

Greetings to my fellow Association and MLS Executives,

I am writing to you today fully immersed in the undercurrent of the wave that we all know as COVID-19 (coronavirus). Unlike the individually unique fires that we face daily in our local communities, our challenge today is common and our response to this challenge although individual in nature must be holistic in intent. It has become clear that it will take a combined effort to save us all. Therefore, I am writing to you because it is our time as Association Executives to use our power to help “flatten the curve” in our individual communities.

In epidemiology, the curve refers to the projected number of new cases in each geographical area over a period. The idea of “flattening the curve” is to stagger the number of new cases over a longer period, so that people have better access to healthcare and so that we can identify and isolate infection hotspots. Flattening the curve will give our healthcare professionals a fighting chance to give much needed aid to those who need help and it will also give us a respite so that we can regroup in this battle.

It is incumbent upon us all, now, to use our power to affect this curve by doing all that we can to decrease the number of our real estate professionals that are on the roads and practicing real estate publicly. Some of our associations have tens of thousands of members. Others just a few hundred. No matter the size of your association, it is time for those members to stay at home so that we can halt the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Convincing our members to stay home will lessen the number of human interactions and thusly decrease the spread of the virus person to person. Staying at home will also decrease the frequency whereby the coronavirus is left on surfaces only to be picked up and transported by a new host. Also, staying at home will help to decongest our streets and emergency rooms leaving them open for those who should be active at this time or who need medical help.

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) has over 1.3 million members. Imagine the impact on COVID-19 that NAR could make if it convinced its 1.3 million members to stay home. But NAR cannot stand alone. Other groups such as the WCR, NAREB, NAHREP, AREAA and the powerful Council of MLSs (CMSL) need to join in this messaging and encourage their own members and MLS subscribers to help flatten the curve.

Regulating HIPPA law, employment law, and open house expectations are great and will serve us all when we return to our “new norm.” But these policy changes, while necessary, only encourage members to continue to do “business as usual” rather than to discourage activity all together. Therefore, we as Association Executives (in my opinion) must go an extra yard. Members will bristle and proclaim that no one can tell them how to run their businesses, and this is true. Be we have come to a place where it is our personal, professional, and social responsibility to use our power and our voice to enforce a social-public policy that outweighs their desire to do business.

Today, we closed our association doors indefinitely. I won’t reopen those doors until local authorities say that I can and/or until such a time that I can ensure that a gathering at the association won’t endanger my members. I realized that keeping my doors open had been sending a signal to our members that they too could keep their doors open (along continuing to show homes, host open houses, etc). Now it is my hope that ORRA’s closed doors will send a new message and serve to convince members to follow suit, and in the process save lives.

Lets flatten the Curve!

Cliff Long, CEO