

NAR Legal Update

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ANTITRUST LAWSUITS UPDATE

- March 6, 2019 Moehrl v NAR et al. lawsuit filed
- Copycat lawsuits were subsequently filed
- May 17, 2019 Motion to Dismiss filed
- June 2019 Plaintiffs Amended Complaints
- Answers due in August



CYBERCRIME/WIREFRAUD

- Long Lost African Prince
- 4.4 Million Complaints Later (since FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) inception in May 2000)
- From 2014-2018, IC3 reported:
 - o 1,509,679 total complaints about internet scams since 2014
 - \odot 7.45 Billion in total losses



2018 STATISTICS



* 2018 IC3 Internet Crime Report





CYBERCRIME VICTIMS

2018 VICTIMS BY AGE GROUP

Victims			
Age Range ¹⁴	Total Count	Total Loss	
Under 20	9,129	\$12,553,082	
20 - 29	40,924	\$134,485,965	
30 - 39	46,342	\$305,699,977	
40 - 49	50,545	\$405,612,455	
50 - 59	48,642	\$494,926,300	
Over 60	62,085	\$649,227,724	

For victims over 40:

- Avg. loss of approximately \$11,000
- Total loss of \$1.5 Billion





TOP STATES



No. 24 Oregon - 4,511 victims





TOP STATES







REAL ESTATE CYBERCRIME/WIREFRAUD

- Real Estate/Rental Cybercrime in 2018

 11,300 Victims*
 - $_{\odot}$ \$149,458,114 Total Loss*
 - $_{\odot}\,$ 1100% increase in BEC/EAC victims **
 - $_{\odot}$ 2200% of monetary loss **
- Per the FBI, real estate is now one of the top victims of malware attacks in the U.S.

*2018 IC3 Internet Crime Report ** Since 2015



TACTICS

- Business E-Mail Compromise (BEC) Targets businesses working with foreign suppliers and/or businesses regularly performing wire transfer payments
- E-Mail Account Compromise (EAC) Targets individuals. These sophisticated scams are carried out by fraudsters compromising email accounts through social engineering or computer intrusion techniques to conduct unauthorized transfer of funds
- Phishing/Vishing/Smishing/Pharming Unsolicited email, text messages, and telephone calls purportedly from a legitimate company requesting personal, financial, and/or login credentials.
- **Spoofing** Contact information (phone number, email, and website) is deliberately falsified to mislead and appear to be from a legitimate source.



THE PLAYBOOK

- Watch MLSs, syndication sites like REALTOR.com, Redfin and Zillow to identify pending home sales.
- Profile the parties in the transaction (real estate agents, title companies, law firms, sellers and buyers) using public websites.
- Hack an e-mail account, watch correspondence until they can step in and send false wiring instructions (e.g. last minute change).
- Steal down payment, closing costs or mortgage payoff funds.
- Rinse and repeat.



AGENT LIABILITY

Bain v. Platinum Realty, LLC, No. 16-2326-JWL, 2018 WL 3105376 (D. Kan. June 25, 2018).

- Fake wire instructions came from agent's e-mail account
- Agent claims she never sent the fraudulent wire instructions
- However after fake wire instructions were sent, agent confirmed to buyer to wire money before closing
- Jury found real estate agent 85% liable
- Judgment of \$167,129



NAR EFFORTS

- On March 12, 2019, NAR hosted representatives from American Bankers Association, American Land Title Association, Mortgage Bankers Association, RESPRO and the American Escrow Agents Association to meet with FBI.
- Working together to combat wire fraud, including educating members and developing common messaging to raise consumer awareness.



RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- 1. Educate buyers about possible scams.
- 2. Make sure you send documents safely (transaction management system).
- 3. Never send wire instructions via e-mail.
- 4. Verify instructions with phone number independently obtained.
- 5. Double check e-mail addresses (call person if unsure).
- 6. Monitor e-mail for unrecognized activity.
- 7. Never click attachments.
- 8. Use strong passwords.



IF FRAUD OCCURS

- 1. Notify other parties in the transaction
- 2. Contact bank where funds were transferred immediately
- 3. File a complaint immediately at IC3.gov
 - Filing within 72 hours provides best chance for recovery
- 4. Report to local FBI office



E-MAIL NOTICE TEMPLATE

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: <u>Never trust wiring instructions sent via email.</u> Cyber criminals are hacking email accounts and sending emails with fake wiring instructions. These emails are convincing and sophisticated. <u>Always</u> independently confirm wiring instructions in person or via a telephone call to a trusted and verified phone number. <u>Never</u> wire money without double-checking that the wiring instructions are correct.

