

APRIL 2021

TITLE NEWS

AMERICAN LAND TITLE ASSOCIATION

BALANCING REDACTION
IN PUBLIC LAND
RECORDS





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FNF is all about providing our agents with the tools to stay ahead of the game this season. Now is a great time to take a closer look at AgentTrax and Starter Search. With the AgentTrax suite, producing CPLs, creating policy jackets and managing so much more online is as easy as a spring breeze.

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DIGITAL ISSUE OF

TITLENews

The digital edition of **TITLENews** includes a webinar recording that details comprehensive data privacy laws and redaction of public land records.

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Hybrid Hysteria

NO, I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT HYBRID CLOSINGS. Rather, I'm referring to the shift from everyone working remotely to a "blended hybrid" model where some employees return to the office and others continue working from home. After a year of monumental shakeups, this is just the latest disruption besieging the workplace.



JEREMY YOHE
ALTA vice president of communications

Over the past year, instead of meeting in person, most in the industry held meetings and stayed connected via video calls. Collectively, we all caught Zoom fatigue. Over the past year, according to Microsoft's Work Trend Index, time spent in meetings has more than doubled globally, and over 40 billion more emails were delivered in February of this year compared with last.

In a company memo, Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser addressed the issue: "I know from your feedback and my own experience, the blurring of lines between home and work and the relentlessness of the pandemic workday have taken a toll on our well-being," she told employees. "It's simply not sustainable. Since a return to any kind of new normal is still a few months away for many of us, we need to reset some of our working practices."

Fraser outlined three actions for Citi staff: to take part in Zoom-free Fridays, to set healthy work boundaries and to take vacation days. Microsoft also has said that, depending on role requirements, employees will be allowed to work from home less than 50 percent of the time.

Addressing flexible work will impact who stays, who goes and who joins a company. Decisions leaders make today about hybrid working will impact organizations for years. The choices will impact how companies shape culture, how they attract and retain talent, and how they can better foster collaboration and innovation.

Microsoft's report showed that 73 percent of workers surveyed want flexible remote work options to continue. Over 40 percent of the global workforce is considering leaving their employer this year and 46 percent are planning to move now that they can work remotely. Remote job postings on LinkedIn increased more than five times during the pandemic as companies looking to attract talent embrace this new paradigm in working. To prepare, business decision makers must consider redesigning physical spaces to better accommodate hybrid work environments.

As companies balance in-person and remote working styles, it will be important to remember that remote work breeds more siloed teams. Leaders must look for ways to foster collaboration and idea-sharing that has fueled workplace innovation for decades.

While companies are learning as they go, two things are certain: flexible work is here to stay, and the talent landscape has fundamentally shifted. In this age of hybrid working, title and settlement companies can take advantage of the opportunity to access different skills and talent not previously available to them.

ALTA Applauds Confirmation of U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge as HUD Secretary

ALTA praised the Senate's confirmation on March 10 of U.S. Rep. Marcia Fudge as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"For more than three decades, Rep. Fudge has continuously demonstrated a commitment to opening the door to homeownership for Americans across the country," said ALTA Chief Executive Officer Diane Tomb. "ALTA looks forward to strengthening our communities nationwide by ensuring homeowners have access to affordable housing opportunities and mortgage financing and supporting bipartisan efforts that promote fair housing laws."

During her confirmation hearing, Fudge said her priorities include ending

discriminatory housing practices as part of President Biden's focus on dismantling systemic racial injustice and boosting Black homeownership.

She also is expected to reinstate a 2013 rule aimed at barring the housing industry from enacting policies that have an adverse effect on Black and Latino Americans. HUD also is expected to reinstate another regulation requiring communities to identify and address barriers to racial integration and disparities in access to transportation, jobs and good schools.

Fudge has represented Ohio in Congress since 2008. She previously chaired the Congressional Black Caucus.



Registration is Open for the Free Virtual ALTA Advocacy Summit

If you've never experienced ALTA Advocacy Summit, now is the time to check it out. Free and virtual, this year's event couldn't be more convenient. In addition to hearing some of Washington, D.C.'s most well-informed speakers, attendees also will have the option to meet virtually with congressional members. The meetings are all arranged by state, so you only need to attend one day of meetings to talk with the legislators relevant to your district. (And if you're nervous, don't worry: ALTA staff will train you on industry issues during the event!)

To make sure your voice is heard on Capitol Hill, put the revised dates—May 18-20—on your agenda and get ready to create a lasting impression on members of Congress. During Advocacy Summit, you'll get the inside scoop on D.C. politics, hear from federal leaders and meet with several members



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of Congress and their staffs. This event provides the only opportunity you'll get to join your peers in speaking with D.C. legislators face-to-face!

For more information and to register, go to meetings.org/advocacy.

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| Compare Your Company's Compensation Package

2020 was—well—a lot of things, including incredibly busy for companies in the title and settlement services industry. Now, all of the trends reports are signaling more of the same for 2021. If you aren't already evaluating your compensation packages to attract the new employees you'll be hiring, now is definitely the time.

Sponsored by Qualia, ALTA's Title & Settlement Services Industry Compensation Index is officially open for 2020 data collection. The Compensation Index allows you to easily examine the full value of your compensation package and compare your business to the competition. It can help you examine salary rates for existing positions and assist you in analyzing the current market for new roles. The Compensation Index provides results showing the 25th percentile, median and 75th percentile of responses – as well as where your company falls – in easy-to-read graphs. A minimum of five data points must meet the filter requirement for results to display.

Companies that have completed 100 percent of the required questions for the Compensation Index can access the national aggregate results for *free*. Results for 2018 and 2019 are available immediately.

We know the data you're providing is sensitive, and your privacy is important to us. All company data is collected through a secure third party, and individual data is kept confidential.

"This will help us be competitive in attracting the best and

brightest candidates for positions in our company," said Frank Pellegrini, president and CEO of Prairie Title in Illinois. The information the Compensation Index provides "will help groom future leaders in our businesses and in our industry. There is no substitute for reliable information."

Other FAQs:

- **Who can enter data?** The primary contact or a designated individual can complete the Compensation Index on behalf of each company location.
 - **Who can review the results?** Because of the highly sensitive nature of the data contained in the survey, full access to the Compensation Index is restricted to a location's primary contact and/or the designated individual.
 - **What data will I need to enter?**
 - Company demographics by location (state, revenue, staffing numbers, expenses, etc.)
 - Compensation data by position (rates, bonuses, hours worked, etc.)
 - Information on the benefits packages your company offers
- If this sounds complicated, don't worry: We created [an easy step-by-step guide](#) to help you navigate the process. You also can [download the full set of questions](#) included in the Compensation Index to help you prepare.

For more information, go to alta.org/compensation/.

| Membership by the Numbers

ALTA is the title insurance and settlement services industry resource for advocacy, education, communications, networking and policy standards. Here's a look at some membership numbers from the past month.

- New Members: 56
- New Associate Members: 2
- New Attorney Members: 17
- State with the most new members: FL and VA w/7
- Total Members: 5,033



NEWS TO SHARE?

If you have information you'd like us to consider for TITLE News, send company announcements to communications@alta.org.

ALTA 2021 TIPAC Donors

The Title Industry Political Action Committee (TIPAC) is ALTA's voluntary, non-partisan political action committee (PAC). TIPAC raises money to help elect and re-elect candidates to Congress who understand and support the issues affecting the title industry. So far in 2021, TIPAC has received \$156,884 from 118 donors. In addition, \$135,000 has been pledged to the TIPAC Education Fund. Check out who has supported the industry at alta.org/tipac.

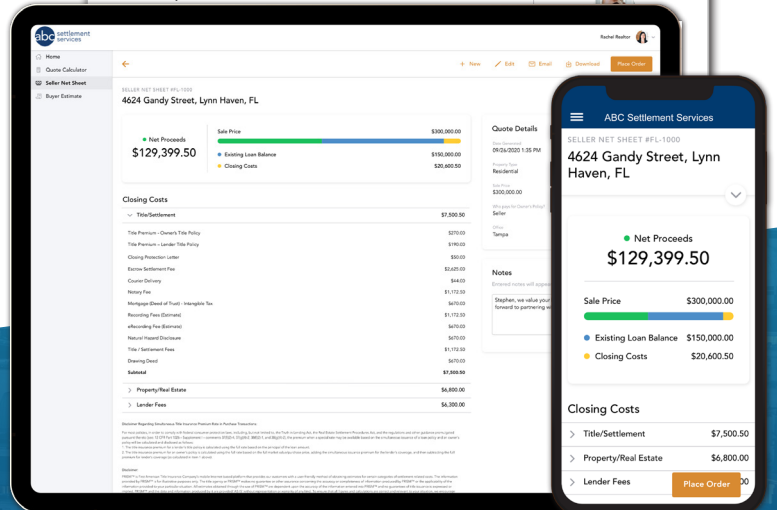
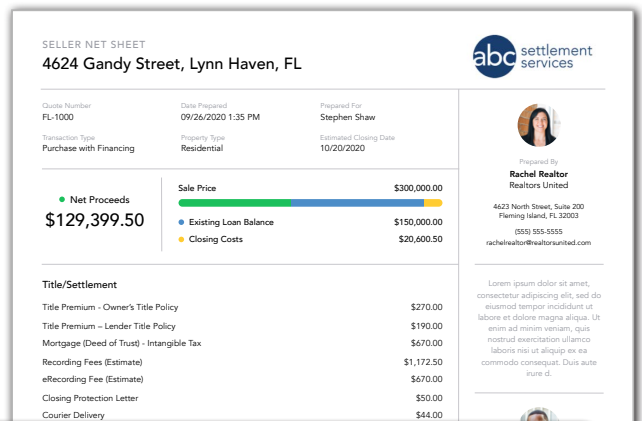
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An illustration of several colorful houses (green, purple, blue, white) with windows and doors. Large black brushstroke redaction marks are placed over the houses, symbolizing the concept of redaction in public records.

