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CATHERINE



Well-known Illinois Legal Leader John O'Brien Fills New Position To Serve as Liaison to ATG Constituents

John G. O'Brien, one of the most recognized attorneys in Illinois, will become vice president and counsel at Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, Inc., (ATG) www.atgf.com, beginning July 1. O'Brien has resigned from the ATG Board of Directors to assume his new responsibilities; Chicago attorney Jonathan Sherry replaced him.

O'Brien, who has practiced law in Arlington Heights since 1972, was president of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) in 2009-10 and is past president and current chairman of the board of directors of the Illinois Real Estate Lawyers Association (IRELA), an organization he founded in 1994. IRELA, composed of real estate attorneys from all corners of Illinois, is the only bar

association that represents the interests solely of real estate attorneys. ATG and IRELA have partnered over the years to advocate for real estate attorneys and the clients they serve.

Largely through O'Brien's advocacy efforts in the mid-90s, IRELA filed a lawsuit against a large Chicago-area realtor to prevent its agents from engaging in the unauthorized practice of law by their efforts to offer what amounted to legal advice to home buyers. IRELA won the lawsuit and continues, according to the ISBA, "to serve as a watchdog to prevent non-lawyers from offering what are essentially legal services to home buyers and sellers." The impact of this ruling is clear not only for attorneys but also for the clients they represent.

The ISBA also credits O'Brien with traveling throughout the state during his presidency, which took place during a period of high foreclosure rates in Illinois, to help homeowners hang on to their homes and, if foreclosure was inevitable, to help them understand the process.

Of his service to the Illinois bar, Peter Birnbaum, ATG president and chief executive officer, notes, "John is one of the most beloved lawyers in Illinois. Through his founding and chairing of IRELA and his presidency of the ISBA, he has built valuable relationships with law firms throughout the state. We believe that John can use those skills to bring significant value to ATG, not only from a marketing standpoint but also through the advocacy we provide lawyers on a daily basis."

In his new role at ATG, O'Brien will serve as special counsel to Birnbaum on industry matters both on the local scene and in bigger arenas. He has already been focusing his expertise in a variety of legal matters. For example, in early June, he testified on behalf of ATG before the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Mortgage Foreclosures. "ATG and its subsidiaries have progressive business plans and a significant consumer protection agenda. I will be charged with coordinating the efforts of those companies, bar associations, regulatory bodies and other interested parties to further these objectives," he said.

O'Brien has lectured on real estate topics for the ISBA, the American Bar Association, numerous other bar associations throughout the state, as well as the Illinois Institute for Continuing Education and ATG.

"I've believed my entire career that ATG is the single greatest lawyer service organization in the State of Illinois. It has done more for what I'll call 'Main Street' lawyers than anybody. ATG supports real issues, for real lawyers, and for real people. I'm energized and really looking forward to this (position). This is what I want to do