

**ACT 236**

S.B. NO. 36

A Bill for an Act Relating to Condominiums.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that associations of apartment owners are increasingly burdened by the costs and expenses connected with the collection of delinquent maintenance and other common expenses.

The legislature further finds that the number of foreclosures in this State has greatly increased, and that associations of apartment owners are often required to bear an unfair share of the economic burden when purchasers in foreclosure actions exercise rights of ownership over purchased apartments without paying their share of common maintenance fees and assessments.

The legislature further finds that more frequently associations of apartment owners are having to increase maintenance fee assessments due to increasing delinquencies and related enforcement expenses. This places an unfair burden on those non-delinquent apartment owners who must bear an unfair share of the common expenses, and is particularly inequitable when a delinquent owner is also an occupant who has benefited from the common privileges and services.

The legislature further finds that there is a need for clarification regarding the authority of associations of apartment owners to use non-judicial and power of sale foreclosure procedures to enforce liens for unpaid common expenses.

The legislature further finds that there is a need for clarification as to where associations of apartment owners may deposit or hold their funds, and how they may invest their funds.

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Allow associations of apartment owners to collect delinquent maintenance and common expenses directly from the tenant of a delinquent owner;
- (2) Clarify the law by specifying when a purchaser in a foreclosure action becomes responsible for assessments and maintenance fees;
- (3) Allow associations of apartment owners the alternative remedy for collecting fees and expenses from delinquent owner-occupants by withholding common privileges and terminate common services to owner-occupied apartments until the delinquent sums are paid;
- (4) Clarify that associations of apartment owners may enforce liens for unpaid common expenses by non-judicial and power of sale foreclosure procedures, as an alternative to legal action;
- (5) Specify where and in what types of investments associations of apartment owners may place their funds.

SECTION 2. Chapter 514A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

**"§514A- Collection from tenants.** (a) If the owner of an apartment rents or leases the apartment and is in default for thirty days or more in the payment of the apartment's share of the common expenses, the board of directors, for as long as the default continues, may demand in writing and receive each month from any tenant occupying the apartment, an amount sufficient to pay all sums due from the apartment owner to the association, including interest, if any, but the amount shall not exceed the tenant's rent due each month. The tenant's payment under this section shall discharge that amount of payment from the tenant's rent obligation, and any contractual provision to the contrary shall be void as a matter of law.

(b) Prior to taking any action under this section, the board of directors shall give to the delinquent apartment owner written notice of its intent to collect the rent owed. The notice shall:

- (1) Be sent both by first-class and certified mail;
- (2) Set forth the exact amount the association claims is due and owing by the apartment owner; and
- (3) Indicate the intent of the board of directors to collect such amount from the rent, along with any other amounts that become due and remain unpaid.

(c) The apartment owner shall not take any retaliatory action against the tenant for payments made under this section.

(d) The payment of any portion of the apartment's share of common expenses by the tenant pursuant to a written demand by the board is a complete defense, to the extent of the amount demanded and paid by the tenant, in an action for nonpayment of rent brought by the apartment owner against a tenant.

(e) The board may not demand payment from the tenant pursuant to this section if:

- (1) A commissioner or receiver has been appointed to take charge of the premises pending a mortgage foreclosure;
- (2) A mortgagee is in possession pending a mortgage foreclosure; or
- (3) The tenant is served with a court order directing payment to a third party.

(f) In the event of any conflict between this section and any provision of chapter 521, the conflict shall be resolved in favor of this section; provided that if the tenant is entitled to an offset of rent under chapter 521, the tenant may deduct the offset from the amount due to the association, up to the limits stated in chapter 521. Nothing herein precludes the apartment owner or tenant from seeking equitable

relief from a court of competent jurisdiction or seeking a judicial determination of the amount owed.

(g) Before the board of directors may take the actions permitted under subsection (a), the board must adopt a written policy providing for the actions and have the policy approved by a majority vote of the apartment owners at an annual or special meeting of the association or by the written consent of a majority of the apartment owners.”

