

President's Column

Dec. 28, 2011

A difference that matters

Many people use the word REALTOR® to describe someone who is a real estate agent or broker. However, there is a difference between a real estate agent or broker who is a Texas REALTOR® and one who is not. As a REALTOR® myself, I believe there are significant advantages for clients who hire a Texas REALTOR®.

Ethical practices

All real estate agents and brokers must be licensed by the Texas Real Estate Commission to assist consumers with buying and selling property. However, only those licensed agents and brokers who choose to become REALTOR®s commit themselves to a higher standard of professional conduct known as the REALTOR® Code of Ethics. The code consists of 17 articles that outline a REALTOR®'s obligations to clients, the public and other REALTORS®. Each article is broken down into several standards of practice that outline the conduct expected of a REALTOR®.

The Code of Ethics is more than a list of goals. It is actually enforced through the REALTOR® organization to ensure the interests of clients, the public and other REALTORS® are protected. As a matter of fact, anyone can charge a REALTOR® with violating the Code of Ethics, and procedures are in place to determine if the code has indeed been broken. If the REALTOR® is found to have violated the code, punishments range from mandatory education to hefty fines and sometimes even suspension of membership in the organization.

Head of the class

Another distinguishing feature of REALTORS® is how much value we place on education. You may have seen a business card or Web page and noticed a string of letters, such as GRI, CRS or ABR, after a Texas REALTOR®'s name. Those letters represent professional designations offered through the REALTOR® organization or affiliated institutions.

As a buyer or seller, you can benefit from a Texas REALTOR®'s in-depth industry knowledge gained from earning designations. Each designation represents a different type of expertise such as buyer representation, affordable housing, property management and others.

Working together for Texas

Having a Texas REALTOR® represent you in a real estate transaction is to your advantage. But even if you aren't currently buying or selling property, you also benefit from the actions of Texas REALTORS® on a much larger scale. Texas REALTORS® work together to promote the interests of homebuyers and property owners – and nowhere is this more evident than at the state Capitol.

When the 82nd Texas Legislature concluded in 2011, Texas REALTORS® counted several successes on behalf of private-property rights and the interests of Texas homeowners. Bills that give homeowners association members more rights became law during the session. A law was passed that increases restrictions on the government's use of eminent domain. And legislation prohibiting private transfer fees and requiring better disclosure also became law this session.

A difference that matters

So, Texas REALTORS® are more than just real estate agents and brokers. They are professionals who abide by a strict ethical code, are obliged to treat all parties fairly, pursue education beyond what the law requires and work for your benefit at the state Capitol.

I hope you'll consider hiring a Texas REALTOR® for your next real estate transaction. It's a difference that matters – for many reasons.

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