

Editorial – Lancaster New Era – July 22, 2011

Bad bankers have not changed ways

The financial crisis and recession that still plague our nation did not occur by chance. Crooked and greedy bankers and mortgage processors made it happen and walked away with piles of cash.

And not one of them has gone to jail.

Some companies have been fined, but no individual has paid a cent.

No individual has been held accountable for operating the scandalous scheme that stole billions of dollars and threw millions of people out of their homes and jobs.

And, because they got away with it once, they seem to be intent on doing it all over again.

A major sign: The illegal practice known as robo-signing is continuing in the mortgage industry. That is, many banks and mortgage lenders are still forging signatures on mortgage documents without carefully considering them.

Such robo-signed documents have led to banks wrongfully foreclosing on people who had paid their mortgages in full, as well as other problems that have hurt individuals and helped undermine the housing industry and the economy.

When the practice was first uncovered last autumn, banks and mortgage companies promised to stop doing it.

But the Associated Press reported early this week that county officials in at least three states say they have received thousands of mortgage documents with questionable signatures in the past few months.

"The same risky practices that put our economy on the brink of collapse continue to infect the housing market," says Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, chair of the Senate's Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection Subcommittee.

She says the subcommittee will hold a hearing.

Other lawmakers and enforcement agencies also are calling for hearings and further investigations.

But all the hearings and investigations in the world won't change anything until the government gets serious about jailing and fining illegal behavior.

If one executive went to jail from Goldman Sachs or any of the other companies that sold mortgages that were bound to fail and then robo-signed away the houses of legitimate homeowners, this insanity might end.

Or at least these "white-collar criminals" would think twice before they tried it again.

It is unbelievable that this nation has endured an economic catastrophe rivaling the Great Depression, primarily because of wrongdoing by executives and their minions at major companies, and the guilty parties -- with the exception of Bernie Madoff -- have not been called to account.

Millions of Americans have suffered while the perpetrators have walked away.

Where are the regulators?

Where are the prosecutors?

Stop robo-signing and all fraud and illegal procedures now: Send a banker to jail.