SECTION 3. Section 514A-82, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

“(b) In addition to the requirements of subsection (a), the bylaws shall provide for:

- (1) The method of removal from office of directors; that at any regular or special meeting of the apartment owners, any one or more members of the board of directors may be removed by the apartment owners and successors shall then and there be elected for the remainder of the term to fill the vacancies thus created. The removal and replacement shall be in accordance with all applicable requirements and procedures in the bylaws for the removal and replacement of directors, including, but not limited to, any provisions relating to cumulative voting. If removal and replacement is to occur at a special association meeting, the call for the meeting shall be by the president or by a petition to the secretary or managing agent signed by not less than twenty-five per cent of the apartment owners as shown in the association’s record of ownership; and provided further that if the secretary or managing agent shall fail to send out the notices for the special meeting within fourteen days of receipt of the petition, then the petitioners shall have the authority to set the time, date, and place for the special meeting and to send out the notices for the special meeting in accordance with the requirements of the bylaws. Except as otherwise provided herein, the meeting for the removal and replacement from office of directors shall be scheduled, noticed, and conducted in accordance with the bylaws of the association.
- (2) The bylaws may be amended at any time by the vote or written consent of sixty-five per cent of all apartment owners; provided that each one of the particulars set forth in this section shall be embodied in the bylaws always; and provided further that any proposed bylaws with the rationale for the proposal may be submitted by the board of directors or by a volunteer apartment owners’ committee. If submitted by that committee, it shall be accompanied by a petition signed by not less than twenty-five per cent of the apartment owners as shown in the association’s record of ownership. The proposed bylaws, rationale, and ballots for voting on any proposed bylaw shall be mailed by the board of directors to the owners at the expense of the association for vote or written consent without change within thirty days of the receipt of the petition by the board of directors. The vote or written consent required to adopt the proposed bylaw shall not be less than sixty-five per cent of all apartment owners; provided that the vote or written consent must be obtained within one hundred twenty days after mailing. In the event that the bylaw is duly adopted, then the board shall cause the bylaw amendment to be recorded in the bureau of conveyances or filed in the land court, as the case may be. The volunteer apartment owners’ committee shall be precluded from submitting a petition for a proposed

bylaw that is substantially similar to that which has been previously mailed to the owners within one year after the original petition was submitted to the board. This subsection shall not preclude any apartment owner or voluntary apartment owners' committee from proposing any bylaw amendment at any annual association meeting.

- (3) Notices of association meetings, whether annual or special, shall be sent to each member of the association of apartment owners at least fourteen days prior to the meeting, and shall contain at least: the date, time, and place of the meeting, the items on the agenda for the meeting, and a standard proxy form authorized by the association, if any.
- (4) No resident manager or managing agent shall solicit, for use by the manager or managing agent, any proxies from any apartment owner of the association of owners that employs the resident manager or managing agent, nor shall the resident manager or managing agent cast any proxy vote at any association meeting except for the purpose of establishing a quorum. No member of a board of directors who uses association funds to solicit proxies shall cast any of these proxy votes for the election or reelection of board members at any association meeting unless the proxy form specifically authorizes the board member to vote for the election or reelection of board directors and the board first posts notice of its intent to solicit proxies in prominent locations within the project at least thirty days prior to its solicitation of proxies; provided that if the board receives within seven days of the posted notice a request by any owner for use of association funds to solicit proxies accompanied by a statement, the board shall mail to all owners either:
  - (A) A proxy form containing the names of all owners who have requested the use of association funds for soliciting proxies accompanied by their statements; or
  - (B) A proxy form containing no names, but accompanied by a list of names of all owners who have requested the use of association funds for soliciting proxies and their statements.

The statement shall not exceed one hundred words, indicating the owner's qualifications to serve on the board and reasons for wanting to receive proxies.

- (5) A director who has a conflict of interest on any issue before the board shall disclose the nature of the conflict of interest prior to a vote on that issue at the board meeting, and the minutes of the meeting shall record the fact that a disclosure was made.
- (6) The apartment owners shall have the irrevocable right, to be exercised by the board of directors, to have access to each apartment from time to time during reasonable hours as may be necessary for the operation of the property or for making emergency repairs therein necessary to prevent damage to the common elements or to another apartment or apartments.
- (7) An owner shall not act as an officer of an association and an employee of the managing agent employed by the association.
- (8) An association's employees shall not engage in selling or renting apartments in the condominium in which they are employed except association-owned units, unless such activity is approved by an affirmative vote of sixty-five per cent of the membership.
- (9) The board of directors shall meet at least once a year. Whenever practicable, notice of all board meetings shall be posted by the resident manager or a member of the board in prominent locations within the

project seventy-two hours prior to the meeting or simultaneously with notice to the board of directors.

- (10) Directors shall not expend association funds for their travel, directors' fees, and per diem, unless owners are informed and a majority approve of these expenses.
- (11) Associations at their own expense shall provide all board members with a current copy of the association's declaration, bylaws, house rules, and, annually, a copy of this chapter with amendments.
- (12) The directors may expend association funds, which shall not be deemed to be compensation to the directors, to educate and train themselves in subject areas directly related to their duties and responsibilities as directors; provided that the approved annual operating budget include these expenses as separate line items. These expenses may include registration fees, books, videos, tapes, other educational materials, and economy travel expenses. Except for economy travel expenses within the State, all other travel expenses incurred under this subsection shall be subject to the requirements of subsection 514A-82(b)(10).
- (13) A lien created pursuant to section 514A-90 may be enforced by the association in any manner permitted by law, including non-judicial or power of sale foreclosure procedures authorized by chapter 667, as that chapter may be amended from time to time.

