

## **Assembly Bill No. 339**

### **CHAPTER 543**

An act to amend Section 18035 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to housing.

[Approved by Governor October 12, 2007. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 12, 2007.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 339, Cook. Mobilehomes: escrow.

Existing law requires a mobilehome or manufactured home dealer, for every transaction by or through the dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a new or used manufactured home or mobilehome subject to registration under existing law, to execute in writing and obtain the buyer's signature on a purchase order, conditional sale contract, or other document evidencing the purchase contemporaneous with, or prior to, the receipt of any cash or cash equivalent from the buyer, to establish an escrow account with an escrow agent, and to cause to be deposited into that escrow account any cash or cash equivalent received at any time prior to the close of escrow as a deposit, downpayment, or whole or partial payment for the manufactured home or mobilehome or accessory thereto. If any dispute arises between the parties to the escrow and upon notification in writing to the escrow agent, unless otherwise specified in the escrow instructions, all funds denoted as deposit are required to be held in escrow until a release is signed by the disputing party, or pursuant to new written escrow instructions signed by the parties involved, or pursuant to a final order for payment or division by a court of competent jurisdiction.

This bill would require that, at the opening of escrow, and upon receiving written notice from a party to the escrow of a dispute, the escrow agent shall inform the parties of their right to hold funds in escrow by submitting a written request to hold funds in escrow, and that, upon receipt by the escrow agent of a party's written request to hold funds in escrow, all funds denoted as deposit be held in escrow pending release under specified conditions.

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

SECTION 1. Section 18035 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

18035. (a) (1) For every transaction by or through a dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a new or used manufactured home or mobilehome subject to registration under this part, the dealer shall execute in writing and obtain the buyer's signature on a purchase order, conditional

sale contract, or other document evidencing the purchase contemporaneous with, or prior to, the receipt of any cash or cash equivalent from the buyer, shall establish an escrow account with an escrow agent, and shall cause to be deposited into that escrow account any cash or cash equivalent received at any time prior to the close of escrow as a deposit, downpayment, or whole or partial payment for the manufactured home or mobilehome or accessory thereto. Checks, money orders, or similar payments toward the purchase shall be made payable only to the escrow agent.

(2) The downpayment, or whole or partial payment, shall include an amount designated as a deposit, which may be less than, or equal to, the total amount placed in escrow, and shall be subject to subdivision (f). The parties shall provide for escrow instructions that identify the fixed amounts of the deposit, downpayment, and balance due prior to closing consistent with the amounts set forth in the purchase documents and receipt for deposit if one is required by Section 18035.1. The deposits shall be made by the dealer within five working days of receipt, one of which shall be the day of receipt.

(3) For purposes of this section, “cash equivalent” means any property, other than cash. If an item of cash equivalent is, due to its size, incapable of physical delivery to the escrowholder, the property may be held by the dealer for the purchaser until close of escrow and, if the property has been registered with the department or the Department of Motor Vehicles, its registration certificate and, if available, its certificate of title shall be delivered to the escrowholder.

(b) For every transaction by or through a dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a new manufactured home or mobilehome subject to registration under this part, the escrow instructions shall provide all of the following:

(1) That the original manufacturer’s certificate of origin be placed in escrow.

(2) (A) That, in the alternative, either of the following shall occur:

(i) The lien of any inventory creditor on the manufactured home or mobilehome shall be satisfied by payment from the escrow account.

(ii) The inventory creditor shall consent in writing to other than full payment.

(B) For purposes of this paragraph, “inventory creditor” includes any person who is identified as a creditor on the manufacturer’s certificate of origin or any person who places the original certificate of origin in escrow and claims in writing to the escrow agent to have a purchase money security interest in the manufactured home or mobilehome, as contemplated by Section 9103 of the Commercial Code.

(3) That the escrow agent shall obtain from the manufacturer a true and correct facsimile of the copy of the certificate of origin retained by the manufacturer pursuant to Section 18093.

(c) For every transaction by or through a dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a used manufactured home or mobilehome subject to registration under this part, the escrow instructions shall provide:

(1) That the current registration card, all copies of the registration cards held by junior lienholders, and the certificate of title be placed in escrow.

(2) That, in the alternative, either of the following shall occur:

(A) (i) The registered owner shall acknowledge in writing the amount of the commission to be received by the dealer for the sale of the manufactured home or mobilehome, and (ii) the registered owner shall release all of its ownership interests in the manufactured home or mobilehome either contemporaneously upon the payment of a specified amount from the escrow account or at the close of the escrow where the buyer has executed a security agreement approved by the registered owner covering the unpaid balance of the purchase price.