BALANCING REDACTION IN PUBLIC LAND RECORDS

Information Shielding Garner's Federal Attention Following Tragic Shooting of Judge's Son

FOR YEARS, the title industry has taken efforts to protect Social Security numbers and other personal information of individuals involved in real estate transactions. Recent redaction measures are intended to shield the location and other personal information of individuals with recognized safety concerns from being accessible through documents contained in public records. While there is a need to shield protected classes with recognized privacy concerns, this must be addressed in a way that does not hinder the ability to complete transactions in a timely fashion.

While various states handle record shielding differently, the tragic shooting of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas' son brought the issue into the national spotlight. Last July, self-described "anti-feminist" lawyer Roy Den Hollander killed the judge's 20-year-old son, Daniel Anderl, and injured her husband. Den Hollander compiled personal information about the judge, including her home address in New Jersey. He posed as a FedEx delivery worker to carry out his crime.

In response, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy signed A1649, known as "Daniel's Law," that requires the redaction of home addresses and telephone numbers of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers from public records. (A bill was passed in March to delay enactment of provisions affecting law enforcement personnel for 18 months.)

"This is a renewed commitment to ensure our judiciary, prosecutors and members of law enforcement who answer the call of justice can do so without fear for their personal safety, or that of their loved ones," said Gov. Murphy. "By shielding the home addresses and private contact information for those who serve on the bench and enforce our laws, we are demonstrating that in the face of unspeakable tragedy, New Jersey responds not with thoughts and prayers, but with concrete action."

The bill amends the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) to exclude from the definition of a public record the portion of any document that discloses the home address of any active or retired judge, prosecutor or law enforcement officer. The bill also prohibits government agencies, individuals and businesses from knowingly publishing on the internet, or otherwise making available, the home address or unpublished home telephone number of any active or retired judge or prosecutor.

The bill also enables any active or retired judge, prosecutor or law enforcement officer whose home address or unpublished telephone number is disclosed on the internet or otherwise made available to the public—or whose immediate family member’s name, home address or unpublished phone number is similarly disclosed—to request that the information be removed. The government agency, individual or business would be required to remove the information within 72 hours of receiving such a request in writing.

Federal Attention

While records-shielding laws have been seen traditionally on the state level, in September 2020, U.S. Sens. Bob Menendez and Cory Booker introduced The Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2020, a bipartisan bill that would safeguard the personally identifiable information of federal judges and their immediate families.

“We must extend these privacy protections nationwide, so that no one lives through what Judge Salas and her husband lived through,” said Sen. Menendez. “We are living in a time of endless vitriol, rising hate crimes, and increased personal attacks. And while we may not be able to eliminate hatred from someone’s heart, we can take action to better protect the men and women of our federal bench. That’s why I am proud to see Governor Murphy sign Daniel’s Law here in New Jersey—and why I remain committed to the passage of the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act in Washington.”

Sen. Booker added, “No person who takes on the responsibility of serving as a federal judge should ever have to live in fear that they or their family could be targeted by someone who is able to easily access their personal information. Judge Salas and her husband, Mark, have gone through something that no parent should ever have to endure.”

Despite receiving bipartisan support, the proposed legislation failed to pass the Senate in December but could be reintroduced this year. ALTA has worked with Senate staff on minor changes to the federal bill to ensure it does not impact the ability of a protected



party to buy or sell real estate. ALTA is hopeful suggested changes are included in the legislative text when the bill is refiled in 2021.

"A promising aspect of this federal legislation is funding for states to use during implementation," said Elizabeth Blosser, ALTA's senior director of government affairs. "Critical funding will go a long way to ensuring uniformity in how redaction laws are applied, which is good for the title industry and protected parties."

Additionally, last year, the U.S. Judicial Conference, the policymaking body for the federal court system, urged Congress to pass legislation that would force a person, business or agency to remove the personal information of federal judges from public records within 48-72 hours of getting a request to do so. That information would include a judge’s home address, birth date, Social Security number, property tax records, personal email address, phone number, photographs and more.

Effective Solutions

At the end of February, various types of redaction and record shielding bills had been introduced in many more states, including Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas and Utah.

The Uniform Law Commission has considered taking up the redaction issue and forming a drafting



Beware of the Switchtask Thief

Have you heard of switchtasking? Whether or not you have, you've likely done it. In fact, you're probably doing it right now. You're reading this article, and an alert from Outlook, Slack or Microsoft Teams appeared on your screen, or a text message appeared on your phone. Do you read it? If you read it, you are switchtasking. Simultaneously talking on the phone, writing an email and answering a text from a family member all while working on a deadline-driven project is often referred to as multitasking. However, according to American author **Dave Crenshaw**, it is actually switchtasking, and it can be detrimental to work and productivity levels.

“We are confused about whether or not we’re being productive. And the reality is, your brain cannot handle multiple active tasks at the same time.”

Crenshaw introduced the term switchtasking in his book, “The Myth of Multitasking: How Doing It All Gets Nothing Done,” and said it’s a better way to describe what is occurring when people attempt to multitask, or rather when they attempt to concentrate on more than one thing.

“We are confused about whether or not we’re being productive. And the reality is, your brain cannot handle multiple active tasks at the same time. You have to switch back and forth ... and every time you switch, you pay a cost,” said Crenshaw, who is a public speaker and time management expert.

During a recent webinar by Lucid Software on how to avoid remote working fatigue, Crenshaw listed increased time, lower quality and higher stress as the costs, and shared tips on improving productivity levels during the workday by avoiding switchtasking.

To prove how negatively impactful switchtasking is, Crenshaw gave the audience a task. The audience had to write on a piece of paper, “switchtasking is a thief” on one line as one task and the numbers 1-21 on a second line as another task.

When doing these two tasks separately, the audience could do each faster than they did when they attempted to switch between the two tasks. For example, when writing “s, 1, w, 2, i, 3, t, 4, c, 5, h, 6, etc.,” on the separate lines, switching back and forth between the phrase and numbers, many in the audience claimed it took longer, and they made mistakes and were more stressed in completing the two tasks.

“If [you] can reduce the number of switches, you’re going to get more time, you’re going to improve the quality of your work and you’re going to reduce your stress levels,” Crenshaw said.

In its newly-released, “The Title Agent’s Guide to Working Remote,” NATIC offers the title agent community a full-service, how-to-guide to working remote, including: Tips from Crenshaw on how to reduce switchtasking and increase productivity levels; professional insight from NATIC’s senior vice president of agency, **Rich Griffin**, on time management; and dispelling the myths of remote work, overcoming the remote struggles, managing a remote workforce, collaboration tools, benefits to working remote, workspace considerations, remote security, company policy and remote training.

View NATIC's
The Title Agent's Guide to
Working Remote HERE.



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committee to design uniform legislation. ALTA sent a letter supporting this step and offered to help during the process.

ALTA believes the best way to shield sensitive information is to limit who has access to the protected data, without removing or altering vital public records. Arizona and Minnesota are examples of effective state programs.

In Arizona, an eligible person can file an affidavit with the court to prohibit the public from accessing personal information. If approved, a court order is issued directing the clerk to prohibit public access to the information. The prohibition on public access expires after a period, generally four to six years. Access for real estate/title professionals is available. Basically, the company emails a request, and the county sends the information.

Susan Tawney, vice president and chief title officer for Pioneer Title Agency in Arizona, said buyers must apply and get permission to have information redacted during recording.

“If it’s the seller, they have to give the title company authorization to review the documents,” said Tawney, who has been with Pioneer Title for 36 years. “I haven’t seen too many of these cases over the years, but it does take a little more time.”

