

NYKIA WRIGHT BECOMES PERMANENT NAR CEO

Joining as interim CEO in the wake of the Burnett verdict and the association's sexual harassment controversy, Wright has navigated one of the most exacting times in NAR's history, and is now ready to start turning the tide: "I am clear-eyed about our past and present, and I am hyper-focused on building trust."

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By Maria Patterson August 19, 2024 Reading Time: 6 mins read [🗨](#)



As the residential real estate industry begins a new chapter, marked by material changes to how business is conducted, the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) has named Nykia Wright its permanent chief executive officer, effective immediately.

An accomplished business executive and former CEO of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Wright has served in the interim CEO role since November 20, 2023, [stepping in post-Burnett verdict](#) when former CEO Bob Goldberg hastened his [planned retirement](#), originally scheduled for December of this year. Since then, Wright has navigated perhaps the most exacting time in the association's—and the industry's—history, [pushing back against an onslaught of media backlash](#) and overseeing [NAR's monumental and controversial decision to settle](#) the Burnett lawsuit.

"I am honored to have earned the confidence and trust from the Leadership Team to guide this organization at such a critical point. I am committed to ensuring our association remains a powerful and effective voice for the industry and to fulfilling our goal to bring the privilege of homeownership to more Americans," Wright said in a statement. "I am clear-eyed about our past and present, and I am hyper-focused on building trust with NAR's many stakeholders so that we can be successful in ensuring we are bringing the best of NAR to each and every one of our members."

From sexual harassment to blackmail to a \$418M settlement, the drama plaguing NAR in the past year elicited a barrage of slings and arrows, even leading to the formation of an [alternative organization](#). It has also [garnered support from many](#). One of the association's most active advocates post Burnett has been its [2024 president Kevin Sears, stepping into the role](#) early after the controversial resignations of [Kenny Parcell due to sexual harassment allegations](#) and [Tracy Kasper who stepped down](#) after an apparent blackmail threat.

"I am thrilled Nykia is staying on board to lead us through this time of transformation," said Sears, broker-associate of Sears Real Estate/Lamacchia Realty in Springfield, Massachusetts, in a statement. "She has been instrumental in leading us up to this point, and her unwavering commitment to our members makes her the ideal steward for guiding our association through the evolving real estate landscape."

During her initial tenure, Wright shepherded the association in early 2024 through negotiations to settle and resolve claims brought on behalf of homesellers related to broker commissions, a decision she firmly supports.

"We have to understand what we were faced with. It's not like we had an entire option set that we were given. This was the path that made the most sense for us," said [Wright during a podcast last week with NextHome's James Dwiggins and Keith Robinson](#).

During the podcast, Wright also took umbrage with the widespread and public debate taking place since the lawsuits, voicing concerns that it will lead to more divisiveness and further legal scrutiny. "I understand that people are frustrated with things, but bring that frustration in-house so that we can be the best organization that we can be," she said.

Priority one: rebuilding trust

According to a release, under Wright's leadership, "NAR is sharpening its focus on its core mission of serving members, communicating more deliberately and working to become a more agile organization."

One of Wright's immediate priorities will be guiding NAR through the [implementation of proposed settlement practice changes](#) and prioritizing ongoing education, training and compliance for consumers and agents.

"We are committed to making sure people always understand how to facilitate the next transaction," Wright told RISMedia. "That's going to require a lot of work and education on our part, and we are very aware of that mandate."

Another key priority near-term is restoring trust. Wright told RISMedia that she will work to "restore the reputation of the REALTOR® in places where there is distrust," and showcase REALTORS® as "builders of communities," not just brokers of real estate transactions.

"Regaining trust and maintaining established trust with all of NAR's stakeholders, from members and staff to partner organizations and the public, is a consistent priority," said Wright. "Trust-building comes from putting a real value and emphasis on transparency, clear and deliberate communication, and mutual understanding."

"I think it's important that we showcase REALTORS® not only as experienced, trusted guides in the home-buying and -selling process, but also as central figures in building community and connectivity. Real estate agents are central to the transaction, of course, but they're also central to their communities. They are our neighbors, PTO volunteers, city council members, policy advocates and ambassadors for the free market."

In order to further restore NAR's reputation, Wright will turn the focus on the association's advocacy power. "A major factor in moving forward is showcasing the impact of our advocacy and how it impacts everyday Americans," she said. "We are going to continue to prioritize advocating for affordability and expanding homeownership access to all Americans that want to buy property by continuing to stress inventory factors, the impact of inflation and the consumer impact of the changing insurance landscape."

"We also need to keep a keen eye on historically disenfranchised populations and advocacy efforts," she added, "continuing to prioritize our work in fair housing, advancing our support for veterans and the like. We need to be sober-minded about the implications of any policies we propose to ensure those groups are benefiting in our economy and not being inadvertently left behind."

Additionally, Wright is guiding the implementation of NAR's Culture Transformation Commission—a group of more than 70 members, including state and local association staff and NAR staff selected through a collaborative process—which was established to identify and break down impediments to being an inclusive, welcoming and respectful organization for all individuals and to ensure that the association meets the evolving needs of members well into the future.

Wright brings a breadth of executive leadership and strategic advisory experience to NAR. Previously, as CEO of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, she led the newspaper through a sweeping digital transformation and a merger with WBEZ (Chicago Public Media), which created one of the largest nonprofit local newsrooms in the country. She is a recognized leader in the media industry for managing significant disruption, driving change and implementing digital transformation at the newspaper.

Wright began her career in the financial services industry and, prior to leading the *Sun-Times*, was a strategy and business transformation consultant who advised Fortune 500 companies and top-tier universities on operational, financial and performance improvement projects.

She is also the co-founder of SonicMESSENGER, a software-as-a-service (SaaS) startup helping democratize audience engagement and measurement by leveraging smart audio.

Wright serves on the board of the Better Government Association, and she is a member of the Dean's Advisory Council at her alma mater, the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth.

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