4 illegal things Notaries should NEVER DO

1. **Entering false information on a Notary certificate**
   - **What does this mean?** Signers sometimes ask Notaries to write a different date for the notarization (known as “backdating”) or alter other information in the certificate (such as listing an absent signer as present during a notarization). **Never do this.**
   - **Why is this illegal?** If you falsify information on a certificate, whoever possesses the fraudulently notarized document can use it to commit fraud.
   - **What are the consequences?** Knowingly falsifying a Notary certificate is prohibited in every state and can result in you paying a fine of thousands of dollars or going to jail.

2. **Failing to require a signer to personally appear during a notarization**
   - **What does this mean?** When you notarize, the signer must personally appear — either by physically being present for a traditional pen-and-paper notarization, or by appearing and communicating with you using methods approved by your state during a remote notarization. **Never notarize without the signer’s personal appearance.**
   - **Why is it illegal?** If you notarize a signature without the signer personally appearing, you have no way to know if the person signed the document willingly — or if the signature was falsified by someone else.
   - **What are the consequences?** Failing to require personal appearance could cause you to lose your commission, pay a hefty fine, or in some states, be found guilty of a misdemeanor offense.

3. **Letting someone else use your seal**
   - **What does this mean?** Only you — the commissioned Notary — are authorized to use your official seal to perform notarizations. **Never let anyone else use your Notary seal.**
   - **Why is it illegal?** Your official seal is used to authenticate every notarization you do. In the wrong hands, a seal could be used to fool authorities into accepting a falsified document as authentic.
   - **What are the consequences?** In some states, letting someone else use the seal is a misdemeanor or requires the Notary to pay a fine. Also, if someone uses your seal to commit fraud, you may be potentially liable for a lawsuit from the victims.

4. **Charging an improper Notary fee**
   - **What does this mean?** When charging a signer for your services, you should never charge a higher Notary fee than your state allows. You must also avoid charging fees that are not allowed in your state.
   - **Why is it illegal?** The fees Notaries can charge are regulated by state law. These regulations are in place to protect customers from being unfairly price-gouged by Notaries. While some states do not set maximum fees, they may have other guidelines, such as requiring any Notary fee charged to be “reasonable.”
   - **What are the consequences?** In some states, charging improper fees may result in your commission being suspended or revoked.

Learn more at: NationalNotary.org

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