



PRESS RELEASE

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Helena, Montana, January 12, 2015 – The Montana Association of Realtors® (MAR) will once again be following a very active agenda in the 2015 Legislative Session, as MAR looks to build on the progress made in the 2013 session.

“MAR will continue to advocate for the availability of affordable housing and for the protection of property owners,” said MAR President Ryan Swinney. “Currently, many pending legislative issues concern Realtors®, who seek to protect the community in which we all live. MAR will be in the forefront, lobbying and testifying on such issues.”

MAR lobbying efforts have been actively engaged in many legislative initiatives to include those that deal with use of exempt wells, regulations impacting development, landlord tenant law reform, patent and copyright trolling reform and access rights across private railroad crossings.

“We support passage of the Department of Justices’ bill on patent and copyright trolling legislation. This legislation would protect recipients against bad faith assertions of patent infringement. This can be seen when a patent holder harasses for purportedly infringing on a patent in order to collect an exorbitant licensing fee,” stated Swinney. Too often a feature, such as one found within a website, for example, could have a patent associated with it. Upon the expiration of the patent, they are purchased with the sole intent of bargaining for a significant financial gain.

“Gaining access to privately held properties should not be an issue for property owners when a railroad crossing intersects their property, especially if it is the only way they can enter and exit their land,” said Swinney. “Now, new permits must be obtained with no guarantee that they will be granted. The outcome could ultimately be the revocation of that permit without cause. This creates a hardship on owners who oftentimes find they can’t sell their property **without this access**. It’s a real mess and we are currently working with railroad representatives to find a solution to this permit dilemma,” states Swinney.

Simultaneously, MAR is working on legislation that seeks to allow the conversion of condominiums to townhouses. Financing has been increasingly hard to ascertain because with condominiums there is no underlying land that is associated with such a purchase. The inability to borrow against condominium units has hurt local economies and resulted in financial hardships for many condominium owners. The sale of these units should include the underlying land and thus

a change in legislation that is well overdue. For more information on the bills we are tracking or sponsoring please see the MAR website at www.montanarealtors.org/mar-at-the-legislature.

The Montana Association of Realtors® (MAR) represents more than 3,600 real estate brokers, property managers and salespersons doing business around the state. Realtors® recognize the need to sustain and enhance the quality of life enjoyed by Montana's citizens. We believe we can build better communities by supporting quality growth and seek economic and housing opportunities that protect property owners.

The Montana Association of Realtors® is a member of The National Association of Realtors®, "The Voice for Real Estate," is America's largest trade association, representing one million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries. For more information please contact a local Realtor® association or call MAR at (406) 441-4871. A complete list of local associations in Montana is available at www.MontanaRealtors.org/mar-directory.

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