(B) (i) The dealer shall declare in writing that the manufactured home or mobilehome is its inventory, (ii) the registered owner shall acknowledge in writing that the purchase price relating to the sale of the manufactured home or mobilehome to the dealer for resale has been paid in full by the dealer, (iii) the current certificate of title shall be appropriately executed by the registered owner to reflect the release of all of its ownership interests, and (iv) the dealer shall release all of its ownership interests in the manufactured home or mobilehome either contemporaneously upon the payment of a specified amount from the escrow account or at the close of escrow where the buyer has executed a security agreement approved by the dealer covering the unpaid balance of the purchase price.

(3) That, in the alternative, the legal owner and each junior lienholder, respectively, shall do either of the following:

(A) Release his or her security interest or transfer its security interest to a designated third party contemporaneously upon the payment of a specified amount from the escrow account.

(B) Advise the escrow agent in writing that the new buyer or the buyer's stated designee shall be approved as the new registered owner upon the execution by the buyer of a formal assumption of the indebtedness secured by his or her lien approved by the creditor at or before the close of escrow.

(d) For every transaction by or through a dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a used manufactured home or mobilehome subject to registration under this part:

(1) The dealer shall present the buyer's offer to purchase the manufactured home or mobilehome to the seller in written form signed by the buyer. The seller, upon accepting the offer to purchase, shall sign and date the form. Copies of the fully executed form shall be presented to both the buyer and seller, with the original copy retained by the dealer. Any portion of the form that reflects the commission charged by the dealer to the seller need not be disclosed to the buyer.

(2) The escrow agent, upon receipt of notification from the dealer that the seller has accepted the buyer's offer to purchase and receipt of mutually endorsed escrow instructions, shall, within three working days, prepare a notice of escrow opening on the form prescribed by the department and forward the completed form to the department with appropriate fees. If the escrow is canceled for any reason before closing, the escrow agent shall

prepare a notice of escrow cancellation on the form prescribed by the department and forward the completed form to the department.

(3) (A) The escrow agent shall forward to the legal owner and each junior lienholder at their addresses shown on the current registration card a written demand for a lien status report, as contemplated by Section 18035.5, and a written demand for either an executed statement of conditional lien release or an executed statement of anticipated formal assumption, and shall enclose blank copies of a statement of conditional lien release and a statement of anticipated formal assumption on forms prescribed by the department. The statement of conditional lien release shall include, among other things, both of the following:

(i) A statement of the dollar amount or other conditions required by the creditor in order to release or transfer its lien.

(ii) The creditor's release or transfer of the lien in the manufactured home or mobilehome contingent upon the satisfaction of those conditions.

(B) The statement of anticipated formal assumption shall include, among other things, both of the following:

(i) A statement of the creditor's belief that the buyer will formally assume the indebtedness secured by its lien pursuant to terms and conditions which are acceptable to the creditor at or before the close of escrow.

(ii) The creditor's approval of the buyer or his or her designee as the registered owner upon the execution of the formal assumption.

(4) Within five days of the receipt of the written demand and documents required by paragraph (3), the legal owner or junior lienholder shall complete and execute either the statement of conditional lien release or, if the creditor has elected to consent to a formal assumption requested by a qualified buyer, the statement of anticipated formal assumption, as appropriate, and prepare the lien status report and forward the documents to the escrow agent by first-class mail. If the creditor is the legal owner, the certificate of title in an unexecuted form shall accompany the documents. If the creditor is a junior lienholder, the creditor's copy of the current registration card in an unexecuted form shall accompany the documents.

(5) If either of the following events occurs, any statement of conditional lien release or statement of anticipated formal assumption executed by the creditor shall become inoperative, and the escrow agent shall thereupon return the form and the certificate of title or the copy of the current registration card, as appropriate, to the creditor by first-class mail:

(A) The conditions required in order for the creditor to release or transfer his or her lien are not satisfied before the end of the escrow period agreed upon in writing between the buyer and the seller or, if applicable, before the end of any extended escrow period as permitted by subdivision (g).

(B) The registered owner advises the creditor not to accept any satisfaction of his or her lien or not to permit any formal assumption of the indebtedness and the creditor or registered owner advises the escrow agent in writing accordingly.

(6) If a creditor willfully fails to comply with the requirements of paragraph (4) within 21 days of the receipt of the written demand and

documents required by paragraph (3), the creditor shall forfeit to the escrow agent three hundred dollars (\$300), except where the creditor has reasonable cause for noncompliance. The three hundred dollars (\$300) shall be credited to the seller, unless otherwise provided in the escrow instructions. Any penalty paid by a creditor under this paragraph shall preclude any civil liability for noncompliance with Section 18035.5 relating to the same act or omission.

