



BOUNDARY LINES

A LOUISIANA REAL ESTATE COMMISSION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Website Launch Edition

Chairman's corner

LREC TAPPED FOR NATIONAL AWARDS



LREC's continuing efforts to improve the quality of education available to Louisiana real estate licensees and our commitment to improve communication with our stakeholders has grabbed the attention of our peer regulatory agencies throughout the country! At the recent annual conference of the Association of Real Estate License Law Officials (ARELLO), I was pleased to accept both their coveted "Education Award" as well as their "Communication Award" on behalf of the LREC.

Our selection for honors in education was largely based on our development and adoption of new continuing education course approval guidelines, in conjunction with new course specific instructor approvals that are scheduled to

take effect Jan. 1, 2013. The net effect of these improvements are to ensure that when licensees sign up for a course, they will benefit from improved course content delivered by a qualified and knowledgeable instructor.

The new LREC website tipped the scales in Louisiana's favor in earning the ARELLO Communication Award. If you haven't visited our site lately, check it out! The clean, new look provides ease of navigation for consumers, licensees, real estate schools and staff alike. The content management format will enable us to fully develop this site into a truly interactive platform.

Among other features, you can now check your license status, monitor your continuing education, change your address, register trade names, renew your license, pay any fees due and keep up to date on LREC activity. A free phone app will be coming soon as well! Our goal is to achieve 100 percent paperless capability for all our stakeholders. However, LREC will also continue to offer paper forms for all transactions.

LREC would never have achieved national recognition without the active involvement and valuable input from you all. Your participation continues to be invaluable. The Louisiana Realtors Association and Real Estate Boards across the state work hand in hand as partners with LREC in moving forward. Our LREC staff deserves immense credit for doing all the heavy lifting in taking our best collective ideas and making them a reality.

- Tim Flavin

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LREC'S IT LIAISON on the NEW WEBSITE FEATURES

Recently, we updated our website to a more robust Content Management System and a fresher, simpler, yet more effective design for you, the end user. We now have complete creative control when it comes to the design and look of the new website. As mentioned in Chairman's Corner, the website garnered national attention last month when the LREC was awarded a Communication Award for our new website at the Association of Real Estate License Law Officials (ARELLO) Annual Conference held in Halifax, Nova Scotia!

Some features to notice about the new site:

MENU BAR

Instead of the side menu of our old site, we now have a menu bar that floats horizontally across the top of the site continuously, for easier navigation. All sub sections are self explanatory for the topics contained within. The one thing to note is that licensing is a section for people interested in becoming a licensed agent, and the licensee box on the home page is for those of you who are already licensed through the Commission.

FEATURE BOXES

Some new features that our end users will notice on the home page of the new site are four new boxes (Consumers, Licensees, News & Events, and Laws and Rules). The Consumers box is a new feature that hopes to guide those that are interested in buying or selling property, or perhaps are simply interested in looking up a licensed agent from our database. The Licensees section is just that, a section for the licensee to accomplish numerous transactions. But this section also serves as a resource for looking up renewal passwords and referencing various real estate laws. The News and Events and Laws and Rules sections lead you to resources to delve deeper into each of those respective topics.

MYLREC

The newest and most useful feature on our website is the MyLREC button, located at the bottom right-hand section of every page throughout the website. This button acts as a quick access point for our licensees that offers links to all of the important functions that a licensee may need to access. Things like LREC email access, online renewal, education records, user name/password look up and so on, are all now just one click away.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

The most exciting thing about this new website is that the possibilities are endless as far as functionality goes. As the market evolves and trends toward e-data and e-commerce based interactions, the LREC will now be able to evolve with these changes. Please feel free to visit us at: <http://www.lrec.state.la.us>. Also, visit our Facebook and Twitter pages and let us know what you think! Simply follow the icons located on the top right hand side of our home page.

The screenshot shows the Louisiana Real Estate Commission website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Education, Licensing, Forms, Complaints & Investigations, and Contact Us. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of the commission's building. Underneath the banner are four feature boxes: Consumers, Licensees, News/Events, and Laws & Rules. The main content area includes a 'Welcome to LREC' section with introductory text and an 'Events Calendar' for October 2012. At the bottom, there is contact information for the Louisiana Real Estate Commission, including physical and mailing addresses, phone numbers, and a MyLREC button.

