



The Official Publication
of the New Jersey
Land Title Association

FinCEN Changes to GTOs and the Impact of AI Or, What Is This Article REALLY All About?

By: Peter Casey Wall

Dear readers, please stick with us to the end of this article. There's a fair bit of exposition in the front and a twist at the end that you might find surprising. As the title suggests, the GTO information is a subterfuge, so if you are fully familiar with the subject matter, skip ahead to the podcast and give that a short listen, unless you are in for the full 18 minutes. After the podcast, read on for the big reveal of "what this article is REALLY all about."

Recap and Update of FinCEN
Geographical Targeting Orders:

The Financial Crimes Enforcement

Network (FinCEN) first issued GTOs in January 2016. These initial orders focused on Manhattan and Miami-Dade County, requiring title insurance companies to identify individuals behind companies making high-end real estate purchases in cash. The orders aimed to combat money laundering by making it more difficult for individuals to use real estate purchases to conceal the origin of illicit funds. The GTOs were initially set to expire in August 2016, but FinCEN extended and expanded their scope due to their perceived effectiveness in identifying and preventing money-laundering schemes.

Recent Changes to the Orders:

April 2024

- FinCEN renewed the GTO requiring title companies to collect and report



information on residential real estate transactions of **\$300,000 or more** made without a bank loan or similar financing.

- In the greater Baltimore region, the threshold was **\$50,000**.
- The renewed GTO covered various counties in: California, Colorado,

FinCEN Changes to GTOs...cont. on page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

FinCEN CHANGES TO GTOs AND THE IMPACT OF AI OR, WHAT IS THIS ARTICLE REALLY ALL ABOUT? **COVER**
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE **PG. 4**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE **PG. 6**
AGENT PERSPECTIVE **PG. 8**
AGENCY SECTION UPDATE **PG. 10**
ALTA ADVOCACY UPDATE **PG. 11**

N.J. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE **PG. 12**
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUMMIT **PG. 16**
2024 CONVENTION PHOTO SPREAD **PG. 18**
CTP RECIPIENT HEATHER R. BELL **PG. 22**
SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE **PG. 22**
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD - ED EASTMAN, JR., ESQ. **PG. 25**
LOUISE HAAS, HONORARY MEMBERSHIP DESIGNATION **PG. 27**

PRESIDENT'S AWARD 2024: CLYDE KOPCHAK **PG. 28**
2025 CONVENTION ATLANTIC CITY **PG. 29**
NJ AD CLUB AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT **PG. 33**
DATES TO REMEMBER **PG. 34**
ON THE MOVE **PG. 34**
NOTES FROM THE EDITOR **PG. 34**





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Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Texas, Washington, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

- The order mandated reporting transactions paid for using currency, cashier's checks, certified checks, traveler's checks, personal checks, business checks, money orders, virtual currency, and **wire funds transfers**.

October 2023

- FinCEN renewed and expanded the GTOs to cover more counties in several states.
- They added counties in Massachusetts, Florida, and Texas to the list of covered areas.
- The purchase amount threshold

remained **\$300,000** for each covered metropolitan area, except for Baltimore City and County, where it stayed at **\$50,000**.

October 2024

- FinCEN renewed the GTOs, effective from October 16, 2024 to April 14, 2025.
- The purchase price threshold remained **\$300,000** for each covered metropolitan area, except for Baltimore, which remained at **\$50,000**.
- These GTOs will be replaced by a nationwide reporting framework that goes into effect on **December 1, 2025**, requiring certain industry professionals to report information about non-financed residential real estate transfers to legal entities or trusts.

The sources emphasize that the GTOs

primarily target title insurance companies and **do not impose new obligations on real estate professionals**. However, real estate professionals should be aware of the GTOs as title companies may contact them for information needed for compliance.

Title Company Preparations for 2025 GTO Changes

The sources indicate that the Geographic Targeting Orders (GTOs), which currently require title companies to report information on certain high-value real estate transactions, will be replaced by a nationwide reporting framework on December 1, 2025. This new framework will require certain industry professionals to report

FinCEN Changes to GTOs...cont. on page 30

Reflections on the 2024 ALTA ONE Event: A Week of Insight, Innovation, and Industry Leadership



By: John P. Crowley, President

As President of the New Jersey Land Title Association, attending the 2024 ALTA ONE event in Orlando this October was an extremely rewarding experience. As a first-time attendee, I was very excited to go. It was an opportunity to connect with industry leaders, explore innovative technologies, and discuss the most pressing issues facing our profession today. The event was a dynamic mix of informative sessions, networking opportunities, and thought-provoking discussions. I strived to attend a wide variety of seminars and events to bring back information that benefited all our members. Below, I will share some of the highlights from each day of the event and reflect on the insights I gained.

Monday: Welcoming Industry Leaders at the ALTA President's Reception

- I arrived at the Signia by Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek in the early afternoon and was able to check in.

ALTA had thought of everything and even had cookies waiting in the lobby. Thanks to our very own Lisa Aubrey, I was able to get an invitation to the ALTA President's Reception on an island in the middle of the hotel property (Thanks Lisa!). It was an evening dedicated to welcoming attendees and setting the tone for the week. It was an excellent opportunity to reconnect with industry colleagues, meet new peers, and build relationships that will benefit our ongoing work at the ALTA and the NJLTA. The reception was a relaxed and welcoming environment, allowing for informal conversations that often lead to deeper collaboration and partnership. As with any good convention, the evening ended at the hotel bar where it became the place to meet up with both old and new colleagues each night.

Tuesday: Advocacy, Innovation, and Networking

• Federal & State Advocacy Meeting (GAC & SLRAC)

As a member of both ALTA committees, I was very much looking forward to this meeting. After multiple meetings over Zoom, this was an opportunity to discuss policy issues that directly affect title professionals and our industry in person. The day began with a discussion on federal and state advocacy efforts over the last year. We focused on how local and federal regulations impact our work, and shared strategies for effective advocacy. Of course, we discussed the greatest hits including alternative title products, the GSE pilot waiver, and even how the recent Supreme Court

decision on the Chevron case could affect the title industry. It was also great to hear that TIPAC had made significant donations to campaigns on both sides of the aisle, underscoring that our industry and those we serve are not a partisan issue.

• Underwriters Section Meeting

Next, I participated in the Underwriters Section meeting, where discussions centered around the role of underwriters in the title industry and how they are adapting to new challenges, such as increasing fraud and the adoption of digital tools. There is also new and revised ALTA forms on the horizon that we will need to review and submit for approval here in New Jersey, including a new ALTA 48.1 (Tribal Waiver), ALTA 22.2 (Location – Undeveloped Land), and ALTA 36.9 endorsements (Energy). Good luck to Mr. Ewan and the Forms Committee at the Rating Bureau! There was also a strong emphasis on maintaining a strong relationship with state insurance commissioners. We will continue to work on that here in New Jersey.

• Omni Session: The Future is Now – Technology & Trends that Will Revolutionize with Don Kennedy and Crystal Washington

In the afternoon, I attended the first Omni Session, "The Future is Now", led by Don Kennedy and Crystal Washington. Crystal is a certified futurist and technology strategist who translates the complexity of emerging technologies so anyone can understand them. The session focused on things like blockchain and AI, and

how these trends will reshape the title industry. The conversation reinforced the importance of staying ahead of the curve and investing in digital tools to improve operational efficiency. I thought it was particularly interesting to learn that technology has cut the historical business cycle norm of 75 years to just seven years. She also stressed the importance of staying curious about new technology and not shying away from it.