(e) For every transaction by or through a dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a new or used manufactured home or mobilehome, the escrow instructions shall specify one of the following:

(1) Upon the buyer receiving delivery of an installed manufactured home or mobilehome on the site and the manufactured home or mobilehome passing inspection pursuant to Section 18613 or after the manufactured home or mobilehome has been delivered to the location specified in the escrow instructions when the installation is to be performed by the buyer, all funds in the escrow account, other than escrow fees and amounts for accessories not yet delivered, shall be disbursed. If mutually agreed upon between buyer and dealer, the escrow instructions may specify that funds be disbursed to a government agency for the payment of fees and permits required as a precondition for an installation acceptance or certificate of occupancy, and the information that may be acceptable to the escrow agent.

(2) Upon the buyer receiving delivery of an installed manufactured home or mobilehome not subject to the provisions of Section 18613 with delivery requirements as mutually agreed to and set forth in the sales documents, all funds in the escrow account, other than escrow fees, shall be disbursed.

(f) Upon receiving written notice from a party to the escrow of a dispute, the escrow agent shall inform the party of his or her right to hold funds in escrow by submitting a written request to hold funds in escrow. Upon receipt by the escrow agent of a party's written request to hold funds in escrow, all funds denoted as deposit shall be held in escrow until a release is signed by the disputing party, or pursuant to new written escrow instructions signed by the parties involved, or pursuant to a final order for payment or division by a court of competent jurisdiction. Any other funds, other than escrow fees, shall be returned to the buyer or any person, other than the dealer or seller, as appropriate. At the opening of escrow, the escrow agent shall give notice of the right to request that funds be held in escrow pursuant to this subdivision.

(g) Escrow shall be for a period of time mutually agreed upon, in writing, by the buyer and the seller. However, the parties may, by mutual consent, extend the time, in writing, with notice to the escrow agent.

(h) No dealer or seller shall establish with an escrow agent any escrow account in an escrow company in which the dealer or seller has more than a 5-percent ownership interest.

(i) The escrow instructions may provide for the proration of any local property tax due or to become due on the manufactured home or mobilehome, and if the tax, or the license fee imposed pursuant to Section 18115, or the registration fee imposed pursuant to Section 18114, is

delinquent, the instructions may provide for the payment of the taxes or fees, or both, and any applicable penalties.

(j) For every transaction by or through a dealer to sell or lease with the option to buy a new or used manufactured home or mobilehome that is subject to inspection pursuant to Section 18613, and for which it is stated, on the face of the document certifying or approving occupancy or installation, that the issuance of the document is conditioned upon the payment of a fee, charge, dedication, or other requirement levied pursuant to Section 53080 of the Government Code, the escrow instructions shall provide that the payment of that fee, charge, dedication, or other requirement be made to the appropriate school district upon the close of escrow.

(k) No agreement shall contain any provision by which the buyer waives his or her rights under this section, and any waiver shall be deemed contrary to public policy and shall be void and unenforceable.

(l) If a portion of the amount in the escrow is for accessories, then that portion of the amount shall not be released until the accessories are actually installed.

(m) Upon opening escrow on a used manufactured home or mobilehome which is subject to local property taxation, and subject to registration under this part, the escrow officer may forward to the tax collector of the county in which the used manufactured home or mobilehome is located, a written demand for a tax clearance certificate, if no liability exists, or a conditional tax clearance certificate if a tax liability exists, to be provided on a form prescribed by the office of the Controller. The conditional tax clearance certificate shall state the amount of the tax liability due, if any, and the final date that amount may be paid out of the proceeds of escrow before a further tax liability may be incurred.

(1) Within five working days of receipt of the written demand for a conditional tax clearance certificate or a tax clearance certificate, the county tax collector shall forward the conditional tax clearance certificate or a tax clearance certificate showing no tax liability exists to the requesting escrow officer. In the event the tax clearance certificate's or conditional tax clearance certificate's final due date expires within 30 days of date of issuance, an additional conditional tax clearance certificate or a tax clearance certificate shall be completed which has a final due date of at least 30 days beyond the date of issuance.

(2) If the tax collector on which the written demand for a tax clearance certificate or a conditional tax clearance certificate was made fails to comply with that demand within 30 days from the date the demand was mailed, the escrow officer may close the escrow and submit a statement of facts certifying that the written demand was made on the tax collector and the tax collector failed to comply with that written demand within 30 days. This statement of facts may be accepted by the department in lieu of a conditional tax clearance certificate or a tax clearance certificate, as prescribed by subdivision (a) of Section 18092.7, and the transfer of ownership may be completed.

(3) The escrow officer may satisfy the terms of the conditional tax clearance certificate by paying the amount of tax liability shown on the form by the tax collector out of the proceeds of escrow on or before the date indicated on the form and by certifying in the space provided on the form that all terms and conditions of the conditional tax clearance certificate have been complied with.

(n) This section creates a civil cause of action against a buyer or dealer or other seller who violates this section, and upon prevailing, the plaintiff in the action shall be awarded actual damages, plus an amount not in excess of two thousand dollars (\$2,000). In addition, attorney's fees and court costs shall also be awarded a plaintiff who prevails in the action.