- Jeremy Endicott

ADVERTISING VIOLATIONS

websites & social media

Approximately one year ago, LREC began issuing citations to licensees whose advertisements failed to comply with Chapter 25 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations. Many brokers and agents have been required to pay a \$75 fine for websites that were determined to be non-compliant. Now seems like the perfect time for a refresher on the usage of advertisements--including social media and internet promotion.

Advertising includes any activity, public notice or representation authorized, made by or on behalf of a real estate licensee. Advertising includes all promotional events, internet, Facebook, Twitter accounts, emails, printed material, pamphlets, billboards, signs, business cards, letterhead and other similar materials. ALL advertisements must include the company name (exactly as licensed) and the broker's telephone number. If the company is affiliated with a franchise, advertisements must include the disclosure that each office is independently owned and operated. If a team name is used, the first and last name of each licensed team member must be included near the team name (only licensed members may be represented as part of the team).

Internet advertising rules require two additional items to be included on EACH page of a website and on the first or last page of an email that either promotes the licensee or the company's services. In addition to the information listed above, you must include the city and state of the

company's main or branch office, and you must list the jurisdiction(s) where you hold a license; i.e. «Licensed in LA» or «Licensed in LA, TX, MS (LREC recommends that email signatures include all necessary information). All information must be on EACH page of a website or other internet promotion.

LREC employs a "one-click away policy" for social media, but this policy does not extend to website advertisements. On Facebook and Twitter promotions, you must include all required information on your Facebook profile or your Twitter profile.

In recent months, the investigative staff has issued numerous citations to licensees and brokers. They are required to pay a \$75 fine to satisfy the citation order. The most common violation found on licensees' websites and emails has been the failure to include licensed team member names when promoting or listing a team.

Currently, the fine for the first offense for any advertising violation is \$75; however, a second violation results in a fine of \$150. Sponsoring brokers must supervise their agents' advertising according to the Rules and Regulations. If an agent is cited a third time, both the broker and the sponsored licensee will be charged and will be required to appear before the Commission in a formal adjudicative proceedings. A sanction will be determined by the Commission during the formal hearing.

The investigative staff monitors internet advertisements and social media for compliance. You may review Chapter 25 of the Commission's Rules and Regulations on our website for more information. If you have specific questions, you can contact an investigator for assistance.

- Marsha Stafford

LREC REMEMBERS RUDY SCHMIDT, JR

This issue of Boundary Lines is dedicated to the memory of our colleague, Rudolph J. "Rudy" Schmidt, Jr., who passed away on October 6, 2012. A long time member of the Louisiana real estate community, he was the director of Uptown Professional Real Estate School in New Orleans, Louisiana, and WebTaught, an online professional education resource.



He was a certified instructor for the Louisiana Real Estate Commission and the Louisiana Real Estate Appraisers Board for over 30 years. Known fondly by his students as "Uncle Rudy," thousands of real estate professionals owe their careers to the passion and dedication he brought to the classroom. We extend our condolences to his wife, son, family and friends.

- Stephanie Boudreaux



[[[CE AUDIT]]] [why it matters]

If there's one thing we can all learn from the past few years of the housing market's upticks and downturns, it's that this market is constantly changing, shifting... dropping. In addition to the market we find changes in mortgage lending, laws and regulations, appraising, advertising, etc.

It should come as no surprise that a regulatory body requires real estate licensees to acquire yearly education hours, not only to refresh fundamental practices of real estate, but also to teach licensees about changes, updates and new market rules.

Licensees who fail to complete all or part of their education are subject to penalties which can include a monetary fine, a censure of licensure, a suspension and a potential revocation. All active licensees are required to complete twelve (12) hours of continuing education prior to renewing their license, and four (4) of these hours must be in a subject mandated by the Commission.

The Commission conducted its first continuing education audit in 2010. The goal of this audit was to verify that licensees had fulfilled their continuing education requirements. During this audit, the Commission requested documentation from over 2,800 licensees. After receiving thousands of telephone calls, emails and faxes, it was determined that over 400 licensees had failed to complete or satisfy their continuing education requirements. These licensees were required to complete any outstanding education and pay a fine in the amount of \$325.

