

Assembly Bill No. 2618

CHAPTER 167

An act to amend Sections 52.2, 1369.520, and 1950.5 of the Civil Code, to amend Sections 116.360, 116.390, 116.540, and 116.610 of the Code of Civil Procedure, to amend Sections 311.4 and 1702.1 of the Public Utilities Code, and to amend Section 742.16 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to courts.

[Approved by Governor August 28, 2006. Filed with
Secretary of State August 28, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2618, Berg. Small claims court: actions.

(1) The Small Claims Act provides that the jurisdiction of the small claims court includes actions brought by a natural person, if the amount does not exceed \$7,500, with specified exceptions.

Existing law limits the jurisdiction of the small claims court to actions for damages, not to exceed \$5,000, for specified acts of discrimination, boycotting, or blacklisting, or the refusal to buy or sell to a person; for violence, threat of violence, or intimidation based on specified characteristics of a person; for denial or interference with the right of access of a disabled person to specified public accommodations; and related civil rights actions, as specified.

This bill would change that \$5,000 limitation to the jurisdictional limit of the small claims court, as specified, thereby conforming that provision to the existing limit of the Small Claims Act.

(2) Existing law relating to common interest developments authorizes specified enforcement actions for declaratory, injunctive, or writ relief, or for relief in conjunction with a claim for monetary damages not in excess of \$5,000, as specified.

This bill would increase that \$5,000 limitation to the jurisdictional limit of the small claims court.

(3) Existing law relating to tenancy authorizes specified actions in small claims court not to exceed \$5,000.

This bill would change that \$5,000 limit to the jurisdictional limit of the small claims court, as specified, thereby conforming that provision to the existing limit of the Small Claims Act.

(4) Existing law provides specified procedures with regard to filing a claim or counterclaim in a class action not to exceed certain jurisdictional limits, and provides that the small claims court shall give judgment for damages or equitable relief, or both, within specified jurisdictional limits.

This bill would increase those jurisdictional limits to that of the small claims court, thereby conforming those provisions to the existing limit of the Small Claims Act.

(5) Existing law requires the Public Utilities Commission to provide on its Internet Web site the means by which consumers may submit informal complaints through electronic means if the dollar amount does not exceed the jurisdictional limit of a small claims court.

This bill would change that jurisdictional limit to that of the small claims court, thereby conforming that provision to the existing limit of the Small Claims Act.

(6) Existing law requires the Public Utilities Commission to entertain complaints against any electrical, gas, water, heat, or telephone company under specified provisions if the amount of money claimed does not exceed the jurisdictional limit of the small claims court, as specified.

This bill would conform that provision to the existing limit of the Small Claims Act.

(7) Existing juvenile law relating to a minor's cleanup, repair, or replacement of damaged property and the liability of the minor's parents for associated costs and damages, grants the judge of the juvenile court jurisdiction in a limited civil case, and further specifies that if the demand is \$5,000 or less, the judge has the powers of a small claims court judge.

This bill would change that jurisdictional limit from \$5,000 to the jurisdictional limit of the small claims court, thereby conforming those provisions to the existing limit of the Small Claims Act.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 52.2 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

52.2. An action pursuant to Section 52 or 54.3 may be brought in any court of competent jurisdiction. A "court of competent jurisdiction" shall include small claims court if the amount of the damages sought in the action does not exceed the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220 and 116.221 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

SEC. 2. Section 1369.520 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1369.520. (a) An association or an owner or a member of a common interest development may not file an enforcement action in the superior court unless the parties have endeavored to submit their dispute to alternative dispute resolution pursuant to this article.

(b) This section applies only to an enforcement action that is solely for declaratory, injunctive, or writ relief, or for that relief in conjunction with a claim for monetary damages not in excess of the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220 and 116.221 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(c) This section does not apply to a small claims action.

(d) Except as otherwise provided by law, this section does not apply to an assessment dispute.

SEC. 3. Section 1950.5 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1950.5. (a) This section applies to security for a rental agreement for residential property that is used as the dwelling of the tenant.

