

July PROA Board Member Message

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As I write this message, I have just finished a three day convention of leaders of real estate investors' groups from all over Pennsylvania and the rest of the country. It occurs to me that it has been some time since I wrote to you about our state organization, the Pennsylvania Residential Owners' Association, PROA for short, and the National Real Estate Investors' Association, National REIA.

Starting this month with PROA, I am ACRE's representative on PROA's board of directors, and currently serve as its Vice President. ACRE is the only Pittsburgh real estate investing association which belongs to and supports PROA, and its work at the state level. PROA is very active at the state level in monitoring legislation in Harrisburg, advancing laws favorable to investors and opposing those harmful to investors. PROA employs a highly respected lobbying firm at a cost of over \$50,000 per year to do these things, and in addition has an affiliated political action committee, PROPAC, which provides contributions to support the political campaigns of candidates who support real estate investors.

Representatives of over 25 local investors' associations meet quarterly to receive updates from our lobbyists, get reports on and provide financial support to local associations pursuing litigation against municipalities with respect to issues of statewide importance, and generally to discuss issues of concern to Pennsylvania real estate investors.

Currently, PROA is working with our lobbyists on two very important bills we are supporting. The first is a bill to add college students as a protected class under the PA Human Relations Act. This bill, if it becomes law, will prevent municipalities from passing anti-student housing ordinances. Such ordinances in communities where large numbers of prospective tenants are college students create serious problems for landlords. The ordinances limit their ability to rent to a large segment of the tenant population, and therefore reduce the value of their rental properties. We hope to see this bill move forward in the fall.

The second bill we are supporting is a continuation of our efforts to deal with the personal property or belongings tenants leave behind when they vacate rental property. Pennsylvania went from giving no guidance on what landlords could do with tenants' property left behind to having a clear procedure to deal with that property under Act 129 last year. However, Act 129 as passed left a glaring loophole in that it did not address what landlords could do with the property of tenants who left without notice before the expiration of their leases. The new bill PROA has worked to create would expand Act 129 to deal with these situations as well.

PROA is also actively opposing legislation which would be overly burdensome with respect to carbon monoxide detectors, and fighting against bills which would allow municipalities to profit from fees or taxes on only residential rental properties, or only properties in certain business districts.

To support these activities, ACRE and other member groups pay dues to PROA, and PROA uses other fundraising. Right now, PROA has a credit report/tenant screening program which saves landlords money over many other credit and screening programs, and which provides a small payment to PROA and to ACRE from each credit report ordered. Go to the PROAssoc.org website for information on this program, or watch for an upcoming article with more details on this program.

PROA also has an affinity program with Stream Energy, through which you can sign up commercial and residential Duquesne Light electric accounts, and soon certain natural gas accounts. You may save a little over Duquesne Light rates, and PROA will receive \$4.00 per account per month under the program. Information on how to sign up for Stream Energy is also on the PROA website.

PROA needs more help from real estate investors all over the state to continue with its mission. I have had residential electric accounts on the Stream Energy program for several months, and have seen a slight savings as well as knowing I am helping PROA at no cost to me. Won't you consider doing the same?

Next month, I'll give you an update on National REIA, and some of the benefits it provides to ACRE members.

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