

Title Insurance

Overview

We handle a wide range of matters for title insurers and their insureds. We serve as lead counsel in complex title matters in 17 states.

Key Matters

Class Action Defense

- Obtained denial of class certification in consumer class action alleging title insurance underwriter overcharged for title insurance premiums in mortgage refinance transactions.
- Obtained denial of motion for class certification in putative multistate class action alleging overcharging for title insurance.
- Obtained dismissal of putative multistate class action alleging violations of RESPA, unfair trade practices, and unjust enrichment based on alleged overcharging for title insurance.
- Obtained reversal of class action discovery order requiring production of more than 300,000 title agent closing files.
- Obtained dismissal of putative class action alleging that the unearned split of premiums with agents constituted a RESPA violation.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of putative class action alleging improper fee splitting with national builder in violation of RESPA; Settled.
- Represented numerous national title insurance underwriters and agents in defense of approximately 15 separate putative class actions around the country alleging failure to comply with reissue rate regulations; Five were dismissed, two settled, balance pending.
- Collaborated with lead counsel in federal class action in Ohio in which the court decertified a statewide class alleging overcharges for title insurance premiums.

Coverage Disputes

- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim involving restrictive covenants at shopping center where title policy did not contain exception for restrictions; Obtained settlement that limited loss to less than 10 percent of damages sought.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim involving a lis pendens not excepted from title policy; Defeated coverage based on the "assumed and agreed to" policy exclusion.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim involving allegations of adverse possession and an unrecorded agreement; Defeated coverage based on the "parties in possession" and "accurate survey" policy exceptions.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim involving allegations that insured leases were disguised financing arrangements; Defeated coverage based on the "assumed and agreed to" policy exclusion.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim involving absence of title to submerged lands where title policy had no "sovereignty lands" exception; Obtained settlement substantially limiting loss and pursued subrogation claim against seller on behalf of insurer.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim involving allegations of overburdening of easements and rights of way ownership; Defeated coverage based on the "assumed or agreed to" and "created subsequent to date of policy" policy exclusions.

Defalcation Actions

- Represented major title insurance underwriter in coordinating claims resolutions stemming from multimillion-dollar title agent defalcation; Obtained \$1.89 million restitution order and coordinated with criminal authorities who obtained a five-year jail term for title agent's principal.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter regarding agent defalcation of more than \$8.5 million; Recouped more than \$6.5 million.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter regarding agent defalcation of more than \$4 million; Obtained contribution from bank, fidelity insurer, and third parties significantly reducing loss.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter regarding third-party misappropriation of approximately \$4 million; Obtained prejudgment writs of attachment against approximately 50 properties and prejudgment writs of garnishment against multiple bank accounts leading to recoupment of entire loss.

Closing Protection Letter Disputes

- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of claim by national lender for \$8.6 million alleging series of inflated appraisals and failures to follow closing instructions; Obtained dismissal of all tort claims and settled remaining contract claim.
- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of lender's claims of \$100,000 in losses, and that underwriter's agent was part of fraud scheme to inflate the property's value and divert loan proceeds to the borrower; Claim denied after factual investigation resulting in no liability to underwriter.

Market Conduct and Unfair Trade Practice Disputes

- Represented national title insurance underwriter in defense of RESPA investigation by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that involved alleged kickbacks to realtors; Consent agreement negotiated with no liability finding.
- Represented two title insurance underwriters regarding market conduct examinations by the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation.
- Represented national title insurance agency regarding market conduct examination by Florida Department of Financial Services; Consent agreement negotiated with no liability finding.

Title and Closing Agent Disputes

- Represented lender in challenge to validity of its mortgage on grounds it was unauthorized under a partnership agreement; Obtained summary judgment based on finding of ratification; affirmed on appeal.
- Represented lender in challenge to the priority of its mortgage; Obtained summary judgment based on doctrine of equitable subrogation; affirmed on appeal.
- Represented title company regarding "flip" transaction where plaintiff alleged failure to disclose the recent purchase, and environmental problems with the property; Obtained dismissal with prejudice; affirmed on appeal.
- Represented prior owner of property in action to establish title under constructive trust; Obtained judgment re-establishing title after bench trial; affirmed on appeal.

