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SB-479 Mortgages: default procedures: trustee's or attorney's fees. (2017-2018)

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Senate Bill No. 479

CHAPTER 217

An act to amend Sections 2924c and 2924d of the Civil Code, relating to real property.

[Approved by Governor September 01, 2017. Filed with Secretary of State September 01, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 479, Morrell. Mortgages: default procedures: trustee's or attorney's fees.

Existing law regarding mortgages generally authorizes a beneficiary, trustee, mortgagee, or his or her agent or successor in interest to demand and receive from a trustor, mortgagor, or his or her agent or successor in interest, or any beneficiary under a subordinate deed of trust, or any other person having a subordinate lien or encumbrance of record those reasonable costs and expenses, as allowed, that are actually incurred in enforcing the terms of the obligation from the date of the notice of sale until the property is sold. This authorization includes trustee's or attorney's fees in an amount not exceeding \$475 if the unpaid principal sum secured is \$150,000 or less, or \$410, if the unpaid principal sum secured exceeds \$150,000 plus a percentage of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding \$50,000, plus specified increasing additional amounts based on the unpaid principal.

This bill would restructure those fee authorization provisions. The bill would authorize fees to be in an amount not exceeding a base amount of \$475, if the unpaid principal sum secured is \$50,000 or less, would authorize a base amount not exceeding \$475 plus 1% of a specified amount if the unpaid principal exceeds \$50,000 but not \$150,000, and would specify additional amounts for unpaid principal sums exceeding \$150,000 as specified.

Existing law authorizes, upon the sale of property under a power of sale, the trustee or his or her agent or successor in interest, to demand and receive, in lieu of other specified charges, from a beneficiary, or his or her agent or successor in interest, or to deduct from the proceeds of the sale, those reasonable costs and expenses that are actually incurred in enforcing the terms of the obligation and the trustee's or attorney's fees that are authorized in an amount not to exceed \$425 or 1% of the unpaid sum secured, whichever is greater.

This bill would increase the above maximum trustee's or attorney's fees from \$425 to \$475.

Existing law limits the amount of trustee's or attorney's fees that may be charged in connection with the enforcement of certain terms of obligation upon default in payment under a mortgage or deed of trust prior to reinstatement of a monetary default, or until the notice of sale is deposited in the mail, or otherwise at any time prior to the decree of foreclosure, to a base amount not to exceed \$350 for an unpaid principal balance sum of \$150,000 or less, or \$300 plus specified additional percentages of unpaid principal sums, if the unpaid principal balance exceeds \$150,000.

This bill would revise and recast those fee provisions. The bill instead would provide that if the unpaid principal sum secured is \$50,000 or less, then the base amount may not exceed \$350. The bill would specify that if the unpaid principal sum secured exceeds \$50,000, but does not exceed \$150,000, then the base amount may not exceed \$350, plus certain additional

percentages of unpaid principal sums, which would increase by additional amounts on any portion of the unpaid principal sum that exceeds \$150,000.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 2924c of the Civil Code is amended to read:

2924c. (a) (1) Whenever all or a portion of the principal sum of any obligation secured by deed of trust or mortgage on real property or an estate for years therein hereafter executed has, prior to the maturity date fixed in that obligation, become due or been declared due by reason of default in payment of interest or of any installment of principal, or by reason of failure of trustor or mortgagor to pay, in accordance with the terms of that obligation or of the deed of trust or mortgage, taxes, assessments, premiums for insurance, or advances made by beneficiary or mortgagee in accordance with the terms of that obligation or of the deed of trust or mortgage, the trustor or mortgagor or his or her successor in interest in the mortgaged or trust property or any part thereof, or any beneficiary under a subordinate deed of trust or any other person having a subordinate lien or encumbrance of record thereon, at any time within the period specified in subdivision (e), if the power of sale therein is to be exercised, or, otherwise at any time prior to entry of the decree of foreclosure, may pay to the beneficiary or the mortgagee or their successors in interest, respectively, the entire amount due, at the time payment is tendered, with respect to (A) all amounts of principal, interest, taxes, assessments, insurance premiums, or advances actually known by the beneficiary to be, and that are, in default and shown in the notice of default, under the terms of the deed of trust or mortgage and the obligation secured thereby, (B) all amounts in default on recurring obligations not shown in the notice of default, and (C) all reasonable costs and expenses, subject to subdivision (c), that are actually incurred in enforcing the terms of the obligation, deed of trust, or mortgage, and trustee's or attorney's fees, subject to subdivision (d), other than the portion of principal as would not then be due had no default occurred, and thereby cure the default theretofore existing, and thereupon, all proceedings theretofore had or instituted shall be dismissed or discontinued and the obligation and deed of trust or mortgage shall be reinstated and shall be and remain in force and effect, the same as if the acceleration had not occurred. This section does not apply to bonds or other evidences of indebtedness authorized or permitted to be issued by the Department of Business Oversight or made by a public utility subject to the Public Utilities Code. For the purposes of this subdivision, the term "recurring obligation" means all amounts of principal and interest on the loan, or rents, subject to the deed of trust or mortgage in default due after the notice of default is recorded; all amounts of principal and interest or rents advanced on senior liens or leaseholds that are advanced after the recordation of the notice of default; and payments of taxes, assessments, and hazard insurance advanced after recordation of the notice of default. If the beneficiary or mortgagee has made no advances on defaults that would constitute recurring obligations, the beneficiary or mortgagee may require the trustor or mortgagor to provide reliable written evidence that the amounts have been paid prior to reinstatement.