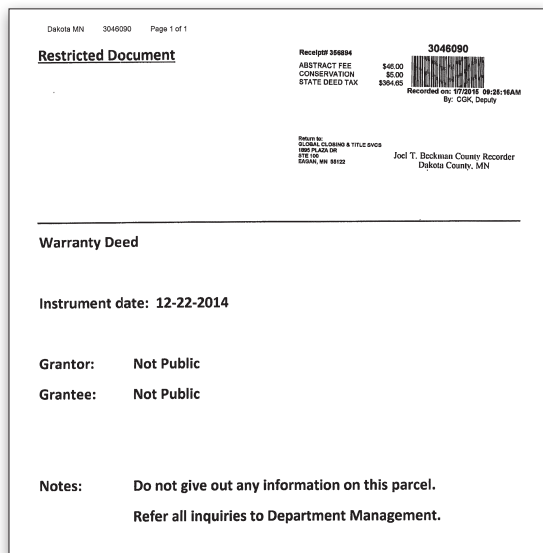
In one instance, an undercover FBI agent was selling his home and didn’t want to disclose his information. Tawney said they explained the process to him so he could understand, and the transaction proceeded.

“My son is a police officer, so he should probably look into this,” Tawney said.

Meanwhile, Minnesota’s [Safe at Home](#) confidentiality program allows an eligible person to file an application with a state agency—usually the attorney general or secretary of state—to certify eligibility for the program. Once certified, a participant may file a notice to prohibit public access to government records containing personal information. When someone enrolls in the program, they are assigned a PO Box address that they can use as their legal address. Access for real estate/title professionals is also available in Minnesota. Richard Welshons, president of DCA Title in Minnesota, said his company has had a few transactions involving Safe at Home but added most in the program don’t own real property.

“It is up to the title examiner and closers to determine why there is a difference in the chain of title,” Welshons said. “Often, there is also a disconnect between the owner’s name in the tax records as compared to the seller’s name on title application.”

Insuring cash purchasers has been trouble free, however, because redaction programs vary by state, many



DCA Title’s search team typically can determine a property owner may be involved in the program when the seller’s name on the title application is different than the name that shows up as the current fee holder.

lenders are not familiar with Minnesota’s Safe at Home.

“Most title insurers require us to include exceptions in our commitments and policies regarding the inability to foreclose the mortgage,” Welshons said. “For that reason, some lenders balk at lending to a borrower enrolled or enrolling into the program.”

Because these deals occur infrequently, Welshons said there’s a learning curve to get familiar with the requirements, so closers work with the company’s underwriters to adhere to the rules. Meanwhile, DCA Title’s recording department is experienced at handling these documents and works with the county office involved to ensure privacy. Blosser said methods in Arizona and Minnesota provide effective solutions that balance protecting at-risk parties and allowing necessary access to public records.

“Other approaches, such as full redaction, are less effective and can lead to potential unintended consequences such as permanently impacting the integrity of land records, non-uniform shielding procedures, creating a false sense of security for the protected party, and the inability to buy, sell or finance property,” Blosser said. “The title industry wants to ensure that these laws do not have adverse consequences for the very people they are designed to protect.”

ALTA’s Redaction Work Group developed frequently asked questions to help promote best practices for record shielding or redaction measures. Ideally, title professionals should maintain access to

information needed for a real estate transfer, or at least be provided with permissioned access mechanisms. Other best practices include uniform standards, setting a time limit on shielding with a renewal process, ensuring there is a restoration process available and making sure that in-person contact is not the only way for authorized parties to gain access to information.

In 2019, ALTA's Real Property Records Committee finalized a white paper titled "Privacy, Redaction, and Public Land Records," which provides guidance on the redaction of information in public records. The paper acknowledges a need to shield protected classes with recognized privacy concerns, but this need must not impede normal business activities. Redacting specific parts of a document or expunging/removing an entire recorded document can prevent access to information and documents that are necessary for providing constructive notice, protecting land rights and preventing fraud, according to the paper.

"Redaction of name and property information from public land records can create unintended consequences including hindering or even prohibiting people from buying and selling real estate," said Elizabeth Reilly, senior privacy counsel for Fidelity National Financial. "Even worse, redaction can create a false sense of security for the people who are intended to be protected and can increase the risk of fraud."

In addition to making recommendations for effective solutions to protect privacy in the public land records, the paper addresses these redaction topics:

- Where privacy is a recognized concern and redaction of public land records works
- Where privacy is a recognized concern, but redaction of public land records is not an effective solution

PRIA Co-brands ALTA Redaction Resources

ALTA and the Property Records Industry (PRIA) have combined efforts to publish several documents to aid members facing redaction legislation statutes in their states.

The resources are designed to help members navigate conversations about these issues with state lawmakers and other stakeholders involved in redaction discussions. While legislators may be well-intended in wanting to provide protection to vulnerable populations, they frequently do not have all the information they need to consider the short- and long-term consequences of redaction laws, nor do they consider the cost involved in redacting public records.

- The co-branded resources include:
- Record Shielding Best Practices
- Record Shield FAQs
- Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2020

- The potential impact of redaction of public land records on businesses
- The potential impact of redaction of public land records on local government
- Additional unintended consequences of redaction of public land records

"Expansion of redaction and record shielding efforts across the country creates challenges for our industry and can impact constructive notice," Reilly said. "As an industry we must face the reality that supporting the status quo is not an effective advocacy technique. Instead, we must actively identify and present viable solutions for record shielding." ■

Information Shielding Best Practices

The following best practices developed by ALTA and PRIA represent an approach that achieves protections for at-risk individuals without impeding the transfer or financing of real estate or creating a risk for fraud.

- Permissioned access should be available to:
 - someone with a signed release from the protected individual or court order.
 - licensed professionals with existing consumer privacy/confidentiality requirements (attorneys, title professionals, assessors, etc.).
 - licensed entities with a signed confidentiality agreement with a government entity.
- State-wide uniform standards and processes must be followed to ensure all records pertaining to an individual are properly shielded.
- Names contained in a record index must not be shielded or

redacted. Records must be discoverable within the public records index, which should include a flag indicating that the document has been shielded.

- Shielding requests should be time limited to minimize long-term impact on the real estate conveyancing system and ensure the continued accuracy of the public records. A renewal request can be submitted every four to six years.
- A process for record restoration must exist to facilitate real estate transactions and transfers, or administration of a will.
- Authorized access to shielded government records should be available electronically, as well as in-person, to allow for social distancing measures and, absent a public health necessity, to accommodate access for non-local authorized parties.
- Government entities and third parties should maintain robust records to track and log access of shielded records.



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ALTA REGISTRY

ALTA Registry Helps Save Funding for 25 Deals

SUMMARY: An agent verification system used by a lender showed that a title company's closing protection letters (CPLs) were inactive, putting 25 deals in peril. However, a quick review of the ALTA Registry validated the title company was in good standing, allowing the deals to close that day.

Imagine having 25 loans scheduled for closing later in the day when the lender calls saying an agent verification business indicated the title company's closing protection letters (CPLs) were inactive.

That's exactly what happened last year to Orange Coast Title. Unable to verify the CPLs, the vendor manager at AmeriHome made a call to Orange Coast's director of operations. The issue was quickly escalated to Bill Burding NTP, executive vice president and general counsel for Orange Coast Title.

Burding reached out to Paul Martin, director of the ALTA Title & Settlement Agent Registry, which is a searchable online warehouse of underwriter-confirmed title agent companies, real estate attorneys, and underwriter direct offices. Martin took a screenshot of Orange Coast Title's record in the registry and correlated it with the company's record with its underwriter that showed the CPL was active. This information was forwarded to AmeriHome.

"Can you imagine the stress of being told 25 of your loans were not closing that day because of inaccurate data from an accountable source?" Burding said. "With one call to the ALTA Registry, Orange Coast Title showed that its CPLs were active and that the lender data was wrong. Shortly after, all 25 loans closed as planned. The ALTA Registry is becoming the definitive source of truth for title agents. The accuracy of the Registry data is unrivaled compared to 'agent verifications' that have no substance."

According to analysis from FundingShield, increases in CPL and agent validation errors with title insurers rose by 530 percent in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the first quarter. Fraud and risk exposures in CPL errors and issues rose 50 percent.

This makes having accurate data even more important. Burding recommended other title companies get their free listing in the ALTA Registry, which can also be used for title companies to denote that they offer remote online notarizations. Every office location is identified by a unique ALTA ID, allowing for quick verification. Each entry is confirmed by title insurance underwriters. There are more than 8,700 office listings in the Registry.

Eddie Oddo, vice president of corporate business solutions at First American Title Insurance Co., said the underwriter has incorporated Registry IDs into the company's online public directory.

