators with whom the members will meet. All participants will be provided with a list of talking points that could be used to highlight MLTA's positions regarding various issues that the legislature might be considering this year. One of the key ideas behind Lobby Day is that elected officials pay attention to numbers. When a group of people from an elected official's district requests a meeting regarding a particular issue, the elected official is likely to be interested in learning more about their concerns. Most elected officials want to make sure that they understand the consequences and benefits of any particular piece of legislation on their constituency. Legislators also like to meet people who have expertise in various industries, so that they know whom to call should they have any questions about an issue that they find themselves needing to understand better. Susan Zuhowski will remain in the room at the Maryland Inn to watch over any personal property, field questions, and generally oversee the Lobby Day experience.

Bill O'Connell has participated in all three of our previous Lobby Days and has this to say. "My experience has been all positive. It is an opportunity to meet your representative in person and have their undivided attention. They welcome the opportunity to hear from you. Your presence shows them that you care about our industry, and that we are real people doing real work. When they see the MLTA either support or oppose legislation, they will remember your visit. They may even call on you in the future to ask for your input. If you have the time, it will be time well spent. You will not regret it."

Please consider joining us for Lobby Day on January 25, 2017. It presents a great opportunity to introduce MLTA to the members of the General Assembly and continue to demonstrate MLTA's leadership in the title industry.



## MLTA 2017 Fall Convention

September 7-9, 2017  
WISP Resort in McHenry, MD

### Name That Convention!

The theme is: Survivor!

Send us your best slogan related to our theme.

All slogans must be submitted by e-mail to:

[MLTA@mdlta.com](mailto:MLTA@mdlta.com)

The final decision will be made by the MLTA Convention Committee, on March 2, 2017.

The winner will be recognized on our website

([www.MDLTA.org](http://www.MDLTA.org)), and will receive \$100.



The Maryland Affordable Housing Trust (MAHT) and the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) would like to remind title producer companies doing business in Maryland, that the 2016 Annual MAHT Report is due no later than March 31, 2017.

The 2016 report can be obtained from the MAHT website, or by contacting MAHT Administrator Peter Brady, Esq. at 301-429-7670, [peter.brady1@maryland.gov](mailto:peter.brady1@maryland.gov)

or

Senior Enforcement Officer Bradford A. Thomas (MIA) at 410-468-2266, [bradford.thomas@maryland.gov](mailto:bradford.thomas@maryland.gov).

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## The MLTA Convention and Education Committees Announce One of Our 2017 Fall Convention Speakers

The MLTA is pleased to announce one of our Keynote speakers for the Fall Convention this year. Our Friday morning speaker will be Anirban Basu, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Sage Policy Group Inc., an economic and policy consulting firm headquartered in Baltimore, MD. In both 2007 and 2016, The Daily Record selected Mr. Basu as one of Maryland's 50 most influential people.

Join us at the MLTA 2017 Fall Convention and hear Mr. Basu's presentation:

Markets, Looking for Clues into the Economy's Direction.