Wednesday: Reinvention, Cybersecurity, and Title Considerations in Renewable Energy

- **Omni Session: Reinvention & Entrepreneurship with Eddie Huang and Don Kennedy**

Diane Tomb, ALTA's CEO started the conversation by reminding all of us that "Our voice is growing and it's time to turn the volume up." Even more than before, it is vital for our industry to speak up about why we are so important. Don Kennedy, ALTA's outgoing President then took the stage to moderate a fascinating discussion with Eddie Huang. Eddie is the creator of the hit TV show *Fresh Off the Boat*, is a restaurateur, author, and cultural commentator. He is also an attorney, which was nice to know that at least one of us escaped the legal field! Eddie and Don focused on the idea that as we continue to adapt to a fast-changing industry, it is important to embrace innovation and entrepreneurial thinking. He shared personal stories to illustrate his successful approach to business. The discussion emphasized how everything is an opportunity if you have the right perspective and how to reinvent our approaches to serving clients better and adapt to new challenges. My favorite point was when he said that to have an opinion on something, make sure you have worked every position that it will affect.

- **Empowering the Grid: Title Considerations in Renewable Energy Deals**

The renewable energy sector is growing rapidly throughout the country, and its impact on the title industry is undeniable. Energy Deals in New Jersey have also seen a significant increase so it is vital to understand how this type of transaction works. This session explored title considerations in renewable energy deals, addressing the unique challenges presented by these transactions. It was intriguing to hear from experts about how to navigate the complexities of energy projects while ensuring proper documentation and clear titles.

- **Redacting Public Records: Laws of Unintended Consequences**

Public records are a cornerstone of the title industry, but the debate around privacy and data security is intensifying. This session provided a thought-provoking analysis of the unintended consequences of laws aimed at redacting public records. It was a timely and important discussion, especially as we continue to balance the need for transparency with privacy concerns. I was able to chat with the moderators about our challenges with the implementation of Daniel's Law and its national implications. It is extremely important to make sure that industry professionals remain involved in conversations with legislators and record keepers to avoid costly and time intensive unintended consequences.

- **Ask the Cybersecurity Experts**

We could not have a title industry conference without talking about cybersecurity! We heard from great speakers including Tyler Adams of CertifiID, Rick Diamond of Fidelity National Financial, Reese Lacasse of CATIC, and Genady Vishnevetsky of Stewart Title. As cybersecurity remains a critical issue, this session allowed participants to ask the experts about best practices for securing sensitive data. Title professionals are increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats, and it was reassuring to learn about the tools and strategies available to safeguard our operations.

Everyone in our industry must take a proactive and aggressive approach to safeguard their information and procedures from these threats.

Thursday: Leadership, Regulation, and Market Impact

- **Omni Session: Finding Strength and Conquering Challenges in Tough Times with Don Kennedy, Richard Welshons, and Alison Levine**

Alison Levine is a *NY Times* best selling author and served as team captain of the first American Women's Everest Expedition. She climbed the highest peak on each continent and skied to both the North and South Pole. She used all of these experiences to become brave enough to address a bunch of title professional. This session was both motivational and practical, offering advice on how to find navigate extremely difficult situations, but also embracing "failure" as an opportunity. In her first attempt to reach the summit of Everest, she and her team had to turn around very close to the top. She said that although it was a disappointing and hard decision, getting back down to try again was always the right choice. In fact, despite what others may have said, she did not consider this "failure". The same can be said in business. Knowing when to quit and regroup can be an extremely valuable skill and something we can all learn from.

- **The Regulatory Landscape**

This session provided an overview of the shifting regulatory landscape and its impact on our industry. We got to hear perspectives from ALTA staff, underwriters, and agents. As I mentioned before, the title waiver pilot program, President Biden's direct reference to the title industry in the State of the Union, and the upcoming FinCen reporting requirements continue to dominate these discussions. It is vital that both ALTA and the NJLTA continue to keep these issues at the forefront and

President's Message...cont. on page 26

Executive Director's Message



Mark Bennett, Executive Director

I hope your new year is off to a wonderful start!

Your NJLTA Board, staff and committees have been busy the past few months working hard on your behalf.

We continue the drive to strengthen the value of NJLTA for its members. We are evaluating and planning to offer top-quality continuing education in the coming year through NJLTA and the New Jersey Land Title Institute, whether it be in-person or online.

The NJLTA is committed to represent the interests of the title industry. Through its Legislative Committee and lobbying team at Public Strategies Impact, NJLTA monitors and lobbies on bills at the New Jersey State House which have a direct impact on your daily business. NJLTA is your voice. And your membership dues are an annual investment in your business to help us better advocate for you. Additionally, NJLTA is your advocate ensuring that all of New Jersey's counties are recording documents properly and in a timely manner.

On the federal level, with a new administration taking office in January, we are monitoring what will happen with a number of housing initiatives. It remains unclear, especially with an expected change in leadership with FHA, if the Fannie Mae Pilot Program (allowing for a waiver of title insurance on certain transactions) and the expansion

of Attorney Opinion Letters, will continue. The new FinCEN rule continues to move forward with an implementation date in December. We will continue to provide updates and education preparing the industry for this upcoming change.



Want to get more involved while helping your industry? It's a great time to join a committee with NJLTA and lend your expertise. Just contact our office and let them know you are interested.

I look forward to seeing you at an NJLTA event in 2025!

As always, feel free to contact me at 732-476-5708 or mark@bennett-management-llc.com. ■

AI and the TITLE INDUSTRY

F R E E G U I D E

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence technology has left many title companies unsure of where and how to start using AI for their business. SoftPro has you covered! Our AI guide series covers:

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Agent Perspective.



By: Scott Rutkay

“Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.”

– Vincent Van Gogh

Consider the soft-close toilet seat. Up until recently, I never did, even though I probably use one at least two times a day. Invented in 1994, in Japan, the hinge system that the creator proposed, solved what initially seems like an inconsequential problem. I’ve been thinking about his hinge a lot lately. The modern toilet seat with hinges and a lid, was patented by American entrepreneurs Charles Neff and Arthur Giblin in the 1920s. But there was a fundamental issue. Toilet seats are thunderstrike loud. Even if you are trying to be very careful, trying extremely hard not to wake someone up, they are impossible to silence. Inevitably a bang will start to echo through the bathroom, then when the effects of the first bang start to wear off, there are subsequent smaller bangs, as the lid settles in place. Everyone’s bathroom. Banging. All day. All night. Every day. Forever.

Until 1994...until someone decided to solve a small, but very annoying, problem. His solution was so simple it’s hard to imagine why no one had come up with it before. I could argue that his small gift to the world saved my marriage. It probably saved many marriages. I could argue his invention changed the world. More importantly, however, what I do argue is that the actual act of solving something small can often lead to huge change in your daily life.

Prior to its creation, I assume that the inventor’s life was very much like mine. He just wanted some occasional peace and quiet. I imagine him trudging through each day like the last. Stuck in a cacophony of beeping, clanging, chiming, ringing, jingling, and clattering. I imagine him closing his eyes occasionally, praying for silence. I imagine him taking solace in a room where you can be by yourself for once, a place where no one ever bothers you – the bathroom. I imagine him in his home. Maybe he has a wife and a couple of children. They all use the bathroom. Everyone does. Every day he hears the toilet seat slam. He begs

his children to close it quietly. I have, so I know he did. Try as they might it doesn’t happen. Toilet seats are loud and always have been. I imagine him getting so close to madness that he had to do something about it. He alone could solve this problem, and he worked on it until he found a solution.

