

**March 24, 2008**

**Wilfong seeks conciliation; \$9,075 in fines levied**

CHARLESTON – The co-president of the manufactured housing trade association in West Virginia told state regulators the industry seeks to improve the working relationship between the two in the future.

Kevin Wilfong, co-president of the West Virginia Housing Institute Inc., told the West Virginia Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Board's March 20 meeting his industry favors an era of conciliation between the groups.

Wilfong, co-owner of Middletown Home Sales of Fairmont, said regulators and industry members have drifted into an antagonist relationship he wants to dispel.

Wilfong suggested industry members and state regulators should hold informal meetings, which he described as "work-study session," to discuss areas of mutual concern in an atmosphere less formal than the meetings of the State Board.

Board member Jack Albert of Cross Lanes disagreed. He said the primary reason for the State Board was to protect consumers, not confer with the industry. "Our relationship with the consumer is much more important than our lobbying with the industry," Albert said. "... Primarily our basic mission is to protect the consumer."

Board member Bob Miller of Charleston said the State Board should hold meetings in the future outside Charleston so members of the manufactured housing industry could attend.

Wilfong said State Board meetings outside Charleston would be welcome.

Division of Labor Commissioner David Mullins said his agency, which regulates the industry, would like to "facilitate" cooperation between the State Board and the manufactured housing sector as long as its efforts do not violate state law.

In formal action, regulators imposed \$8,250 in fines on seven active and three inactive manufactured housing retail firms and levied a separate \$825 on companies with paperwork violations.

Another five companies received reprimands on cease and desist orders for employing unlicensed contractors to handle work for them.

The largest fines -- \$2,500 -- were imposed on a Lisbon, OH, company that is a former member of WVHI. It was fined for selling into West Virginia 10 floors from an unlicensed manufacturer.

A total of \$2,250 in fines were issued for three companies that no longer are in operation.

The board issued licenses to the following firms: manufacturer, Forest River Housing of Wakarusa, IN; dealer, Friendly Home Sales, LLC, of Daniels, Raleigh County, Joseph G. Smith; and contractor, Frank's Backhoe & Dozier of Marietta, OH.

The recovery fund set up by the industry to protect consumers now contains \$1.46 million.

The State Board sets its next meeting for 10 a.m. May 8 in Charleston.