(2) If the trustor, mortgagor, or other person authorized to cure the default pursuant to this subdivision does cure the default, the beneficiary or mortgagee or the agent for the beneficiary or mortgagee shall, within 21 days following the reinstatement, execute and deliver to the trustee a notice of rescission that rescinds the declaration of default and demand for sale and advises the trustee of the date of reinstatement. The trustee shall cause the notice of rescission to be recorded within 30 days of receipt of the notice of rescission and of all allowable fees and costs.

No charge, except for the recording fee, shall be made against the trustor or mortgagor for the execution and recordation of the notice which rescinds the declaration of default and demand for sale.

(b) (1) The notice, of any default described in this section, recorded pursuant to Section 2924, and mailed to any person pursuant to Section 2924b, shall begin with the following statement, printed or typed thereon:

"IMPORTANT NOTICE [14-point boldface type if printed or in capital letters if typed]

IF YOUR PROPERTY IS IN FORECLOSURE BECAUSE YOU ARE BEHIND IN YOUR PAYMENTS, IT MAY BE SOLD WITHOUT ANY COURT ACTION, [14-point boldface type if printed or in capital letters if typed] and you may have the legal right to bring your account in good standing by paying all of your past due payments plus permitted costs and expenses within the time permitted by law for reinstatement of your account, which is normally five business days prior to the date set for the sale of your property. No sale date may be set until approximately 90 days from the date this notice of default may be recorded (which date of recordation appears on this notice).

This amount is as of

_____	(Date)
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and will increase until your account becomes current.

While your property is in foreclosure, you still must pay other obligations (such as insurance and taxes) required by your note and deed of trust or mortgage. If you fail to make future payments on the loan, pay taxes on the property, provide insurance on the property, or pay other obligations as required in the note and deed of trust or mortgage, the beneficiary or mortgagee may insist that you do so in order to reinstate your account in good standing. In addition, the beneficiary or mortgagee may require as a condition to reinstatement that you provide reliable written evidence that you paid all senior liens, property taxes, and hazard insurance premiums.

Upon your written request, the beneficiary or mortgagee will give you a written itemization of the entire amount you must pay. You may not have to pay the entire unpaid portion of your account, even though full payment was demanded, but you must pay all amounts in default at the time payment is made. However, you and your beneficiary or mortgagee may mutually agree in writing prior to the time the notice of sale is posted (which may not be earlier than three months after this notice of default is recorded) to, among other things, (1) provide additional time in which to cure the default by transfer of the property or otherwise; or (2) establish a schedule of payments in order to cure your default; or both (1) and (2).

Following the expiration of the time period referred to in the first paragraph of this notice, unless the obligation being foreclosed upon or a separate written agreement between you and your creditor permits a longer period, you have only the legal right to stop the sale of your property by paying the entire amount demanded by your creditor.

To find out the amount you must pay, or to arrange for payment to stop the foreclosure, or if your property is in foreclosure for any other reason, contact:

_____	(Name of beneficiary or mortgagee)
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_____	(Mailing address)
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_____	(Telephone)
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If you have any questions, you should contact a lawyer or the governmental agency that may have insured your loan.

Notwithstanding the fact that your property is in foreclosure, you may offer your property for sale, provided the sale is concluded prior to the conclusion of the foreclosure.

Remember, **YOU MAY LOSE LEGAL RIGHTS IF YOU DO NOT TAKE PROMPT ACTION.** [14-point boldface type if printed or in capital letters if typed]"

Unless otherwise specified, the notice, if printed, shall appear in at least 12-point boldface type.