I imagine him in a meeting. Raising his hand at the end, explaining what he had been working on. I imagine people snickering. What a ridiculous thing to think about – the seats are loud, always have been, always will be. He’s heard that his whole life, even believed it until recently. I imagine that as he demonstrates what he created people start to understand what he’s done. Slowly they start to understand what the impact could be, slowly they understand his genius. There’s silence in the room. I imagine he finishes the presentation by slamming another seat as loud as he can, then closes the seat with his hinge silently.

I hear you chuckling, and I get it, but now that the banging of toilet seats has

Agent Perspective...cont. on page 15

3 SEARCH EXPERTS

1 CONVENIENT PLATFORM



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Agency Section Update



By: Cindy Stengel, Chair of the Agency Section Management Board

“Teamwork makes the Dream work” – John C. Maxwell

We have all heard many times “Teamwork makes the Dream work”. I say it constantly to my staff and even have it written on the wall in my office. It is a great reminder of how, with a team, you can accomplish a lot. Title insurance may seem like an individual task, but successful real estate transactions rely heavily on teamwork between various professionals in the industry. From real estate agents to underwriters, the role of collaboration is crucial in ensuring smooth closings and protecting all parties involved.

In this day and age, with the number of fraud and fraudsters right at our doorstep, knowing who you are working

with can make all the difference. One time, an attorney called me to provide “new” wire instructions for a closing we were about to conclude. I instantly knew it was not him by his voice. See, what this imposter did not realize was, I knew the attorney and had worked with him many times before. Needless to say, we quickly foiled his plan to get one over on us. That is why it’s so important to have those partnerships between real estate professionals, title agents, underwriters, attorneys and, let’s not forget, settlement agents.

This importance of partnership can also fall into having a team of fellow title agents that share in the same experiences we all have daily. The New Jersey Land Title Association makes that community available for you. Our quarterly meetings are there to inform the agents of the comings and goings of

the industry, but it’s also there to connect with fellow colleagues, and perhaps learn from each other. This relationship is built on trust and mutual respect for one another. We are in the trenches together. Title insurance may not always be front and center in the real estate process, but its success is built on the collective effort of a well-coordinated and well-educated team.

Come collaborate with us in sharing your thoughts and experiences. Interested in joining a committee? I’m sure there is one for you. Please join us for our upcoming seminars in February 2025 via webinar and April 2025 in South Jersey. Our past two meetings in October and December, as pleasant as they were, happened to be small and intimate. We are looking to expand that. Spread the word! ■



Advocate Winter 2024

The American Land Title Association keeps us up to date with changes and events affecting our industry. These are some of the news items that were found most relevant over the last quarter. Join the association today at <http://www.alta.org/membership/> and become a part of ALTA. Articles compiled by David E. Penque, Criterion Title Agency.

Is Your ALTA Policy Forms License Active?

September 12, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/yf7ddejk>

An active ALTA Policy Forms License is required to legally use and issue ALTA's copyrighted policy forms. A license is required even if you only issue a few policies per year. Any attorney, title agency, or law firm that is considered an issuing agent—any entity that has its own agency agreement with an underwriter and signs that entity name on a policy—must maintain its own Policy Forms License. Read on to purchase a Policy Forms License or learn about membership options.

Revision to ALTA Best Practices Published as Final

September 17, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/4xpnea56>

The revisions have been made with the objective of allowing agents and direct operations to continue to optimize their practices and procedures to ensure financial safety, data security and operational stability, and to provide lenders with the assurances that their needs are being fulfilled by improved operations. Revisions address password management and closing transactions not involving state regulated title insurance policies.

Tips for Checking State Identification Cards During an In-Person Notarization

September 17, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/ytub4pxs>

Seller impersonation fraud attempts continue to increase as 28% of title companies experienced at least one of these incidents in 2023, according to a study conducted by ndp | analytics. To



help combat this fraud, ALTA and the National Notary Association created a handout with tips to help verify and check state identification cards during an in-person notarization.

Survey Finds 60% of Homebuyers Experience Frustration During Mortgage Process

September 26, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/w776z6ch>

According to the Snapdocs survey, the key factors borrowers identified as negatively impacting their experience occurred during the closing, including document errors, lengthy in-person appointments and unexpected caretaking and travel costs.

Secret Service Issues Updated Memo on Seller Impersonation

September 26, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/4np7uncz>

With the help of ALTA member company Knight Barry Title, the U.S. Secret Service updated a memo it issued in 2022 regarding seller impersonation scams involving real estate. In the new memo, the Secret Service warns that criminals now are impersonating title companies by purchasing fake website domains that are similar to title company website domains.

Latest Weather Disasters Highlight Need for Business Continuity Plan

October 8, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/5n98sryu>

The third pillar of ALTA's Best Practices encourages title professionals to have a business continuity and disaster recovery plan. According to ready.gov, the process for creating a plan should encompass as much as possible of what a business might need during an emergency, including communications planning, IT support, and recovery and continuity plans.

FHA Reports HUD Second Liens Are Being Missed

October 10, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/45d5hskp>

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has several tools to help borrowers avoid foreclosure. One of the resources is through an interest-free second lien—called a partial claim lien—that borrowers can use to pay down arrearages. However, the Federal Housing Administration report persistent instances in all areas of the country in recent years where the lien is successfully recorded but not detected by title agents. Read on for information from HUD on the best way to obtain payoffs for partial claims.

ALTA Board Approves New, Revised Endorsements

October 31, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/5bu3fzrd>

Comments about the endorsements may be submitted through December 3rd. The Forms Committee will review any submitted industry comments. The new and revised forms will be published January 2nd depending on the results of the review.

Chevron is Overruled: How Does This Affect the CFPB and the Title Insurance Industry?

November 5, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/3y9py7m9>

The U.S. Supreme Court on June 28, issued a landmark 6-3 decision rejecting the judicial doctrine known as Chevron deference in two cases, *Loper Bright* and *Relentless*. Why should the title insurance industry care about this Supreme Court decision on a judicial doctrine that was little-known outside of legal circles? Read on to learn how this decision could help reign in the aggressive excesses of the CFPB (and other regulatory agencies), and perhaps, unexpectedly, provide more consistency for regulated entities.

More Than Pushing a Button

November 7, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/fkj7yhzr>

Title insurance differs notably from other lines of insurance because most of the events that lead to a claim take place before a policy is issued. As a result,

ALTA Advocacy Update...cont. on page 13

Banking Advantages For you and your clients



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N.J. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By: Joseph O’Gorman

If you wander over to the New Jersey Legislature website and search OPRA (<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/opra>), you’ll be greeted with a banner that reads, “OPRA is a state law that was enacted to give the public greater access to government records maintained by public agencies in New Jersey.”

And, when the state’s original Open Public Records Act became effective on July 7, 2002, the primary framework of the law expanded public access to government records in a very constructive way. The existence of OPRA certainly yielded a positive impact in our industry. The creation of uniform processes, request forms, and turnaround time expectations cleared a path to data access that, until then, wasn’t always the same across local and state agencies.

N.J. Legislative Update...cont. on page 14



ALTA Advocacy Update

continuation from page 11

most of the title professional's efforts are focused on reducing or eliminating the likelihood of claims during the initial underwriting process rather than on loss adjustment after a claim is filed. Read on for summaries of two reports that analyze title professionals' curative efforts, as well as the claims paid by the industry. The article also details various technologies that are available to help aid title professionals in their title clearance work.