Don't Miss the MLTA 2017 Fall Convention

September 7-9

WISP Resort in McHenry, MD

### ALTA Upcoming Events

January 2017

#### 2017 January Large Agents Meeting

Casa Marina A Waldorf Astoria Resort, Key West, FL  
January 22 - January 24

#### 2017 January Research/Agent Committee Meeting

Casa Marina A Waldorf Astoria Resort, Key West, FL  
January 25

#### 2017 HOP Leader Training - Las Vegas

January 26

#### 2017 4-Special

January 31 - December 31

February 2017

#### 2017 February Membership Committee Meeting

February 8

#### 2017 HOP Leader Training - Miami, FL

February 9

#### 2017 HOP Leader Training - D.C.

February 16

#### 2017 Denver ALTA Innovation Boot Camp

February 21 - February 22

#### How PHH v. CFPB Impacts RESPA Enforcement

February 22

March 2017

#### 2017 ALTA SPRINGBOARD

Omni Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX  
March 8 - March 10

May 2017

#### 2017 ALTA Advocacy Summit

The Watergate Hotel, Washington, DC  
May 1 - May 3

June 2017

#### 2017 Nashville ALTA Innovation Boot Camp

June 20 - June 21

August 2017

#### 2017 Baltimore ALTA Innovation Boot Camp

August 23 - August 24

October 2017

#### 2017 ALTA ONE

Trump National Doral Miami, Miami, FL  
October 10 - October 13



## Sun Provides Energy for Owners, Clouds for Title Process

Jeff Thompson, Esq., CLTP  
Westcor Land Title Insurance Company

As winter kicks in and fuel bills rise, more and more consumers are looking at their electric, gas, or oil bills - and making plans to follow up on the ad they saw for solar panels. After all, the Maryland Clean Energy Center reports that switching to solar can result in savings of 50% to over (that's right – over) 100% of traditional electrical systems. So why isn't everyone running to order their own set of photo-voltaic cells? It might have something to do with the price. A complete solar electric system (photo-voltaic cell panels, inverter, and installation) can cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000. Following installation, an owner also must shoulder the costs associated with ongoing maintenance.

The barrier of installation and maintenance costs has been overcome in recent years as companies, such as Sungevity, SunRun, SunPower, and SolarCity (Third Party Providers), have begun offering programs, previously available only in commercial settings, to homeowners that allow them to lease the systems (Operating Lease) or to simply purchase the electricity converted by solar panels installed on their homes (Power Purchase Agreement). The typical length of a solar lease or PPA agreement is 10-20 years. As the owners of properties with solar installations refinance or sell, title issues are beginning to appear.

At a recent family dinner, the subject of solar panels came up and I commented on the problems our industry faces (that's right – I'm boring at home, too). My daughter, who works for the US Green Building Council, promptly rebuked me. It seems the USGBC views solar energy and the resulting decreased reliance on fossil fuels as a path to the future to be encouraged. If my daughter is any indication of what the millennial generation will demand as they move into the market place, we are at the beginning of a paradigm shift in power supply. The problem lies in how the financing for that shift takes place.

The Third Party Provider often protects its ownership interest through the filing of a UCC statement to place others on notice of its ownership interest in the solar panels. The common refrain heard by title companies that run across these UCC statements is that the UCC statement secures only a lease of personal property – that it does not create a security interest in the real property. What the UCC statement also does, however, is place everyone on notice of an unrecorded lease that allows a party other than the owner to come upon the property for the purpose of removing an item affixed to the property, the removal of which may damage the lender's collateral, or substantially decrease its value. As such, your underwriter may instruct you to identify the lease, as disclosed by the UCC statement, and to take exception to the rights of third parties under that lease to enter upon the property to remove the solar panels and associated hardware.

continued on following page

Such an exception may be viewed with concern by a refinance lender or by a purchase money mortgage lender since, in both cases, the lease predates the deed of trust. The potential fallout of such an exception in the short run may be lender requests that the lease and/or the UCC statement be subordinated to the lien of the new mortgage – something the Third Party Provider may not yet be legally set up or willing to do. One solution that may be offered – release and refilling of the UCC statement – doesn't quite do the trick, since the release of the UCC statement does nothing to terminate rights of the Third Party Provider under the Operating Lease or PPA.

Enter the settlement.

Scenario 1: You have prepared the commitment, communicated with all parties to get a final CD in place, and traveled to the remote closing where your buyer is happily waiting to become the new owner of a beautiful house complete with solar panels to decrease utility costs. It is at this point that the listing agent calmly states that he has a little document for the buyers to sign – an assignment of the lease agreement for the solar panels. As the sun streaming through the window is suddenly cut off by dark clouds, you hear the buyer say, "What lease – I'm not signing any lease."

Scenario 2: You have prepared the commitment, communicated with all parties to get a final CD in place, and traveled to the remote closing where

the buyer storms in from the final walk-through wanting to know what happened to those beautiful solar panels that were on the house when he signed the contract and were an integral part of his decision to purchase. The seller advises him that the panels are personal property and he is moving them to his new house – if the buyer wants his own solar panels, the seller is happy to put him in touch with the solar company that did the installation and removal.

