



OneKey MLS hosts panel with Mercury, NYRAC, Compass and NYSAR on politics and NY real estate

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Shown (from left) are: Brian Tormey, NTP, president, TitleVest; Jonathan Greenspun, managing director, Mercury Public Affairs; Mike Kelly, director of government affairs, New York State Association of Realtors; Heather Domi, founding chairperson, NYRAC, and associate real estate broker, Compass; and Richard Haggerty, CEO of OneKey MLS.

New York, NY Real estate is a driving economic force in New York, and politics and policy can have a significant impact on the industry. The Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors, Inc. (HGAR) and OneKey MLS hosted a virtual panel last week featuring experts who surveyed New York's political landscape, looked at laws and regulations, and shared intel on what real estate professionals need to know to support the industry.

“The New York State Association of Realtors does an incredible job of getting in front of the legislators, particularly in Albany with their Lobby Day,” said Richard Haggerty, CEO of OneKey MLS, the regional multiple listing service that covers nearly a dozen counties in the greater NYC area from Manhattan, to Suffolk, Westchester and Sullivan.

“Also, our state and local organizations have done calls to action and connected our members to

legislators representing them in their districts,” Haggerty said. “It’s very effective.”

Haggerty recalled that, during his time as CEO of HGAR, “We’d have all the legislators come in one room of the capitol building, coordinated by senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. It was really powerful to see 100 people filling up that room. We had an organized agenda on state and local issues, which made an impact with the legislators.”

Haggerty hosted “The Importance of Politics and Policy in New York Real Estate,” a virtual forum featuring Heather Domi, founding chair of the New York Residential Agent Continuum (NYRAC) and associate real estate broker at Compass; Jonathan Greenspun, managing director of Mercury Public Affairs; and Mike Kelly, director of government affairs for the New York State Association of Realtors. The Oct. 12 event was moderated by Brian Tormey, NTP, president of TitleVest, a leading NYC-based provider of title insurance and related real estate services.

The panel agreed on the importance for real estate professionals to know their local lawmakers and the issues, and to advocate for policies beneficial to the industry.

“A lot of agents in our city are passionate about politics in our industry,” said Domi, who founded NYRAC in 2018 as a group of civic-minded agents to advocate for the industry. “The reality is, most people don’t take action because they rely on somebody else, such as the real estate boards, to do it. When individual constituents start contacting their local lawmakers, in large numbers, they move the needle and people listen. It’s very impactful and allows us to have a voice in what is happening in our industry. Our voice matters.”

Greenspun of Mercury, a public strategy firm, urged viewers to get more politically involved.

“The politics of real estate changed drastically circa 2018, when the Republicans no longer controlled the state Senate,” said Greenspun. “For years, real estate prospered ... but with the election of AOC (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY 14) and some very far left-wing members of the state legislature, that turned the politics in Albany on its head.

“The message for everyone tuning in today, and to convey to your colleagues, is get involved. It matters. The survival of your industry is dependent upon it,” Greenspun said.

The panel pointed to laws and issues impacting the industry, including:

- Class-action lawsuits against the National Association of Realtors and other entities over commissions;
- Brooklyn Councilman Chi Ossé’s bill to require landlords who hire a broker to pay the broker’s fees, as opposed to the renter automatically being responsible;
- Good Cause legislation, which seeks to limit how a landlord can evict a tenant; and

- The expiration of 421-A, which offered a real estate tax exemption for new housing construction.

“It is critical for you to get involved politically and make your voice heard,” said Kelly, of the New York State Association of Realtors. “A working practitioner or a Realtor brings a voice to the issues that I talk to lawmakers about all the time. They have the expertise to talk to their lawmakers about why they like a bill or why they have concerns about a piece of legislation. I represent the industry, I have a good knowledge of the issues but I’m not working with buyers and sellers, or renters and property owners.”

Kelly ticked off races to watch in New York for 2024, including the 18th congressional district, where Republican Alison Esposito is seeking to oust Democrat Pat Ryan. He also pointed to Republican-held House seats in New York’s 1st, 3rd, 4th, 17th, 19th and 22nd districts that the Democrats are hoping to flip in 2024.

“As I look toward these 2024 elections, there’s an opportunity for us to weigh in,” Kelly said. “My ask, at least of our own members is, I’m not going to tell you who to vote for, but you need to vote. Lawmakers need to know that real estate votes – that’s really important.”

The webinar is part of the “Be Your Best” series created by HGAR and OneKey MLS, to help Realtors and agents navigate a changing landscape.

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