Counterfeit Credibility: The New Threat of Notary Impersonation Fraud

November 14, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/fkj7yhzr>

The National Notary Association (NNA) published a paper that outlines how criminals commit Notary impersonation fraud, the laws currently in place to address it and proactive measures that can be taken to protect notaries.

Bipartisan Congressional Real Estate Caucus Urges FHFA to Halt Title Insurance Waiver Pilot

November 19, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/2749nvwv>

Led by U.S. Rep. Lou Correa (D-Calif.), Mark Alford (R-Mo.), Tracey Mann (R-Kan.) and Brittany Pettersen (D-Colo.), 17 members of Congress sent a letter on November 18th to FHFA Director Sandra Thompson that said the pilot will inadvertently cause irreparable damage to homeowners and lenders, and potentially leave them without critical protection against financial loss. The four representatives are co-chairs of the caucus.

9 Red Flags to Identify Deepfakes Targeting Financial Institutions

November 19, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/42j2pa3z>

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issued an alert to help financial institutions identify fraud schemes associated with the use of deepfake media created with generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools.

FHFA Sets Conforming Loan Limit for 2025

November 26, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/5fjpuvtn>

The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) increased the conforming loan limit values (CLLs) for mortgages acquired by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (the Enterprises) to \$806,500 in 2025. This is a 5.2% increase from 2024.

How AI is Helping to Spot Email Scams

November 27, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/3ec6fku6>

As reported by Genady Vishnevetsky, Chief Info Security Officer for Stewart Title Guaranty Company, phishing attacks pose a significant threat in today's digital landscape, but artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to combat these scams.

Federal Court Halts BOI Reporting

December 10, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/5yyu3rzd>

A federal district court issued a preliminary injunction December 3rd prohibiting FinCEN from enforcing the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) and the beneficial ownership information (BOI) reporting rule.

FBI Warns Generative AI Used for Financial Fraud

December 10, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/ykn25uf9>

Generative artificial intelligence reduces the time and effort criminals must expend to deceive their targets. Since it can be difficult to identify when content is AI-generated, the FBI provided several examples of how criminals may use generative AI in their fraud schemes.

Communicating the Intrinsic Value of the Title Industry Through Education, Service and Greater Efficiency

December 12, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/42z3fzrj>

The best way to overcome the lack of understanding about title insurance is by ramping up efforts to share information with buyers, sellers, real estate agents, loan officers and the community. That's easy to say but challenging to do. It starts by allocating time and resources to getting it done.

Five Questions About Title Industry Values

December 12, 2024

<https://tinyurl.com/hswtvh86>

Values are the basis of how a business functions. They set you apart from the competition, make you unique and are essential to achieving your organization's goals. In this article, we talk with Tom Richardson, president of Michigan-based Liberty Title, who shares why ALTA's Our Values are important for the industry and his company. ■

Meet Connie



Our County Search and Reading Operations Manager

With over 25 years in the title industry, Connie is a 2023 People First Honoree, a New Jersey licensed Title Producer, and a subject matter expert in New Jersey and New York title products. Connie leads a seasoned team that collects data from public records and compiles it into pre-commitment products.

Key Areas of Impact

Connie's focus on mentorship and professional development has also contributed to the growth and retention of top talent, fostering a high performing, engaged workforce. Connie and her team are subject matter experts contributing to the advancement of title plant expansion, precision in county searching, and the construction of reading products covering all of New Jersey and New York.

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N.J. Legislative Update

continuation from page 12

The act didn't just swing the doors open to all the government's data. Rather, it embraced a thoughtful approach for how to request, source and provide information back to the public in a reasonable timeframe, at a practical and standardized cost. Exceptions remained and statutes were passed protecting specific subsets of information for a variety of reasons. But ultimately, the public gained a clear path to records in partnership with the custodians who manage them. And it has worked since its inception!

More recently, the legislative community began whispering about changes to OPRA, as there were privacy concerns. A further concern was that the number of requests were too many and voluminous and that public offices managing the requests didn't have the bandwidth to keep up on, that businesses and attorneys alike were creating cottage industries out of both sourcing information and challenging OPRA denials. The latter seemed

especially concerning since *fee shifting* meant that the state was obligated to pay attorney fees in the event a denial was overturned. Those fees add up.

Changes to the law were proposed. So, the state assembly offered A4045 and the Senate served up a companion bill (S2930); both began gaining momentum early in 2024. The changes were met with opposition from many corners.

It was easy to wonder – is our industry the target of these changes? Are we creating the demand and high-volume requests? We don't think so.

Through hours of testimony and even some research done in the media, it seems entities routinely requested resident, homeowner, and licensing information in bulk for multiple commercial uses. The risk to the title industry was that our public records would be swept up into the *solutions* this amended OPRA was seeking. Confidence that our access would remain untouched was low.

So, we got to work. Many began conducting due diligence, evaluating the legislation thoroughly. The original drafts

contained concerning language like “data brokers” while targeting re-sellers of data. Achieving clear title is supremely reliant upon accessing public records. Would the law see our industry differently?

The NJLTA Legislative Committee sought time with the legislators. Efforts were made to explain the valuable, specific purpose our industry's access serves and how reliable access to public records is imperative for homeowners and prospective buyers, not just the folks who manage the many title clearance processes. Not long ago, the term “Title Search Business Entity” was created as a part of Daniel's Law to allow the title community access to unredacted records. Was that needed here? Might that work? While considered, it became unnecessary.

Through the efforts of the Legislative Committee, a softer version of the OPRA revision was published. The prevailing version removed the data re-seller component – changing the data broker definition – while also adding provisions

N.J. Legislative Update...cont. on page 27

Agent Perspective

continuation from page 8

stopped, hear me out. Here's what I keep on coming back to. What he solved was a giant problem, by doing something very small. It took talent. Don't get me wrong. He was the absolute right person at that time to take on the task. He was likely an engineer. Maybe he was a tinkerer – a born inventor. What I realized thinking about him is that he is the exact type of person that I most like to hire. I love people who like to tinker with problems. People with born curiosity notice small things. Things that I often miss, as I bounce around the office, head spinning. They also tend to be self-starters, but I don't think they're looking for problems all day. I don't think they're crippled by them, focusing on nothing else until they're solved. I just think they move around their world trying small things out to make their day better and easier.

I think they aren't particularly vocal either. They just do little things that make a difference. I had one employee, a post

closer, set up an empty cube as a shipping center. She centralized everything she needed to get her job done. She even set up an old computer and scanner for that purpose. However, in doing so, she came up with a completely different workflow for breaking down packages and rolled it out to the rest of the staff. I didn't ask her to – in fact, I never knew that the old way wasn't working as well as it could. The old way was the way I was taught in 2004. No surprise there's a new way of doing things two decades later.

Doing your job as efficiently isn't a great trick. I don't think anyone among us purposefully makes their job harder for themselves. So, her setting up a desk with supplies didn't really surprise me. What did surprise me was the fact that she developed a spreadsheet with some tracking features built into it that not only helped her do her job, but when she shared it with the rest of the group, stopped them from asking her questions all day. All the information that anyone needed from her was updated, real-time, all day long, automatically. It was a

timesaver for her, and a tremendous help in the office. It probably didn't take her that long to create. She saw a problem – people bothering her all day – and came up with an eloquent simple solution that allowed her to just get things done a little easier than the day before.

