

**WEST VIRGINIA
SECRETARY OF STATE
JOE MANCHIN, III
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW DIVISION**

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Form #6

**NOTICE OF FINAL FILING AND ADOPTION OF A LEGISLATIVE RULE AUTHORIZED
BY THE WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

AGENCY: Real Estate Commission TITLE NUMBER: 174

AMENDMENT TO AN EXISTING RULE: YES NO

IF YES, SERIES NUMBER OF RULE BEING AMENDED: 1

TITLE OF RULE BEING AMENDED: Requirements in Licensing Real Estate Brokers,
Associate Brokers & Salespersons & the Conduct of
Brokerage Business

IF NO, SERIES NUMBER OF RULE BEING PROPOSED: _____

TITLE OF RULE BEING PROPOSED: _____

THE ABOVE RULE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE.

AUTHORIZATION IS CITED IN (house or senate bill number) Senate Bill 2014

SECTION §64-9-15, PASSED ON June 13, 2003

THIS RULE IS FILED WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE. THIS RULE BECOMES EFFECTIVE ON THE
FOLLOWING DATE: July 1, 2003


Authorized Signature

**TITLE 174
LEGISLATIVE RULE
REAL ESTATE COMMISSION**

SERIES 1

**REQUIREMENTS IN LICENSING REAL ESTATE BROKERS, ASSOCIATE BROKERS,
AND SALESPERSONS AND THE CONDUCT OF BROKERAGE BUSINESS**

§174-1-1. General.

1.1. Scope. -- This legislative rule establishes general regulations for the filing of applications for real estate licenses and the requirements necessary to renew licenses and for the enforcement and administration of the provisions of WV Code § 30-40-1 et seq.

1.2. Authority. -- W. Va. Code § 30-40-8

1.3. Filing Date. -- June 26, 2003

1.4. Effective Date. -- July 1, 2003

§174-1-2. Definitions.

2.1. Commission. -- The term "Commission" means the West Virginia Real Estate Commission as authorized by WV Code § 30-40-6.

2.2. Licensee. -- The term "licensee" means a broker, an associate broker, and a salesperson as defined in WV Code § 30-40-4.

2.3. Applicant. -- The term "applicant" means any person who is making application to the commission for a license.

§174-1-3. License Fees.

3.1. License year. -- The license year begins on July 1 and ends June 30 of each fiscal year. The Commission may issue licenses on an annual or biannual basis. Fees are not prorated.

3.2. Proper fee. -- Each application for a license shall be accompanied by a separate check or money order for the proper fee for that particular application. When a salesperson, who is duly licensed, desires to become a broker, his or her employing broker shall surrender his or her salesperson's certificate to the Commission before a broker's certificate is issued. He or she shall pay the fee for the broker's license as set forth in separate rule. The Commission shall not give credit for the fee paid for the salesperson's license.

§174-1-4. License Certificates.

4.1. License certificates. -- The Commission shall issue to each licensee a license in such form and size as shall be prescribed by the Commission. A broker's license shall

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show the broker's name, business name and business address. An associate broker's and salesperson's license shall show the name of the real estate broker by whom he or she is employed.

4.2. Designated Broker – No broker's license shall be issued in the name of a partnership, association, corporation, or other form of business organization, until the governing body of the business organization executes a subordination resolution which grants full authority to the partner/member/officer acting as the broker for the business organization. The subordination resolution must be submitted on a form provided by the Real Estate Commission and be sworn to and notarized.

§174-1-5. Branch Offices.

5.1. Register of branch office. -- Every licensed broker who desires to conduct brokerage transactions at any location other than the principal place of business must make application for a branch office license and pay the required fee in order to receive a license certificate for each branch office. A mere temporary shelter on a subdivision being sold by the broker, for the convenience and protection of licensees and customers, and at which transactions are not closed and licensees are not permanently assigned is not considered to be a branch office. The permanence, use, and character of activities conducted at the office or shelter shall determine whether it must be registered.

5.2. Manager of Branch Office. -- Every broker who obtains a license for a branch office must designate one associate broker or salesperson as manager of each branch office. A broker shall not employ, as manager of his or her branch office, a real estate salesperson with less than two (2) years actual experience as a licensed real estate salesperson: *Provided*, That a broker may designate himself or herself as the manager of a branch office if the broker is capable of adequately supervising all associate brokers and salespersons assigned to the branch office.

§174-1-6. Cancellations And Transfers.

