

Directors Say Yes To Political Initiative

5/19/2011

The NAR Board of Directors overwhelmingly approved the REALTOR® Party Political Survival Initiative (RPPSI) at its May 14 meeting and to raise NAR dues to \$120, from \$80, to pay for it. Under the initiative, the \$40 in new dues revenue will go to help fund and provide assistance to local, state, and national political and issues campaigns. Although some of the funds will be used to augment the REALTORS® Political Action Committee, a majority of the funds—73 percent—will be used for bolstering grassroots action. RPAC contributions are still critical, said former NAR President Cathy Whatley, who presented the initiative to the directors.

IDX change

Also at the meeting, which closed the 2011 REALTORS® Midyear Legislative Meetings & Trade Expo in Washington, D.C., the directors voted to add an opt-in provision, effective 30 days from passage, to the “franchisor index and display” portion of the Internet Data Exchange (IDX) policy that the board adopted in November 2010. That provision gives franchisors the right to index and display listing data from their franchisees’ IDX feeds on their national Web sites.

The decision to add the opt-in centered on the directors’ concerns about the availability of listing information to non-participants without brokerages’ consent. Brokers representing Leading Real Estate Companies of the World, Home Services of America, and the Realty Alliance led the way toward the policy change; those companies oppose the new IDX policy and had backed a failed proposal to repeal the policy.

Federal Policy

With the federal government exploring changes to the secondary mortgage market, the board passed a resolution supporting the continuation of the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) system to help ensure the continued availability of affordable and safe mortgage financing. The FHLB system makes funds available to its member banks, helping to keep down the cost of financing to consumers.

Other changes approved by the board:

MLS Policy

New language in the MLS Policy Statement permits, at the option of the local MLS, the inclusion of price changes and days on market information in advertisements, including IDX displays, of the participants’ listings.

NRDS Database Compliance

The deadline for associations to meet the NRDS central database compliance batch upload and download programs was extended to June 30, 2012. The deadline had been Dec. 31 of this year.

Code of Ethics Training

Modified NAR’s organizational standards criteria to include associations’ obligation to administer and

enforce the REALTOR® Code of Ethics training requirements.

Association Name Changes

Also, the board passed changes to allow for quicker association name changes by permitting staff to approve names when the change is non-substantive and to allow for earlier mediation in disputes over association name changes.

Legal Funding

Approved \$150,000 to support three legal cases, involving classification of a brokerage administrative fee on the HUD-1 settlement form, whether an administrative fee violated RESPA rules on unearned fees, and allegations of price-fixing in violation of antitrust law.

Professional Standards

In changes to Code of Ethics Article 17, associations would be given discretionary authority to require their members to mediate otherwise-arbitrable disputes. The change would also include an amendment to Standard of Practice 17-2 that would enable parties to a dispute to reject mediation if all parties in the dispute chose to arbitrate or litigate. The change to Article 17 is subject to approval by the NAR Delegate Body.

Section 19 of the Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual, which references Grievance Committees' review of ethics complaints, was amended to provide guidance to hearing panels in circumstances where, after an ethics complaint has been forwarded for hearing, it comes to light that the underlying transaction or event is also the basis for civil litigation, administrative or regulatory proceedings, or criminal litigation.

New Officers

Elected the association's 2012 slate of officers: Maurice ("Moe") Veissi of Florida, president; Gary Thomas of California, president-elect; Steve Brown of Ohio, first vice president; and William ("Bill") Armstrong, GRI, of Maryland, treasurer.

D.J. Snapp of Florida will serve as vice president and liaison to committees under Veissi, and Scott Louser of North Dakota will serve as vice president and liaison to government affairs.

Recognition

Adorna Carroll, ABR, GRI, of Connecticut, and PeggyAnn McConnochie, GRI, of Alaska were named NAR Distinguished Service Award recipients for 2011, and Gary Clayton, RCE, CAE, CEO of the Illinois Association of REALTORS®, was named the William R. Magel Award winner for distinguished service as an association executive. Both the DSAs and the Magel Award winner will be formally recognized at the 2011 REALTORS® Annual Meeting in November in Anaheim, Calif.

Past President Richard Mendenhall, recognizing the upcoming the 10th anniversary of the REALTORS® Relief Foundation in September 2011, gave a moving tribute to members who've served in the military.

REALTOR.com President Errol Samuelson reported to the directors about changes to that site to make access to listings easier on phones and other mobile devices, prevent scraping and other unauthorized use of data, and enhance attraction of listings to buyers in other countries.