Experience

- *Partell v. Lawyers Title Ins. Corp.*, No. 1:08-cv-00166, 2011 WL 4974730 (W.D.N.Y. Sept. 30, 2011). Dismissal of putative class action alleging violations of RESPA and New York General Business Law, and claims for money had and received, unjust enrichment, and breach of implied contract, based on alleged overcharging for title insurance.

- *Corwin v. Lawyers Title Ins. Co.*, 276 F.R.D. 484 (E.D. Mich. 2011). Denial of class certification in putative statewide consumer class action against title insurance underwriter alleging overcharging for title insurance premiums.
- *Calbough v. Fidelity Nat'l Title Ins. Co.*, No. 05-6642 (Fla. Cir. Ct. 2011). Order granting motion to abate, holding that “the reasons underlying the proposition that an insured may reject an insurer’s defense under a reservation of rights do not apply to an insurer’s right to establish an insured’s right of title.”
- *Chicago Title Ins. Co. v. Lerner*, 435 B.R. 732 (S.D. Fla. 2010). Order denying motion to abate action for breach of personal undertaking against principals of bankrupt developer for failure to remove liens on insured property pending resolution of state court lien cases and holding that, absent the bankruptcy court’s extension of the automatic stay to principals, insurer’s action may proceed.
- *Macula v. Lawyers Title Ins. Co.*, 264 F.R.D. 307 (N.D. Ohio 2009). Denial of putative statewide consumer class action against title insurance underwriter alleging overcharging for title insurance premiums.
- *Hoving v. Lawyers Title Ins. Co.*, 256 F.R.D. 555 (E.D. Mich. 2009). Denial of class certification in putative multistate class action alleging overcharging for title insurance premiums.
- *Smith v. Lawyers Title Ins. Corp.*, No. 2:07-cv-12124, 2009 WL 514210 (E.D. Mich. Mar. 2, 2009). Dismissal of putative multistate class action alleging violations of RESPA, unfair trade practices, and unjust enrichment based on alleged overcharging for title insurance.
- *Commonwealth Land Title Ins. Co. v. Higgins*, 975 So. 2d 1169 (Fla. 1st DCA 2008). Reversal of class action discovery order requiring production of more than 300,000 title agent closing files.
- *Hwang v. Junron Fla., Inc.*, 965 So. 2d 132 (Fla. 2d DCA 2007). Dismissal of action by buyer against title insurer and closing agent in “flip” transaction; affirmed on appeal.
- *Lehman Bros. Holdings, Inc. v. Hirota*, No. 8:06-cv-2030, 2007 WL 1471690 (M.D. Fla. May 21, 2007). Dismissal of fraud, conspiracy, and negligence claims against title insurer and closing agent on economic-loss rule grounds.
- *Mickens v. Stewart Title Guar. Co.*, 902 So. 2d 804 (Fla. 2d DCA 2005). Imposition of equitable lien after bench trial; affirmed on appeal.
- *Chicago Title Ins. Co., Inc. v. Alday-Donalson Title Co. of Fla., Inc.*, 832 So. 2d 810 (Fla. 2d DCA 2002). Summary judgment for title insurer in interference with contract action; affirmed on appeal.
- *Gulf Island Resort, L.P. v. Yale Mortg. Corp.*, 783 So. 2d 259 (Fla. 2d DCA 2001). Summary judgment for lender in challenge to validity of mortgage; affirmed on appeal.

- *Wash. Enters. v. DiMaria*, 773 So. 2d 550 (Fla. 2d DCA 2000). Summary judgment recognizing priority of mortgage under equitable subrogation doctrine; affirmed on appeal.
- *Chicago Title Ins. Co. v. S. Clark Butler*, 770 So. 2d 1210 (Fla. 2000). Adverse summary judgment finding anti-rebating statute for title agent's share of title insurance premium unconstitutional; affirmed on appeal.

