



Department of Justice

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The Department of Justice yesterday filed a civil antitrust suit alleging that the Title Insurance Rating Bureau of Arizona Inc. (TIRBA) and its members conspired to fix prices on escrow services in Arizona.

Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti said the suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Phoenix, Arizona on Tuesday, September 23, 1980.

The complaint charges that the activities of TIRBA violate Section 1 of the Sherman Act. It asks that TIRBA and its members be enjoined from conspiring to fix prices on escrow services and that TIRBA withdraw all escrow rate filings made by it with the Director of Insurance of the State of Arizona's Department of Insurance.

Sanford M. Litvack, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Antitrust Division, said the complaint alleges that beginning in November, 1977, and continuing to the present, TIRBA conspired to fix, stabilize and maintain fees for escrow services in the state. All the title insurers who do business in Arizona are TIRBA members.

Escrow services are provided by agents who hold property, money or documents for delivery when a specified event occurs.

Escrow agents perform a variety of services in connection with various types of escrow transactions. Some of these services include drafting documents, obtaining information, paying debts, ordering title insurance, collecting rent or mortgage payments, and delivering title to property.

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A majority of real estate transactions in Arizona are closed through the use of escrow. Revenues of TIRBA members and subscribers from the provision and sale of escrow services in Arizona were in excess of \$34 million in the period 1978-1979.

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