Ownership of the system, and its portability, may also affect the settlement process, especially if the owners are intent on moving the rented system to their new residence (an option under most Lease Agreements). If the existence of solar panels is revealed either on the contract or through the title exam, one may need to speak with realtors to determine (i) who owns the system; (ii) whether the panels are installed under a lease (and if so, the terms and remaining duration of the lease); (iii) whether the panels are installed in keeping with a PPA, and whether the buyer has been made aware of this fact; and (iv) the intention of the parties with respect to retention and/or removal of the installation. An adjustment for Operating Lease rental or PPA fee between buyer and seller may need to be added to those for water/sewer on the settlement statement. An escrow agreement also may be necessary in that event. Timing in the delivery of the TILA-RESPA Integrated Disclosure statement also may need to be addressed if delays

continued on following page

occur prior to closing due to the need for post-removal inspections, or if the value of the property is based in part on the existence of solar panels. Damages to the structure caused by removal of the system, or an inspection to determine the lack of any damages, may have to be factored into the scheduling of settlement or result in delays while they are completed. As such, the existence of solar panels should be communicated to the lender as soon as possible to determine what, if any, steps are required to accommodate lender or investor concerns.

Unfortunately there is no work-around that will allow the removal of an exception to the rights of a Third Party Provider under an operating lease or PPA, since removal (or threatened removal) of equipment is the Third Party Provider's only security for continued payment. Like taxes or water bills, operating leases or PPAs and their associated UCC filings must become realities to be excepted to and not impediments to be removed via subordination agreements. As more and more solar installations work their way into the picture, standard practices must evolve in the approach taken by lenders to the existence of operating leases or PPAs associated with solar panel installations. Until that happens, the best approach may be to alert your title insurance underwriter, incorporate questions to alert you to the existence of a solar installation, and alert all affected parties as early as possible, setting them to work on an acceptable agreement. Hunker down for a bumpy ride.



### [What MLTA Members Might Expect from Annapolis This Legislative Session](#) A Brief Overview

Briefly, MLTA will be promoting passage of legislation to repeal the statutory requirement for a "Certificate of Preparation" that is currently filed with Mortgages and Deeds of Trust, but retaining the requirement for Deeds.

The Underwriters Coalition has worked out language with the MIA for 2 bills to be introduced dealing with: 1) removing the prohibition of rating bureaus, and 2) clarifying a process for licensing and character investigations of agents. The bills have been pre-filed as SB 31 and SB 40.

Another bill that we will be involved with is SB 76, which renames and changes the mission of the Real Property Records Improvement Fund, to become a Judiciary IT Improvement Fund.

J. William Pitcher  
Attorney at Law

## Fall Convention 2017 - Make Your Plans Now!



Please plan on joining your friends and colleagues at the 2017 MLTA Fall Convention, September 7-9, 2017, at the scenic WISP Resort in western Maryland. The Fall Convention is the MLTA's premier event, offering our members the best opportunity to network with others in the industry, gain valuable knowledge from industry experts during the education sessions, and visit with vendors and service providers who can enhance the efficiency and sustainability of your individual operations.

Our agenda for the three-day convention is still being developed; but it will be packed with "something for everyone." You will have opportunities to receive continuing education credits, be inspired by motivational speakers, and listen to topics designed to help you face new industry challenges so that you remain competitive within a rapidly and ever-changing industry. There also will be plenty of time for relaxation and fun, including white water rafting, golf, water sports on Deep Creek Lake, and mountain activities, such as zip lines, hiking, and mountain coasters. Your evenings will be filled with great food and entertainment in the fresh mountain air while enjoying picturesque sunsets over the mountains. Additionally, we will be hosting the annual Exhibitor Showcase, offering attendees the opportunity to learn more about products and services to help run their offices more efficiently and in compliance with current regulations.

Don't miss this valuable opportunity to help your business grow and thrive! Make your plans now to attend the annual MLTA Fall Convention. See you there!

