

## Consumer Advisory for Buyers and Sellers

**Washington consumers are advised that any firm charging for real estate brokerage services in Washington should be licensed as a real estate brokerage in Washington.**

Brokerage services include listing, selling, purchasing, negotiating, and more. Of course property owners may advertise, negotiate, show and sell their own property without the need for licensure. Buyers may negotiate and purchase property for themselves without becoming licensed. Most consumers utilize the services of licensed brokers to find buyers or sellers, negotiate terms, and to handle the paperwork in their transactions.

**Consumers have many price and service options.**

Licensed brokerages compete on price and also on the extent of services offered. Consumers may choose among real estate professionals who operate on a “fee **per** service” basis and others who provide a full complement of services for the agreed compensation. Some licensed firms offer discount Internet listing services. Knowing that there are differences in services and fees allows consumers to make informed choices about the services they need and the amount they are willing to pay for those services.

The choices available to consumers include access to for-sale-by owner Internet advertising, packages of signs and forms, price competition between traditional brick and mortar based licensed offices, and more. Consumers are encouraged to carefully review the suitability of the services offered to their individual needs. While any owner may advertise their own property, owners expecting licensed assistance in showing their property and negotiating with prospective buyers would probably not need for-sale-by-owner advertising packages or signage. Since publishing a property owner’s advertising doesn’t require a real estate license, consumers will wish to be cognizant of the difference between purchasing advertising postings and paying for limited or full menu brokerage services.

### **Protections for consumers**

Washington consumers are entitled to receive a pamphlet explaining the Law of Real Estate Agency (Revised Code of Washington Chapter 18.86). This pamphlet describes the duties of agents. It also explains that brokers may represent the buyer, the seller, both or neither. Washington real estate licensees are required to provide this information, prior to consumers entering into a contract for brokerage services, before consenting to dual agency, and before waiving any rights to agency representation in a real estate transaction. Purchasers are entitled to receive this pamphlet prior to signing any purchase offer.

## **Recommendations**

The Department of Licensing encourages consumers needing assistance with real estate brokerage services involving property in Washington to:

- Select from among firms with active real estate licenses in Washington. Firms licensed and regulated in Washington are subject to the jurisdiction of Washington courts. Consumers may check the status of professional licenses issued by the Department of Licensing online at: [www.dol.wa.gov/business/checkstatus.html](http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/checkstatus.html).
- Determine the extent of brokerage services you need and confirm that the licensed brokerage firm that you select provides those services.
- Make certain that you receive a pamphlet on the Law of Real Estate Agency before signing an agreement for brokerage services, before signing an offer to purchase, before consenting to dual agency, and before waiving any rights to agency representation in a real estate transaction, whichever occurs first.

Skip a trip – go online  
[www.dol.wa.gov](http://www.dol.wa.gov)