



NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

February, 2009

[To: State Legislative Leaders and Financial Services
Committee Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons]

Joe Hackney
*Speaker of the House
North Carolina
President, NCSL*

Gary VanLandingham
*Director, Office of Program
Policy Analysis and Government
Accountability (OPAGA)
Staff Chair, NCSL*

William T. Pound
Executive Director

We write on behalf of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to respectfully urge your consideration of legislation in this legislative session to implement the federal Secure and Fair Enforcement (S.A.F.E.) for Mortgage Licensing Act. **If your state fails to act by July 31, 2009, your authority to license and regulate mortgage loan originators would be preempted.** Mortgage loan originators in any state that fails to act by July 31, 2009 would be licensed and regulated by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The S.A.F.E. Act was included in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (H.R. 3221), signed into law on July 30, 2008. This provision requires that any residential mortgage originator must be either state-licensed or federally registered by July 31, 2009. A state not enacting legislation by July 31st, can be granted a two-year extension by HUD if they make a good faith effort to incorporate a state-licensing system by that date. In addition, states must ensure loan originators register with the Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System (NMLS) for accountability and transparency purposes.

The state-licensing system must meet several minimum requirements to maintain supervisory authority for loan originators. These include having a process to assess individuals acting as mortgage originators in their state without proper license or registration, criminal history and credit background checks, pre-licensure education and testing, establishing a minimum net worth or surety bonding requirements to reflect the dollar amount of loans by the originator and abiding by the obligations in the Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System, among others.

The Conference of State Banking Supervisors (CSBS) and the American Association of Residential Mortgage Regulators (AARMR) have created model state legislation which provides states with guidance in creating a system of licensure. This model state law (http://www.csbs.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=SAFE_Act) addresses the aforementioned major standards under the S.A.F.E. Act which state regulatory agencies and mortgage loan originators must abide by. In January 2009, HUD reviewed the model legislation and determined that it met the minimum requirements of the S.A.F.E. Mortgage Licensing Act.

We also must bring to your attention that in some states a version of the legislation may have been introduced that while purporting to implement the SAFE Act will actually dilute the minimum license requirements and will result in a state being determined to be out of compliance with the SAFE Act. This would allow HUD to then license and regulate the brokers in that state. We would urge you to review any legislation already introduced in your state to ensure that the legislation meets the minimum requirements as outlined in the CSBS model.

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We appreciate the opportunity to bring this matter your attention. Should you have questions about our concerns, please contact Neal Osten at 202-624-8660 (neal.osten@ncsl.org) or Jeff Hurley at 202-624-7753 (Jeff.Hurley@ncsl.org) in NCSL's Washington office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Hackney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "J" and "H".

Speaker Joe Hackney, NCSL President