

Thurston County REALTORS® Association

Ombudsman Process

The definition of Ombudsman for REALTORS® – *The Ombudsman Program in its simplest definition is informal telephone mediation. In some cases it can address and resolve minor complaints from the public. It can also resolve inter-Realtor® conflicts before they become serious problems. Like a mediator, an ombudsman helps parties find solutions.*

WHAT IS THE TCRA OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM?

Ombudsman Procedures adopted by the Thurston County REALTORS® Association are intended to provide enhanced communications and initial problem-solving capacity to the professional standards process. TCRA is charged with the responsibility of receiving and resolving ethics complaints, and hearing arbitration disputes filed against its' members. An Ombudsman can respond to general questions regarding real estate practices, transaction details, ethical practices and enforcement issues.

HOW WILL I KNOW TO ASK FOR AN OMBUDSMAN?

Many complaints do not expressly allege violations of specific articles of the REALTORS® Code of Ethics and may not concern conduct related to the Code. Some complaints are transactional, technical, and procedural questions that can be readily responded to. Some complaints are due strictly to lack of communication. These types of issues may be appropriate for the Ombudsman program.

WHAT ARE REALTOR® OMBUDSMAN BENEFITS?

You can receive non-judgmental real estate related information in a timely manner and at no cost.

WHAT THE OMBUDSMEN WILL NOT DO?

- Adjudicate/make the final decision;
- Give legal advice;
- Determine who is right or wrong;
- Disclose communications – Process is CONFIDENTIAL;
- Make any written record of discussions and/or agreements.

WHO ARE THE OMBUDSMEN?

REALTORS® appointed to be Ombudsmen must:

- Meet criteria for extensive real estate experience (average 30 plus years);
- Demonstrate objectivity;
- Participate in a training program; and possess extensive knowledge of the Realtor® Code of Ethics & Best Practices.

HOW DOES THE OMBUDSMAN PROCESS WORK?

The TCRA Dispute Resolution Services Manager will assemble information to be sent to the TCRA Ombudsman via e-mail. This information may include:

- Name, phone number and role of the complainant (that is, buyer, seller, broker, etc.)
- Name, phone number, and role of the respondent (that is, broker, principal broker, office manager.)
- If the respondent is a broker, the name of principal broker and/or managing broker.

The TCRA Ombudsman will make all necessary contacts in an attempt to resolve the complaint. If the Ombudsman efforts are effective, there is no further action necessary. If the efforts are not successful in resolving the Complainant's issues, the Ombudsman will advise the Complainant about the next step(s) in the complaint process.

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510 Stoll Road

Olympia, WA 98503

Phone: (360) 491-3910

Fax: (360) 491-1347

tcr@thurstoncountyrealtors.org