The provisions of this subsection shall be deemed incorporated into the bylaws of all condominium projects existing as of January 1, 1988, and all condominium projects created after that date."

SECTION 4. 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:

- (1) [liens] Liens for taxes and assessments lawfully imposed by governmental authority against the apartment[.]; and
- (2) [all] All sums unpaid on any mortgage of record [which] that 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 or by non-judicial or power of sale foreclosure procedures set forth in chapter 667, by the [manager] managing agent or board of directors, acting on behalf of the association of 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.] rental owed. The [manager] managing agent or board of directors, acting on behalf of the association of apartment owners, [may,] unless prohibited by the declaration, may bid on the apartment at foreclosure sale, and acquire and hold, lease, mortgage, and convey the [same.] apartment. Action to recover a money judgment for unpaid common expenses shall be maintainable without foreclosing or waiving the lien securing the [same.] unpaid common expenses owed.

(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. The mortgagee of record or other purchaser of the apartment shall be deemed to acquire title and shall be required to pay the apartment's share of common expenses and assessments beginning:

- (1) Thirty-six days after the order confirming the sale to the purchaser has been filed with the court;
  - (2) Sixty days after the hearing at which the court grants the motion to confirm the sale to the purchaser; or
  - (3) Upon the recording of the deed,
- whichever occurs first.

(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.

(e) As an alternative to foreclosure proceedings under subsection (a), where an apartment is owner-occupied, the association of apartment owners may authorize its managing agent or board of directors to, after sixty days' written notice to the apartment owner and to the apartment's first mortgagee of the nonpayment of the apartment's share of the common expenses, terminate the delinquent apartment's access to the common elements and cease supplying a delinquent apartment with any and all services normally supplied or paid for by the association of apartment

owners. Any terminated services and privileges shall be restored upon payment of all delinquent assessments.

(f) Before the board of directors or managing agent may take the actions permitted under subsection (e), the board must adopt a written policy providing for such actions and have the policy approved by a majority vote of the apartment owners at an annual or special meeting of the association or by the written consent of a majority of the apartment owners.”

SECTION 5. Section 514A-97, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsection (c) to read as follows:

“(c) All funds collected by an association, or by a managing agent for any association, shall be:

- (1) Deposited in a financial institution, including a federal or community credit union, located in the State and whose deposits are insured by an agency of the United States government;
- (2) Held by a corporation authorized to do business under article 8 of chapter 412; [or]
- (3) [Invested in the obligations of the United States government.] Held by the United States Treasury; or
- (4) Purchased in the name of and held for the benefit of the association through a securities broker that is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission, has an office in the State, and the accounts of which are held by member firms of the New York Stock Exchange or National Association of Securities Dealers and insured by the Securities Insurance Protection Corporation.

All funds collected by an association, or by a managing agent for any association, shall be invested only in:

- (1) Demand deposits, investment certificates, and certificates of deposit;
- (2) Obligations of the United States government, the State of Hawaii, or their respective agencies; provided that those obligations shall have stated maturity dates no more than ten years after the purchase date unless approved otherwise by a majority vote of the apartment owners at an annual or special meeting of the association or by written consent of a majority of the apartment owners; or
- (3) Mutual funds comprised solely of investments in the obligations of the United States government, the State of Hawaii, or their respective agencies; provided that those obligations shall have stated maturity dates no more than ten years after the purchase date unless approved otherwise by a majority vote of the apartment owners at an annual or special meeting of the association or by written consent of a majority of the apartment owners;

provided that before any investment longer than one year is made by an association, the board must approve the action; and provided further that the board must clearly disclose to owners all investments longer than one year at each year’s association annual meeting.

Records of the deposits and disbursements shall be disclosed to the commission upon request. All funds collected by an association shall only be disbursed by employees of the association under the supervision of the association’s board of directors. All funds collected by a managing agent from an association shall be held in a client trust fund account and shall be disbursed only by the managing agent or the managing agent’s employees under the supervision of the association’s board of directors. The commission may draft rules governing the handling and disbursement of condominium association funds.”

## **ACT 236**

SECTION 6. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed. New statutory material is underscored.<sup>1</sup>

SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved July 2, 1999.)

### **Note**

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.