"Verifying CPLs is just another example of how lenders can use the database to validate an agent or underwriter's status from a single-trusted source," Oddo said. "The ALTA Registry gives mortgage lenders an extra layer of confirmation that they're working with the correct title agent, settlement company or real estate attorney. First American processes help keep confirmations current and accurate and plans a future system integration with the Registry."



FRAUDULENT UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS SPIKE

Each State has Different
Requirements and Time
Frames for Reporting

The FBI has seen a spike in fraudulent unemployment insurance claims complaints related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic involving the use of stolen personally identifiable information (PII).

Because of this, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has reminded employers of their obligations related to unemployment insurance. Companies may be committing fraud if they take certain actions to avoid tax liability or enable fraudulent claims against their accounts. The DOL also called attention to employers' obligations to report any potential unemployment fraud. Each state has different requirements and time frames for reporting. As an example, employers in California have 10 days from the mailing date of the notice to file an objection.

Employers need to familiarize themselves with their obligations under the applicable state and federal laws. They should also report any fraudulent activity of which they become aware.

Many people have been victimized by criminals impersonating them using their stolen identities to submit fraudulent unemployment insurance claims online. The criminals obtain their victims' information using a variety of techniques, including

buying stolen PII, previous data breaches, computer intrusions, cold-calling victims while impersonating someone else, email phishing schemes, physical theft of data from individuals or third parties, and from public websites and social media accounts. Criminal actors will use third parties or persuade individuals who are victims of other scams or frauds to transfer funds to accounts they control.

According to several reports:

- Georgia found more than 130,000 false claims filed in July.
- Illinois identified more than 120,000 counts of unemployment insurance fraud in August.
- Maryland announced 47,000 fraudulent claims had been uncovered in early July.

What Can Employers Do?

According to the Society of Human Resource Management, employers should inform employees of the spike in this type of fraud and educate them on how to protect personal information. Human resource professionals should be on alert and review any notices from the state unemployment administrator with heightened scrutiny.

Employers tend to be the first to learn of these scams when an unemployment notice is received regarding an existing employee. In some instances, CEOs and upper management have shown up on unemployment notices received by employers. If you encounter such an issue:

- **Notify the appropriate state unemployment administrator.** Many states now have forms for reporting this type of fraud and most have a hotline to call. The DOL has compiled a list of [those hotline numbers](#).
- **Notify the DOL.** You can use [this form](#).
- **Notify the employee.** Inform the affected employee that his or her personal information has likely been compromised.
- **Instruct that employee.** Have the employee file a police report and report the issue to the state unemployment administrator and to the DOL.
- **Assist the employee.** You can also provide information regarding resources for addressing identity theft. The Federal Trade Commission has a [helpful website](#).

What Can Employees Do?

If you believe you have been a victim of identity theft related to fraudulent unemployment insurance claims, report the fraud to law enforcement, state unemployment insurance agencies, the IRS, credit bureaus and your employer's human resources department. The FBI encourages victims to report any fraudulent or suspicious activities to the Internet

Crime Complaint Center at [ic3.gov](#).

Many victims of identity theft related to unemployment insurance claims do not know they have been targeted until they try to file for unemployment insurance benefits themselves, receive a notification from the state unemployment insurance agency, receive an IRS Form 1099-G showing the benefits collected from unemployment insurance or get notified by their employer that a claim has been filed while the victim is still employed.

Be Alert

The FBI advises the public to be on the lookout for the following suspicious activities:

- Receiving communications regarding unemployment insurance forms when you have not applied for unemployment benefits.
- Unauthorized transactions on your bank or credit card statements related to unemployment benefits.
- Any fees involved in filing or qualifying for unemployment insurance.
- Unsolicited inquiries related to unemployment benefits.
- Fictitious websites and social media pages mimicking those of government agencies.

Tips to Protect Yourself

- Be wary of telephone calls and text messages, letters, websites or emails that require you to provide your personal information or other sensitive data, especially birth dates and Social Security numbers. Be cautious with attachments and embedded links within emails, especially from an unknown email sender.
- Make yourself aware of methods fraudsters are using to obtain PII and how to combat them by following security tips issued by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, including:
 - [Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Attacks](#)
 - [Protecting Against Malicious Code](#)
 - [Preventing and Responding to Identity Theft](#)
- Monitor your bank accounts on a regular basis and [request your credit report](#) at least once a year to look for any fraudulent activity. If you believe you are a victim, review your credit report more frequently.
- Immediately report unauthorized transactions to your financial institution or credit card provider.
- If you suspect you are a victim, immediately contact the three major credit bureaus to place a fraud alert on your credit records. Additionally, notify the Internal Revenue Service by filing an Identity Theft Affidavit (IRS Form 14039) through [irs.gov](#) or [identitytheft.gov](#).

Mortgage Origination Hits Record \$4.3 Trillion in 2020



Report Says Rate Lock Suggests Refi Originations to Stay Near Record Highs in Q1

WHEN ALL WAS SAID AND DONE, THE INDUSTRY ORIGINATED A RECORD-BREAKING \$4.3 TRILLION IN MORTGAGES IN 2020. An all-time high of \$2.8 trillion were refinances, with \$1.5 trillion in purchase loans—the largest annual volume since 2005.

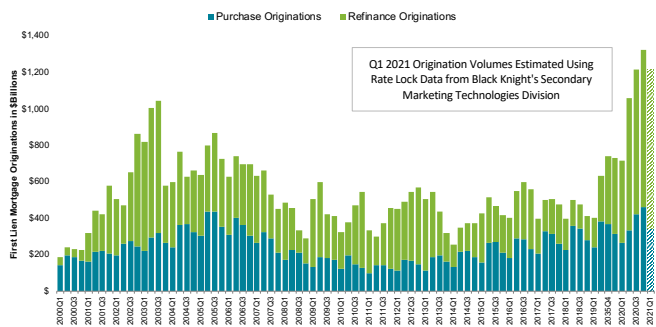
The momentum looked likely to carry over into the first quarter of 2021, according to rate lock data from Black Knight.

“Roughly 2.8 million homeowners refinanced their mortgages in the last quarter of 2020, which saw a record-breaking \$869 billion in refinance lending,” said Black Knight Data & Analytics President Ben Graboske. “Assuming a 45-day lock-to-close timeline, daily rate lock data from Black Knight through mid-February suggests refi activity could remain steady in Q1 2021.”

off quickly. With interest rates rising to 3.02 percent as of March 4 according to Freddie Mac’s Private Mortgage Market survey, just 12.96 million high-quality refinance candidates remain. This is the smallest that population’s been since May 2020 and represents a 29 percent reduction in just three weeks, according to Black Knight.

Meanwhile, the time to close these loans averaged 58 days in both December 2020 and January 2021, according to an origination report from ICE Mortgage Technology. The average time to close a refinance also held at 59 days month over month. The average time to close a purchase increased from 56 days in December 2020 to 57 days in January 2021. Overall, the time to close on all types of transactions is up 10 days year-over-year.

FIRST LIEN ORIGINATION ACTIVITY



Recent rate increases have significantly curtailed refinance incentive. As recently as Feb. 11, there were still some 18.1 million refi candidates in the market, but those numbers have since fallen

Monthly Origination Overview for Closed Loans

	2020												2019				
	Jan	Dec	Nov	Oct	Sept	Aug	Jul	Jun	May	Apr	Mar	Feb	Jan	Dec	Nov	Oct	Sept
Time to Close ALL (Days)																	
ALL	58	58	55	54	51	49	47	47	45	42	40	43	48	48	45	44	43
REFI	59	59	59	57	54	50	50	48	44	39	35	40	48	45	43	42	39
PLR	57	56	49	48	47	45	44	46	47	46	45	45	48	51	47	47	46
Time to Close FHA (Days)																	
ALL	62	62	54	52	51	48	46	48	47	45	44	46	50	50	47	46	45
REFI	65	64	61	61	58	55	54	57	50	46	42	51	57	46	44	44	41
PLR	61	61	52	50	49	47	45	46	46	45	44	45	49	54	48	47	47
Time to Close CONV (Days)																	
ALL	57	57	55	54	51	49	47	47	45	41	38	42	48	47	45	43	42
REFI	58	58	59	57	54	51	50	47	44	39	34	39	47	44	43	41	39
PLR	54	53	47	47	46	44	43	45	47	46	44	45	48	50	47	46	45
Time to Close VA (Days)																	
ALL	64	61	55	54	52	50	49	50	49	48	47	48	51	52	48	48	47
REFI	76	64	62	63	60	56	54	60	54	48	46	50	56	47	46	47	44
PLR	61	60	51	51	50	49	48	47	48	47	47	47	50	54	49	49	48