I don't know if she felt the same way as the inventor of the soft-close toilet seat. I'm not sure if what she did rises to the level of a world changing device that billions of people use every day. However, in her world it does. Everyone she works with uses her report every day. Her office is a little quieter than it was the day before. I'm sure that makes her day that much more enjoyable. A small problem, with a small solution, led to a huge improvement. I'm not sure what the reaction was like in 1994 Japan, only what I saw in my own office. We need more people like her – dreamers that become doers. Look out for them. They're quietly making your life easier just by trying new things out. ■



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The 2024 October Research Women's Leadership Summit



By: Jana Segarra

I checked into my hotel, the lovely Hilton in downtown Cleveland, which is across the street from the Browns Stadium and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, on a bright sunny November day. I headed down to the floor where the conference rooms are located and checked in. I got my name badge, program agenda, and headed into the main ballroom where the first speaker was about to start. There was coffee, snacks, handshakes, business attire, friendly greetings and chatter, the normal pleasant hum of a convention that is about to start before the real work begins. In some ways this was like other conventions I have attended in the past. But in many ways this convention was very, very different.

The Women's Leadership Summit is not just about being a leader. It is about being a whole person first, so you can show up and do your best to lead. Sessions that focused on things like delegation strategies and negotiation skills are of particular importance to women. As women we are often conditioned to be caretakers and are not always inclined to ask for help, delegate, or negotiate on our own behalf. However, the overall

success of an entity often hinges on these big, basic concepts. Get these parts wrong and your work can quickly become inconsistent, counterproductive and potentially ineffective. Discussing these necessary skills and fostering good habits will help women to become better leaders. And in a female dominated industry like title insurance, if we can bolster this support for young people entering the business, who don't learn these things in school or at home, it has the potential to also improve our industry overall.



After the convention I sent October Research CEO and Publisher Erica Meyer some questions for this article. We are reprinting her answers here in their entirety with her permission. I think the goals and tenets of WLS are best explained in her own words and her answers help us get to know this organization better and bring its very important mission to life.

Question: What inspired you to create the Women's Leadership Summit?

Erica: At the end of the day, we all want to make the world a better place. I realized we had the unique opportunity as a company to help educate hundreds

of women at a time, an opportunity to make the world better for women today and to pay it forward to the next generation of women leaders.

The core business of October Research is to help educate professionals in the real estate transaction. Our real estate industry is composed of more than 62% women, higher than the national average of 49.6%, but only a small percentage of these women hold leadership positions.

We had an idea. Let's add a Women's Breakfast with a candid panel discussion to our annual National Settlement Services Summit (NS3) conference. It was a HIT! The first big industry event to celebrate women. The feedback said, "don't we deserve more than just a one-hour discussion with breakfast?" Well, heck yes!

Hey, we are pretty darn good at hosting conferences (check), we work in an industry filled with women (check). Why not use our skills, resources and knowledge to help hundreds of women at a time?

We started sharing the WLS mission and the concepts of our four diamonds with friends, family and like-minded professional women and realized we needed to broaden our scope to ALL professional women and future leaders! There is a need for Development – Growth – Support – and Empowerment across the spectrum. We are still operating WLS at a loss on the books, but it's worth it. We ARE making a difference!



I'm currently reading a book titled *What I Told My Daughter* by Nina Tassler, and she says... "We don't need to demand equality so much as we need to live and breathe it in everything we do."

We ask WLS attendees to share what they learn at WLS with their friends, family, co-workers, children, nieces, mentees, etc. when they leave. Share the knowledge. Together, we can make a difference! We can do this, one conversation at a time!

Question: What are the main ideas you hope attendees take home with them?

Erica: The Women's Leadership Summit (WLS) was built on four diamonds:

Develop to your full potential.

Grow your opportunities.

Build your **Support** network.

Empower yourself to achieve your goals.

Develop



Develop to your full potential

Grow



Grow your opportunities

Support



Build your support network

Empower



Empower yourself to achieve your goals

WLS gives women the chance to unplug from everyday life and focus on themselves. We are the first ones to accept a new project or responsibility, but the last ones to schedule time for ourselves.

The agenda is built each year around a combination of industry professionals, but we also invite women from outside the industry. We are all facing the same challenges/obstacles at the end of the

day, so maintaining the balance keeps the industry specific lingo out of the conversation and invites women outside our industry in to see how incredible the women of title are. It's a potentially new source for attracting talented and young professionals into the industry, as the title industry continues to discuss the "silver tsunami".

Building the agenda is a team effort. Speaker submissions are received, our event coordinator performs her research on experience, topic relevancy and interviews multiple age groups to make sure we have a balance. A few team members gather to finalize the pieces of the puzzle to ensure a balanced program, then the agenda is released...a very exciting day for us to reveal what we consider a masterpiece.

Some of the intentions we consider in building the agenda are a comfortable environment free of the everyday stresses of life, establishing a positive agenda and vibe, a relaxed environment that encourages participation and information sharing, relatable topics, a supportive culture, the ability to develop controlled skills – changes you can make to establish a balance of work and life skills (you can't be your best unless you feel your best).

Question: Can you describe the WLS community and tell us what the monthly gatherings are about?

Erica: Disclaimer, we are in the process of making some changes to the monthly WLS Community meetings for 2025.

The monthly WLS Community virtual gatherings pull together a group of women for a guided discussion on various topics like setting goals for the new year, financial planning and leadership lessons. Every other month we have a book club discussion to complement the topic, so each topic typically lasts for two months. For example, we read the book *Atomic Habits* then had a discussion on the highlights from the book and how they apply to real life. Women are encouraged to share their successes, challenges and best practices with one another so we can all learn together. Each meeting kicks off with guests who want to share their success stories and accomplishments since the previous

month. This encourages women to verbally share their incredible work, which is a step in the process of realizing and appreciating all the great things we do. We can't just sit back and assume people will notice. The WLS Community meetings also create the opportunity to expand your network.

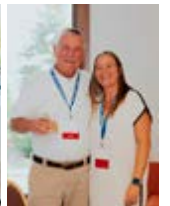
Each meeting lasts 60 minutes, a small time investment in yourself and your development. We all have a ton of things we could be doing in those 60 minutes, but prioritizing yourself is a step women need to take. It all comes back to the four diamonds of Support, Grow, Develop and Empower. We are providing a resource and network to help our industry friends by *Advancing the Leaders of Tomorrow*.



Jana: The Women's Leadership Summit is not long, just two days, but the takeaways are mighty. It is a different convention, one that is about leadership, learning and networking with other female professionals on what is working for them and how we can Develop, Grow, Support and Empower each other. I brought so many things back that are already helping me with my business and day to day. I was the only attendee from New Jersey this year and that's too bad. I hope the event is held again next year. I look forward to going with some other representatives from our fine state. In the meantime, I encourage you to check out the offerings of the WLS Community meetings. There are many things to learn that will help you in your personal and professional life. ■



New Jersey Land Title Association's 2024 Convention



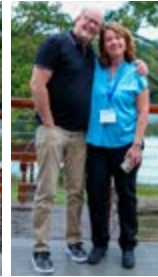


New Jersey Land...cont. on page 20

New Jersey Land Title Association's 2024 Convention

continuation from page 19







Heather R. Bell, CTP

It has been 33 years since the New Jersey Land Title Association first recognized a select group of extraordinary title professionals to be designated as Certified Title Professionals (“CTP”) in the State of New Jersey. Since that time a total of thirty-five members of the land title community have distinguished themselves with the proficiency, knowledge and dedication to the profession necessary to qualify under the CTP program. All of them are unique in their own way, but they share one common and important trait... LEADERSHIP.

