

Senate Bill No. 537

CHAPTER 942

An act to add Section 27388 to the Government Code, relating to recordation fees.

[Approved by Governor October 15, 1995. Filed
with Secretary of State October 16, 1995.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 537, Hughes. Recordation fees.

Existing law requires the county recorder, upon payment of proper fees and taxes, to accept for recordation any instrument, paper, or notice that is authorized or required by law to be recorded.

This bill would provide that in addition to other recording fees, upon the adoption of a resolution by the county board of supervisors, a fee of up to \$2 shall be paid at the time of recording of every real estate instrument, as defined. The bill would require that the fees collected be placed in the Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund to be distributed by the county chief administrative officer, as determined by a Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund Committee, to district attorneys and local law enforcement agencies for the purpose of determining, investigating, and prosecuting real estate fraud crimes, as specified.

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

SECTION 1. Section 27388 is added to the Government Code, to read:

27388. (a) In addition to any other recording fees specified in this code, upon the adoption of a resolution by the county board of supervisors, a fee of up to two dollars (\$2) shall be paid at the time of recording of every real estate instrument, paper, or notice required or permitted by law to be recorded within that county, except those expressly exempted from payment of recording fees. "Real estate instrument" is defined for the purpose of this section as a deed of trust, an assignment of deed of trust, a reconveyance, a request for notice, and a notice of default. "Real estate instrument" does not include any deed, instrument, or writing subject to the imposition of a documentary transfer tax as defined in Section 11911 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, nor any document required to facilitate the transfer subject to the documentary transfer tax. The fees, after deduction of any actual and necessary administrative costs incurred by the county in carrying out this section, shall be paid

quarterly to the county auditor or director of finance, to be placed in the Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund.

(b) Money placed in the Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund shall be expended to fund programs to enhance the capacity of local police and prosecutors to deter, investigate, and prosecute real estate fraud crimes. After deduction of the actual and necessary administrative costs referred to in subdivision (a), 60 percent of the funds shall be distributed to district attorneys subject to review pursuant to subdivision (d), and 40 percent of the funds shall be distributed to local law enforcement agencies within the county in accordance with subdivision (c). In those counties where the investigation of real estate fraud is done exclusively by the district attorney, after deduction of the actual and necessary administrative costs referred to in subdivision (a), 100 percent of the funds shall be distributed to the district attorney, subject to review pursuant to subdivision (d). The funds so distributed shall be expended for the exclusive purpose of deterring, investigating, and prosecuting real estate fraud crimes.

(c) The county auditor or director of finance shall distribute funds in the Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund to eligible law enforcement agencies within the county pursuant to subdivision (b), as determined by a Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund Committee composed of the district attorney, the county chief administrative officer, and the chief officer responsible for consumer protection within the county, each of whom may appoint representatives of their offices to serve on the committee. If a county lacks a chief officer responsible for consumer protection, the county board of supervisors may appoint an appropriate representative to serve on the committee. The committee shall establish and publish deadlines and written procedures for local law enforcement agencies within the county to apply for the use of funds and shall review applications and make determinations by majority vote as to the award of funds using the following criteria:

(1) Each law enforcement agency that seeks funds shall submit a written application to the committee setting forth in detail the agency's proposed use of the funds.

(2) In order to qualify for receipt of funds, each law enforcement agency submitting an application shall provide written evidence that the agency either:

(A) Has a unit, division, or section devoted to the investigation or prosecution of real estate fraud, or both, and the unit, division, or section has been in existence for at least one year prior to the application date.

(B) Has on a regular basis, during the three years immediately preceding the application date, accepted for investigation or prosecution, or both, and assigned to specific persons employed by



the agency, cases of suspected real estate fraud, and actively investigated and prosecuted those cases.

(3) The committee's determination to award funds to a law enforcement agency shall be based on, but not be limited to, (A) the number of real estate fraud cases filed in the prior year; (B) the number of real estate fraud cases investigated in the prior year; (C) the number of victims involved in the cases filed; and (D) the total aggregated monetary loss suffered by victims, including individuals, associations, institutions, or corporations, as a result of the real estate fraud cases filed, and those under active investigation by that law enforcement agency.

(4) Each law enforcement agency that, pursuant to this section, has been awarded funds in the previous year, upon reapplication for funds to the committee in each successive year, in addition to any information the committee may require in paragraph (3), shall be required to submit a detailed accounting of funds received and expended in the prior year. The accounting shall include (A) the amount of funds received and expended; (B) the uses to which those funds were put, including payment of salaries and expenses, purchase of equipment and supplies, and other expenditures by type; (C) the number of filed complaints, investigations, arrests, and convictions that resulted from the expenditure of the funds; and (D) other relevant information the committee may reasonably require.

(d) The county board of supervisors shall annually review the effectiveness of the district attorney in deterring, investigating, and prosecuting real estate fraud crimes based upon information provided by the district attorney in an annual report submitted to the board detailing both:

(1) Facts, based upon, but not limited to, (A) the number of real estate fraud cases filed in the prior year; (B) the number of real estate fraud cases investigated in the prior year; (C) the number of victims involved in the cases filed; (D) the number of convictions obtained in the prior year; and (E) the total aggregated monetary loss suffered by victims, including individuals, associations, institutions, corporations, and other relevant public entities, according to the number of cases filed, investigations, prosecutions, and convictions obtained.

(2) An accounting of funds received and expended in the prior year, which shall include (A) the amount of funds received and expended; (B) the uses to which those funds were put, including payment of salaries and expenses, purchase of equipment and supplies, and other expenditures by type; (C) the number of filed complaints, investigations, prosecutions, and convictions that resulted from the expenditure of funds; and (D) other relevant information provided at the discretion of the district attorney.

(e) The intent of the Legislature in enacting this section is to have an impact on real estate fraud involving the largest number of



victims. To the extent possible, an emphasis should be placed on fraud against individuals whose residences are in danger of, or are in, foreclosure as defined under subdivision (b) of Section 1695.1 of the Civil Code. Case filing decisions continue to be in the discretion of the prosecutor.

(f) A district attorney's office or a local enforcement agency that has undertaken investigations and prosecutions that will continue into a subsequent program year may receive nonexpended funds from the previous fiscal year subsequent to the annual submission of information detailing the accounting of funds received and expended in the prior year.

(g) No money collected pursuant to this section shall be expended to offset a reduction in any other source of funds. Funds from the Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund shall be used only in connection with criminal investigations or prosecutions involving recorded real estate documents.