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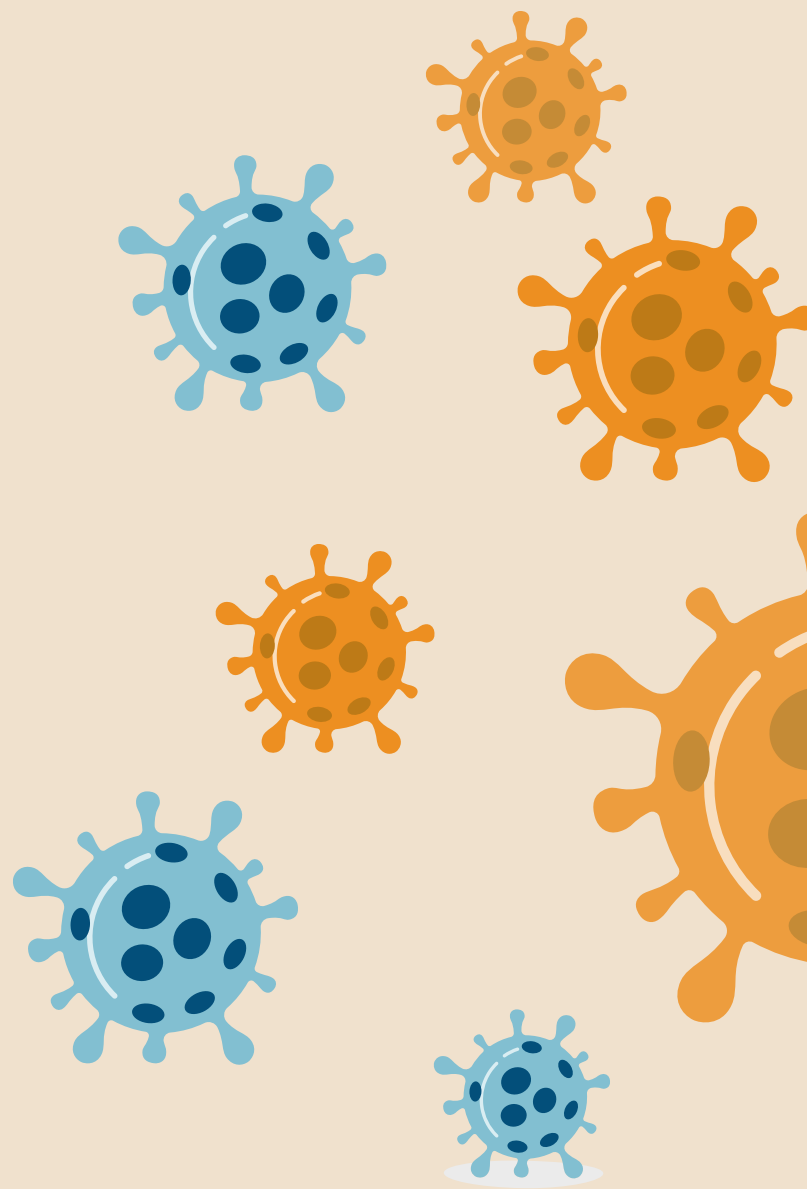
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TITLE INDUSTRY CLOSES STRONG 2020

AM Best Revises Outlook



AM BEST REVISED ITS MARKET SEGMENT OUTLOOK on the U.S. title insurance industry to stable from negative due to its exceptional performance in 2020 despite the pandemic.

AM Best's "[Market Segment Outlook: U.S. Title Insurance](#)," noted that the outlook had been revised to negative in April 2020, prompted by the sudden and substantial U.S. economic slowdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the report, the title insurance industry proved to be far more resilient than anticipated in the wake of the dramatic market changes brought about by the pandemic, and that future prospects should continue to benefit from ongoing housing market and economic trends.

AM Best expects the residential real estate market to remain strong and U.S. monetary policy to remain accommodative in 2021. The sudden acceleration toward greater workplace flexibility and work-from-home options nationwide should further fuel homebuying activity in 2021. Given that homeowners have more equity in their homes, default levels should not elevate as in the housing crisis of 2007-2009.

In 2020, the title insurance industry proved to be the most profitable segment in the property/casualty industry, as low interest rates and record-low mortgage rates led to a refinancing and homebuying surge in the latter half of 2020, and furthered the business activities of title insurers.

Here's a look at how the four largest underwriter families fared during 2020 and the fourth quarter of last year.

Fidelity

Fidelity National Financial reported that its title insurance segment generated record pretax earnings of \$1.8 billion during 2020. This is up from \$1.5 billion in pretax earnings during 2019.

During the fourth quarter of 2020, the company's title segment reported adjusted pretax earnings of \$624 million. This compared to adjusted pretax earnings of \$355 million during the same period a year ago.

"I would like to thank our entire team for their incredible efforts as we navigated through a challenging environment this past year, while delivering record results for both the fourth quarter and the full year 2020 in our title business," said Fidelity CEO Randy Quirk during the company's earnings call. Our primary focus has been and continues to be the health and well-being of our employees, while maintaining our business continuity and ensuring the needs of our customers are consistently met."

During the fourth quarter of 2020, Fidelity's direct operation opened 728,000 title orders and closed 617,000 orders. Purchase orders comprised 38 percent of all closed direct orders. This compared to 492,000

opened direct orders and 417,000 closed direct orders during the fourth quarter of 2019. Purchases comprised 49 percent of all of Fidelity closed direct orders during Q4 2019.

Fidelity reported total commercial revenue of \$322 million, a 0.3% increase versus total commercial revenue in the fourth quarter of 2019. Overall, the company reported fourth-quarter average fee per file of \$2,116, an 11 percent decrease versus the fourth quarter of 2019.

Fidelity paid \$283 million in claims during 2020. This was up from \$240 million in claims paid during 2019.

Last year, Fidelity reported it made significant headway investing on technology in its title business, including the inHere Experience Platform and Close inHere. The inHere platform transforms the overall experience of buying, selling, and refinancing a home by helping to enhance the safety and simplicity needed to start, track, notarize, and close the transaction.

"We believe our significant national footprint will prove to be a real plus as further adoption of our client-facing and title automation technology expands our competitive advantage," Quirk said.

First American

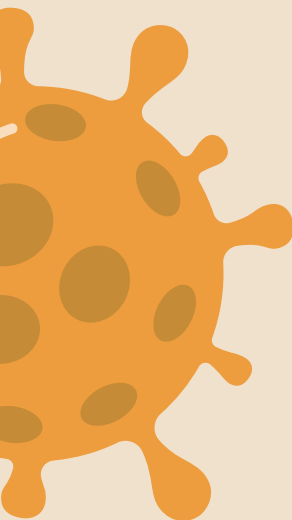
First American Financial Corp. reported that its title insurance and services segment generated pretax income of \$1 billion during 2020. This was up from \$912.2 million in pretax income during 2019.

During the last quarter of 2020, First American's title segment reported \$377.2 million in pretax income compared to \$283.8 million in pretax income during the fourth quarter of 2019.

"Our 2020 performance demonstrated the remarkable resilience of our people amidst the challenges presented by the pandemic," said Dennis Gilmore, First American's CEO. "The company closed over one million transactions while most of our people were working from home."

During 2020, First American's direct operations opened 1,470,900 orders and closed 1,043,800. This compared to 1,093,000 direct orders opened and 795,800 orders closed during the same period in 2019.

The average revenue per direct title order declined to \$2,457, primarily due to the shift in the order mix from higher-premium commercial and purchase transactions to lower-premium residential refinance transactions. During the fourth quarter, 58 percent of the direct orders First American closed were refinances. The refi share versus residential was 49



percent during Q4 2019.

First American paid \$164.1 million in claims during 2020. This is up slightly from \$162.2 million in claims paid during 2019.

In 2020, First American closed on its \$350 million acquisition of Docutech. In January, First American entered into book transfer agreements to facilitate the company's exit from the property and casualty insurance business. Gilmore said the move will enable First American to focus on its core title business. He expects to complete the transfer by the third quarter of 2022.

"Looking ahead, the robust mortgage market has continued into 2021, with strong refinance and purchase activity, driven by elevated housing demand and low mortgage rates," Gilmore said. "We are also encouraged by the rebound in the commercial market in the fourth quarter and expect our commercial business performance will continue to improve throughout the year.

Old Republic

Old Republic International reported that its title insurance segment generated pretax income of \$344 million during 2020. This was up from \$230.8 million in pretax income during 2019.

The company's title group closed out the year with a strong fourth quarter, reporting \$132.1 million in pretax income. This was up from \$77.1 million in pretax income during the final quarter of 2019.

In a release, the company reported performance was driven by a robust real estate market supported by a continued low interest rate environment, resulting in an increase in home sales and refinance activity.

"We continue to be extremely proud and grateful to all our employees as they remained focused and positive in dealing with the daily challenges, both professionally and personally, in these unprecedented times," said Carolyn Monroe, president of Old Republic National Title Insurance Co. "Our accomplishments were achieved with the unwavering commitment of employees and the support of our customers. I'm honored to be reporting our results on behalf of all of our dedicated and hardworking employees."