(b) As used in this section, “security” means any payment, fee, deposit or charge, including, but not limited to, any payment, fee, deposit, or charge, except as provided in Section 1950.6, that is imposed at the beginning of the tenancy to be used to reimburse the landlord for costs associated with processing a new tenant or that is imposed as an advance payment of rent, used or to be used for any purpose, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

(1) The compensation of a landlord for a tenant’s default in the payment of rent.

(2) The repair of damages to the premises, exclusive of ordinary wear and tear, caused by the tenant or by a guest or licensee of the tenant.

(3) The cleaning of the premises upon termination of the tenancy necessary to return the unit to the same level of cleanliness it was in at the inception of the tenancy. The amendments to this paragraph enacted by the act adding this sentence shall apply only to tenancies for which the tenant’s right to occupy begins after January 1, 2003.

(4) To remedy future defaults by the tenant in any obligation under the rental agreement to restore, replace, or return personal property or appurtenances, exclusive of ordinary wear and tear, if the security deposit is authorized to be applied thereto by the rental agreement.

(c) A landlord may not demand or receive security, however denominated, in an amount or value in excess of an amount equal to two months’ rent, in the case of unfurnished residential property, and an amount equal to three months’ rent, in the case of furnished residential property, in addition to any rent for the first month paid on or before initial occupancy.

This subdivision does not prohibit an advance payment of not less than six months’ rent if the term of the lease is six months or longer.

This subdivision does not preclude a landlord and a tenant from entering into a mutual agreement for the landlord, at the request of the tenant and for a specified fee or charge, to make structural, decorative, furnishing, or other similar alterations, if the alterations are other than cleaning or repairing for which the landlord may charge the previous tenant as provided by subdivision (e).

(d) Any security shall be held by the landlord for the tenant who is party to the lease or agreement. The claim of a tenant to the security shall be prior to the claim of any creditor of the landlord.

(e) The landlord may claim of the security only those amounts as are reasonably necessary for the purposes specified in subdivision (b). The landlord may not assert a claim against the tenant or the security for damages to the premises or any defective conditions that preexisted the tenancy, for ordinary wear and tear or the effects thereof, whether the wear and tear preexisted the tenancy or occurred during the tenancy, or for the cumulative effects of ordinary wear and tear occurring during any one or more tenancies.

(f) (1) Within a reasonable time after notification of either party's intention to terminate the tenancy, or before the end of the lease term, the landlord shall notify the tenant in writing of his or her option to request an initial inspection and of his or her right to be present at the inspection. The requirements of this subdivision do not apply when the tenancy is terminated pursuant to subdivision (2), (3), or (4) of Section 1161 of the Code of Civil Procedure. At a reasonable time, but no earlier than two weeks before the termination or the end of lease date, the landlord, or an agent of the landlord, shall, upon the request of the tenant, make an initial inspection of the premises prior to any final inspection the landlord makes after the tenant has vacated the premises. The purpose of the initial inspection shall be to allow the tenant an opportunity to remedy identified deficiencies, in a manner consistent with the rights and obligations of the parties under the rental agreement, in order to avoid deductions from the security. If a tenant chooses not to request an initial inspection, the duties of the landlord under this subdivision are discharged. If an inspection is requested, the parties shall attempt to schedule the inspection at a mutually acceptable date and time. The landlord shall give at least 48 hours' prior written notice of the date and time of the inspection if either a mutual time is agreed upon, or if a mutually agreed time cannot be scheduled but the tenant still wishes an inspection. The tenant and landlord may agree to forgo the 48-hour prior written notice by both signing a written waiver. The landlord shall proceed with the inspection whether the tenant is present or not, unless the tenant previously withdrew his or her request for the inspection.

(2) Based on the inspection, the landlord shall give the tenant an itemized statement specifying repairs or cleaning that are proposed to be the basis of any deductions from the security the landlord intends to make pursuant to paragraphs (1) to (4), inclusive of subdivision (b). This statement shall also include the texts of paragraphs (1) to (4), inclusive, of subdivision (b). The statement shall be given to the tenant, if the tenant is present for the inspection, or shall be left inside the premises.

(3) The tenant shall have the opportunity during the period following the initial inspection until termination of the tenancy to remedy identified deficiencies, in a manner consistent with the rights and obligations of the parties under the rental agreement, in order to avoid deductions from the security.