6.1. Custody of license certificates. -- The broker shall maintain in his or her custody and control the license certificates of each salesperson and associate broker. Upon the termination of employment, the broker shall immediately notify the salesperson or associate broker and return the license certificate to the Commission for cancellation.

6.2. Change of employing broker by salesperson or associate broker. -- In the event a salesperson or associate broker wishes to transfer his or her real estate license to a broker other than the broker under whom he or she is presently employed, he or she must first notify his or her present employer, in writing, and must submit a properly executed application for change of employing broker on a form provided by the Commission for this purpose, and pay the required fee.

6.3. Sworn statement by broker. -- In the event a real estate salesperson or associate broker makes application for change of employing broker, the application shall include a sworn statement by the broker in whose employ the applicant desires to enter certifying that the applicant is to be employed by him or her.

§174-1-7. Qualifications For Real Estate Broker's License.

7.1. Experience requirement. -- WV Code § 30-40-12 among other required qualifications for a broker's license, provides that "an applicant for a broker's license shall have served an apprenticeship as a licensed salesperson for two years or shall produce evidence satisfactory to the Commission, in its sole discretion, of real estate experience equivalent to two years full-time experience as a licensed salesperson".

7.2. Apprenticeship. -- The Commission defines the word "apprenticeship," as used in WV Code § 30-40-12 to mean a broker-salesperson relationship wherein the salesperson apprentice is taught the methods, techniques and terminology of the real estate business under the guidance and direction of a broker. In order to satisfy the apprenticeship requirement, the applicant shall submit to the Commission, written documentation outlining the applicant's experience in the real estate business. The documentation must demonstrate that the applicant has gained experience in all aspects of the real estate business equal to that which would be gained by a person engaged in the real estate business on a full time basis during a minimum two year period of time.

7.3 Written Documentation of Experience – In order for the Commission to determine the experience of an applicant for a broker's license, the applicant shall submit, on forms prepared by the Commission, a complete list of all the real estate transactions in which the applicant has been involved. The information submitted must, at a minimum, cover the current calendar year and the preceding two calendar years.

7.4. Affidavit of Broker. -- Each and every broker, with whom a real estate salesperson has been employed, shall furnish the Commission with an affidavit attesting to the applicant's experience and qualifications. The broker shall submit the affidavit on a form prepared by the Commission.

7.5 Equivalent Experience – An applicant for a broker's license may qualify for waiver of all or part of the two year apprenticeship requirement under the following guidelines:

a. Four or more years full-time experience as a licensed real estate appraiser within the last ten years;

b. Four or more years full-time experience as a trust officer handling real property within the last ten years;

c. Four or more years full-time experience as a subdivider, developer, or general contractor who has developed, financed and sold 50 or more lots, residential units or commercial units within the last ten years. To qualify under this provision, the applicant must have been directly involved in all phases of the development activities;

d. Four or more years full-time experience as a loan officer of a bank, lending institution, or mortgage company in a capacity directly related to the financing of real estate within the last ten years, or;

e. Licensed as a real estate broker in another jurisdiction within the past five years. Provided, That if an applicant for a broker's license is licensed in another jurisdiction as a broker at the time the application is submitted to the Commission, he or she shall be granted a full waiver of the apprenticeship requirement.

§174-1-8. Office Signs.

8.1. Sign requirement. -- All registered real estate brokers, holding an active certificate, shall erect, and maintain a sign on or about the entrance of their principal office and each branch office, which shall be easily observed and read by persons about to enter any of the offices. Every sign shall contain the name of the broker, together with his or her trade name, if any, beneath which shall be the word "Broker," all in letters not less than 1 inch in height. If the broker so desires, the names of the salespersons or associate brokers may be placed below the name of the broker.

§174-1-9. Advertising.

9.1 Advertising by licensees -- When advertising real estate, through linear advertisement, radio, television, web sites or any other media, each advertisement shall include the firm name, the name of the broker, office location information, and the term "Broker" or "Realtor" as the case may be. The names of associate brokers and salespersons may be included in the advertisement as long as they are clearly identified as such. *Provided*, That if the licensee is the owner of the property, the licensee has all the rights of an unlicensed person.

9.2. Advertising by salespersons and associate brokers. -- Salespersons and associate brokers may not advertise any property under their own names. All advertising by an associate broker or salesperson must be under the direct supervision of and in the name of the employing broker.

§174-1-10. Trade And Fictitious Names.

