

Don't fall into \$89 trap for N.J. deed copy

I would like to applaud the recent signing into law of a bill regulating deed procurement solicitations in New Jersey. As Gloucester County Clerk, I have been troubled by the frequent occurrence of deed procurement solicitations at far above the cost to acquire a copy of your deed directly from the Gloucester County Clerk's Office. These solicitations often have the appearance of an official document, when in reality it is nothing more than an attempt to take advantage of unsuspecting homeowners for profit.

The fact is obtaining a copy of a deed is neither expensive nor time consuming. Gloucester County homeowners may access their deeds online at uslandrecords.com for free at any time. If you would like a copy of your deed made by our office, the price is 5¢ per page and a certified copy costs only an additional \$2. We have seen the price for a certified copy as high as \$89 in deed solicitations brought to my office by residents.

While my office has been proactive in warning of these solicitations as we are made aware, Senate Bill 1962 now provides additional safeguards in the law. Companies are now required to notify my office in writing at least 15 days before the written solicitation of deed procurement services in Gloucester County. Under the new law, the solicitation must also provide the contact information of the County Clerk's office, as well as the fee to receive a copy of the deed from the County Clerk's office directly. We are confident these new measures will be an important step in preventing New Jersey homeowners from being deceived in the future.

I would like to thank Senate President Stephen Sweeney, Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez, and Assemblyman Paul Moriarty for their vigilance in protecting Gloucester County homeowners. Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez of the 5th Legislative District and Assemblyman Paul Moriarty of the 4th Legislative District were both primary sponsors on this bill and Senator Sweeney saw the bill through its passage in the Senate. We are fortunate to have legislators actively identifying and preventing deceptive business tactics in Gloucester County.

James N. Hogan
Gloucester County Clerk