(4) Nothing in this subdivision shall prevent a landlord from using the security for deductions itemized in the statement provided for in paragraph (2) that were not cured by the tenant so long as the deductions are for damages authorized by this section.

(5) Nothing in this subdivision shall prevent a landlord from using the security for any purpose specified in paragraphs (1) to (4), inclusive, of subdivision (b) that occurs between completion of the initial inspection and termination of the tenancy or was not identified during the initial inspection due to the presence of a tenant's possessions.

(g) (1) No later than 21 calendar days after the tenant has vacated the premises, but not earlier than the time that either the landlord or the tenant provides a notice to terminate the tenancy under Section 1946 or 1946.1, Section 1161 of the Code of Civil Procedure, or not earlier than 60 calendar days prior to the expiration of a fixed-term lease, the landlord shall furnish the tenant, by personal delivery or by first-class mail, postage prepaid, a copy of an itemized statement indicating the basis for, and the amount of, any security received and the disposition of the security and shall return any remaining portion of the security to the tenant.

(2) Along with the itemized statement, the landlord shall also include copies of documents showing charges incurred and deducted by the landlord to repair or clean the premises, as follows:

(A) If the landlord or landlord's employee did the work, the itemized statement shall reasonably describe the work performed. The itemized statement shall include the time spent and the reasonable hourly rate charged.

(B) If the landlord or landlord's employee did not do the work, the landlord shall provide the tenant a copy of the bill, invoice, or receipt supplied by the person or entity performing the work. The itemized statement shall provide the tenant with the name, address, and telephone number of the person or entity, if the bill, invoice, or receipt does not include that information.

(C) If a deduction is made for materials or supplies, the landlord shall provide a copy of the bill, invoice, or receipt. If a particular material or supply item is purchased by the landlord on an ongoing basis, the landlord may document the cost of the item by providing a copy of a bill, invoice, receipt, vendor price list, or other vendor document that reasonably documents the cost of the item used in the repair or cleaning of the unit.

(3) If a repair to be done by the landlord or the landlord's employee cannot reasonably be completed within 21 calendar days after the tenant has vacated the premises, or if the documents from a person or entity providing services, materials, or supplies are not in the landlord's possession within 21 calendar days after the tenant has vacated the premises, the landlord may deduct the amount of a good faith estimate of the charges that will be incurred and provide that estimate with the itemized statement. If the reason for the estimate is because the documents from a person or entity providing services, materials, or supplies are not in the landlord's possession, the itemized statement shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the person or entity. Within 14 calendar days of completing the repair or receiving the documentation, the landlord shall complete the requirements in paragraphs (1) and (2) in the manner specified.

(4) The landlord need not comply with paragraph (2) or (3) if either of the following apply:

(A) The deductions for repairs and cleaning together do not exceed one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125).

(B) The tenant waived the rights specified in paragraphs (2) and (3). The waiver shall only be effective if it is signed by the tenant at the same time or after a notice to terminate a tenancy under Section 1946 or 1946.1 has been given, a notice under Section 1161 of the Code of Civil Procedure has been given, or no earlier than 60 calendar days prior to the expiration of a fixed-term lease. The waiver shall substantially include the text of paragraph (2).

(5) Notwithstanding paragraph (4), the landlord shall comply with paragraphs (2) and (3) when a tenant makes a request for documentation within 14 calendar days after receiving the itemized statement specified in paragraph (1). The landlord shall comply within 14 calendar days after receiving the request from the tenant.

(6) Any mailings to the tenant pursuant to this subdivision shall be sent to the address provided by the tenant. If the tenant does not provide an address, mailings pursuant to this subdivision shall be sent to the unit that has been vacated.

(h) Upon termination of the landlord's interest in the premises, whether by sale, assignment, death, appointment of receiver or otherwise, the landlord or the landlord's agent shall, within a reasonable time, do one of the following acts, either of which shall relieve the landlord of further liability with respect to the security held:

(1) Transfer the portion of the security remaining after any lawful deductions made under subdivision (e) to the landlord's successor in interest. The landlord shall thereafter notify the tenant by personal delivery or by first-class mail, postage prepaid, of the transfer, of any claims made against the security, of the amount of the security deposited, and of the names of the successors in interest, their address, and their telephone number. If the notice to the tenant is made by personal delivery, the tenant shall acknowledge receipt of the notice and sign his or her name on the landlord's copy of the notice.