10.1. Use of trade name. -- An individual broker may use a trade name. Any broker who wishes to use a trade name must disclose the trade name in an application for license and upon approval by the Commission, the trade name will be placed upon the broker's license certificate. The trade name shall not be the same as that currently being used by another broker in the same locality. A broker shall not use any trade name not registered with the Commission. *Provided*, That a broker that chooses to operate under a franchise agreement shall not be required to register the name of the franchise organization with the Commission and the name of the franchise organization will not be registered by the Commission.

10.2. Change of trade name. -- Each broker shall notify the Commission in writing of any change of trade name. The notice shall be made on a form supplied by the Commission and accompanied by the original license certificate and proper fee. The Commission shall issue a new certificate with the new trade name for the unexpired period.

§174-1-11. Offer Of Inducements And Gifts.

11.1 No licensee may offer, directly or indirectly, door prizes, gifts, or anything of value, in exchange for the sale or listing of any real estate or while engaged in any other activity regulated by the Commission. *Provided*, That it shall not be improper for a licensee to:

a. Provide a closing gift of nominal value to a party to the transaction, as long as it has not been used as an inducement;

b. Discuss or negotiate the compensation the licensee agrees to charge for his or her services; or

c. Disseminate information about special terms, conditions or other inducements which are bona fide offers made by a principal to a real estate transaction.

§174-1-12. Location Of Office.

12.1. Usual place of business. -- Usual place of business is defined as the physical location from which a broker carries on his or her business and which the broker holds forth to the public as his or her usual place of business. The broker may maintain his or her usual place of business in a licensee's residence, but the residence must be sufficient to maintain the records and accounts required in Section 16 of this rule and of sufficient space within which to permit the Commission's inspection of the accounts and records without interference by other users of the property.

12.2. Beer sales. -- A broker shall not maintain an office or display a sign, where beer or other alcoholic beverages are sold. If a real estate office is located adjoining to or in the same building where beer or other alcoholic beverages are dispensed, the office shall have a private entrance. The Commission shall determine if the location of a real estate office is in keeping with the standards of the real estate trade.

§174-1-13. Renewal Of License.

13.1. Duty to renew. -- All licenses expire June 30 regardless of the date the license was issued. It is the duty of all licensees to register with the Commission and to renew their licenses by paying the renewal fee for a license as set forth under separate rule.

13.2. Operating without license. -- Any licensee who does not register as required by this section, but continues to operate when a license is required, is in violation of WV Code § 30-40-1 et seq.

13.3. Examination required. -- Any licensee who does not renew his or her license by June 15 of the year subsequent to the license's expiration shall be required to comply with all the requirements for obtaining an original license.

13.4. Continuing education. -- Each licensee applying for the renewal of his or her license on active status, shall furnish proof, as established by the Commission, showing he or she has completed, during the term of the preceding license, seven (7) hours of instruction in an approved real estate course, for each year covered by the term of the previous license. It is the responsibility of the broker to see that all licensees in his or her employ comply with this requirement prior to applying for a renewal of their licenses.

a. This requirement does not apply to any licensee who qualified to obtain an original license in the fiscal year preceding the annual renewal date. *Provided*, That if the Commission issues a license that covers more than one fiscal year, the licensee shall be required to submit proof that he or she has completed approved continuing education credits for all years other than the year immediately following the year in which he or she qualified to obtain an original license.

b. A licensee in an inactive status is not required to comply with the continuing education requirement. A licensee on an inactive status who desires to be placed on active status must furnish satisfactory evidence to the commission that he or she has completed the approved continuing professional education that would have been required for active status at the time the license was renewed. The licensee must comply with this requirement prior to being placed on active status.

c. Non-resident licensees must comply with the continuing education requirement. However, if the non-resident's jurisdiction has a comparable continuing education requirement and recognizes West Virginia continuing education credits as fulfilling that jurisdiction's continuing education requirement, the Commission will accept continuing education credits earned in the other jurisdiction.

§174-1-14. Examinations.

14.1. Appear for examination. -- An applicant who is required to take an examination shall appear for and be administered an examination at the time and place specified by the Commission. If the applicant fails to appear at the time and place specified by the Commission for the examination, the applicant may be scheduled for the next available examination. If the applicant fails to appear for the next examination, his or her application will be canceled and he or she must then reapply.

14.2. Application for examination – An application for license shall only be valid for two attempts at passing the examination. Upon the applicant's second unsuccessful attempt at passing the examination, the applicant will be required to submit a new application which shall be valid for two more examinations.

