# The government will accept comments on real estate competition until July 31

Have an opinion about the current state of competition in the residential real estate industry? The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have been accepting public comments on the subject since April and the final deadline to submit public comments is tomorrow, July 31.

The two agencies held a joint workshop on real estate competition in June in the run-up to an important milestone: later this year, a longstanding government consent decree affecting real estate websites will expire. The agreement was put into place in 2008 after the DOJ sued the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the industry's largest trade group, for alleged antitrust violations. Its expiration has some leading industry experts concerned about what a less-regulated real estate industry will look like.

So far, the FTC and DOJ have posted 45 comments (available here) they've received from a motley crowd of real estate organizations and individuals.

The federal agencies are particularly interested in comments on these questions:

1. How has residential real estate brokerage competition evolved over the last 10 years? Has consumer demand for particular brokerage services or models changed with increasing reliance on internet-enabled technologies? How do brokers compete today with respect to fees, services, reputation for quality and other variables?
2. How have internet-enabled technologies, including consumer-facing platforms for accessing listings information, changed the residential real estate brokerage industry? What are the benefits and drawbacks of these platforms for consumers?
3. What are the current barriers to competition in residential real estate brokerage markets?
4. What have been the effects of past regulatory and antitrust enforcement actions on residential real estate brokerage markets? What actions can legislatures, regulators, and other government bodies take to maintain future competition in this industry?

The agencies will display the comments they receive on their websites. Comments may be submitted here. The last time the two agencies held a joint workshop on real estate competition in October 2005, they produced a joint report in April 2007.

The agencies have not said whether they plan to use the public comments they receive this time around to produce an updated report on real estate competition or take any other actions, but members of Congress have asked for such an update.

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“[T]he FTC will read and consider all of the comments we receive, but no determination has been made as to next steps,” an FTC spokesperson told Inman via email today.

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