This year’s designee, Heather R. Bell, has stepped forward and assumed that mantle of leadership with gusto and determination. She entered the industry in September 2002 as an ordinary title clerk who would go on to accomplish extraordinary things. Quickly acquiring her Title Producer License in 2004, within four short years she advanced in her title acumen to steward the development of Kensington Vanguard’s New Jersey title operations where she excelled for the following seven years. Along the way Heather attained licensure in 17 additional states.

During a sojourn with national underwriter Stewart Title Guaranty Company from 2013 to 2017, she began to share her exceptional knowledge with others by providing continuing education programs on a variety of topics and serving as a Trustee on the New Jersey Land Title

Institute board. It was at this same time that Heather’s particular talents came to the attention of the New Jersey Land Title Association, serving on committees and as a Member of the Agency Section Management Board. That is what Leaders do!

In 2017 Kensington Vanguard welcomed her back to the fold as Executive Vice President of their affiliate, Property Title Group, LLC. Heather’s growth as an individual and as a title person was undeniable, stepping to the fore again and again, embracing further leadership roles. One of Heather’s most significant positions was the Editor-in-Chief of the NJLTA’s award winning publication, The Advocate. It was chiefly thru her guidance and singular force of purpose that what started as an eight-page black and white fold over newsletter 37 years ago has evolved into a full color critically acclaimed professional industry publication. This was accomplished as the Advertising Manager raising the revenue needed for the upgrade, then followed by her leadership as the Editor-in-Chief. She has served in that capacity since 2019.

Continuing to carry that burden even while serving as a Member and Officer of the Agency Section Management Board, Heather recently completed her two-year tenure as the Chairperson of the Section. Now Heather has deservedly advanced to the position of Secretary/Treasurer of the NJLTA, on the road to a future Presidency. The NJLTA and the entire New Jersey title industry congratulates Heather on being designated as our newest Certified Title Professional. ■



Sara Valenz, Chair

One of the many benefits of being an employee of a member of the NJLTA is the availability of the John Weigel Scholarship. The first John Weigel Scholarship was awarded to Katherine A. Ramler in 1998 and provides for a total of \$8,000 payable over four years at the rate of \$1,000 semi-annually.

There are some new and exciting changes to the scholarship eligibility beginning in 2025. While the application deadline of March 1 remains the same (and is right around the corner) the applicant pool is expanded with revisions to the Eligibility and Destination paragraphs. Now an applicant may start at a 2-year community college before moving onto a 4-year institution. Additionally, the definition of family was revised to include minors who reside with the employee and are provided substantial support by the employee. Please familiarize yourself with the updated application guidelines below and encourage any qualified applicants to apply!

RULES AND GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE JOHN R. WEIGEL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED BY:

THE NEW JERSEY LAND TITLE ASSOCIATION

The New Jersey Land Title Association (hereafter called the “NJLTA”) established an \$8,000.00 scholarship for the benefit of a qualified candidate from the title insurance industry for higher education. The NJLTA honors and recognizes its Director Emeritus, John R. Weigel, for his long service to the title insurance industry and his own professional accomplishments

Scholarship Committee Update



by denominating the award the John R. Weigel Scholarship Award.

1. ELIGIBILITY: The pool of eligible candidates is comprised of all persons who are both currently working in the title industry for an employer licensed by the State of New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance as either a title insurance company or a title insurance agent, and who have worked for any NJLTA member for at least eighteen (18) of the twenty-four (24) months immediately preceding the filing of the student candidate's application. "Persons" include not only the employee himself/herself, but also the employee's spouse and children (including natural, adopted and step), and shall also include minors who reside with the employee and are provided substantial support by the employee, as evidenced by certifications signed by the employee and the minor (form attached) provided the Scholarship applicant is domiciled in New Jersey or attending a New Jersey high school at the time the application is filed, and will be entering a college or university as a matriculating freshman. Excluded from eligibility are the family members of any Review Committee participant. The current employer of the title industry employee must have been a member of the NJLTA for the two (2) fiscal years immediately preceding the year in which the student candidate applies and must be a member in good standing at the time of the award.

2. AMOUNT: The scholarship is in the amount of \$8,000.00, spread over a 4-year period at the rate of \$2,000.00 annually, payable directly to the college in \$1,000.00 installments at the

commencement of each semester (assuming the common academic schedule of 2 semesters a year).

3. CRITERIA: The Review Committee shall recommend to the Board of Governors the best candidate from the year's applicants, taking into account several factors including but not limited to academic achievement (such as grade point average (GPA) and college board scores (SATs)), graduation from an accredited high school or an acceptable alternative, extracurricular activities, public service experience, letters of recommendation and other worthwhile considerations.

4. DESTINATION: The scholarship award is designed for undergraduate education at any 2-year or 4-year institution in or out of New Jersey accredited by a recognized academic authority. In the case of attendance at a 2-year institution, the applicant must immediately matriculate to a 4-year institution upon completion of the 2-year program.

5. PROOF OF PERFORMANCE: Continuing eligibility requirements include:

(a) That the student be required to produce a certified copy of the preceding semester grades as a precondition to the payment of the next semester's \$1,000.00 installment;

(b) That the student maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA on an annual basis in order to remain vested for future payments, unless the Review Committee is satisfied that the student shows sufficient promise despite a mediocre freshman year performance to merit additional payments for the sophomore year (akin to a "probation" period);

(c) That an acceptable minimum course load is 12 credit hours per semester,

provided that the student is never more than 6 credit hours behind the accumulated credit hours that a full-time, full-load student would have for the same time period; and

(d) That the student's continuing entitlement to the periodic payments be contingent upon the student's avoidance of criminal activity or other behavior which the Board of Governors would consider in its unfettered discretion to be distasteful or unsavory.

6. RESERVATION OF DISCRETION: The NJLTA expressly reserves the right to amend these Rules and Guidelines at any time, and to limit, narrow, or discontinue the scholarship program at any time without notice. This scholarship program is entirely voluntary and discretionary on the part of the NJLTA, and no applicant shall be entitled to any rights or to claim any reliance on the scholarship program unless the applicant is awarded by and duly accepts the John R. Weigel Scholarship from the NJLTA.

Link to the updated application:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/njlta.org/resource/resmgr/docs/scholarship/scholarship_application_1.pdf

DEADLINE FOR COMPLETED APPLICATIONS IS MARCH 1, 2025. COMPLETED APPLICATIONS, INCLUDING ALL ATTACHMENTS, MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE NEW JERSEY LAND TITLE ASSOCIATION, 1201 DUBLIN ROAD, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215 ON OR BEFORE THAT DATE. ■



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Brian Wagenhoffer, Frank Fasulo, Todd Delfarno & Norman Recarte

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD HONORARY MEMBER AWARDEES

Ed Eastman, Jr., Esq. is a co-founding member of the law firm of Davison Eastman Munoz Paone, P.A. and is a recognized authority on Real Estate, Complex Title Disputes, and Real Estate Litigation.

Since 2000, Ed has been the Executive Director of the New Jersey Land Title Association and was the recipient of the association's President's Award in 2019. His dedication to the NJLTA has become apparent during his years of service to the Association and its members.