14.3. Rules. -- The following examination rules will prevail and violation of any rule is grounds for disqualification of the applicant:

- a. Examinees may not refer to any notes, books or memoranda.
- b. The examinee must show all computations on the blank pages of the examination paper.
- c. The copying of questions or the making of notes is prohibited.
- d. Examinees may not talk or ask questions of another examinee during the course of the examination.
- e. All examinees must present identification which contains a current recognizable photograph and their signature. Any examinee who does not present the required identification will be prohibited from sitting for the examination.
- f. All examinees must pay the required examination fee at the time of sitting for the examination.

14.4. Reexamination. -- The Commission will give a notice of failure to an applicant who fails to attain a passing grade on the examination. The Commission will schedule another examination and will give the applicant written notice of when and where to appear.

14.5. Review of examination. -- An applicant for a real estate license who fails the examination after two (2) attempts may review the examination papers, to verify that they were properly graded, by making written request to the Commission.

14.6. Payment of license fee. -- An applicant for a real estate license, upon successfully passing the examination, must pay the required license fee within three months from the date of sitting for the examination. The Commission will cancel the application of any applicant who does not pay the required license fee within three months. Any applicant that fails to pay the license fee in compliance with this rule, will be required to reapply and successfully pass the examination. Provided, That the Commission may grant a three month extension for time to pay the license fee if good cause to do so is demonstrated by the applicant. Each request for an extension will be considered on a case by case basis and shall be granted if extenuating facts or circumstances warrant.

§174-1-15. Complaints.

15.1. Filing of Complaint. -- The Commission will consider complaints of alleged violations of WV Code § 30-40-1 et seq. only when they are submitted in writing on forms supplied by the Commission and set forth all details of the transaction, giving full names of all persons having knowledge of such transactions, together with specific addresses, dates, monetary amounts involved, copies of contracts, closing statements, correspondence and other pertinent documents and information. Only in this way can the Commission handle such matters expediently and satisfactorily.

§174-1-16. Trust Funds.

16.1. Maintain records. -- Every broker shall maintain at the broker's usual place of business, for a minimum of five (5) years, books, records, contracts, closing statements, bank records, and other necessary documents so that the Commission may determine the adequacy of the trust fund account. The accounts and other records shall be open to inspection by the Commission and its duly authorized representatives at all times during regular business hours at the broker's usual place of business. The Commission will consider material discrepancies in the accounts and records a violation of WV Code § 30-40-1 et seq. by the broker.

16.2. Salesperson and associate broker with trust funds. -- Every real estate salesperson and associate broker who receives any trust funds shall immediately, or at the first opportunity, pay over or deliver the trust funds to the broker, under whom he or she is registered as a salesperson or associate broker. No real estate salesperson or associate broker shall collect any money in connection with any real estate brokerage transaction, whether as a commission, deposit, payment, rental, or otherwise, except in the name of and with the consent of the licensed real estate broker under whom he or she is licensed. Upon receipt of any trust money, the salesperson or associate broker shall immediately turn it over to his or her employing broker. The Commission will consider the failure of a salesperson or an associate broker to comply with this rule to be a violation of WV Code §30-40-1 et seq.

16.3. Interest bearing accounts. -- Trust funds may be deposited into an interest-bearing account under the following conditions:

a. The trust funds must first be deposited into a trust fund account established in compliance with WV Code § 30-40-18;

b. The broker must obtain, from all parties to the transaction, a written agreement which must contain, at a minimum:

1. Authorization to remove the funds from the trust fund account for the express purpose of depositing the funds into an interest bearing trust fund account established in compliance with WV Code §30-40-18;

2. Identification of the financial institution, and the type of account to be opened;

3. Identification of who will earn the interest on the funds; and,

4. How and when the interest will be disbursed.

c. No interest, privilege, or other compensation recognized by virtue of establishing or maintaining any interest bearing account established in compliance with this rule shall inure to the benefit of the broker or any other licensee; and

d. Upon closing any interest-bearing account established in compliance with this rule, the total proceeds of the account must be deposited in the broker's trust fund account prior to any disbursements being made.

§174-1-17. Commingling Defined.

17.1. Commingling within the meaning of WV Code § 30-40-19 is defined as failure to deposit or place trust funds received in: (1) a neutral escrow depository or (2) the hands of principals or (3) a trust fund account by the next business day following receipt. However, it is not commingling to hold an uncashed check until acceptance of an offer when the contract terms clearly require such conduct and it is not commingling to hold an uncashed check after acceptance of an offer when the contract terms clearly require such conduct. Each licensee must make certain that the real estate contract specifically provides for a check to be held in an uncashed form when requested to do so by the seller or purchaser.

