

ACT 282

H.B. NO. 1989

A Bill for an Act Relating to Condominiums.

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

SECTION 1. Section 514A-90, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

**“§514A-90 Priority of lien.** (a) All sums assessed by the association of apartment owners but unpaid for the share of the common expenses chargeable to any apartment constitute a lien on the apartment prior to all other liens, except [only] (1) liens for taxes and assessments lawfully imposed by governmental authority against the apartment, and (2) all sums unpaid on any mortgage of record which was recorded prior to the recordation of a notice of a lien by the association of apartment owners, and costs and expenses including attorneys’ fees provided in such mortgages. The lien of the association of apartment owners may be foreclosed by action by the manager or board of directors, acting on behalf of the apartment owners, in like manner as a mortgage of real property. In any such foreclosure the apartment owner shall be required to pay a reasonable rental for the apartment, if so provided in the bylaws, and the plaintiff in the foreclosure shall be entitled to the appointment of a receiver to collect the same. The manager or board of directors, acting on behalf of the apartment owners, may, unless prohibited by the declaration, bid on the apartment at foreclosure sale, and acquire and hold, lease, mortgage, and convey the same. Action to recover a money judgment for unpaid common expenses shall be maintainable without foreclosing or waiving the lien securing the same.

(b) Where the mortgagee of a mortgage of record or other purchaser of an apartment obtains title to the apartment as a result of foreclosure of the mortgage, the acquirer of title[,] and the acquirer’s successors and assigns[,] shall not be liable for the share of the common expenses or assessments by the association of apartment owners chargeable to the apartment which became due prior to the acquisition of title to the apartment by the acquirer. The unpaid share of common expenses or assessments shall be deemed to be common expenses collectible from all of the apartment owners, including the acquirer[,] and the acquirer’s successors[,] and assigns.

(c) No apartment owner shall withhold any assessment claimed by the association. An apartment owner who disputes the amount of an assessment may request a written statement clearly indicating:

- (1) The amount of common expenses included in the assessment, including the due date of each amount claimed;

- (2) The amount of any penalty, late fee, lien filing fee, and any other charge included in the assessment;
- (3) The amount of attorneys' fees and costs, if any, included in the assessment;
- (4) That under Hawaii law, an apartment owner has no right to withhold assessments for any reason;
- (5) That an apartment owner has a right to demand mediation or arbitration to resolve disputes about the amount or validity of an association's assessment, provided the apartment owner immediately pays the assessment in full and keeps assessments current; and
- (6) That payment in full of the assessment does not prevent the owner from contesting the assessment or receiving a refund of amounts not owed.

Nothing in this section shall limit the rights of an owner to the protection of all fair debt collection procedures mandated under federal and state law.

(d) An apartment owner who pays an association the full amount claimed by the association may file in small claims court or require the association to mediate to resolve any disputes concerning the amount or validity of the association's claim. If the apartment owner and the association are unable to resolve the dispute through mediation, either party may file for arbitration under part VII of this chapter; provided that an apartment owner may only file for arbitration if all amounts claimed by the association are paid in full on or before the date of filing. If the apartment owner fails to keep all association assessments current during the arbitration, the association may ask the arbitrator to temporarily suspend the arbitration proceedings. If the apartment owner pays all association assessments within thirty days of the date of suspension, the apartment owner may ask the arbitrator to recommence the arbitration proceedings. If the owner fails to pay all association assessments by the end of the thirty day period, the association may ask the arbitrator to dismiss the arbitration proceedings. The apartment owner shall be entitled to a refund of any amounts paid to the association which are not owed."

SECTION 2. Section 514A-94, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

**"§514A-94 Attorneys' fees and expenses of enforcement.** (a) All costs and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred by or on behalf of the association for:

- (1) Collecting any delinquent assessments against any owner's apartment;
- (2) Foreclosing any lien thereon; or
- (3) Enforcing any provision of the declaration, bylaws, house rules, and the Condominium Property Act; or the rules of the real estate commission;

against an owner, occupant, tenant, employee of an owner, or any other person who may in any manner use the property shall be promptly paid on demand to the association by such person or persons; provided that if the claims upon which the association takes any action are not substantiated, all costs and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred by any such person or persons as a result of the action of the association, shall be promptly paid on demand to such person or persons by the association.