Monroe said the company has moved forward implementing a Robotic Process Automation platform (RPA) and deployed bots throughout key processes in the company.

"We are piloting and soon will be implementing a title automation engine to increase the speed in our servicing of refinance orders," she added. "This automated technology gives us the ability to produce and title more efficiently with the utilization of multiple data sources through RPA, algorithms and rules-based decision engines, while keeping the product integrity

intact. While we continue to embrace advancements in technology, title-related and otherwise, we are dedicated to analyzing the breadth of service improvements and the application of our technological progressions. We remain mindful of the needs of our customers and we'll continue to provide connected solutions for all of them."

For the year, Old Republic's title segment paid \$75.3 million in claims. This was up from \$67.4 million in claims during 2019.

Stewart

Stewart Information Services Inc. reported that its title insurance segment generated \$218.5 million in pretax income during 2020. This is up from \$117.0 million in pretax income during 2019.

During the fourth quarter, the company's title segment reported \$94.9 million in pretax income. This is up from \$20.3 million in pretax income during the same period a year ago.

Fred Eppinger, Stewart's CEO, said results were driven by revenue growth across all lines of business and by actively managing expenses.

"Even with real estate trends remaining strong through the fourth quarter, I was especially encouraged to see solid performance across all major channels, including purchase, refinancing, commercial, international and ancillary services," he said. "We continued to execute on our plan to leverage top line performance to drive enhanced company profitability, as we not only took advantage of elevated transaction activity in the quarter, but also made acquisitions that strengthened our real estate technology, valuations and core title offerings."

Stewart's direct operations opened 152,622 orders during the fourth quarter of 2020 and closed 126,027 during this period. The company opened 93,235 direct orders in Q4 2019 and closed 76,810 orders during the quarter.

During the fourth quarter, Stewart paid \$46.6 million in claims. This is up from \$28.9 million in claims paid during the fourth quarter of 2019. For the year, the company paid \$115.2 million in claims, compared to \$84,423 in claims paid during 2019.

In a release, Stewart reported that direct title revenues increased as a result of overall improvements in commercial and non-commercial revenues, primarily driven by increased transactions during the fourth quarter 2020 compared to the prior year quarter.

"I remain thankful for the tremendous dedication and hard work of our associates in these challenging times, their efforts have been nothing short of extraordinary and, hopefully, 2021 will bring all of us a greater level of safety and security," Eppinger said.

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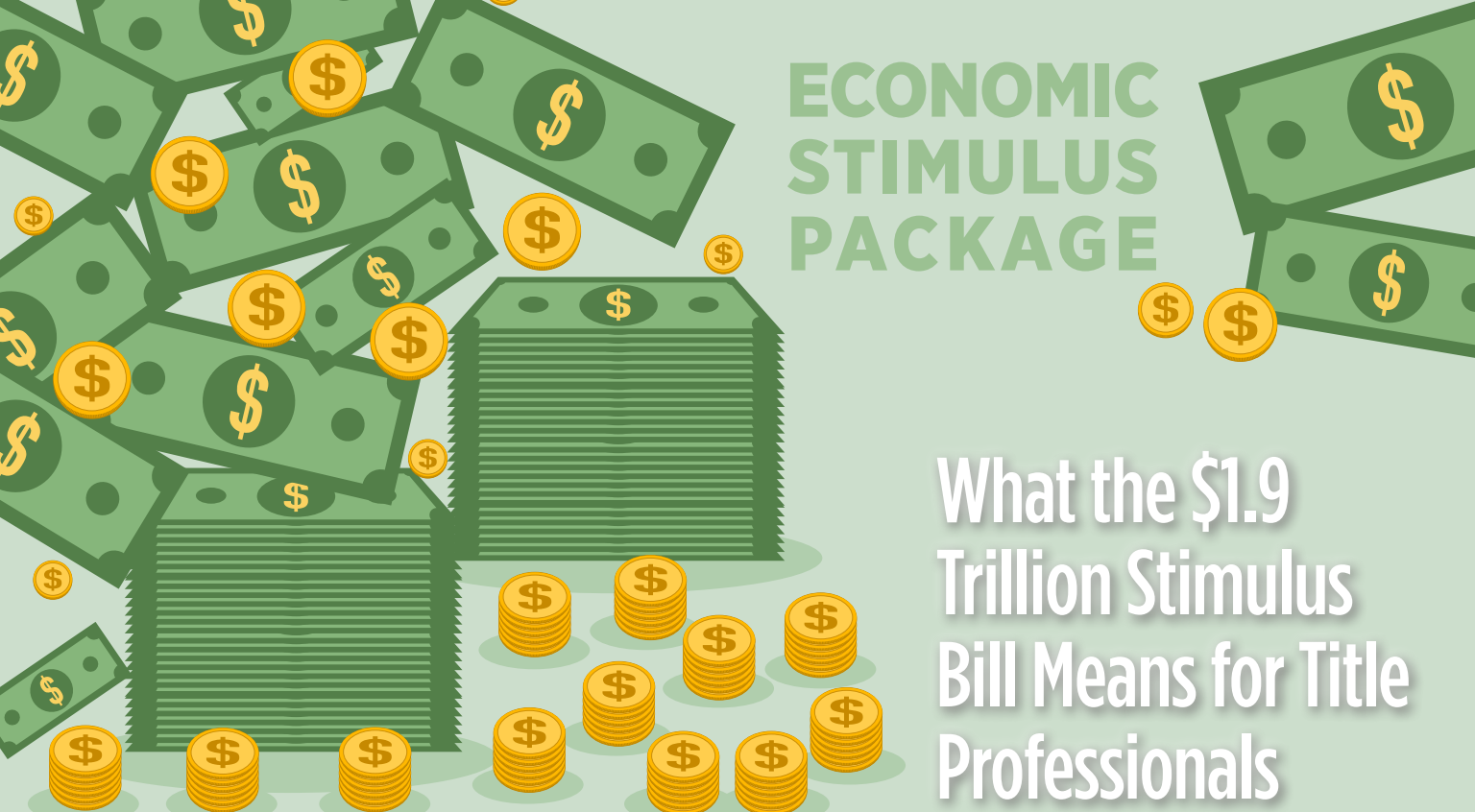
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ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE

What the \$1.9 Trillion Stimulus Bill Means for Title Professionals

President Biden on March 11 signed into law the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package passed by Congress. At the center of the plan is another round of economic impact payments of up to \$1,400, a \$300 weekly boost to jobless benefits until September and an expansion of the child tax credit for one year. There are also new funds for vaccine distribution and testing, rental assistance and K-12 schools for reopening costs. Lastly, the bill includes about \$350 billion for state and local governments. Here's a look at some of the provisions:

Stimulus Checks

Most Americans will receive \$1,400 stimulus checks, which will be phased out for higher earners. Individuals earning an adjusted gross income (AGI) up to \$75,000 (and married couples earning up to \$150,000) are eligible for the full \$1,400 each, plus \$1,400 for each dependent. No individual with an AGI over \$80,000 or couples earning over \$160,000 will receive one. Heads of household earning up to \$112,500 will receive the full amount, and it will phase out completely at \$120,000 for those filers.

Unemployment Assistance

Federal unemployment benefits through the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program will be extended through Aug. 29, 2021. The Pandemic Unemployment Compensation will \$300 weekly.

Paycheck Protection Program

The bill includes more than \$7 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Are you eligible for [a second PPP loan](#)? Deadline to apply is March 31.

Commercial

An additional \$20.3 billion in new money will be provided for rental assistance. This is on top of the \$25 billion allocated in

December. Meanwhile, the bill includes \$50 billion in assistance for small businesses, specifically \$28.6 billion has been earmarked for restaurants. The National Restaurant Association said 110,000 restaurants have temporarily or permanently closed.

Foreclosure and Forbearance

The eviction and foreclosure moratorium has been extended through Sept. 30, 2021. The same extension has been issued as well for forbearances of federally guaranteed mortgages.

Family Tax Credits

There is a one-year increase for the child tax credit from \$2,000 to \$3,000. Expanded Paid Sick and Family Leave has been issued through Sept. 30, 2021.

Housing Assistance

There is \$10 billion for a Housing Assistance Fund that will allow state housing finance agencies to help homeowners with COVID-19 hardships. Additionally, there is \$100 million for housing counseling services.

Governments

The bill provides \$350 billion to state and local governments, as well as \$130 billion to schools to help them re-open safely.

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States Title Going Public as Doma in \$3B Deal With SPAC

States Title will go public as Doma following a \$3 billion deal with special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) Capitol Investment Corp. V.

"I founded Doma to remove friction and frustration from home-buying and to make closing on a home as simple and efficient as booking a ride or ordering a meal," said Max Simkoff, CEO of Doma.