(2) Return the portion of the security remaining after any lawful deductions made under subdivision (e) to the tenant, together with an accounting as provided in subdivision (g).

(i) Prior to the voluntary transfer of a landlord's interest in the premises, the landlord shall deliver to the landlord's successor in interest a written statement indicating the following:

- (1) The security remaining after any lawful deductions are made.
- (2) An itemization of any lawful deductions from any security received.
- (3) His or her election under paragraph (1) or (2) of subdivision (h).

This subdivision does not affect the validity of title to the real property transferred in violation of this subdivision.

(j) In the event of noncompliance with subdivision (h), the landlord's successors in interest shall be jointly and severally liable with the landlord for repayment of the security, or that portion thereof to which the tenant is entitled, when and as provided in subdivisions (e) and (g). A successor in interest of a landlord may not require the tenant to post any security to replace that amount not transferred to the tenant or successors in interest as

provided in subdivision (h), unless and until the successor in interest first makes restitution of the initial security as provided in paragraph (2) of subdivision (h) or provides the tenant with an accounting as provided in subdivision (g).

This subdivision does not preclude a successor in interest from recovering from the tenant compensatory damages that are in excess of the security received from the landlord previously paid by the tenant to the landlord.

Notwithstanding this subdivision, if, upon inquiry and reasonable investigation, a landlord's successor in interest has a good faith belief that the lawfully remaining security deposit is transferred to him or her or returned to the tenant pursuant to subdivision (h), he or she is not liable for damages as provided in subdivision (l), or any security not transferred pursuant to subdivision (h).

(k) Upon receipt of any portion of the security under paragraph (1) of subdivision (h), the landlord's successors in interest shall have all of the rights and obligations of a landlord holding the security with respect to the security.

(l) The bad faith claim or retention by a landlord or the landlord's successors in interest of the security or any portion thereof in violation of this section, or the bad faith demand of replacement security in violation of subdivision (j), may subject the landlord or the landlord's successors in interest to statutory damages of up to twice the amount of the security, in addition to actual damages. The court may award damages for bad faith whenever the facts warrant that award, regardless of whether the injured party has specifically requested relief. In any action under this section, the landlord or the landlord's successors in interest shall have the burden of proof as to the reasonableness of the amounts claimed or the authority pursuant to this section to demand additional security deposits.

(m) No lease or rental agreement may contain any provision characterizing any security as "nonrefundable."

(n) Any action under this section may be maintained in small claims court if the damages claimed, whether actual or statutory or both, are within the jurisdictional amount allowed by Section 116.220 or 116.221 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(o) Proof of the existence of and the amount of a security deposit may be established by any credible evidence, including, but not limited to, a canceled check, a receipt, a lease indicating the requirement of a deposit as well as the amount, prior consistent statements or actions of the landlord or tenant, or a statement under penalty of perjury that satisfies the credibility requirements set forth in Section 780 of the Evidence Code.

(p) The amendments to this section made during the 1985 portion of the 1985-86 Regular Session of the Legislature that are set forth in subdivision (e) are declaratory of existing law.

(q) The amendments to this section made during the 2003 portion of the 2003-04 Regular Session of the Legislature that are set forth in paragraph (1) of subdivision (f) are declaratory of existing law.

SEC. 4. Section 116.360 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

116.360. (a) The defendant may file a claim against the plaintiff in the same action in an amount not to exceed the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220, 116.221, and 116.231. The claim need not relate to the same subject or event as the plaintiff's claim.

(b) The defendant's claim shall be filed and served in the manner provided for filing and serving a claim of the plaintiff under Sections 116.330 and 116.340.

(c) The defendant shall cause a copy of the claim and order to be served on the plaintiff at least five days before the hearing date, unless the defendant was served 10 days or less before the hearing date, in which event the defendant shall cause a copy of the defendant's claim and order to be served on the plaintiff at least one day before the hearing date.

