



Jeffrey D. DeBoer

EDITORS' NOTE *Jeff DeBoer has served as President and CEO of The Real Estate Roundtable since 1997 and, through a variety of positions, he has been at the forefront of every major piece of legislation affecting the real estate industry over the past 30 years. DeBoer also serves as Chairman of the Real Estate Industry Information Sharing and Analysis Center (RE-ISAC). He is Chairman of the National Real Estate Organizations. He also served as Co-Chairman of the Advisory Board of the RAND Corporation's Center for Terrorism Risk Management Policy, and was a founding member of the steering committee of the Coalition to Insure Against Terrorism (CIAT). DeBoer additionally serves on the Advisory Board of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the Virginia Bar Association and the American Bar Association. DeBoer earned a law degree from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia and an undergraduate degree from Yankton College in Yankton, South Dakota.*

ORGANIZATION BRIEF *The Real Estate Roundtable (rer.org) brings together leaders of the nation's publicly-held and privately owned real estate ownership, development, lending and management firms with the leaders of national real estate trade associations to jointly address key national policy issues relating to real estate and the overall economy. Collectively, Roundtable members' portfolios contain over 12 billion square feet of office, retail and industrial properties valued at more than \$1 trillion; over 1.5 million apartment units; and in excess of 2.5 million hotel rooms. Participating trade associations represent more than 1.5 million people involved in virtually every aspect of the real estate business.*

How did the original mission develop for The Real Estate Roundtable and how have the efforts evolved?

Our original goal was to provide a vehicle for the chairmen, presidents, and CEOs of the leading companies in the real estate industry to connect with Washington in a much more organized way than they had previously. We wanted to unite the broad-based real estate industry

The Power of Real Estate

**An Interview with Jeffrey D. DeBoer,
Founding President and Chief Executive Officer, The Real Estate Roundtable**

leadership with the many trade associations that have for a long time participated in Washington in advancing their more parochial interests.

It is built off the fact that the real estate industry is extremely broad-based; it's extremely balkanized in terms of product type, with many different product types; and it also is diverse in terms of structure.

Our goal was to unite the leadership of the leading real estate firms with the leadership of the trade associations to develop a more cohesive and organized way to communicate with Washington about real estate and about public policies that affect real estate.

How well-understood is it that real estate is the foundation for much of our economic strength?

It's much more understood today than it was 10 years ago, certainly in Washington. At a local level, for example, it's always been understood that when real estate markets are healthy and single-family and income-producing real estate values grow in local communities, it means the local communities are growing themselves, and that they are positive places in which to live, and to educate and raise children.

Nationally, that message is sometimes overlooked. It has to be continually reinforced that it is real estate that is providing the predominant source of revenue for state, local, and federal governments; it accounts for a huge percentage of tax revenues, especially on a local level where nearly 70 percent of all tax revenues are attributable in some way to real estate. Then there is the job factor – direct and indirect jobs in real estate now count for 9 or 10 million people in America.

Sometimes when you're everywhere, it can seem as if you're nowhere. It's not as if real estate is an industry that has a particular geographic strength over some other part of the country; there are no senators, for example, who represent the real estate industry. This means we have to work very hard nationally to reinforce the link between real estate and growing economies and jobs, and healthy and safe communities.

We want people to talk about why we need good public policy for the real estate asset, and the reason we need it is because it's what makes America a great place.

What are the key policy issues you're facing today and where do you stand in dealing with them?

We look at these issues based on what is good for the asset – and the asset is income-producing real estate. We're not looking at public policy issues from the perspective of making it great for investing in real estate. We want to look at it from the asset out: for example, having the right kind of steady tax rules applied to real estate. We're not looking for a lot of subsidy, we're not looking for a lot of penalty; we just want real estate to be taxed fairly.

The same holds true for the way the lending policies apply to real estate, or for energy-related issues, or for making our buildings safe for people to work in or shop in.

As tax reform is debated in Washington, we want the industry to be taxed on a just economic basis. We address issues like what the depreciation table should be for real estate and what the capital gains rules should be for real estate.

A big issue today is the terrorism risk insurance program, which is a program that was put in place after 9/11. That program is set to expire at the end of this year; we need that insurance to continue to be available.

We're very interested in the way a foreign investment into U.S. real estate is taxed. Right now, there is foreign capital that investors would like to put in the U.S. but we have some barriers in the tax laws that discourage capital investment in real estate here compared to other parts of the world. We think those rules should be level.

We have a great debate going on in this country about energy policy and usually it surrounds how we can produce more of one type of energy and less of another type of energy. We want to promote a point of view where real estate should be a big part of this discussion on energy because our buildings and the tenants in these buildings use a lot of energy. If we can help make buildings more energy efficient, we can save energy, and that's good for the buildings and also good for the whole energy debate.

How would you describe your leadership style?

My key tenant is honesty. The truth can hurt, but if you are not leading from an honest position, then decisions that flow from that position are distorted, and are made and implemented for the wrong reasons. I also like to benefit from all kinds of perspectives. I will always listen. Finally, I make sure it is my own path I'm following and not someone else's, and then pursue that path in a way that demonstrates that I'm not afraid to fail. ●