In January 2019, States Title acquired North American Title Group's underwriter (North American Title Insurance Co.) and the majority of its retail title business (North American Title Co.) from Lennar Corp.. The companies garnered 1.8 percent of the title market through the first nine months of 2020, according to ALTA's Market Share Data. According to a release, Doma has facilitated over 800,000 real estate closings for leading lenders such as Chase, Homepoint, PennyMac and Sierra Pacific Mortgage.

"In 2020, adoption and usage of our core product exceeded our expectations,"

Simkoff said. "We pushed hard against our product and operational expansion road map, and this accelerated momentum is helping remove friction from the home buying and refinancing experience. Right now, our patented machine intelligence technology reduces title processing time from five days to as little as one minute — our goal is that the entire mortgage closing process move from a 50-plus day ordeal to less than a week. This partnership with Capitol demonstrates their confidence in our strong growth position as we continue our sprint to architect the future of real estate transactions."

Doma saw revenues of \$179.8 million in 2019 and \$189.7 million in 2020, according to filings made with the Securities and Exchanges Commission. Generally accepted accounting principal (GAAP) revenues are expected to be around \$226.4 million in 2021.

The transaction is expected to provide

up to \$645 million in cash proceeds, including a fully committed \$300 million in private investment in public equity (PIPE) and up to \$345 million of cash held in the trust account of Capitol. Top-tier investors anchoring the PIPE overall include funds and accounts managed by BlackRock; Fidelity Management & Research Company LLC; The Gores Group; Hedosophia; SB Management, a subsidiary of SoftBank Group Corp.; and Wells Capital. Existing Doma shareholder, Lennar, has also committed to the PIPE, and Spencer Rascoff, co-founder and former CEO of Zillow Group, has committed a personal investment to the PIPE.

This is the fifth SPAC handled by Capitol Investment. SPACs, also known as blank check companies, are shell corporations listed on a stock exchange with the purpose of acquiring a private company.

TitleOne Acquires Title Company in Idaho

TitleOne, a subsidiary of Realogy Title Group LLC, acquired Land Title of Nez Perce County in Lewiston, Idaho.

"Land Title of Nez Perce County is known for fostering a collaborative culture and for delivering exceptional service and community support to the Lewiston market, attributes that mirror TitleOne's values," said Jason Vickrey, president of TitleOne. "We're thrilled to be adding this outstanding team to the TitleOne family."

Founded in 1984, Land Title of Nez Perce County was previously owned and operated by 25-year industry veteran Joe Strohmaier. He will continue to manage Land Title's operations. Financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

"The decision to join forces with TitleOne was an easy one," Strohmaier said. "Combining our companies allows us to streamline operations and capitalize on efficiencies, while offering our customers an expanded range of products and services."

Midland Trust Company to Acquire ATG Trust

Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund Inc. (ATG) has signed a definitive agreement to sell its subsidiary, ATG Trust Company, to Midland Trust Company (MTC).

"We predicated the decision to consider the sale of ATG Trust on finding a purchaser, trust company or bank, that would offer a collegial culture similar to ATG's, retain as many of our team members as possible, and allow the trust company to sustain or improve upon the services offered to attorneys and their clients," said Peter Birnbaum, ATG president and CEO. "We found exactly that in Midland, an organization of the highest integrity."

Midland Trust is a subsidiary of Effingham, Ill.-based Midland States Bancorp Inc. The acquisition will enhance ATG Trust's commitment to offering creative trust and estate solutions by providing expanded investment, technological and operational capabilities. After the transaction closes, the staff from ATG Trust and Midland Trust Company's Chicago office will relocate to a new location in Chicago's downtown.



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Virginia Passes Data Privacy Bill With ALTA-supported GLBA Exemption

Virginia's House of Representatives and Senate passed the Consumer Data Protection Act, which would establish a framework for controlling and processing personal data.

[SB 1392](#) will go into effect Jan. 1, 2023, Virginia becomes the second state to enact major privacy legislation, following the [California Consumer Privacy Act](#).

The bill includes an ALTA-supported exemption for data and information governed by the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA). The federal law already limits how financial institutions—including title and settlement services companies—share and use customer personal information.

The bill applies to all persons that conduct business in Virginia and either

1. control or process personal data of at least 100,000 consumers, or
2. derive over 50 percent of gross revenue from the sale of personal data and control or process personal data of at least 25,000 consumers.

The bill also outlines responsibilities and privacy protection standards for data controllers and processors. Under the bill, consumers can access, correct, delete, obtain a copy of personal data and opt out of the processing of personal data for the purposes of targeted advertising. The bill gives Virginia's attorney general authority to enforce violations of the law. However, unlike the CCPA, Virginia's bill does not provide a private right of action.

Michigan Regulator Issues Cease and Desist Against Title Company

The Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) issued a cease-and-desist order against Cedar Hawk Title Company and its employees,

Victoria Larsen and Tabria Josey.

The regulator accused Cedar Hawk Title of posing as a Michigan-based title insurance company, selling fraudulent title insurance online to consumers and operating without a license. The case was investigated by DIFS after a consumer became suspicious of requested wire transfers totaling nearly \$150,000 while purchasing a home in November 2020. The consumer, skeptical of the transactions and with the assistance of law enforcement, was able to successfully halt the transfers of funds before they could be finalized.

Cedar Hawk, Larsen and Josey have 30 days to contest the order and request a hearing. They may be subject to up to \$50,000 in fines for their violation of the Michigan Insurance Code, and their actions may also constitute criminal violations.

CoreLogic Launches New Digital Title and Closing Solution

CoreLogic launched a new digital title and closing solution to deliver a single, end-to-end digital mortgage workflow.

With the solution, CoreLogic said it can help lenders accelerate their existing title processes by automating dozens of manual steps.

Traditionally, mortgage lenders have had to manually re-key dozens of separate pieces of property information from PDF copies of title documents prior to closing a loan. Most lenders have paid teams of employees to review these documents and then re-type this title information into their loan origination systems (LOS). These manual processes are time-consuming, subject to data-entry errors and potential security concerns.

Recognizing an opportunity for process improvement, CoreLogic developed the Universal Title Data Structure (UTDS) to source this data directly from the title agent's production software in a standard, consistent

format. The UTDS automatically digitizes, organizes and transmits over 350 individual data elements from title commitments, tax certificates, major endorsements and property reports. Rather than being locked in flat PDF documents, the UTDS releases the title data so that it can flow securely from the title provider to the lender's LOS through CoreLogic's platforms. The solution tracks and securely transmits all title order details, replacing phone calls, faxes and email with an organized and centralized communication platform, according to CoreLogic.

"By completely automating these manual processes, we are able to take significant time, touch and cost out of our clients' workflows, and help them deliver an improved borrower experience," said Glen Evans, executive of collateral technology solutions at CoreLogic.

Stewart Acquires Signature Closers

Stewart Information Services Corporation acquired Signature Closers LLC in a move to strengthen its digital closing strategy.

Stewart also recently acquired NotaryCam and partnered with CertifiD to create a centralized experience for customers.

"With their industry-leading notary panel and technology platform, Signature Closers is the perfect addition to our digital capabilities, advancing our strategic vision of accelerating, securing, and simplifying the title and closing process for our customers," said Stewart CEO Fred Eppinger. "These recent acquisitions and partnerships help create an end-to-end digital product offering by utilizing complementary products and services to enhance the closing process and further improve the customer experience."

Signature Closers provides full- and self-service signing support for title companies and lenders via their vetted and compliant e-notary-capable network

of notary signing agents and attorneys along with a proprietary internal solution. The Secure Your Notary Closer platform allows companies to automate and manage in-house signings.

Compass to Purchase D.C.-based KVS Title

Real estate technology company Compass has signed a definitive agreement to purchase Washington, D.C.-based KVS Title. Compass now serves California, Florida, Washington State, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. This deal comes less than six months after Compass purchased Modus, a title and escrow software startup.

"We're incredibly excited to welcome the KVS Title team to Compass. Their family-like culture, their expertise in the title business and, most importantly, their great leadership team make them a perfect match for Compass," said Compass Founder and CEO Robert Reffkin. "The underlying driver of Compass' success has always been our obsession with how to help agents grow their business and better serve their clients. With this acquisition we're advancing both of these goals."

Founded in 2010, KVS Title serves the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. It employs more than 90 employees at six offices.

Recent Integrations

- The **SoftPro 360** business exchange platform is now integrated with **SearchCONNECT**, an affiliate of Investors Title and National Investors that provides search solutions in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. SoftPro users can place online orders for SearchCONNECT's title search and policy-typing solutions directly through their SoftPro software.