SEC. 5. Section 116.390 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

116.390. (a) If a defendant has a claim against a plaintiff that exceeds the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220, 116.221, and 116.231, and the claim relates to the contract, transaction, matter, or event which is the subject of the plaintiff's claim, the defendant may commence an action against the plaintiff in a court of competent jurisdiction and request the small claims court to transfer the small claims action to that court.

(b) The defendant may make the request by filing with the small claims court in which the plaintiff commenced the action, at or before the time set for the hearing of that action, a declaration stating the facts concerning the defendant's action against the plaintiff with a true copy of the complaint so filed by the defendant against the plaintiff. The defendant shall cause a copy of the declaration and complaint to be personally delivered to the plaintiff at or before the time set for the hearing of the small claims action.

(c) In ruling on a motion to transfer, the small claims court may do any of the following: (1) render judgment on the small claims case prior to the transfer; (2) not render judgment and transfer the small claims case; (3) refuse to transfer the small claims case on the grounds that the ends of justice would not be served. If the small claims action is transferred prior to judgment, both actions shall be tried together in the transferee court.

(d) When the small claims court orders the action transferred, it shall transmit all files and papers to the transferee court.

(e) The plaintiff in the small claims action shall not be required to pay to the clerk of the transferee court any transmittal, appearance, or filing fee unless the plaintiff appears in the transferee court, in which event the plaintiff shall be required to pay the filing fee and any other fee required of a defendant in the transferee court. However, if the transferee court rules against the plaintiff in the action filed in that court, the court may award to the defendant in that action the costs incurred as a consequence of the transfer, including attorney's fees and filing fees.

SEC. 6. Section 116.540 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

116.540. (a) Except as permitted by this section, no individual other than the plaintiff and the defendant may take part in the conduct or defense of a small claims action.

(b) Except as additionally provided in subdivision (i), a corporation may appear and participate in a small claims action only through a regular employee, or a duly appointed or elected officer or director, who is employed, appointed, or elected for purposes other than solely representing the corporation in small claims court.

(c) A party who is not a corporation or a natural person may appear and participate in a small claims action only through a regular employee, or a duly appointed or elected officer or director, or in the case of a partnership, a partner, engaged for purposes other than solely representing the party in small claims court.

(d) If a party is an individual doing business as a sole proprietorship, the party may appear and participate in a small claims action by a representative and without personally appearing if both of the following conditions are met:

(1) The claim can be proved or disputed by evidence of an account that constitutes a business record as defined in Section 1271 of the Evidence Code, and there is no other issue of fact in the case.

(2) The representative is a regular employee of the party for purposes other than solely representing the party in small claims actions and is qualified to testify to the identity and mode of preparation of the business record.

(e) A plaintiff is not required to personally appear, and may submit declarations to serve as evidence supporting his or her claim or allow another individual to appear and participate on his or her behalf, if (1) the plaintiff is serving on active duty in the United States Armed Forces outside this state, (2) the plaintiff was assigned to his or her duty station after his or her claim arose, (3) the assignment is for more than six months, (4) the representative is serving without compensation, and (5) the representative has appeared in small claims actions on behalf of others no more than four times during the calendar year. The defendant may file a claim in the same action in an amount not to exceed the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220, 116.221, and 116.231.

(f) A party incarcerated in a county jail, a Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation facility, or a Division of Juvenile Facilities facility is not required to personally appear, and may submit declarations to serve as evidence supporting his or her claim, or may authorize another individual to appear and participate on his or her behalf if that individual is serving without compensation and has appeared in small claims actions on behalf of others no more than four times during the calendar year.

(g) A defendant who is a nonresident owner of real property may defend against a claim relating to that property without personally appearing by (1) submitting written declarations to serve as evidence supporting his or her defense, (2) allowing another individual to appear and participate on his or her behalf if that individual is serving without

compensation and has appeared in small claims actions on behalf of others no more than four times during the calendar year, or (3) taking the action described in both (1) and (2).

(h) A party who is an owner of rental real property may appear and participate in a small claims action through a property agent under contract with the owner to manage the rental of that property, if (1) the owner has retained the property agent principally to manage the rental of that property and not principally to represent the owner in small claims court, and (2) the claim relates to the rental property.

