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[Home](#) > Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, Inc. SVP Hank Shulruff Honored with Presidential Commendation by Illinois State Bar Association

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By *Benzinga Staff*

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CHICAGO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--

Hank Shulruff, real estate attorney and senior vice president with [Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund](#) ^[1], Inc. (ATG), the only bar-related title insurance company based in Illinois, was recently named the recipient of the [Illinois State Bar Association](#) ^[2] (ISBA) 2010 Presidential Commendation.

John O'Brien, president of the ISBA, presented Shulruff with the Presidential Commendation at the ATG Board of Directors dinner in St. Louis, Mo. on Tuesday evening, June 22.

Nearly two years ago, Shulruff began forging pro-bono partnerships between ATG and [Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago](#) ^[3] (NHS ^[4]), the [City of Chicago](#) ^[5], various bar associations, community foundations and others. The group's mission has been to help homeowners at-risk of foreclosure understand their options, avoid foreclosure, and apply for loan modifications under the Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP).

Event sponsors have co-organized a series of "[Fix Your Mortgage](#) ^[6]" events in the city of Chicago (two in 2009 and six in 2010), and "[Keep Your Home](#) ^[7]" foreclosure-prevention events in the Chicago suburbs (one in 2009 and three in 2010).

At these events, homeowners at-risk of foreclosure apply for loan modifications with help from volunteer real estate attorneys and HUD-certified counselors.

Shulruff and ATG also co-sponsored similar events in Peoria, Ill. and in Madison, Wisc. in 2009.

While presenting Shulruff with the award, O'Brien recalled the words of Professor John Wigmore, former Dean of Northwestern Law School, who, in commenting on lawyers' service to those in need, said that all lawyers should go forth and do likewise.

“The tireless and meaningful work Hank and the volunteer attorneys under Hank’s direction have provided through these unique partnerships is a shining example of how legal professionals can be part of the solution,” O’Brien stated.

“Presenting Hank with this important acknowledgement of his tireless efforts to help at-risk homeowners avoid foreclosure was one of my last acts as president of the ISBA,” concluded O’Brien, who finished his one-year term on June 25, 2010.

According to O’Brien, since 2008 the number of people who qualify for civil legal aid (based on income) increased 21 percent. At the same time, the State of Illinois slashed its budget for funding civil legal services by 50 percent, down to \$1,750,000.

O’Brien stated that Illinois lawyers provided 2.2 million hours of pro-bono work and donated \$14 million in 2009. Their combined contributions equal nearly a half billion dollars of donated time (based on an average billing rate of \$225 per hour).

“We’re extremely proud of the free legal advice and support Hank and the hundreds of other volunteer real estate attorneys continue to provide to at-risk homeowners,” said Peter Birnbaum, president of ATG. “Hank has helped to mobilize, recruit, train and volunteer hundreds of real estate attorneys to help at-risk homeowners.”

Three additional Fix Your Mortgage and two additional Keep Your home events are planned for the remainder of 2010. Co-sponsoring partners for the Fix Your Mortgage events include Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago ^[8] (NHS ^[4]) and the City of Chicago ^[9]. ATG and NHS are among the primary co-sponsors for the Keep Your Home suburban events.

The Illinois Real Estate Lawyers Association ^[10] (IRELA), South Suburban Bar Association ^[11], and Lake County Bar Association ^[12] have also played an integral role in the Keep Your Home events.

Through ATG’s extensive lawyer network, Shulruff and ATG have recruited and helped to train more than 500 volunteer attorneys to assist at-risk homeowners at these events.

Attorneys’ Title Guaranty Fund, Inc.

Through its nearly 4,000 member attorneys across Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana, Attorneys’ Title Guaranty has presided over more than 2.5 million home closings and provided homebuyers with competitively priced title insurance since 1964. The only bar-related title insurance company based in Illinois, ATG has built a significant market share by providing excellent service at competitive prices. It has a financial stability rating of “A Prime Unsurpassed” from the independent ratings bureau, Demotech.

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