

## **ASHI Client Bill of Rights**

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### **American Society of Home Inspectors® (ASHI®) Client Bill of Rights**

As a profession, home inspectors have an ethical obligation to the public. This obligation includes integrity, competency, honesty, confidentiality, objectivity and an interest in public safety. Fulfilling this obligation will promote and preserve public confidence in the profession. In recognition of this obligation, we hereby promote and proclaim these rights for our clients.

I. To be assured the inspector is objective in his or her reporting and will not knowingly understate or overstate the significance of reported conditions.

II. To be assured the inspector's opinion is based on genuine conviction within the scope of his or her education and experience.

III. To be assured the inspector stays current with the industry's body of knowledge through continuing education.

IV. To be assured the inspector will not disclose inspection results or client information without client approval.

V. To be assured the inspector has not accepted any form of compensation for recommending contractors, services or products.

VI. To be assured the inspector will not offer to repair or replace for compensation any component covered by the ASHI Standards of Practice for one year after the inspection.

VII. To be assured future referrals to the inspector from real estate agents are not dependent on the inspection findings or the sale of the property.

VIII. To be assured the home inspector has no financial interest in the transaction.

IX. To be assured the inspector is not receiving compensation for the inspection from any other party.

X. To be assured the inspector did not compensate the real estate agent or other party for the referral to the client.

### ***Introducing the ASHI Client Bill of Rights***

As the new ASHI Ethics Committee chairperson, I have been focusing more of my attention on our Code of Ethics (CoE) than ever before. Since ASHI President Brion Grant asked me to serve as the chair of the committee, I've spent a great deal of time studying the Request For Interpretations (RFIs) published since our CoE was modified several years ago.

In the midst of my intensive study of the CoE this spring, HBO aired a miniseries called "John Adams." The drama detailed our second president's life and accomplishments from the time of the infamous Boston Massacre to his death on July 4, 1826. While watching the series that encompassed the signing

of the Declaration of Independence and adoption of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, it occurred to me that our clients also have an expectation of certain rights from their ASHI home inspectors. Those rights are embedded in our Code of Ethics.

I started researching the subject and found other professional organization had developed various documents detailing the rights of their clients and other stakeholders. With this in mind, I sat down with a copy of the Code of Ethics and extracted 10 critical elements and placed them in the ASHI Client Bill of Rights. Ten seemed like an appropriate number given the U.S. Constitution Bill of Rights also contained 10 amendments to the constitution.

While there is nothing new in this ASHI Client Bill of Rights as far as requirements, it creates a shift in perspective. Typically, we have projected our CoE as an inspector's responsibility to perform in a given manner. If you look within the profession, most CoEs are a list of rules. While the ASHI CoE is of the utmost importance to us, there may be little understanding of some of the provisions among the general public, and our clients may not understand fully how our CoE protects and serves them.

The Client Bill of Rights shifts the focus from the inspector to the client. Our ethics are no longer something we 'do to ourselves' or rules we must follow, but rather a benefit we provide our clients. This is a significant shift and important distinction in the profession. A homebuyer can now personalize these rights as benefits provided by the ASHI inspector and better appreciate the need to hire an ASHI inspector.

A benefit of this new perspective is that we have a new slant on an old message to take to the public, a new public relations tool that ASHI can deliver to the media and generate positive public relations for our members. To this end, we are releasing this through our public relations firm, MS&L, to major newspapers around the country. Paul Staron, ASHI Public Relations Committee chair, will include The ASHI Client Bill of Rights in

ASHI's Realtor® association newsletter, "We Speak House." The bill will be broadcast to our members in the ASHI leadership newsletter, "First Thing," and in "The Inspector," our monthly e-newsletter to the members. It will also be sent to chapter public relations reps, and it will appear on our Web site, [ashi.org](http://ashi.org).

You have an excellent opportunity to promote this to the public locally. Local media are often interested in consumer advocacy stories, and you can use the ASHI Client Bill of Rights to promote your commitment to ASHI's high ethical standards. You also should consider posting the ASHI Client Bill of Rights on your Web site and may even want to provide a copy to your clients with the inspection report.

There is one other thing I think is noteworthy. Oftentimes, ASHI members and those in ASHI leadership complain about how long it can take ASHI to develop and deliver new and innovative concepts to the membership. In this case, the elapsed time from the day the ASHI Client Bill of Rights was written, reviewed by the Ethics Committee and subsequently approved by the Board of Directors was eight days.

In the "Report from the President" in the March issue of the ASHI Reporter, Brion Grant wrote that one of the goals of leadership was "to strengthen ASHI's position as the #1 association in the country." With the hiring of our new Executive Director Jeff Arnold, the adoption of the ASHI Client Bill of Rights and the other work going on in the committees, I'd say President Grant is on the fast track to achieving the goals he established for the year.