Email Notice Template available on nar.realtor:

https://www.nar.realtor/law-and-ethics/wire-fraud-email-notice-template



CYBER AND FIDELITY INSURANCE REPORT



Report is available on nar.realtor:

https://www.nar.realtor/reports/cyber-and-fidelity-insurance-report



NAR RESOURCES

- Wire Fraud Landing Page: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/topics/wire-fraud</u>
- Sample Wire Fraud Notices: https://www.nar.realtor/data-privacy-security/wire-fraud-notices
- Legal Case Summary: https://www.nar.realtor/legal-case-summaries/licensee-liable-for-wire-fraud-losses
- Video Alerts and Education:
 - <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law/how-to-avoid-wire-fraud-in-transactions</u>
 - <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/wire-fraud-alert-for-buyers</u>
 - <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law-data-security-program-basics</u>
 - <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law-cyberscams-and-the-real-estate-professional</u>
 - <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law/window-to-the-law-creating-a-cybersecurity-program</u>
 - <u>http://realtormag.realtor.org/daily-news/2016/04/22/video-arm-your-clients-against-wire-fraud</u>
- Data Privacy and Security Landing Page: http://www.nar.realtor/topics/data-privacy-and-security/resources
- Data Privacy and Security Toolkit: https://www.nar.realtor/law-and-ethics/nars-data-security-and-privacy-toolkit



COMING SOON AND POCKET LISTINGS

- Coming Soon listing generally refers to when agent has a signed listing agreement but the property is not available for showing or sale until a later date.
- Pocket Listing (Office Exclusive Listing, Off-MLS Listing) generally refers to a listing in which an agent has a signed listing agreement and the seller opts-out of placing the listing on the MLS.
- Neither are new, but have become more popular due to current market conditions.



ARE THEY THE SAME?

- NO A Coming Soon is different if it is used appropriately and fairly.
- A Coming Soon becomes a Pocket Listing when the listed property is never made available to the general public.
- Coming Soon when used appropriately is completely legitimate.
- Pocket Listing is more risky and raises many questions.



COMING SOON – PROPER USES

- Coming Soon is appropriate when it helps the seller
 - Market generation
 - $_{\rm \circ}\,$ Provides seller extra time
- Presents a true and accurate picture
- All buyers are treated equally and fairly
- Complies with state laws, regulations and MLS rules



COMING SOON – IMPROPER USES

- Never lists on the MLS
- Shown only to a select few
- Without seller permission or consent
- No signed listing contract
- Accept bids or offers before advertised time
- No logical or reasonable reason
- Only appropriate if it's not misused



POCKET LISTINGS

- Most experts agree that sellers (majority) are best served by MLS listing.
- MLSs facilitate transactions by creating a consolidated source of accurate property information, and function best when information is complete.

 Pocket Listings can compromise information accuracy and undermine cooperation.

- MLSs ensure max exposure and provides the best chance for highest offer.
- General perception that Pocket Listings only benefit the listing firm.



POCKET LISTINGS – PROPER USES

- Rarely in the best interest of the seller.
- Seller wants privacy (e.g. celebrity, divorce).
- Seller wants a quick transaction.
- Seller wants control and to limit the number of strangers walking through seller's property.
- Seller wants to test price.



LEGAL RISKS

- Breach of Agent's Duties
- State Laws and Regulations
- Fair Housing
- Antitrust



BREACH OF DUTIES

- Loyalty Act solely in the principal's best interests at the exclusion of all others including broker's self interest.
 - Dual Agency (NYC Lawsuit Houlihan)
 - o Conflict of Interest: Self Interest (Double Commission) vs. Seller's Interest (Highest Price)
 - Sweetwater v. Umansky
- Reasonable Care and Diligence
 - \circ Competent
 - Superior skill and expertise
 - Same duty as doctor or lawyer
- Cooperation Duty to cooperate when in the client's best interest. Rooted in the premise that broad exposure and cooperative marketing produce best result.



STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

- Colorado
 - Advise client during listing contract negotiation the risks and benefits risks of "coming soon."
 - Motivation must be only for seller's benefit.
- South Carolina
 - Cannot advertise as "Coming Soon" before entering into a listing agreement.
- Idaho
 - ° "Coming Soon" that markets to only a select group is misleading advertisement.
 - No safe haven for claims that a seller is content just because of accepted offer.
 - Could violate Idaho's Consumer Protection Act.



STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS

- Nebraska
 - Must have an active listing agreement.
 - Must be in the name in which broker does business and under the broker's supervision.
 - Must be with the property owner's knowledge and written consent.
 - Must actually be "Coming Soon" and not shown or marketed before indicated time.



