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As a relatively new Real Estate Agent, December 2002, I have encountered much competitiveness in our industry. 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®.

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 are displayed on the Internet.

Where I personally experience industry competitiveness is not from fellow agents that follow the rules. It is those "fly-by-night" agents, brokerages and the flat fee companies that infringe on our industry, and then forget about their client's. Agents that only work with listings, because they yield a "higher commission" and just throw away the buyer's. The buyer's are people that need help too. Brokerages and Flat Fee companies that will list a home for a very low commission or flat fee and lock the seller into a contract that has a "hefty" cancellation fee if canceled before the contract ends. The companies that have come "out-of-the-woodwork" so to speak, that targets the For Sale By Owners. I don't have a problem with people wanting to try to sell their home themselves. The problem I have is that these .com companies (Just Listed – Help-U-Sell – Assist-To-Sell – For-Sale-By-Owner (the yellow sign) – and the For Sale By Owner) take the listings, use the MLS to market their listings and do nothing further for the client, unless the client pays an additional fee for the extras. "And if the general public thinks that they use "real people" in their commercials or ads; then we have a bigger problem"!!

When these "fly-by-night(s)" take our business, it makes it very hard for the "good agents" who are striving to succeed. I think the National Association of Realtors® need to examine this area of competitiveness.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my letter.

Gladys Machlet