§174-1-18. Closing Statements.

18.1. Deliver to Seller and Buyer. -- Every broker shall make certain that the seller and buyer, receive a complete, detailed closing statement showing all of the receipts and disbursements for their side of the transaction.

§174-1-19. Requirements Of Broker.

19.1. Broker becoming licensed salesperson. -- The holder of a broker's license may, during the term of that license, request inactivation of the broker's license and upon filing the appropriate application and payment of the proper fee, be issued a salesperson's license. Under this procedure he or she need not qualify by taking the salesperson's examination. The salesperson may reinstate the broker's license at any future date upon filing the appropriate application and fee, as long as the licensee maintains a current

license. A broker's examination is not required under this procedure if the broker applicant is the holder of a current salesperson's license.

19.2. Brokers who rent desk space in a real estate office. -- A broker who rents desk space within a real estate office and whose own brokerage business is conducted separately and apart from that of the broker from whom the desk space is rented, shall maintain a sign on the main entrance door or on a wall or window immediately adjacent to the door, and comply with all other requirements of holding a broker's license.

19.3. Broker to refund deposit money. -- When for any reason the owner fails, refuses, neglects or is unable to consummate the deal as provided for in the contract and through no fault or neglect of the purchaser, the real estate transaction cannot be completed, the broker has no right to any portion of the deposit money which was deposited by the purchaser, even though the broker's compensation may have been earned. The broker shall return the deposit to the purchaser at once and the broker should look to the owner for his or her compensation. The Commission will consider a violation of this subsection to be a violation of WV Code § 30-40-19.

§174-1-20. Court Action.

20.1. Licensee to inform Commission of civil action. -- When any licensee is a party to any civil suit or proceeding arising out of any transaction involving real property other than actions for eviction or for the collection of back rent, it is the duty of each licensee to supply the Commission with a copy of the judgement or final disposition of the case.

20.2. Licensee to inform Commission of criminal action. -- When any licensee is a defendant in any criminal proceeding other than misdemeanor traffic violations, it is the duty of the licensee to supply the Commission with a copy of the petition, complaint, warrant, indictment, or information, and the answer filed, if any, and to advise the Commission of the disposition of the case and the nature and amount of any judgment, verdict, finding or sentence made, entered or imposed.

§ 174-1-21. Bad Checks.

21.1. Bad checks. -- Checks tendered to the commission by any course provider, applicant or licensee which are returned marked NSF (Insufficient Funds) or are not honored for any cause, may be considered prima-facie evidence of untrustworthiness or incompetency in such a manner to endanger the interest of the public. The Commission will afford the course provider, applicant or licensee a reasonable opportunity to replace the bad check with a certified check or money order. In the event the bad check is not cured, the Commission may institute appropriate action to collect the funds including court costs and fees paid to a collection agency. The Commission shall refuse to issue or shall cancel a license which was sought or obtained by the issuance of a bad check.

§174-1-22. Agency Disclosure.

22.1. Each licensee shall provide a written notice disclosing which party the licensee is representing as agent to all parties to a real estate transaction. The required written notice shall be signed by all parties, and the real estate broker shall maintain a copy of the notice in his or her transaction files. The licensee shall execute this written notice prior to

any party signing any contract for representation, offer to purchase, to sell, or to exchange real estate for which a broker's license is required by WV Code § 30-40-1 et seq.

22.2. Any licensee acting as agent of a buyer, shall disclose his or her agency relationship to the seller, or the broker representing the seller, prior to any showing of the property or the initiation of negotiations which ever occurs first.

22.3. A real estate broker shall provide written notice to all parties prior to paying a portion of his or her compensation to a broker representing another party to the transaction.

22.4. A licensee may not be the agent for both the buyer and the seller without obtaining the written consent of both the buyer and the seller.

22.5. If change in a licensee's agency status makes an earlier disclosure inaccurate, incomplete or misleading, the licensee shall prepare a revised disclosure form and immediately present it to all parties to the transaction. The revised disclosure must be dated and must be acknowledged in writing by all parties.

22.6. In any circumstance in which the seller or buyer refuses to sign an acknowledgment of receipt of notice of agency disclosure, the licensee shall sign and date a written declaration setting forth the facts of the refusal.