(b) If any claim by an owner is substantiated in any action against an association, any of its officers or directors, or its board of directors to enforce any

provision of the declaration, bylaws, house rules, or this chapter, then all reasonable and necessary expenses, costs, and attorneys' fees incurred by an owner shall be awarded to such owner; provided that no such award shall be made in any derivative action unless:

- (1) The owner first shall have demanded and allowed reasonable time for the board of directors to pursue such enforcement; or,
- (2) The owner demonstrates to the satisfaction of the court that a demand for enforcement made to the board of directors would have been fruitless.

If any claim by an owner is not substantiated in any court action against an association, any of its officers or directors, or its board of directors to enforce any provision of the declaration, bylaws, house rules, or this chapter, then all reasonable and necessary expenses, costs, and attorneys' fees incurred by an association shall be awarded to the association, unless the action was filed in small claims court or prior to filing the action in a higher court the owner has first submitted the claim to mediation, or to arbitration under part VII of this chapter, and made a good faith effort to resolve the dispute under any of those procedures."

SECTION 3. Section 514A-121, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

**"§514A-121 Arbitration of disputes.** (a) At the request of any party, any dispute concerning or involving one or more apartment owners and an association of apartment owners, its board of directors, managing agent, or one or more other apartment owners relating to the interpretation, application or enforcement of chapter 514A or the association's declaration, bylaws, or house rules adopted in accordance with its bylaws shall be submitted to arbitration. The arbitration shall be conducted, unless otherwise agreed by the parties, in accordance with the rules adopted by the commission and the provisions of chapter 658; provided that the Horizontal Property Regime Rules on Arbitration of Disputes of the American Arbitration Association shall be used until the commission adopts its rules; provided further that where any arbitration rule conflicts with chapter 658, chapter 658 shall prevail; provided further that notwithstanding any rule to the contrary, the arbitrator shall conduct the proceedings in a manner which affords substantial justice to all parties. The arbitrator shall be bound by rules of substantive law and shall not be bound by rules of evidence, whether or not set out by statute, except for provisions relating to privileged communications. The arbitrator shall permit discovery as provided for in the Hawaii rules of civil procedure; provided that the arbitrator may restrict the scope of such discovery for good cause to avoid excessive delay and costs to the parties or the arbitrator may refer any matter involving discovery to the circuit court for disposition in accordance with the Hawaii rules of civil procedure then in effect.

(b) Nothing in subsection (a) shall be interpreted to mandate the arbitration of any dispute involving:

- (1) The real estate commission;
- (2) The mortgagee of a mortgage of record;
- (3) The developer, general contractor, subcontractors, or design professionals for the project; provided that when any person exempted by this paragraph is also an apartment owner, a director, or managing agent, such person shall, in those capacities, be subject to the provisions of subsection (a);
- (4) Actions seeking equitable relief involving threatened property damage or the health or safety of apartment owners or any other person;

- (5) Actions to collect assessments which are liens or subject to foreclosure; provided that an apartment owner who pays the full amount of an assessment and fulfills the requirements of section 514A-90(d) shall have the right to demand arbitration of the owner's dispute, including a dispute about the amount and validity of the assessment;
- (6) Personal injury claims;
- (7) Actions for amounts in excess of \$2,500 against an association of apartment owners, a board of directors, or one or more directors, officers, agents, employees, or other persons, if insurance coverage under a policy or policies procured by the association of apartment owners or its board of directors would be unavailable because action by arbitration was pursued; or
- (8) Any other cases which are determined, as provided in section 514A-122, to be unsuitable for disposition by arbitration."

SECTION 4. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 18, 1991.)