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MBREA president's message: Choose to join!

January 07, 2009 - Appraisal & Consulting

Now that we know the final content of the Home Valuation Code of Conduct we are able to better estimate its impact. The work started by N.Y. attorney general Andrew Cuomo has many commendable components highlighted by strong language establishing an unprecedented level of appraiser independence for residential appraisers. We believe these safeguards are long overdue and appropriate to implement on a federal level.

We are concerned about the overwhelming reliance placed on appraisal management companies (AMCs) as a primary means to insure independence in the appraisal process. AMCs operate in an unregulated environment that provides no avenue of recourse should they fail to provide the bulwark separating appraisers from undue influence by loan production staff. MBREA will be working with various parties to effectuate a reasonable safety net of oversight for AMCs.

A few years ago, several national appraisal organizations banded together to create a joint lobbying and government relations program. This seems to work well in most instances although there are times when one group's members' interests are separate from the others. The coalition though, points out the value of professional organizations working in concert when possible.

Regionally, we experienced the emergence of state appraisal organizations during 2008. The galvanizing events are the growing dominance of AMCs, the Code of Conduct and appraiser independence. MBREA has been in contact with and provided support to these groups and will continue to do so in 2009. We would like to bring these groups together to discuss issues and solutions that would be consistent throughout N.E.

Appraisers are an independent lot. For the most part, we work by ourselves or with one or two others. We have weathered a few economic cycles, always optimistic that the downturns will be short and the upturns long-lasting. Our independence, though, may be one of the reasons we have been long on complaining and short of effective action. Only an estimated 30% of the more than 3,000 real property appraisers in Mass. belong to a professional appraisal organization. That means about 2,000 appraisers made a decision not to associate themselves with an organization of their peers. Nationally, the percentage of appraisers who belong to any association is about the same. Imagine how more effective our efforts would be in Mass. to bring about change if MBREA's membership numbered 2,000 rather than 600?

I belong to both the MBREA and the Appraisal Institute. I joined each to become connected with professional peers whom I respected and could draw upon for advice and support. The benefits I receive from membership far outweigh the dues I pay. In return for my involvement, both associations provide me with invaluable information about emerging issues and advocate with state and federal officials for the advancement of our profession. Other MBREA members belong to the American Society of Appraisers or the National Association of Independent Fee Appraisers. Like me, they see the importance of associating with both national and local organizations.

At the 2008 N.E. Appraisers Expo I looked around at the number of appraisers in attendance who do not belong to any professional organization. It amazes me to think that a person committed to a profession chooses not to join and participate with a group that provides networking, opportunities for professional growth and encourages the highest ethical standards for its members. The challenge I present to you in 2009 is to choose to become a member of one or more professional appraisal organizations.

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