CODE OF ETHICS

- Protect and promote client's interest while treating all parties honestly. (Article 1)
- Advise seller of policies regarding cooperation and any compensation amounts to be offered. (SOP 1-12)
- Cooperate and make property available for showing when in the seller's best interest. (Article 3 & SOP 3-10)
- Do not misrepresent availability to show or inspect property (SOP 3-8)
- Be honest and truthful in communications and present true picture in advertising, marketing and other representations. (Article 12)



DYNAMICS



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- and duties
 - Applicable Laws

Standards





MLS

Association

Law

BEST PRACTICES

- Don't advertise a property without written consent of the seller.
- Get a listing agreement that is legally compliant and fully executed.
- Know and follow your state laws, regulations and MLS submission rules.
- Make sure the seller understands the pros and cons of an exclusion (EXPLAIN, EXPLAIN and EXPLAIN).



RESOURCES

• Articles:

 The Latest on Coming Soon: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/realtor-ae-magazine/the-latest-on-coming-soon-listings</u>

- Law & Policy: Professionalism and pocket listings: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/realtor-ae-magazine/law-policy-professionalism-and-pocket-listings</u>
- "Coming Soon" Is it in the Seller's Best Interest?: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/articles/coming-soon-is-it-in-the-seller-s-best-interest</u>
- Window to the Law Videos:
 - Coming Soon Listing Best Practices: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law-coming-soon-listings-best-practices</u>
 - Off MLS Listings: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law/window-to-the-law/window-to-the-law-off-mls-listings</u>





NAR LEGAL RESOURCES







RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT





WINDOW TO THE LAW

A monthly video series focusing on legal topics of interest to the real estate industry.

- Coming Soon Listings
- Teams
- RESPA
- Wire Fraud
- Independent Contractor Classification
- Antitrust
- Social Media
- Interactions with an Appraiser
- Campaign Finance Law
- ADA: Basics & Website Accessibility
- Copyright Infringement
- Patent Trolls
- Drones
- Elder Abuse
- And many more.

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TO THE LAW

WINDOW

https://www.nar.realtor/videos/window-to-the-law





LEGAL PULSE

Quarterly newsletter analyzing recent legal trends, as well as emerging issues, impacting real estate professionals.

Legal Pulse

Current Issue: 4Q 2018: Agency, PCD, RESPA, and Fair Housing

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Explore this issue



Download or print this quarter's Legal Pulse newsletter. (PDF:402.62 KB)

This edition of the quarterly report analyzes legal trends in risk management areas that affect real estate professionals: Agency, Property Condition Disclosure, RESPA, and Fair Housing.

Read the 4Q 2018 Executive Summary





Advertisement

https://www.nar.realtor/publications/legal-pulse





STATE ISSUES TRACKER

Interactive, searchable database of real estate-related state regulations, as well comparisons of various state approaches to core real estate issues.



https://www.nar.realtor/political-advocacy/state-issues-tracker




LEGAL CASE SUMMARIES

Legal summaries of recent cases of interest to the real estate industry.



https://www.nar.realtor/legal-case-summaries





HOT TOPICS IN BROKER RISK REDUCTION

Hot Topics in Broker Risk Reduction

Katie Johnson, General Counsel & Chief Member Experience Officer May 2019

WIRE FRAUD (https://www.nar.realtor/topics/wire-fraud)

- a. Follow these tips to reduce risk of wire fraud:
 - i. Alert homebuyers at the outset of the transaction. Many brokers are requiring signed disclosures. <u>http://www.realtor.org/videos/wire-fraud-alert-for-buyers</u>
 - ii. Instruct homebuyers to call wire recipient using an independently-verified phone number.
 - iii. Avoid sending wire instructions (and any sensitive financial information) via email.
 - iv. Use a secure transaction management platform to share documents and information.
 - V. Use good email security practices never open unsolicited links or attachments, keep operating system and anti-virus updated, use strong passwords and two-factor authentication, purge regularly, and avoid using unsecured wifi.
 - vi. Create an e-mail rule to flag email communications where the "reply" email address is different from the "from" email address shown.
 - vii. Immediately report suspected fraud to the bank from which the funds were transferred.
 - viii. Get to know your local FBI field office and contact them immediately if fraud is suspected. ix. Report fraud incidents to www.ic3.gov.
- b. <u>Resources:</u>
 - i. How to Avoid Wire Fraud video: <u>https://www.nar.realtor/window-to-the-law/how-to-avoid-wire-fraud-in-transactions</u>
 - ii. Wire Fraud Email Notice: https://www.nar.realtor/law-and-ethics/wire-fraud-email-notice-template
 - iii. FBI, BEC: The 12 Billion Dollar Scam: https://www.ic3.gov/media/2018/180712.aspx

https://www.nar.realtor/legal/hot-topics-for-brokers





SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHY AGREEMENTS



Research & Statistics Political Advocacy Education

Who Owns Your Property Photos?