In 2011, a second education audit was conducted. This time, the Commission reached out to over 500 licensees, of which 81 were found to be in violation. Commission staff has been working on the 2012 education on audit for several months and this year's audit has yielded

more than 500 licensees who have failed to complete their required continuing education. This year's audit has also uncovered several repeat offenders. Licensees who are repeat offenders will be required to complete the outstanding education and pay a fine in the amount of \$575.

With less than three (3) months remaining to receive credit hours for this year, licensees who have not yet completed their education should contact their local education vendors, preferably before New Year's Eve. This year's mandatory 2012 continuing education course is titled "Advertising Rules and Regulations – How they relate to social media and teams in general advertising." Additional information on continuing education requirements can be found on our new website at <http://www.lrec.state.la.us/mandatory-topic>. You may also view a list of continuing education vendors at <http://www.lrec.state.la.us/continuing-education/#Distance>.

The Louisiana Real Estate Commission works to ensure that licensees are in compliance with all rules and regulations. It's our way of ensuring that the public interest is kept at heart and that the Louisiana Real Estate Industry is functioning at its best.

****Licensees with an initial licensure date of January 1, 2012 or later are also required to complete continuing education. Initial licensees will receive eight (8) hours of continuing education for completing the post licensing course, however they are still obligated to complete the four (4) hour mandatory topic.****

- Robert Maynor



Formal Adjudication: suspension

At a formal hearing held August 16, 2012, the Individual Real Estate Broker's license issue to Nicole Elizabeth Lombas was suspended for 180 days and she was fined \$2,500 for: failure to have the sales escrow account properly titled (2701. A. of the Rules and Regulations and LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (2)); making disbursements from a sales escrow checking account without first obtaining the written consent of all parties having an interest in the funds (2715. A. 1. of the Rules and Regulations and LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (2)); failure to notify the Commission in writing of a change of mailing address (3101. A. of the Rules and Regulations and LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. (2)); failure to maintain and have records readily available and properly indexed (LSA-R.S. 37: 1449. E and LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (1)); failure to cooperate with Commission personnel conducting an investigation and failure to produce requested documents (LSA-R.S. 37: 1453. B. and C); and using advertisement that was misleading and inaccurate (LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (35)).

Formal Adjudication: revocation

At a formal hearing held June 21, 2012, the Individual Real Estate Broker's license issued to Thereasa M. Gransberry and the corporate license of T-Grans Realty, LLC was revoked for: failure to cooperate with Commission personnel conducting an investigation and failure to produce requested documents (LSA-R.S. 37: 1453. B and C); failure to maintain a rental trust account and failure to place rental proceeds in a rental trust account (2701. B. of the Rules and Regulations and LSA-R.S. 37:1455 A. (2)); failure to maintain records (LSA-R.S. 37: 1449. D); failure to account for client funds (LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (4)); failure to properly disburse money to the rightful owner (LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (5)); commingling client funds with personal funds (LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (6)); and offering real estate as being for sale and lease without the written consent of the owner (LSA-R.S. 37: 1455. A. (11)).

- Marsha Stafford

MyLREC

In 2008, the Louisiana Real Estate Commission created *MyLREC* to allow licensees, registrants and certificate holders a technologically advanced option for conducting business with the LREC and to rid the Commission of excess paperwork when a digital format would work fine.

To access *MyLREC* from the new site, licensees can scroll down to the second half of the fold and find the button on the bottom right-hand corner of the screen. Upon clicking the button, licensees will be brought to a page that has a few options from which they can choose:

My LREC	Email License Search
User Password Lookup	Change Address
License Renewal	View Education Record

Users will also find a calendar of events and deadlines as well as the trusty info@lrec.state.la.us, an email for licensees and the public alike to send all their questions and concerns to the Commission. Keep in mind, of course, that we do have specified email addresses if a user has a question for a specific department. Those email addresses can be found here: <http://www.lrec.state.la.us/contact-us/>.

- Les Patin



Website Redesign survey

Good Day Louisiana!

As we are celebrating the launch of our new website and the recent awards in Nova Scotia, we realize that we are in no place to get comfortable. We plan to press forward, answering to the advances of technology, continuously moving forward.

This content management software will allow us to improve your experience as the end user. Also, we will continue to bring you the most relevant information via this publication, Facebook and Twitter. If you ever have any recommendations

as to how we can improve our communications, please let us know!

We can't do it alone. You can start telling us what you think of the website redesign by taking our brief survey. As always, we're listening!

survey

Follow us for all the latest updates!



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