



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor, State of Florida
Florida State Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of the undersigned groups we would like to thank you for your leadership and diligent attention to the issues affecting Florida during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic continues, the economic ramifications are becoming clear. Our organizations are concerned that interruptions to certain essential government services could have severe negative economic ramifications for citizens at a time when they are already under stress. As you know, the real estate industry is central to the overall health of the economy.

In particular, we request that you consider real estate transactions and title recording be declared as essential services which should remain active, with steps taken in order to minimize any risk to workers. These businesses provide services that are legally mandated by contract and they work with the financial industry in processing escrow payments. In addition, we request that the recording and other work of the County Clerk and Comptrollers Recorders be declared an essential service which should remain open. Steps to ensure safety could include permitting recording of documents only submitted online or through electronic platforms and by mail or in-person delivery by appointment only with appropriate safeguards, for the duration of the crisis.

The reasons for this are self-evident. In the absence of a functioning county recorder, real estate transactions, many of which are already in progress, might not be able to be closed. This would result in additional and significant hardships to the persons involved especially those who are buying or selling a home. Also, with record low interest rates, there is also likely going to be an opportunity for many Florida homeowners to refinance at the lower rates, which would provide immediate economic relief to homeowners dealing with the challenges of these times. Without a functioning recorder's office that opportunity could be lost.

We respectfully request that your office ensure that any emergency orders that are pending at the state or county level declare that the work of the County Clerk and Comptroller Recorders are an essential service and that they shall remain open and continue to conduct business, of course with safeguards for their employees during the ongoing crisis.

In these difficult times, we know the economic ramifications of this pandemic will be substantial, but believe this step will help to support the individuals and entities involved in real estate and lending transactions and the economy as a whole.

Sincerely,

Barry Grooms
President
Florida Realtors®

Scott Merritt
Executive Director
Florida Land Title Association

Rusty Payton
Chief Executive Officer
Florida Home Builders Association