



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES

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June 15, 2010

Brant L. Stevens
Attorney at Law
628-1/2 N. Monroe St., Suite 201B
Spokane, WA 99201

RE: Escrow Agent Licensing

Dear Mr. Stevens,

The Department of Financial Institutions, Consumer Services Division (“the Division”) has received and reviewed your letter of June 10, 2010, requesting a no-action letter regarding your legal practice and the recent changes to the Escrow Agent Registration Act, RCW 18.44 (the Act). As you know, Substitute House Bill 2564 (chapter 34, Laws of 2010) made significant changes to the attorney exception in the Act.

An escrow is a transaction where a person (the escrow agent) receives any written instrument, money, evidence of title to real or personal property, or other thing of value from a person or persons and transfers it to another person or persons, based on instructions from the principal parties to the transaction. This transaction must be for the purpose of effecting and closing the sale, purchase, exchange, transfer, encumbrance, or lease of real or personal property. Escrow does not include activities that require the exercise of legal discretion by an attorney. The Division considers an escrow transaction that involves exercise of legal discretion by an attorney as incidental to the practice of law and not subject to licensing under the Act.

In your request for a no action letter and our follow-up via e-mail, you state real estate closing services are a small component of your practice and you are not principally engaged in the escrow business. You also state that you only advertise and identify yourself as an attorney, that you are only compensated for escrow services through your law practice, and that you are personally involved in every transaction your office conducts.


Based on the facts as you present them, the Division will take no action against you for unlicensed escrow activity. Because this determination is based upon the representations set forth in your letter, it should be noted that any different facts or conditions might result in a different conclusion. The Division reserves the right to make a different determination in the future, should either your circumstances or the law change. Further, this letter only expresses the Division’s position with regard to unlicensed escrow activity enforcement actions, and does not

affect the Division's ability to pursue other enforcement actions against you should you violate any of the applicable provisions of the Act.

This is an individual determination based on your specific circumstances, and has no effect or precedential value for persons in similar situations. Your exception is an individual exception based on your admission to practice law in Washington, and does not apply to any non-attorney employee that might conduct escrow transactions independent of your oversight.

Thank you for contacting DFI. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Phil Brady
Staff Attorney