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Real Estate Topics



Listing content fuels the real estate industry, and displaying photographs of real properties online is now a vital part of the real estate professional's marketing plan. Sellers use photographs to market properties, and buyers rely on those images to select which properties to visit. MLSs distribute property listings through proprietary databases that include the listing photographs. Moreover, MLSs in turn often license their property listing databases, including broker-provided photographs, to third-party portals, such as REALTOR.com, and other websites and vendors.

Improper use of listing photographs, however, can create legal problems for agents, brokerages and MLSs. Authorship and ownership of photographs within the real estate industry is "fractured". Who authored the photograph and who can use what photograph and in what way varies across the industry. Listing photographs may be taken by homeowners, real estate agents, MLS or brokerage employees, or professional photographers.



Photographs may be owned or licensed to different parties in a variety of ways. A misunderstanding of how you may use the photographs for property listings could make you vulnerable to a copyright lawsuit.

For example, copyright infringement of listing photographs is central to the recent lawsuit *VHT, Inc. v. Zillow Group, Inc.*, No. 2:15-cv-1096 (W.D. Wash. 2015). VHT purportedly retains ownership in the listing photographs and only grants non-exclusive licenses to brokers to use the photographs solely in connection with marketing active property listings. In the complaint, VHT alleges that Zillow uses VHT's photographs without authorization in connection with "sold" properties and on Zillow's home design website, "Digs." VHT argues that these uses exceed



Sample Agreements

In order to assist members and member firms, NAR Legal Affairs created sample agreements, which should be modified as necessary to fit your particular needs.

These documents are provided as a sample, and are not intended to be and do not constitute legal advice, or a substitute for specific legal advice or opinions. The user of this sample document should not use this document without consulting legal counsel. The use of this document should be modified to address the specific legal needs of the user.

Work for Hire Agreement: This sample agreement provides that the commissioned photographs are a "Work for Hire", which means the commissioning party is the automatic owner of the photographs from their creation. Download: DOC IPDF

Assignment Agreement: In this sample agreement, the photographer assigns all right, title and interest in the photographs to the broker. Download: DOC | PDF

Exclusive License Agreement: A photographer may want to retain its ownership of the photographs. In this sample agreement, the photographer grants to the broker an exclusive license to display and distribute the photographs in connection with the real estate industry. Download: DOCI PDF

Back to "Who Owns Your Property Photos?"

REALTOR® Content Resource

FREE consumer content ready to use for your SOCIAL MEDIA, WEBSITE, NEWSLETTER or other materials

HouseLogic.com/members GO!



https://www.nar.realtor/law-and-ethics/who-owns-your-property-photos





REAL ESTATE BROKERAGE ESSENTIALS[®]



REALTOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of REALTORS®





TRADEMARK PROTECTION PROGRAM





REALTOR® TRADEMARK

Logos and Trademark Rules

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Download the REALTOR® Logo It is important to use NAR's membership marks—including the REALTOR® logo and the terms REALTOR®, REALTOR-ASSOCIATE®, REALTORS®—correctly and according to the rules outlined in the Membership Marks Manual.

Download REALTOR® Logos and get information on how to use the logos correctly:

Trademark Use in Social Media

Video: Make Our Marks

Remarkable









MLS logo

Frequently Asked Questions

REALTOR® logo Commercial logo

Equal Housing Opportunity logo

Read the top 5 things you need to know about using the REALTOR® trademarks correctly, then take this quiz to test your knowledge. Get tips for using the terms REALTOR®, REALTOR-ASSOCIATE®, and REALTORS®:

· With a member's name

http://www.nar.realtor/logos-and-trademark-rules

Trademark Tips for Associations Video: https://www.nar.realtor/videos/maintaining-therealtor-brand-for-the-next-100-years





REALTOR® TRADEMARK VIDEOS



https://www.nar.realtor/logos-and-trademark-rules/makeour-marks-remarkable Why NAR Protects the REALTOR® Trademark

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https://www.nar.realtor/videos/whynar-protects-the-realtor-trademark







LITIGATION SUPPORT





LEGAL ACTION PROGRAM

NAR's Legal Action Committee provides financial assistance in connection with litigation affecting NAR, state and local REALTOR[®] associations, members, and real estate owners where the cases may have a direct or indirect impact on the real estate industry.



https://www.nar.realtor/programs/legal-action-program







LIBRARY & ARCHIVES







eBooks Catalog	Contact Us:
Business Letter Templates	800-874-6500 Library Hours: 8:30 - 11:30 am & 12:30 - 4 pm Central, Monday to Friday
Library Catalog	− Librarians@realtors.org ≥
NAR Archives	– Chat Live – Twitter (@askNAR)≝
Culture Scan Blog	- Facebook @
Videos	Search:
Policies & Services	Print Collection Digital Collection Archives Collection
References	

https://www.nar.realtor/library-archives

https://realtors.kohalibrary.com/cgi-bin/koha/opac-main.pl#page=page-1





THANK YOU

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