

**The National Association of Realtors® , “The Voice for Real Estate,” is America’s largest trade association, representing more than 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.**

**Remarks By Charles McMillan  
2009 NAR President  
Houston Real Estate Board  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
January 23, 2009  
Houston, TX**

**UNITED TOWARD TOMORROW**

Good Afternoon. It is a pleasure to be back here in Texas, and to be part of this wonderful 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

Earlier this week, I had an incredible opportunity to be part of another historic celebration, as I experienced first-hand the Inauguration of America’s 44<sup>th</sup> President – Barack Obama.

As I stood outside in the cold Washington, D.C., weather and watched Mr. Obama take the oath of office, I couldn’t help but think how far America has come in the past 60 years.

When I looked around me, I saw people from all walks of life, all backgrounds, ages and nationalities, standing side by side, united in our hope for a better nation.

It was a thrilling experience, and one that I will never forget.

I share it with you today because there was a time – not so long ago – when people doubted that our nation and our industry would ever get beyond our differences.

**The National Association of Realtors®**, “The Voice for Real Estate,” is America’s largest trade association, representing more than 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

***Great Progress***

I don’t need to tell you how exclusive this business – and our organization – once was.

When the National Association of Real Estate Brokers was founded, it opened new doors for African-Americans to excel in real estate. And, through your local chapter, here in Houston, you have opened new doors for many African-Americans in this community.

What you have accomplished during the past 20 to 30 years is especially impressive.

You hosted the first-ever community housing fair, showing us how to reach out to potential homebuyers. In the years since, you have put countless families on the path to homeownership through outreach and education.

More recently, you joined with colleagues at the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, the Asian Real Estate Association of America, and other minority associations to host multicultural housing fairs, uniting us all in our common goal of making housing more affordable and accessible.

Through your women’s council, you also launched the first financial literacy program for local high school students more than a dozen years ago.

And, now, through an outstanding partnership with the city of Houston, you are helping to bring mortgage finance education to even more citizens through “Money Week Houston.”

**The National Association of Realtors<sup>®</sup>, “The Voice for Real Estate,” is America’s largest trade association, representing more than 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.**

These are just some of the incredible ways you have helped to build and strengthen this community in recent years.

As you celebrate your 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, you have much to be proud of. On behalf of the National Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup>, and all real estate professionals, I thank you for your incredible service to this community and for helping to move our industry forward.

As a direct result of your great contributions, our industry, like our nation, has come a long way in the past 60 years.

As I stand here today, I believe the time has come for us to put our differences – whatever they may be – aside, and work together to ensure the value of homeownership remains steadfast for all people and a cornerstone of this great nation.

I would like nothing more than to see real estate professionals of all backgrounds, ages, experiences and ethnicities, fully united in 2009. And it starts right here – at the local level – with folks like you and me talking about challenges and working together to resolve them.

### ***More to Do***

I think we all can agree that our nation and our industry are undergoing tremendous change. We are facing incredible challenges in our businesses and in our communities, related to housing and the economy.

Many Americans are losing their homes to foreclosure. Others who want to buy a home can’t get the financing they need. And, too many homeowners are seeing the value of their homes fall substantially.

**The National Association of Realtors®**, “The Voice for Real Estate,” is America’s largest trade association, representing more than 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

For most of us, this is the most challenging time we may ever face in our careers, and in our lifetime. It will take all of our talents to address these problems and to build a better future for our own families and those we serve.

Let me be clear: The current issues in the housing market affect everyone – they are not confined to any one demographic or group. Therefore, we must work together as never before on solutions that benefit everyone.

Today, I am here not only to celebrate with you, but also to reach out and ask that you join with us in the following ways...

First, we need your help to advocate for laws and policies that will stem the tide of foreclosure and maintain the value of homeownership for future generations.

The National Association of REALTORS® has been working with many of our partners in Washington, D.C., to advance a housing stimulus plan that would keep mortgage rates low, help more people avoid foreclosure, provide for an improved homebuyer tax credit, and raise the FHA and Fannie and Freddie loan limits to make sure people can get a home loan.

We have made great progress in getting these measures into legislation, but their passage is not certain.

Congress and the new Administration need to know how much these provisions mean to the people in each and every community across the nation. Who better to tell them exactly what American homeowners are facing than the real estate professionals who are working in the trenches each and every day? That’s where you can really make a difference.

**The National Association of Realtors<sup>®</sup>, “The Voice for Real Estate,” is America’s largest trade association, representing more than 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.**

Please help us send a message from the people of Houston that we need help to unlock the housing market.

All you have to do is go to *RealtorActionCenter.com* and send a letter to your member of Congress. Together, we can save housing and our communities from this crisis.

Second, I believe we need to pull our resources to help create larger, more impactful homebuyer assistance programs.

Don’t get me wrong, federal programs are very important, but ultimately, it’s our work here in the community that will change the course of housing in America.

NAR just recently launched our largest housing opportunity grant program in our history. The Ira Gribin Workforce Housing Grant provides funding from \$50,000 to \$400,000 to individual state and local REALTOR<sup>®</sup> associations to implement programs that address the need for affordable workforce housing.

Today, I challenge you, the members of the Houston Real Estate Board, and members of the Houston Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup> to work together as a unified force to implement a new program right here in this community.

Together, we can continue your outstanding legacy of community service, and inspire others to do the same.

Third, and finally, we must do more to encourage all real estate professionals to participate within and across our organizations.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I believe the time has come to move beyond our differences, and appreciate just how much we all have in common.

**The National Association of Realtors®**, “The Voice for Real Estate,” is America’s largest trade association, representing more than 1.2 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.

As America becomes more diverse, so does our industry. We have an incredible opportunity to learn from one another and to pass our experiences and knowledge to the next generation of professionals.

I promise to encourage all REALTORS® to get involved in your organizations – to participate in your meetings and discussions; to support your programs and to openly communicate with you at every possible opportunity.

Likewise, I hope that each and every one of you will participate fully in the REALTOR® organization; that you will share your perspectives and knowledge with us; and that you will help us unite our industry toward a better tomorrow.

### ***Conclusion***

As our 16<sup>th</sup> President Abraham Lincoln said in perhaps the most famous speech in American History:

“The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.”

Of course, Lincoln was referring to those who fought at Gettysburg for our freedom. Yet, I believe those words ring true for all of us, as well.

The best way for us to honor and celebrate those who worked during the past 60 years to give us the opportunity to succeed is to dedicate ourselves to providing those same opportunities for others.

Again, thank you for inviting me to be here today, and congratulations on 60 years of incredible service to this community!