Housing Market Potential

Existing and Potential Home Sales* (in Millions, Seasonally Adjusted Annualized Rate)

6.65 SAAR

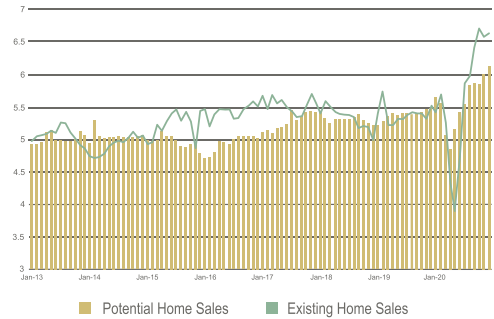
Existing Home Sales

6.15 SAAR

Potential Home Sales

+8.2%

Market Performance Gap



*Potential home sales measures what a healthy market level of home sales should be based on the economic, demographic and housing market environments.

National Consumer House-Buying Power

How much home one can afford to buy given the average income and the prevailing mortgage rate

December 2020

\$513,093

House-Buying Power

+21.1%

Year-Over-Year

Where House-Buying Power is Strongest

Top States and Cities

States

1. New Jersey: **\$678,902**
2. Maryland: **\$671,077**
3. Hawaii: **\$663,761**
4. Massachusetts: **\$654,093**
5. California: **\$627,647**

Cities

1. San Jose, CA: **\$1,132,789**
2. San Francisco, CA: **\$940,791**
3. Washington, DC: **\$867,453**
4. Boston, MA: **\$777,367**
5. Baltimore, MD: **\$671,547**

Source: Mark Fleming, Chief Economist at First American Financial Corporation

North American Title Bolsters Underwriting Counsel

North American Title Insurance Co. (NATIC) has added David Jenkins as national underwriting and expansion counsel to support growth of its parent company, States Title. In this new role, Jenkins provides guidance on underwriting decisions for business originated by strategic and enterprise accounts and advises associates and customers on instant underwriting files and the legal aspects of title and closing issues. He also advises the company's operations team on the expansion of its instant underwriting product into new states, underwrites residential and commercial title closings, and assists affiliated title agents on extraordinary title issues and real estate transaction closing challenges.

WFG Names Regional Underwriting Counsel for Central Region

WFG National Title Insurance Co. has appointed Neil Narut to the newly created position of vice president and regional underwriting counsel for its central region. He will provide underwriting support to title agents in Illinois and Indiana, which comprise the central region of WFG's Midwest Division. He will partner with Kimberly O'Connor, vice president and central region underwriting counsel for the Great Lakes Division, which encompasses Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Realty Title Names President of Mid-South Divisions

Tennessee-based Realty Title announced it named Brad Lehman as president of its Mid-South divisions. This includes middle Tennessee, Chattanooga, east Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia divisions. Lehman will be responsible for leading and overseeing operations for 25 offices. Lehman has served in multiple senior management positions for two national title insurance underwriters and worked for a family-owned title company in Brentwood, Tenn.

FNF Family of Companies Appoints Southeast Region Manager

The FNF Family of Companies named Ravi Bapodra to the position of senior vice president and regional manager for the Southeast Region of Agency Operations. With more than 20 years of industry experience, he built a successful default services division early in his career. Bapodra joined Fidelity National Financial in 2015 as regional sales manager. He played a major role in the growth and development of the southeast operations. Most recently, he helped establish the National Title Insurance Company of New York as a new underwriter for local agency operations in Georgia.

Surety Title Company Appoints COO

Surety Title Company LLC named Casey Brown as chief operating officer. She will take a lead role managing internal operations, streamlining processes and improving efficiencies across departments and office locations. Key to her responsibilities will be staff education with the establishment of a leadership development program, an area in which she has long-standing training and expertise. Prior to joining Surety Title, Brown was with First American Title Insurance Co. holding positions as vice president and state agency manager for both New Jersey and Delaware, and senior underwriter and director of education for the past five years.

CATIC Names Pennsylvania State Manager

CATIC Title Insurance Company named Lisa Mansueto as vice president and state manager of Pennsylvania. Before her current position at CATIC Title, she served as vice president and state manager for a national title insurance company. Mansueto managed diverse offices in Berwyn, Pittsburgh and Erie, Pa. She recruited, trained and developed a consultative sales team and an industry-leading underwriting team, insuring both residential and commercial transactions.

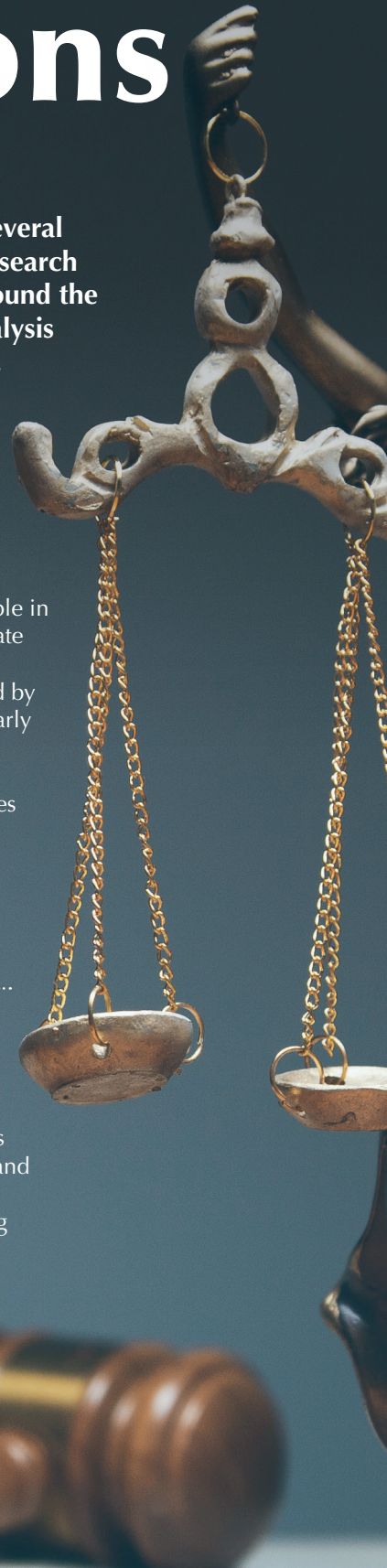
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Price per copy:

Digital: ALTA members: \$200 | Nonmembers: \$300
Print: ALTA members: \$270 | Nonmembers: \$370

Title Insurance Law Newsletter

This monthly newsletter is the source of information about current law affecting the title insurance industry around the United States. The digital newsletter reports on important cases and decisions regarding title insurance coverage, class actions and regulatory enforcement, closing protection letters, escrow and settlement duties, agent/underwriter disputes, conveyancing law and RESPA and TILA compliance and violations. Author J. Bushnell Nielsen offers insightful analysis. Should you want a sample of the newsletter prior to purchase, please contact cperez@alta.org.

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Do You Follow the 70-20-10 Rule?

THE 70-20-10 RULE ISN'T A NEW CONCEPT. It has been applied to many different areas, including leadership, innovation approaches and learning. Recently, the concept came to mind when thinking how our industry approaches digital closings.

Prolific songwriter Jonathan Reed has explained that no matter what you're trying to produce, 70 percent of your attempts will be mediocre, 20 percent will suck, and 10 percent will be amazing. "It's not 'quantity or quality.' It's: 'quantity breeds quality,'" he said.

We all want to deliver a great experience. It's the last step in the process—when the homebuyers get the keys. It's when people get paid for their work. There's a lot riding on our ability to make the moment accurate, seamless and memorable.

Historic order volumes during the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of digital closings. Some companies went all in. Others remain cautious, unsure how they will adapt and implement the needed technology, while still producing the best possible work. But the horse has left the barn. With 30 states already having passed remote online notary (RON) legislation—and more on the way—it's time to start kicking the tires on this service. Your first digital closing may have some glitches, but it's part of the process.

In their book *Art & Fear*, David Bayles and Ted Orland share a story about how a professor divided his ceramics class into two groups. One group was graded on quantity and the other on quality. The first group had their pots weighed; the heavier they were, the higher the grade. The second was graded on the best pot they produced, no matter how big it was or how many pieces were created.

"Grading time and a curious fact emerged: The works of highest quality were all produced by the group being graded for quantity," the authors reported. "It seems that while the 'quantity' group was busily churning out piles of work—and learning from their mistakes—the 'quality' group had sat theorizing about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay."

In the sports world, NBA legend Michael Jordan once said, "I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." To bring it back to the business world, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos says he's all about failing. He's never regretted trying and failing. His fear was regretting not trying. This comes from a person who has made billions of dollars from failures at Amazon.com. "If the size of your failures isn't growing," he said, "you're not going to be inventing at a size that can actually move the needle," Bezos said.

What does throwing clay, shooting a basketball or creating a mega-successful online store have to do with closing mortgage and real estate transactions? Everything.

The best way to get better at something isn't to worry and study and plan, it's to do it—even if you completely fail at first.



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