

OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The Valley Board of Realtors® (VBR) announced today that it has implemented as part of its Professional Standards Program an Ombudsman program for the public and VBR's members. It is used by the Association to assist parties to resolve disputes both between the public and Realtors®, and between Realtors® as well. It is designed to open up communication and thereby assist people in solving conflicts in the early stages. Ombudsmen are trained to be impartial and do not determine right or wrong.

The ombudsman was created in 1809 in Sweden, originally to help citizens pursue their complaints against the government and its officers. It was only in the 1960's that the United States, together with New Zealand and Great Britain introduced and began to practice the program. In the U.S. it was initially used to improve communication between students and faculty during the turbulence of that time. The point to the program was to have concerns responded to efficiently and effectively.

The National Association of Realtors® introduced Ombudsing into professional standards programs after 2000, when mediation as a form of conflict resolution became introduced. Ombudsing is designed to anticipate and resolve misunderstandings and disagreements before matters escalate to formal complaints or conflicts. All PAR Ombudsmen are trained in the skills necessary, and all have extensive past experience on the Realtor® committees that address ethics violations and other disputes. However, no Ombudsman is allowed to serve on those committees any longer, so that they may be truly neutral. They are familiar with the Realtor® Code of Ethics, Alaska real estate regulations and current real estate practices.

The Valley Board of Realtors® represents almost 350 licensed Realtors®. For more information on this program, or to ask to be contacted by an Ombudsman, contact VBR Association Executive/Professional Standards Administrator, Paula Nance, at 907-376-5080.