

Cooper Real Estate

To whom it may concern:

I have been in the real estate business for more than thirty years. I operate in a small marketplace with about 350 real estate practitioners and about 115,000 residents. I also teach real estate related classes all over the State of Michigan. I have heard stories, both locally and elsewhere in my state, about how many practitioners there are and how few customers. Much of the difficulty that new licensees talk about is how difficult it is to overcome all the competition that is chasing each potential listing. Everyone they know that may need real estate service has many friends in the business.

The real estate industry is a model of competition that works. In an economy in which large, national corporations -- such as Wal-Mart and Microsoft -- dominate the marketplace, real estate stands apart. We are an industry made up predominantly of small businesses and independent contractors who represent the entrepreneurial spirit this country was founded on.

All of us serve localized markets where we compete for business every day. Fierce competition is fueled largely by the uniquely intense and personalized nature of the service we provide to our clients -- which, in turn, determines our future success through referrals and return business.

Barriers to entry are low. If you are willing to take the time to learn the business in your local market, pass the state license examination and adhere to the REALTOR® code of ethics, there is nothing to stand in the way of success in this industry. I had to learn the business and pass the state licensing examination, but it is my own work ethic, commitment to professional standards and dedication to client satisfaction that determine my success.

Even through the economic downturns our country has experienced in the past few years, our industry has continued to provide opportunity -- something I would say is confirmed by the thousands of new agents that join our profession every year and the over 2 million Americans who are now licensed to provide professional real estate services in communities across the country.

Nothing encourages a competitive business environment more than providing consumers with choice. In the residential real estate marketplace, consumers not

only are able to choose from more than 76,000 brokerage firms and more than 1.2 million REALTORS®, but also from a variety of business models.

The MLS is a cooperative, broker-to-broker offer of cooperation and compensation that help both brokers and customers buy and sell homes. It is not a public utility, nor should it be.

The beauty of the MLS is that it allows real estate brokerages of every size to compete on a level playing field. It gives all of us access to an inventory of property listings that we are able to show and sell to our clients.

The MLS doesn't discriminate. All MLS members are treated equally, regardless of their size or their business model, and yet the rights of property owners and their listing brokers are respected. The rules of the MLS achieve a delicate balance between respecting the rights of listing brokers so they will continue to be willing to contribute their inventory of listings and permitting cooperating brokers the ability to show those listings and be assured of receiving compensation if they bring about a successful sale.

From my perspective, the new policy is a win-win for consumers and REALTORS®. Each participant must compete in a very diverse and difficult environment. They may make promises of service that they intend to keep. Some merely allude to what their performance will be or remain silent on the issue. This ploy of silence then allows for lesser service and poorly served consumers. From that experience all practioneers are viewed with suspicion. REALTORS® win because the consumer will have a legal right to have a level playing field. Consumers win because they will receive the service that they believed they contracted for in their hiring of a REALTOR®. If a REALTOR® chooses to provide a lesser level of service, they are free to enter into a non-agency contract.

It works for consumers because it gives home sellers a choice whether to permit marketing of their property on the Internet and in selecting an MLS member with whom they want to work. It allows them to "opt-in" and have their property displayed on other brokers' Web sites even if they are working with a broker who does not participate in sharing his listings for display by his competitors. And it works for REALTORS® because it gives us the right to control where our listings, with the informed consent of property owners, are displayed on the Internet.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my ideas.

Yours truly,

John P. Cooper

John P. Cooper, Broker