Insights

03.25.2024

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 22, 2024

07.29.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 29, 2022

07.22.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 22, 2022

07.15.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 15, 2022

07.08.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 8, 2022

07.01.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 1, 2022

06.24.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 24, 2022

06.17.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 17, 2022

06.10.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 10, 2022

06.03.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 3, 2022

05.27.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 27, 2022

05.20.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 20, 2022

05.13.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 13, 2022

05.06.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 6, 2022

04.29.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 29, 2022

04.22.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 22, 2022

04.16.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 16, 2022

04.08.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 8, 2022

04.01.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 1, 2022

03.25.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 25, 2022

03.18.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 18, 2022

03.12.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 11, 2022

03.05.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 4, 2022

02.26.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 25, 2022

02.19.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 18, 2022

02.12.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 11, 2022

02.05.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 4, 2022

01.29.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 28, 2022

01.22.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 21, 2022

01.15.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 14, 2022

01.11.2022

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 7, 2022

12.28.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending December 24, 2021

12.18.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending December 17, 2021

12.11.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending December 10, 2021

12.03.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending December 3, 2021

11.26.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 26, 2021

11.19.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 19, 2021

11.12.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 12, 2021

11.05.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 5, 2021

10.29.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 29, 2021

10.22.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 22, 2021

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 15, 2021

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 8, 2021

10.01.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 1, 2021

09.24.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 24, 2021

09.17.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 17, 2021

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 10, 2021

09.03.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 3, 2021

08.27.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 27, 2021

08.20.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 20, 2021

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 13, 2021

08.06.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 6, 2021

07.30.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 30, 2021

07.23.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 23, 2021

07.16.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 16, 2021

07.09.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 9, 2021

07.02.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 2, 2021

06.25.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 25, 2021

06.18.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 18, 2021

06.11.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 11, 2021

06.04.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 4, 2021

05.28.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 28, 2021

05.21.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 21, 2021

05.14.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 14, 2021

05.07.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 7, 2021

04.30.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 30, 2021

04.23.2021

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 23, 2021

04.16.2021

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11.23.2020

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11.20.2020

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10.30.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 30, 2020

10.16.2020

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08.21.2020

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08.14.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 14, 2020

08.07.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 7, 2020

07.31.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 31 , 2020

07.24.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 24 , 2020

07.17.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 17, 2020

07.10.2020

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 26, 2020

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 15, 2020

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 1, 2020

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 17, 2020

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 10, 2020

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Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 3, 2020

03.27.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 27, 2020

03.06.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 6, 2020

02.28.2020

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 28, 2020

12.27.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending December 27, 2019

12.23.2019

Changes to Florida Notarization Statutes Effective January 1, 2020

12.12.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending December 6, 2019

12.06.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 29, 2019

12.02.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 22, 2019

12.02.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 15, 2019

11.13.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 8, 2019

11.08.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 1, 2019

10.30.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 18, 2019

10.11.2019

Financial Services & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 11, 2019

10.05.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 4, 2019

09.27.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 27, 2019

09.20.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 20, 2019

09.13.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 13, 2019

08.30.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 30, 2019

08.23.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 23, 2019

08.09.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: July 22 - August 9, 2019

07.20.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 19, 2019

07.16.2019

Florida Appellate Court Rules That Arbitration Agreement in Special Warranty Deed Can Bind Subsequent Purchasers

07.05.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 5, 2019

06.29.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 28, 2019

06.22.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 21, 2019

06.08.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 7, 2019

05.24.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 24, 2019

05.17.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 17, 2019

05.10.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 10, 2019

05.03.2019

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 3, 2019

04.27.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 26, 2019

04.20.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 19, 2019

04.06.2019

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 5, 2019

03.30.2019

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 29, 2019

03.23.2019

Financial Services & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 22, 2019

