Not long ago it was safe to say that real estate professional were unique in that we were a self-policing profession that had gone beyond the requirements of government by making our members adhere to a code of ethics that were centered on protection of not only our membership but the consumer public first and foremost. Why now has the government decided to so vehemently attack our industry and the standards by which we conduct business? One can look to a paper published by the Brookings Institution, an independent research and policy institute located in Washington, D.C. on June 27, 2005.

Following is an excerpt from that paper:

*We offer three broad policy recommendations: First, federal and state antitrust authorities should carefully scrutinize efforts to limit competition in the residential real estate brokerage market.*

*Second, state governments should refrain from adopting laws or rules that inhibit competition in real estate brokerage.*

*Third, Congress should allow the Federal Reserve Board and the Treasury Department to permit banks, which have long been natural potential entrants into this business, to offer residential real estate brokerage services through separately capitalized affiliates.*

One can only assume that as a result of this paper and widespread attacks within the media, especially the Wall Street Journal, the government was compelled to place our industry under scrutiny. Little has been written or said regarding any public complaint or outcry regarding our services or fees. The MLS which was invented, nurtured and developed by pioneers within our profession for the benefit of both agents and the buying public was never funded, subsidized or in any way beholden to any government body is now being dictated too and threatened by those entities.

Two Web sites have recently come online—one sponsored by the Department of Justice, http://www.usdoj.gov/atr/public/real_estate/index.htm, and one by the Federal Trade Commission, http://www.ftc.gov/bc/realestate/index.htm—that go far beyond the normal public information capacity expected of government developed sites.

Real estate agents across the state and country must stand and work together to respond to these efforts and educate the American public with an educated view of their value in the real estate process and their contributions to their communities. We must present ourselves in a light which shines on our virtues and strengths.

There are many more issues facing agents and their clients—homeowners—which require us to be even more diligent and vocal in defense of property rights and the laws that affect those rights.

This battle will be won the way every battle is won—one skirmish at a time. At a local level there are things that can be done by individual agents to turn the tide of public opinion back in our favor. Following are a few ideas that should be easily attainable:

**Conduct your business ethically and demand the same from those around you.**

**Get involved in your community and make it a better place to live.**

**Focus on the consumer; improve communication whenever possible.**

**Keep learning, promote knowledge within the industry, and promote best practices.**

**Get involved in your local and state associations; contribute time.**

**Help your local association promote the REALTOR® value proposition.**

**Understand the importance of REALTOR® political involvement and contribute generously to your political action fund.**

**Understand that without commitment on your part, your future is at risk.**

**Do not leave this for somebody else to take care of. ★**

---

Stephen Haley  
Broker Associate  
Keller Williams  
Group One, Inc., Reno  
775-823-8787