



March 20, 2020

Governor Tony Evers  
Via email only

**Re: Economic Stability during the COVID19 pandemic – Keeping Land Records Open**

Dear Governor,

Wisconsin Register of Deeds offices (ROD) are necessary to keep the housing and commercial real estate markets open during this global health crisis. Specifically, title examiners need access to ROD offices to process property titles and settlement companies need to be able to record real estate documents in the land records. Without which we anticipate that mortgage lenders will be unable to issue loans, chilling if not stopping homes sales and refinances during this crisis. Because many county offices have closed or limited services, this is impacting the entire stream of home conveyancing.

One action item that we would ask you consider is designating ROD offices as a component of Wisconsin's essential critical infrastructure. This would be consistent with the designation by the US Department of Homeland Security which includes "financial services" in the essential matrix, including workers who are needed to process and maintain systems for processing financial transactions and services.<sup>1</sup>

As part of this designation we would recommend an Executive Order be issued that would require Wisconsin's Registers of Deeds offices to maintain minimal hours of operation for official filings and requests, processing of recorded information and providing accurate records of the counties' official records. If maintaining a limited open office is not feasible, we would recommend a requirement that these offices maintain a drop box or other similar mechanism that would insure the transaction of business without direct physical interaction.

Wisconsin REALTORS®, lenders and closing agents are working hard to maintain a safe and clean closing environment in which to transact real sales and refinances critical to maintaining economic stability and savings to Wisconsin homeowners. We greatly appreciate your continued leadership during this crisis. Please know that we are available and willing to help.

Wisconsin Land Title Association

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce>

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