03.18.2019

Trial Checklist

03.09.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 8, 2019

03.02.2019

Financial Services & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 1, 2019

02.23.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 22, 2019

02.09.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 8, 2019

02.02.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 1, 2019

01.26.2019

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 25, 2019

01.19.2019

Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 18, 2019

11.23.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 23, 2018

11.16.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 16, 2018

11.10.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending November 9, 2018

10.29.2018

Real Property & Financial Services Update: Week Ending October 26, 2018

10.22.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 19, 2018

08.18.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending August 10 & 17, 2018

07.28.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 27, 2018

06.23.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending June 15 & 22, 2018

05.25.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending May 18 & 25, 2018

05.15.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 11, 2018

04.24.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending April 6 & 13, 2018

04.02.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 23, 2018

03.23.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending March 9 & 16, 2018

03.05.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 2, 2018

03.01.2018

Real Property & Financial Services Update: Weeks Ending February 16 & 23, 2018

02.14.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 9, 2018

01.24.2018

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 12, 2018

12.18.2017

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending December 1 & 8, 2017

11.30.2017

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending November 17 & 24, 2017

11.14.2017

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending November 3 & 10, 2017

10.30.2017

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending October 20 & 27, 2017

10.17.2017

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending October 6 & 13, 2017

10.09.2017

Real Property, Financial Services, & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending September 22 & 29, 2017

09.20.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending September 8 & 15, 2017

09.05.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 1, 2017

08.31.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 18 & 25, 2017

08.16.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 11, 2017

08.07.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 28 & August 4, 2017

07.25.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 14 & 21, 2017

07.13.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 7, 2017

06.26.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 16 & 23, 2017

06.19.2017

The New 2016 ALTA Commitment with Florida Modifications: Expressing the Limitations on Liability

06.07.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending June 2, 2017

06.02.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 19 & 26, 2017

05.15.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending May 12, 2017

05.09.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 28 & May 5, 2017

04.24.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 14 & 21, 2017

04.12.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 31 & April 7, 2017

03.29.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 24, 2017

03.20.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending March 10 & 17, 2017

03.07.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending February 17 & 24, 2017

02.14.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 10, 2017

02.10.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending February 3, 2017

02.03.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 27, 2017

01.25.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 20, 2017

01.19.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 13, 2017

01.11.2017

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 6, 2017

12.15.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending December 2 & 9, 2016

12.02.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending November 18 & 25, 2016

11.17.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending November 4 & 11, 2016

11.02.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending October 21 & 28, 2016

10.19.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 14, 2016

10.13.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending October 7, 2016

10.03.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending September 23 & 30, 2016

10.01.2016

10 Lawsuits You Can't Ignore

09.19.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending September 16, 2016

09.14.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending September 2 & 9, 2016

09.09.2016

Defalcation is a Dirty Word, But Not the End of the World

08.30.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 19 & 26, 2016

08.23.2016

Appeals Court Sends Full Credit Bid Defense to Arizona Supreme Court

08.17.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 12, 2016

08.11.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending August 5, 2016

08.01.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 29, 2016

07.25.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 22, 2016

07.20.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending July 15, 2016

07.08.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending June 24 & July 1, 2016

06.21.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending June 10 & 17, 2016

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Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending May 29 & June 3, 2016

05.26.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending May 13 & May 20, 2016

05.10.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending April 29 & May 6, 2016

04.26.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending April 15 & 22, 2016

04.11.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 8, 2016

04.06.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending April 1, 2016

03.30.2016

Real Property & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending March 25, 2016

03.23.2016

Real Property, Financial Services & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending March 11 & 18, 2016

03.08.2016

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Real Property, Financial Services & Title Insurance Update: Weeks Ending February 12 & 19, 2016

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Real Property, Financial Services & Title Insurance Update: Week Ending January 22, 2016

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Comment, The Budd Co.: The Toehold Defense to a Section 7 Attack

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