Through his career, Mr. Eastman has achieved multiple professional milestones of distinction:

- General Manager, New Jersey Land Title Insurance Rating Bureau, 2003 – current
- Lecturer for the New Jersey Land Title Institute
- Authored sections of the New Jersey Practice Series on real estate law and is co-author of NJICLE book entitled, "Residential Real Estate Law and Practice in New Jersey"
- Chairperson of the Board of Consultors, of the Real Property Law Section of the New Jersey State Bar Association
- Certified mediator, N.J. Administration Office of the Courts
- Served as a Municipal Court Judge, a Municipal Prosecutor, as Assistant Monmouth County Counsel, Boundary Line Commissioner, Condemnation Commissioner, H.U.D. Foreclosure Commissioner, and Master in Chancery
- Member, Title Insurance Advisory Committee, N.J. Department of Banking and Insurance
- N.J.D.E.P. Advisory Committee for Onsite Wastewater Management

In 2006, Ed received the New Jersey State Bar Association's Legislative Recognition Award for his work on the proposed Adverse Possession Bill. On January 25, 2012, The Real Property, Trust and Estate Law Section of the New Jersey State Bar Association awarded its Arthur S. Horn Distinguished Service Award to Ed for his extraordinary contributions to the development of Real Property Law in the State of New Jersey. He has been recognized among *Best Lawyers in America*® for 16 consecutive years for Real Estate Litigation and Real Estate Law. Ed received his B.A. from the University of Delaware and his J.D. from Seton Hall University School of Law. ■



Meet Don



Our Pennsylvania Tax Operations Manager

A veteran of searching with nearly 30 years' experience, he leads a Pennsylvania Tax Search team versed in the nuances and complications that come with uncovering and reporting tax billing and payment information everywhere in PA.

Key Areas of Impact

Building relationships with collectors and public record custodians alike, Don has been influential in reducing wait times for information and vital documents needed to facilitate closings. He leads a team that has embraced process automation along the way, helping Charles Jones deliver the best Pennsylvania Tax Certifications in the market.



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**HAPPY NEW YEAR****2025**

Happy New Year from the New Jersey Land Title Institute! As we step into 2025, we remain committed to empowering title insurance professionals with education and excellence, helping our industry reach new heights together.

President's Message

continuation from page 5

work with state and federal representatives to make sure that consumers can safely and affordably purchase a home, obtain a mortgage, and more.

- **Learn How FinCEN's Real Estate Money Laundering Rule Impacts You**

I made sure to attend this seminar due to the substantial impact this new rule will have on all of us. FinCEN's own estimates state that this will cost title companies up to \$600 million a year to comply. With the rule going into effect in December of 2025, we must prepare ourselves to deal with this head on. This session provided an in-depth look at the rule and what we must do to comply. It was an essential update, particularly for those of us in leadership roles, as we must ensure our members understand the compliance requirements and their implications. ALTA has continued to put out materials on this subject and I would expect to see underwriters and other industry

members doing the same in the coming months.

Friday: Closing the Event with Key Insights

- **ALTA/NSPS Land Title Surveys and Related Endorsement Coverages: Lessons Learned from the Real World**

This session focused on land title surveys and related endorsement coverages, offering practical insights and lessons learned from real-world scenarios. It was particularly valuable for title professionals who deal with complex real estate transactions, where understanding the nuances of land surveys can be crucial. The ability to understand what a survey actually says and apply it to a title policy is a vital skill. This is particularly true in New Jersey where our long history as colony and state, combined with local real estate practices, can lead to some very interesting title issues.

- **ALTA ONE Closing Brunch with Chaunte Lowe**

The event closed with a powerful keynote by Olympic athlete and

medalist Chaunte Lowe, who shared her journey of overcoming challenges and achieving success. Her story was a fitting conclusion to an event that emphasized resilience, innovation, and leadership. It was also a stark reminder of truly how disastrous my high school track career was!

Conclusion: A Week of Learning, Networking, and Growth

The 2024 ALTA ONE event in Orlando was a week of invaluable learning, networking, and reflection. As the President of the NJLTA, I am excited to share these insights and connections I made to help our members thrive in an increasingly complex and digital world. The title industry is at a crossroads, and events like ALTA ONE provide the tools and knowledge necessary to ensure we continue to lead and innovate for years to come. I want to thank the NJLTA for allowing me to attend. The 2025 ALTA ONE is in Manhattan from October 7-10, and I encourage all of you to attend! ■

N.J. Legislative Update

continuation from page 14

to expedite requests (for a fee) and reducing the burden of legal fees connected to successful appeals. The legislation was signed into law by Governor Murphy on June 5, 2024. The net result? Records custodians were given more time to satisfy requests.

Since the OPRA revisions were originally introduced because records custodians didn't have the bandwidth to keep up, the key change turned out to be a 14-day window for requests, replacing the 7-day window that was a part of the original legislation. But even more urgent needs can be addressed if the requester is willing to pay an expedite fee.

To date, not much has changed. Even though the governor signed the new legislation into law in June, the framework didn't take effect until September 3rd. It's only been a few months, but we've yet to see any massive changes and yet to challenge anything new that is in place. We are waiting, however, for the

Government Records Council (GRC) to take shape and begin managing OPRA cases, of which there is a backlog. The governor did re-appoint two existing GRC members to achieve continuity, but the council has several open seats yet to be filled. Pending GRC decisions will be worth watching.

Weeks, if not months, of work done by many helped create a version of OPRA

that maintains our industry's access to vital public records. So far, so good there. The state believed a 22-year-old law needed to be modernized as digital access and sourcing tools changed over time.

Fortunately for the title community, longstanding, *unchanged* standards were considered, too. ■



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Louise Haas, Honorary Membership Designation

By: Lisa A. Dombrowski

The New Jersey Land Title Association (NJLTA) is proud to announce that Louise Haas, a dedicated and long-serving member of the association, has been awarded honorary membership in recognition of her outstanding

contributions and unwavering commitment to the organization.

Louise Haas, a lifelong resident of New Jersey, has been an integral part of the state's legal community for over three decades. After graduating from Taylor Business Institute as a paralegal, Louise embarked on a career in the legal field that has seen her become a respected and valued professional. In July 1991, she joined the Davison Eastman Munoz & Paone, PA, firm, where her exceptional organizational skills and dedication quickly became apparent.

In 2001, Louise took on the role of Executive Secretary for the NJLTA, a position she has held with distinction ever since. Over the years, she has been instrumental in the success of the NJLTA, playing a key role in the organization of its annual convention and ensuring that the association runs smoothly and efficiently. Her hard work and independence, combined with her belief in treating everyone with respect, have earned her the admiration and respect of her colleagues.

Louise's contributions were further recognized in 2023 when she was awarded

the NJLTA Distinguished Service Award, a testament to her pivotal role in the association's achievements. Her superlative organizational skills and commitment have not only enhanced the NJLTA's operations but have also set a high standard for others to follow.



Outside of her professional life, Louise enjoys spending her weekends with her husband, Greig, and their son, Garrett. The

Haas family, along with their beloved dog, Casey, often embark on camping trips across the country. Their recent adventures took them to the breathtaking landscapes of Utah and the sun-soaked shores of Key West.

As the NJLTA celebrates Louise Haas's honorary membership, it is clear that her impact on the organization will be felt for many years to come. Her dedication, integrity, and passion for her work make her a truly deserving recipient of this honor. ■



By: Peter Casey Wall

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that I announce Clyde Kopchak as the recipient of this year's President's Award.



Clyde is the President of Priority Search Services, LLC, a vendor providing municipal tax and flood searches in New Jersey. He has been serving the title insurance industry in New Jersey for over 30 years. If you're a customer of his, you undoubtedly appreciate his personalized customer service and quality products. As one anonymous client said, "You know that you can always count on him to go above and beyond if necessary. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with him." While all of this is true, it is not the primary reason I chose him for the President's Award.

