

Timeshare Owners' Best Friend

By Scott Riddle

I would like to share some information with you regarding a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enhancing vacation ownership: ARDA -ROC (Resort Owners' Coalition). Although ARDA was founded to support the developers of timeshare resorts, ARDA-ROC's goal is to represent timeshare owners in the jurisdictions of their vacation ownership(s) where they may, or may not, reside on a full-time basis. The more I have researched ARDA-ROC, the more I have come to respect who they are and what they do.

ARDA-ROC seeks to be the "voice" of timeshare owners and has the stated objective of gaining a "seat" at the table when legislative issues in any forum may impact timeshare owners. This organization is our political "watchdog" that attempts to keep an eye on our interests when potential legislation is being considered by governing bodies.

While at the recent ARDA convention, I had the opportunity to speak with Kenneth McKelvey, the Chairman of ARDA-ROC. ARDA-ROC is a membership organization, comprised of over one million timeshare owners, who voluntarily contribute funds (normally \$3 to \$10) per year to advocate local, state and federal policies that are beneficial to timeshare owners. In addition, ARDA-ROC works to eliminate, reduce or modify any legislation that is not in the best interest of timeshare owners. Operations are overseen by an appointed Executive Group composed of industry professionals in the field of timeshare property management and a member elected from the ROC members.

Each year, ARDA-ROC engages staff, either through a management agreement with ARDA or independent consultants, counselors, lobbyists or attorneys, in almost every state where timeshare has a serious presence, as well as many independent countries in the Caribbean. ARDA-ROC is currently involved in defense of timeshare owners in nine states and three Caribbean islands. Some examples of recent operations of ARDA-ROC include the following:

1. Opposed a 300% tax increase in the State of Hawaii;
2. Worked to defeat a proposed Transient Occupancy Tax in SC;
3. Introduced Non-Judicial Foreclosure legislation in Wisconsin
4. Supported the clarification of Non-Judicial Foreclosure in Maine
5. Worked to protect timeshare owners against harmful changes to the Utah timeshare act.

The organization has been focused on all of the above during just the past 3 months. In these trying economic times, timeshare owners must have an organization to deal with such issues, or face new taxes and a legislative bias to taxing the non-voter. ARDA-ROC stands between such legislation and you. Kenneth McKelvey advised me that the amount of work being done by ARDA-ROC has been on-going for some time now, and wants every timeshare owner to be aware.

ARDA-ROC recognizes that most

timeshare owners have not had, until recently, the necessary means to keep up with any and all potential legislation that may negatively impact their ownership.

To improve communications and awareness, ARDA-ROC has recently completed a new website -- www.arda-roc.org. This site is designed to inform timeshare owners in matters that may impact their ownership. Owners can view what is in the pipeline for their resort's particular location, get email updates, and participate in the front line action. I suggest you visit the website as soon as possible to learn about any circumstances that may impact your home resort(s).

ARDA-ROC believes timeshare owners are great citizens and are more than prepared to pay their fair share of any tax burden necessary for the various programs and services that governmental entities are providing. The organization is in favor of "fair" representation, and "fair" tax sharing, but opposed to "owners being taxed because no votes are in those that get taxed." It attempts to support the necessary alterations to present laws to ensure such policies.

ARDA-ROC is working for you in many states on such issues as non-judicial foreclosure, resale issues, "post-card/transfer" companies, and scams directed at timeshare owners. Their intent is to be helpful to owners and resort homeowner associations in any way possible. They are interested in hearing from you directly because timeshare needs your pro-active participation.

In conclusion, I would like to express my professional opinion: ARDA-ROC is a great organization and deserves the support of every timeshare owner. It should bring some peace of mind to all timeshare owners that there is someone fighting such battles as taxation without representation that have the potential to effect every owner.

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