(i) A party that is an association created to manage a common interest development, as defined in Section 1351 of the Civil Code, may appear and participate in a small claims action through an agent, a management company representative, or bookkeeper who appears on behalf of that association.

(j) At the hearing of a small claims action, the court shall require any individual who is appearing as a representative of a party under subdivisions (b) to (i), inclusive, to file a declaration stating (1) that the individual is authorized to appear for the party, and (2) the basis for that authorization. If the representative is appearing under subdivision (b), (c), (d), (h), or (i), the declaration also shall state that the individual is not employed solely to represent the party in small claims court. If the representative is appearing under subdivision (e), (f), or (g), the declaration also shall state that the representative is serving without compensation, and has appeared in small claims actions on behalf of others no more than four times during the calendar year.

(k) A husband or wife who sues or who is sued with his or her spouse may appear and participate on behalf of his or her spouse if (1) the claim is a joint claim, (2) the represented spouse has given his or her consent, and (3) the court determines that the interests of justice would be served.

(l) If the court determines that a party cannot properly present his or her claim or defense and needs assistance, the court may in its discretion allow another individual to assist that party.

(m) Nothing in this section shall operate or be construed to authorize an attorney to participate in a small claims action except as expressly provided in Section 116.530.

SEC. 7. Section 116.610 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

116.610. (a) The small claims court shall give judgment for damages, or equitable relief, or both damages and equitable relief, within the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220, 116.221, and 116.231, and may make any orders as to time of payment or otherwise as the court deems just and equitable for the resolution of the dispute.

(b) The court may, at its discretion or on request of any party, continue the matter to a later date in order to permit and encourage the parties to attempt resolution by informal or alternative means.

(c) The judgment shall include a determination whether the judgment resulted from a motor vehicle accident on a California highway caused by

the defendant's operation of a motor vehicle, or by the operation by some other individual, of a motor vehicle registered in the defendant's name.

(d) If the defendant has filed a claim against the plaintiff, or if the judgment is against two or more defendants, the judgment, and the statement of decision if one is rendered, shall specify the basis for and the character and amount of the liability of each of the parties, including, in the case of multiple judgment debtors, whether the liability of each is joint or several.

(e) If specific property is referred to in the judgment, whether it be personal or real, tangible or intangible, the property shall be identified with sufficient detail to permit efficient implementation or enforcement of the judgment.

(f) In an action against several defendants, the court may, in its discretion, render judgment against one or more of them, leaving the action to proceed against the others, whenever a several judgment is proper.

(g) (1) The prevailing party is entitled to the costs of the action, including the costs of serving the order for the appearance of the defendant.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) of this subdivision and subdivision (b) of Section 1032, the amount of the small claims court fee paid by a party pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 116.230 that exceeds the amount that would have been paid if the party had paid the fee pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 116.230 shall not be recoverable as costs.

(h) When the court renders judgment, the clerk shall promptly deliver or mail notice of entry of the judgment to the parties, and shall execute a certificate of personal delivery or mailing and place it in the file.

(i) The notice of entry of judgment shall be on a form approved or adopted by the Judicial Council.

SEC. 8. Section 311.4 of the Public Utilities Code is amended to read:

311.4. (a) On or after July 1, 2001, the commission shall establish procedures to permit the submission of informal complaints through electronic means in accordance with this section.

(b) On or before January 1, 2002, the commission shall provide on its Internet Web site the means by which consumers may submit informal complaints through electronic means.

(c) It is the intent of the Legislature that, commencing one year from the date that the procedures described in subdivision (a) are implemented, the commission annually review the procedures and the technology involved to ensure the continued effectiveness of the program, and report any findings to the Legislature.

(d) For the purpose of this section, "electronic means" includes, but shall not be limited to, e-mail or the Internet, or both.

(e) Upon the receipt of an informal complaint submitted by electronic means, the commission shall immediately forward the complaint to the entity named in the complaint.

(f) The commission shall permit the submission of informal complaints through electronic means, if, as determined by the commission, both of the following conditions are met:

(1) The dollar amount in the complaint does not exceed the jurisdictional limit of a small claims court specified in subdivision (a) of Section 116.220 or Section 116.221 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(2) The commission has addressed any impediments in the electronic systems employed by the commission that would prevent or substantially adversely affect the ability of the commission to receive informal complaints by electronic means.