President's Award 2024: Clyde Kopchak



Every once in a while, you encounter an individual whose dedication to a cause that brings them no direct benefit is truly impressive. As an affiliate member of the NJLTA, Clyde has been ever-present during my time of involvement. He has served as a key contributor on many committees. Most notably, he was a key contributor on the convention committee in 2022 when I was the chair, putting together a big show at the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Clyde provided a constant presence with calm reassurance that everything would go well, and he offered to do anything that needed to be done. More recently, he contributed a necessary point of view as a search vendor for our legislative committee, helping us communicate with our lobbyists to get a more favorable version of the OPRA bill passed in the legislature.

Clyde shows up. He doesn't complain. He's fun to work with. He makes volunteering feel less like a chore and more like something you want to do. I hope current and future members will take his example and emulate it. ■

Meet April



Our Corporate and Document Retrieval Services Manager

With experience across four decades, April leads a team of specialists who know exactly where to search and how to retrieve Corporate Due Diligence products across the entire country.

Key Areas of Impact

April has focused on many positive changes during her tenure, creating efficiencies in sourcing information and documents while also streamlining components of production. Along with her team, she remains a trusted, knowledgeable expert, routinely working with clients to provide recommendations and definitions across dozens of national offerings.

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NJLTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE



June 1-3, 2025



Hard Rock Casino &
Hotel Atlantic City, NJ



www.njlta.org

STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS



We're excited to announce that the 2025 NJLTA Convention will be held from June 1-3 at the Hard Rock Casino & Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ!

Take advantage of the special room rate of \$105++ and enjoy all that Atlantic City has to offer. Attendees will be eligible to earn five hours of continuing education credits during the convention.

Mark your calendars and stay tuned. More details are coming soon. We look forward to seeing you there!

FinCEN Changes to GTOs and the Impact of AI Or, What Is This Article REALLY All About?

continuation from page 3

information to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) about non-financed transfers of residential real estate to a legal entity or trust.

Here’s how title companies can prepare:

Understand the New Reporting Framework- Title companies should carefully review the final rule issued by FinCEN in August 2024, which establishes the nationwide reporting framework [3]. This will provide detailed information on the reporting requirements, covered transactions, and other relevant details.

Update Internal Policies and Procedures- Title companies should update their internal policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the new nationwide framework. This may involve revising existing procedures related to customer due diligence, transaction monitoring, and recordkeeping.

Train Staff- Title companies should train their staff on the new reporting requirements and procedures. This training should cover identifying reportable transactions, collecting the necessary information, and submitting reports to FinCEN accurately and timely.

Enhance Data Collection Systems- The nationwide framework might necessitate the collection of additional data points compared to the current GTOs. Title companies should review their data collection systems and make necessary adjustments to ensure they can gather all the required information for reporting.

Communication and Collaboration- Title companies should communicate the changes to their clients and partners, including real estate professionals, to ensure a smooth transition.

By taking these steps, title companies can ensure a seamless transition to the nationwide reporting framework and maintain compliance with FinCEN regulations.

Wouldn’t it be great to hear a podcast about this topic?

Well, since you asked, here’s a link to a podcast we commissioned for discussion of this topic. Please give it a listen and tell the *Advocate* staff what you think.

<https://bit.ly/njltapodvideo>

SCAN ME



Obviously, this article is about FinCEN Geographic Targeting Orders. Why am I bringing up AI?

What would you think if I told you this entire article, except for the concept and this paragraph, were written, edited, and performed by AI That includes the two-person podcast you, hopefully, just listened to. It’s the truth.

I pulled four articles on the FinCEN targeting orders from the internet and saved them as PDFs.

I signed into [NOTEBOOKLM.GOOGLE.COM](https://notebooklm.google.com) with my Gmail account and uploaded those four articles as my sources. NotebookLM helped me organize, summarize, understand and represent the information in the article you see above. After that, NotebookLM generated a two-person podcast that is 18 minutes long – in about five minutes.

So, what is this article really about?

Well, I guess that depends on whether or not you read it to the end. If you stopped before the podcast, you probably think I did a decent job of summarizing the bulletins we’ve seen coming out on this issue. If you stopped after the podcast maybe you think I’m touting the ability of digital audio media to help spread understanding of complex topics that affect our industry. But, if you made it this far, you now see that this article is really about how powerful AI is becoming and how proper application in our daily work is not only possible, but probable and to some extent, highly available.

I recommend giving NotebookLM a try if you need to come up with a way to explain complex topics to an audience, or you need to have a complex topic analyzed and summarized for your own understanding. ■

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NJ AD CLUB AWARD

ANNOUNCEMENT: Did you know you are reading an award-winning publication?

The Jersey Awards for creative design excellence in advertising and publication was held Wednesday, September 18, 2024. This was the 56th Annual Event for the NJ Advertising Club. The exhibit and awards evening featured all the winners out of over 350 entries in seven categories, from print thru digital, radio and television.

For the eighth straight year the NJLTA's quarterly newsletter, the *Advocate*, is an award winner. We received a 1st Place Award for Newsletter, Print Version.

I would like to take the time to send a very special thank you to the Editorial Board, Committee Members, Advertisers and all the people who contributed in 2023; without you the success of the *Advocate* would not be possible:



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Be a part of the Award-Winning Team that brings you the *Advocate* each quarter! Reach out to me or one of the other committee members today.

Heather R. Bell
Editor-in-Chief

DATES TO REMEMBER

February 2025

16th - 18th ALTA ONE Commercial Network Conference

Location: Savannah, GA

www.alta.org to register

26th NJLTA – Agency Section Meeting & Seminar

www.njlta.org for additional information

March 2025

19th NJLTA-Board of Governors' Meeting

Location: Virtual

www.njlta.org for additional information

19th - 21st 2025 ALTA Edge

Location: Louisville, KY

www.alta.org to register

Subject to change. Please check websites as needed.

Would you like your event or continuing education class included on this calendar?

If so, please contact, Robert Yakovchuk

(robert.yakovchuk@fnf.com or

732-545-1174) for information.

Thank you!

On the Move

WELCOME!



John Hess has joined New Jersey CATIC Title team as New Jersey Agency Advisor. He will work in support of agency services and the growth of their NJ agency network. John is a seasoned title insurance professional who brings over 16 years of title experience.

A graduate of Thomas Edison State University, John received his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Accounting. He is a licensed title insurance producer in the state of New Jersey, and holds title licenses in the states of PA, FL, IN, MO and VA. ■

Notes from the Editor

By: Heather R. Bell, Editor-in-Chief



I love the start of a New Year. New beginnings, new plans put into motion and new relationships formed. We hope you enjoyed this issue of *Advocate*. A discussion on the impact of AI, a review of our President's ALTA ONE experience and all the important updates and changes your Association is already hard at work on are all here for your reading enjoyment. I will also note that I personally cannot think of a better time to get involved. There are plenty of NJLTA committees that would

love to have you join and help them with the important work they do for us all. Do not hesitate to reach out to the Executive Board or any of the Committee Chairs today. Wishing you all a successful 2025!

We are always on the lookout for the next agency for our Agent Spotlight Interview. Please reach out and let me know if you are interested in being interviewed and having your company under the spotlight for our next issue. ■

2025

New year,
same great
advantages.

Credit: NongAsimo
Welcome to the team...

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