Joe Shepherd  
2017 Convention Committee Chairman







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# Our Most Recent CLTP Designees



By Ruth E. Kohl, CLTP  
Co-Chair of the CLTP Committee

We are pleased to announce the 2016 CLTP designees:

Eric Batz – Agency Representative for Old Republic Title

William O'Connell – State Counsel for First American Title Insurance Company

This is a huge achievement. MLTA honors their dedication to the Association and their overall knowledge of the title industry.

You'll find a list of all CLTP designees on our website [www.MDLTA.org](http://www.MDLTA.org). Click on "Membership."  
Please be sure to look for some significant changes to the CLTP program in 2017.

## MLTA Members in the Community

Our first MLTA Member in the Community Spotlight is Elizabeth "Betsy" Russo. Betsy is the managing member of MCP Title Services, LLC, current DCLTA president, and an MLTA member.



Betsy also is the Vice- President of the Anne Arundel County Volunteer Center. The Anne Arundel County Volunteer Center is the premier volunteer connector in Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis. Annually, the Volunteer Center helps more than 4,000 individuals, families, corporate and community groups find volunteer opportunities at 360+ community organizations. Volunteers of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds are mobilized to feed the homeless, serve seniors, protect the environment, mentor youth, and change our community for the better.

These volunteers create more than \$2 million of value added to our community in volunteer time per year. For every 1 hour AACVC is open, they generate 50 hours of service, and for every \$1 donated, AACVC gives back \$20 in volunteer time to the community.

AACVC recently organized a #GivingTuesday event, at Squisito's in Crofton, where attendees, while enjoying pizza, donated coats for children 18 and under, and/or made financial contributions that will help the residents of Anne Arundel County.

If you would like more information on how you can support AACVC, or find volunteer opportunities, please check out their website: [www.aacvc.org](http://www.aacvc.org).

Anne Arundel County Volunteer Center  
2666 Riva Road, Suite 130  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
Email: [info@aacvc.org](mailto:info@aacvc.org)  
Phone: 410-897-9207  
Fax: 410-222-4589

Betsy is just one of many MLTA members who are doing good things in our community. Please contact us at [MLTA@mdlta.com](mailto:MLTA@mdlta.com) if you know of other members who should be included in upcoming spotlights.

## What Now for the CFPB?



By Ned W. Livornese, Esq.

In the fall issue of the this newsletter, I speculated about the effects of the October 11, 2016 decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia

Circuit in the PHH v. CFPB case. As expected, the CFPB has asked for the case to be reheard by the full DC Circuit Court (what lawyers call an en banc review), as opposed to the 3-judge panel that handed down the original decision.

Something even more ominous for the CFPB than the PHH decision, however, may be the recent election of Donald Trump. Although the President-elect hasn't provided much detail about possible reform at the CFPB, it's clear that he would like to repeal the Dodd-Frank Act, which created the CFPB.

A complete repeal of Dodd-Frank seems unlikely, even with a Republican president and Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. The CFPB has helped return more than \$11 billion to consumers since it was created, and it's generally supported by the public. The structure of the CFPB, which has a mandate to enforce dozens of federal consumer statutes, also makes it difficult to simply void its existence. Additionally, votes to completely dismember the agency may not exist in the Senate.

That's not to say, however, that the powers of the CFPB won't likely be curtailed in a dramatic way.

Let's start with Richard Cordray, the CFPB's current Director, whose term expires in mid-2018. Although the PHH decision permits the President to replace the Director, at will, implementation of the court's ruling will be delayed until the appeals process has run its course. In other words, Cordray will stay on, with his current powers, for the time being. However, Cordray has been mentioned as a possible candidate for the 2018 governor's race in Ohio. Should he run, he will need to leave the CFPB relatively soon to begin fundraising and hiring an election staff.

Whether or not Cordray runs for governor, then-President Trump will almost certainly replace Cordray when the court decision becomes final. Further, the PHH case will likely result in the CFPB being headed by a bipartisan commission of up to five commissioners. Many members of the financial community have been advocating this as a means of tempering the potential uncertainty that the CFPB may bring to financial markets every time a new president is elected. Finally, Congress will likely act to bring the agency's budget under control of congressional appropriators, which will give lawmakers the direct means to influence CFPB rulemakings by manipulating the agency's purse strings.

