

Why the real estate industry is everything I love about Pride Month

Historically, the real estate industry has been — and continues to be — a bellwether for socio-political change

BY ELIZABETH ANN STRIBLING-KIVLAN



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As June is National Pride Month, I want to take a moment to say how proud and grateful I am to be a real estate professional. I'm not saying this purely because I am a lesbian, a woman and the head of a NYC-based real estate brokerage — although these things do give me a unique perspective.

I truly believe that, thanks to the [Fair Housing Act](#), the real estate industry is much more inherently progressive on issues of gender equality and anti-discrimination than most other industries, as well as many of our government officials.

A look back at fair housing

In case you are unfamiliar, the Fair Housing Act, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, was passed by Congress four days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Fair Housing Act “protects people from discrimination when they are renting, buying, or securing financing for any housing. The prohibitions specifically cover discrimination because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and the presence of children.”



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The original Act only covered four classes: race, color, national origin and religion. In 1974, sex was added to the protected classes, and in 1988, disability and familial statuses were included. The real estate industry had officially become a bellwether for social change.

Today's climate

Fast forward to 2018, and real estate professionals are still standing up for equality under the law, even as some lawmakers try to undermine fair housing.



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California Republican Representative Dana Rohrabacher caused an uproar when

he announced that people should be allowed to refuse to sell their homes to gay people. Presumably, Roerbacher, who is up for re-election this year, said this to please some of his more conservative constituents.

However, his words brought criticism and action from one of the most powerful real estate groups in the country. Last month, [the National Association of Realtors rescinded its support for Roerbacher](#).

“After reviewing all new, relevant information, it was determined that Representative Rohrabacher will [no longer receive support from NAR’s President’s Circle](#),” the association’s president, Elizabeth Mendenhall, said in a statement.

“Making this decision was the right thing for NAR to do; the association’s member Code of Ethics is far ahead of Congress on gender identity and sexual orientation discrimination. We certainly hope that Congress will follow the lead set at our recent legislative meetings and support the elimination of housing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.”

Roerbacher’s reasoning is that people shouldn’t be forced to sell their homes to people whose lifestyle choices conflict with their religious beliefs.

He “draws the line at racism” but feels that fair housing should not extend beyond that, specifically to the LGBTQ community.

As a gay woman, I’m personally offended by his statements; as an American, I am wholly disappointed that this type of rhetoric is alive and well in our society.

The silver lining in all of this is that there are organizations that continue to speak out for all Americans, regardless of their backgrounds, skin color or whom they love. During this Pride Month, I can safely say that I am proud to be a woman, I am proud to be gay, and I am proud to be part of an industry that stands up for equality.

Elizabeth Ann Stribling-Kivlan is the president of [Stribling & Associates](#).

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