(g) The commission shall include a notice on its Internet Web site of the availability of the procedures described in subdivision (a).

(h) For the purposes of implementing this section, the commission shall make available to the public an industry specific online complaint form that allows a customer to specify information that the commission determines to be relevant for purposes of resolving a dispute, including the account number, the type of dispute, and the opportunity to make general comments.

(i) This act may not be implemented, and no information technology-related preparatory work may be undertaken in connection with this act prior to July 1, 2001, without the concurrence of the commission and the authorization of the Department of Information Technology pursuant to Executive Order D-3-99.

SEC. 9. Section 1702.1 of the Public Utilities Code is amended to read:

1702.1. (a) The commission shall entertain complaints against any electrical, gas, water, heat, or telephone company under Sections 734, 735, and 736 when the amount of money claimed does not exceed the jurisdictional limit of the small claims court as set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 116.220 or Section 116.221 of the Code of Civil Procedure. However, when the public interest so requires, the commission or presiding officer may, at any time prior to the filing of a decision, terminate the expedited complaint procedure and recalendar the matter for hearing under the commission's regular procedure.

(b) No attorney at law shall represent any party other than himself or herself under the expedited complaint procedure.

(c) No pleading other than the complaint and answer is necessary. A hearing without a reporter shall be held within 30 days after the answer is filed.

(d) The parties may file applications for rehearing pursuant to Section 1731. If the commission grants an application for rehearing, the rehearing shall be conducted under the commission's regular hearing procedure.

SEC. 10. Section 742.16 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

742.16. (a) If a minor is found to be a person described in Section 602 by reason of the commission of an act prohibited by Section 594, 594.3, 594.4, 640.5, 640.6, or 640.7 of the Penal Code, and the court does not remove the minor from the physical custody of the parent or guardian, the

court as a condition of probation, except in any case in which the court makes a finding and states on the record its reasons why that condition would be inappropriate, shall require the minor to wash, paint, repair, or replace the property defaced, damaged, or destroyed by the minor or otherwise pay restitution to the probation officer of the county for disbursement to the owner or possessor of the property or both. In any case in which the minor is not granted probation or in which the minor's cleanup, repair, or replacement of the property will not return the property to its condition before it was defaced, damaged, or destroyed, the court shall make a finding of the amount of restitution that would be required to fully compensate the owner and possessor of the property for their damages. The court shall order the minor or the minor's estate to pay that restitution to the probation officer of the county for disbursement to the owner or possessor of the property or both, to the extent the court determines that the minor or the minor's estate have the ability to do so, except in any case in which the court makes a finding and states on the record its reasons why full restitution would be inappropriate. If full restitution is found to be inappropriate, the court shall require the minor to perform specified community service, except in any case in which the court makes a finding and states on the record its reasons why that condition would be inappropriate.

(b) If a minor is found to be a person described in Section 602 by reason of the commission of an act prohibited by Section 594, 594.3, 594.4, 640.5, 640.6, or 640.7 of the Penal Code, and the graffiti or other material inscribed by the minor has been removed, or the property defaced by the minor has been repaired or replaced by a public entity that has elected, pursuant to Section 742.14, to have the probation officer of the county recoup its costs through proceedings in accordance with this section and has made cost findings in accordance with subdivisions (c) or (d) of Section 742.14, the court shall determine the total cost incurred by the public entity for said removal, repair, or replacement, using, if applicable, the cost findings most recently adopted by the public entity pursuant to subdivision (c) or (d) of Section 742.14. The court shall order the minor or the minor's estate to pay those costs to the probation officer of the county to the extent the court determines that the minor or the minor's estate have the ability to do so.

(c) If the minor is found to be a person described in Section 602 by reason of the commission of an act prohibited by Section 594, 594.3, 594.4, 640.5, 640.6, or 640.7 of the Penal Code, and the minor was identified or apprehended by the law enforcement agency of a city or county that has elected, pursuant to Section 742.14, to have the probation officer of the county recoup its costs through proceedings in accordance with this section, the court shall determine the cost of identifying or apprehending the minor, or both, using, if applicable, the cost findings adopted by the city or county pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 742.14. The court shall order the minor or the minor's estate to pay those

costs to the probation officer of the county to the extent the court determines that the minor or the minor's estate has the ability to do so.