Regardless of how things pan out in 2017, it's probable that unfettered enforcement actions by the CFPB to correct all of the perceived wrongs in the financial services industry will be dramatically curtailed. The loss of Richard Cordray could have a negative effect on the morale of the 1600+ employees of the CFPB. The requirement for a consensus by multiple commissioners will slow down many decisions at the CFPB. Also, the possibility of budget cuts by Congress will decrease the CFPB's ability to deploy its forces everywhere the agency would like to be in the marketplace.

In short, the glory days of the CFPB may well be behind it. Depending upon your view of the world, that will either be a very good or very bad thing!

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## Mike Romans Retiring on January 31, 2017

By Pat Bayne

I started working in the Title Building, owned by SAFECO, in November 1984. Joe Blume, Ken Bayne, and I worked on the third floor in the agency department. The second floor had legal counsel and a title plant. The direct operation, where Mike Romans worked, was on the first floor. I had been working there a few weeks when Ken pointed Mike Romans out to me – “That’s Mike – he reads numbers really well upside down.” It had been an odd place to work in some respects – some people on the first floor “worked in the cage.” Bea Disney’s sole responsibility seemed to be ensuring that the white-out was locked up at all times, one gentleman cut his toe nails at his desk, and you could tell what day of the week it was by Lou Jira’s pants color. At least once a week, Mr. Jira returned from lunch with the mouse glue pad stuck to his foot because he wanted to see, yet again, if it really was sticky. So, if they had hired someone to read upside down, it really did not seem all that strange. At that point, Mike had been working in the title business for 11 years, having started his career with Title Guarantee as a settlement officer in 1973.

I did eventually learn that Mike read upside down because he sat on the other side of a settlement table from buyers and sellers, explaining the paperwork that faced them, and that he was one of the most respected commercial settlement officers in Maryland. The title business was much different then. Both Joe and Ken had started as abstractors, moving up through the company as examiners, and to the agency department. Mike also had done abstracting to learn more about the

business. In 1987, Joe, Ken, Mike, and I left SAFECO for another underwriter; then, in 1991, we joined Stewart. Over the years, the business evolved into what it is today, and Mike has grown and learned a number of different computer programs, the intricacies of CFPB, and numerous other changes to the business and HUDs. There is no longer an entire floor of support personnel. Mike has always been up to the challenge, and remains a highly respected settlement officer, on both residential and commercial transactions.

Mike has been a dedicated friend and colleague to each of us who he has worked with, and loyal to the companies fortunate enough to have him working for them. We were at Stewart for at least five or more years before he took a sick day. I remember exactly where I was when I received the call that he was taking a sick day. Ken could probably tell you what he was wearing. It was, for all of us working with Mike, a momentous occasion! In 43 years, thousands upon thousands of people have sat across the table from Mike. Most probably never knew how fortunate they were to have someone so knowledgeable and professional conducting their settlement. Most probably never knew how lucky they were to even meet Mike. Please join those of us at the Stewart family in wishing Mike many happy, joyful years of retirement.



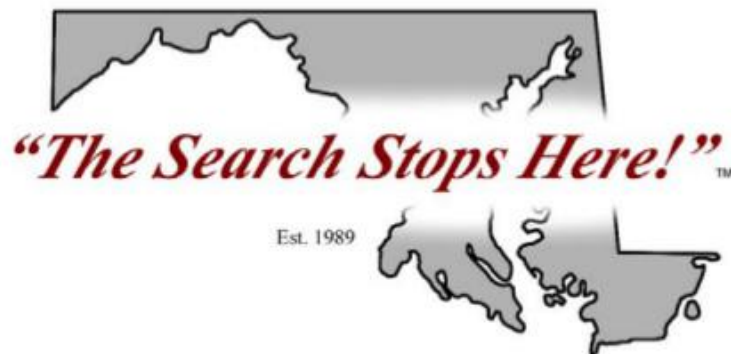
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