

Realtors praise digital signature legislation

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Posted: 03:53 PM Wednesday, April 13, 2011

OKLAHOMA CITY – A bill awaiting Gov. Mary Fallin’s signature would allow real estate deals in the state to be signed with a few mouse clicks instead of ink on paper.

Senate Bill 657, sponsored by state Sen. Clark Jolley, R-Edmond, and state Rep. Aaron Stiles, R-Norman, will allow digital signatures to be used to finalize real estate contracts for the first time in Oklahoma.

Both the Oklahoma House of Representatives and the Senate voted unanimously to pass the digital signature bill, which was sent to the governor on April 7.

“By passing SB 657, Oklahoma has joined 46 other states in recognizing that our world today is electronic,” said Hope White, president of the Oklahoma Association of Realtors.

The association pushed for the legislation to help make real estate transactions more efficient, especially for deals involving out-of-state parties, said Charla Slabotsky, vice president of government affairs for the Oklahoma Association of Realtors.

“This will take the place of what might have been done through snail mail in the past. It’s a burden, especially to consumers in other states,” Slabotsky said.

Oklahoma was one of 47 states that adopted a piece of model legislation about 10 years ago called the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act that gave electronic signatures the same validity as the old-fashioned kind.

However, Oklahoma added a clause to the bill that required the secretary of state to set up a registry to regulate the process, but the new authority was never established.

“It was one of those things that, looking back 10 years ago, nobody can remember why we changed it,” Slabotsky said.

Senate Bill 657 simply eliminates the need for a state registry.

Over the past decade, several software companies have developed digital signature programs that cannot be duplicated by other parties and are automatically time-stamped.

Fallin is expected to sign the digital signature bill into law within the next few days, allowing it to take effect immediately.