(d) If the court determines that the minor or the minor's estate is unable to pay in full the costs and damages determined pursuant to subdivisions (a), (b), and (c), and if the minor's parent or parents have been cited into court pursuant to Section 742.18, the court shall hold a hearing to determine the liability of the minor's parent or parents pursuant to Section 1714.1 of the Civil Code for those costs and damages. Except when the court makes a finding setting forth unusual circumstances in which parental liability would not serve the interests of justice, the court shall order the minor's parent or parents to pay those costs and damages to the probation officer of the county to the extent the court determines that the parent or parents have the ability to pay, if the minor was in the custody or control of the parent or parents at the time he or she committed the act that forms the basis for the finding that the minor is a person described in Section 602. In evaluating the parent's or parents' ability to pay, the court shall take into consideration the family income, the necessary obligations of the family, and the number of persons dependent upon this income.

(e) The hearing described in subdivision (d) may be held immediately following the disposition hearing or at a later date, at the option of the court.

(f) If the amount of costs and damages sought to be recovered in the hearing pursuant to subdivision (d) is five thousand dollars (\$5,000) or less, the parent or parents may not be represented by counsel and the probation officer of the county shall be represented by his or her nonattorney designee. The court shall conduct that hearing in accordance with Sections 116.510 and 116.520 of the Code of Civil Procedure. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the court determines that a parent cannot properly present his or her defense, the court may, in its discretion, allow another individual to assist that parent. In addition, a husband or wife may appear and participate in the hearing on behalf of his or her spouse if the representative's spouse has given his or her consent and the court determines that the interest of justice would be served thereby.

(g) If the amount of costs and damages sought to be recovered in the hearing pursuant to subdivision (d) exceeds five thousand dollars (\$5,000), the parent or parents may be represented by counsel of his or her or their own choosing, and the probation officer of the county shall be represented by the district attorney or an attorney or nonattorney designee of the probation officer. The parent or parents shall not be entitled to court-appointed counsel or to counsel compensated at public expense.

(h) At the hearing conducted pursuant to subdivision (d), there shall be a presumption affecting the burden of proof that the findings of the court made pursuant to subdivisions (a), (b), and (c) represent the actual damages and costs attributable to the act of the minor that forms the basis of the finding that the minor is a person described in Section 602.

(i) If the parent or parents, after having been cited to appear pursuant to Section 742.18, fail to appear as ordered, the court shall order the parent or

parents to pay the full amount of the costs and damages determined by the court pursuant to subdivisions (a), (b), and (c).

(j) Execution may be issued on an order issued by the court pursuant to this section in the same manner as on a judgment in a civil action, including any balance unpaid at the termination of the court's jurisdiction over the minor.

(k) At any time prior to the satisfaction of a judgment entered pursuant to this section, a person against whom the judgment was entered may petition the rendering court to modify or vacate the judgment on the showing of a change in circumstances relating to his or her ability to pay the judgment.

(l) For purposes of a hearing conducted pursuant to subdivision (d), the judge of the juvenile court shall have the jurisdiction of a judge of the superior court in a limited civil case, and if the amount of the demand is within the jurisdictional limits stated in Sections 116.220 and 116.221 of the Code of Civil Procedure, the judge of the juvenile court shall have the powers of a judge presiding over the small claims court.

(m) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the authority of a juvenile court to provide conditions of probation.

(n) The options available to the court pursuant to subdivisions (a), (b), (c), (d), and (k), to order payment by the minor and his or her parent or parents of less than the full costs described in subdivisions (a), (b), and (c), on grounds of financial inability or for reasons of justice, shall not be available to a superior court in an ordinary civil proceeding pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 1714.1 of the Civil Code, except that in any proceeding pursuant to either subdivision (b) of Section 1714.1 of the Civil Code or this section, the maximum amount that a parent or a minor may be ordered to pay shall not exceed twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) for each tort of the minor.