



Register Of Deeds Association

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March 23, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers

Governor of Wisconsin

Via email: [Edwin.Huerta@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Edwin.Huerta@wisconsin.gov) and [Jenni.Dye@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Jenni.Dye@wisconsin.gov)

RE: Exempting Wisconsin Register of Deeds Offices from Safer at Home Order

Dear Governor Evers:

On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Wisconsin Realtors Association, Wisconsin Mortgage Bankers Association and the Wisconsin Land Title Association wrote to you, asking that you designate Register of Deeds offices across our state as essential Constitutional Offices that are critical to the economic infrastructure of our state. The Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association agrees and writes in support of their request as we are a necessary and integral part of the financial services process.

Since 1836, Registers of Deeds offices have maintained all land records in our counties in a searchable and accessible form to the public, the real estate industry and title companies. We record millions of real estate instruments every year. Without the ability to conduct land records searches or record documents, mortgage lenders are unlikely to issue loans and title companies will unlikely be able to issue title insurance policies. Under the aforementioned circumstances, the purchase and sale of all real property in our state will cease, as will the ability for homeowners to refinance their mortgages during this pandemic.

Another important aspect of the Register of Deeds office is to issue certified copies of vital records such as birth, death and marriage certificates. We have already received directives from the Wisconsin State Vital Records office that we may not issue certificates remotely, therefore, necessitating that we remain in our offices to some degree. These certificates are needed to obtain Social Security retirement and other major financial assets.

We respectfully request that your Safer at Home Order require Register of Deeds offices to maintain minimum hours of operation during this pandemic. This will allow us to continue to record and index essential real estate instruments and issue vital records upon request. Many of our offices have already made reductions in staffing and have closed our doors to the public. We are working with our county leaders to maintain operations that will allow minimal disruption to the state's real estate market and maintain some economic stability. We are doing this through remote work, eRecording, mail and express mail, drop-offs via lock boxes, etc.

We look forward to continuing these services and greatly appreciate your continued leadership through this crisis. We respectfully request an order directing us to continue our statutory obligations.

Very truly yours,

Heather Schwersenska

Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association, President

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**"Few things have to last as long as county records."**