



Contact:

Paula Sollami Covello, Esq.
Mercer County Clerk
Tel: (609) 989-6820
Email: pscovello@mercercounty.org
www.mercercounty.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**County Clerk Congratulates Senator Turner on Senate Passage of Her Bill
CRACKING DOWN ON MISLEADING DEED SOLICITATIONS**

TRENTON – Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello today congratulated Senator Shirley K. Turner on the Senate’s passage of the Senator’s bill yesterday to crack down on private companies that mislead unsuspecting homeowners by charging them inflated prices for a certified copy of their property deed, a service county clerk provides to the public for a nominal fee.

The bill (S1962) would protect consumers by requiring that private companies must disclose that there is a County Clerk that can provide deed procurement services at a lesser cost, and must disclose the address of the County Clerk in a clear, conspicuous and prominent manner on their solicitation. It would also regulate solicitation of deed procurement services by making the companies register with the NJ consumer fraud division prior to doing business in New Jersey and would subject the companies to penalties for non-compliance under the consumer fraud act.

An unlawful practice under the consumer fraud act is punishable by a monetary penalty of not more than \$10,000 for a first offense and not more than \$20,000 for any subsequent offense. In addition, a violation can result in cease and desist orders issued by the Attorney General, the assessment of punitive damages, and the awarding of treble damages and costs to the injured party.

“I’m so very pleased with the work of Senator Turner who continued to press for passage of this important legislation, said Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello. It is addressing an ongoing problem and should help many people from overpaying for certified copies of deeds, which most homeowners may not even need.”

County Clerk Sollami Covello began working with legislators, Senator Turner and former Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman prior to the bills first introduction in 2010 when she saw that many people were paying as much as \$79 for a certified copy of their deed when these can be obtained at \$10.00 plus \$1.50 for additional pages. "People were being swindled," said County Clerk Covello. We had been issuing warnings through the press but there was nothing unlawful about the practice. Ultimately, the legislators sponsored this bill and the legislation was endorsed by the Statewide County Clerks and their organization COANJ. It never became law. Yesterday, it moved through the Senate with a vote of 35-0 and will now head to the Assembly for further consideration.

"This legislation will crack down on this deceitful practice and ensure that individuals who engage in this kind of activity face hefty penalties for their action," said Senator Turner.

"As County Clerks, we are grateful to have this bill move forward as a vehicle to enforce penalties on these companies and their predatory practices so that people will not be victimized any longer," said County Clerk Sollami Covello.

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