If the obligation secured by the deed of trust or mortgage is a contract or agreement described in paragraph (1) or (4) of subdivision (a) of Section 1632, the notice required herein shall be in Spanish if the trustor requested a Spanish language translation of the contract or agreement pursuant to Section 1632. If the obligation secured by the deed of trust or mortgage is contained in a home improvement contract, as defined in Sections 7151.2 and 7159 of the Business and Professions Code, which is subject to Title 2 (commencing with Section 1801), the seller shall specify on the contract whether or not the contract was principally negotiated in Spanish and if the contract was principally negotiated in Spanish, the notice required herein shall be in Spanish. No assignee of the contract or person authorized to record the notice of default shall incur any obligation or liability for failing to mail a notice in Spanish unless Spanish is specified in the contract or the assignee or person has actual knowledge that the secured obligation was principally negotiated in Spanish. Unless specified in writing to the contrary, a copy of the notice required by subdivision (c) of Section 2924b shall be in English.

(2) Any failure to comply with the provisions of this subdivision shall not affect the validity of a sale in favor of a bona fide purchaser or the rights of an encumbrancer for value and without notice.

(c) Costs and expenses that may be charged pursuant to Sections 2924 to 2924i, inclusive, shall be limited to the costs incurred for recording, mailing, including certified and express mail charges, publishing, and posting notices required by Sections 2924 to 2924i, inclusive, postponement pursuant to Section 2924g not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50) per postponement and a fee for a trustee's sale guarantee or, in the event of judicial foreclosure, a litigation guarantee. For purposes of this subdivision, a trustee or beneficiary may purchase a trustee's sale guarantee at a rate meeting the standards contained in Sections 12401.1 and 12401.3 of the Insurance Code.

(d) (1) Trustee's or attorney's fees that may be charged pursuant to subdivision (a), or until the notice of sale is deposited in the mail to the trustor as provided in Section 2924b, if the sale is by power of sale contained in the deed of trust or mortgage, or, otherwise at any time prior to the decree of foreclosure, are hereby authorized to be in an amount as follows:

(A) If the unpaid principal sum secured is fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) or less, then in a base amount that does not exceed three hundred fifty dollars (\$350).

(B) If the unpaid principal sum secured is greater than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) but does not exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000), then in a base amount that does not exceed three hundred fifty dollars (\$350) plus one-half of 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

(C) If the unpaid principal sum secured is greater than one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) but does not exceed five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), then in a base amount that does not exceed three hundred dollars (\$300) plus one-half of 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) up to and including one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) plus one-quarter of 1 percent of any portion of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000).

(D) If the unpaid principal sum secured is greater than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), then in a base amount that does not exceed three hundred dollars (\$300) plus one-half of 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) up to and including one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) plus one-quarter of 1 percent of any portion of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) up to and including five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) plus one-eighth of 1 percent of any portion of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).

(2) Any charge for trustee's or attorney's fees authorized by this subdivision shall be conclusively presumed to be lawful and valid where the charge does not exceed the amounts authorized in this subdivision. For purposes of this subdivision, the unpaid principal sum secured shall be determined as of the date the notice of default is recorded.

(e) Reinstatement of a monetary default under the terms of an obligation secured by a deed of trust, or mortgage may be made at any time within the period commencing with the date of recordation of the notice of default until five business days prior to the date of sale set forth in the initial recorded notice of sale.

In the event the sale does not take place on the date set forth in the initial recorded notice of sale or a subsequent recorded notice of sale is required to be given, the right of reinstatement shall be revived as of the date of recordation of the subsequent notice of sale, and shall continue from that date until five business days prior to the date of sale set forth in the subsequently recorded notice of sale.

In the event the date of sale is postponed on the date of sale set forth in either an initial or any subsequent notice of sale, or is postponed on the date declared for sale at an immediately preceding postponement of sale, and, the postponement is for a period that exceeds five business days from the date set forth in the notice of sale, or declared at the time of postponement, then the right of reinstatement is revived as of the date of postponement and shall continue from that date until five business days prior to the date of sale declared at the time of the postponement.

Nothing contained herein shall give rise to a right of reinstatement during the period of five business days prior to the date of sale, whether the date of sale is noticed in a notice of sale or declared at a postponement of sale.

Pursuant to the terms of this subdivision, no beneficiary, trustee, mortgagee, or their agents or successors shall be liable in any manner to a trustor, mortgagor, their agents or successors or any beneficiary under a subordinate deed of trust or mortgage or any other person having a subordinate lien or encumbrance of record thereon for the failure to allow a reinstatement of the obligation secured by a deed of trust or mortgage during the period of five business days prior to the sale of the security property, and no such right of reinstatement during this period is created by this section. Any right of reinstatement created by this section is terminated five business days prior to the date of sale set forth in the initial date of sale, and is revived only as prescribed herein and only as of the date set forth herein.

As used in this subdivision, the term "business day" has the same meaning as specified in Section 9.

SEC. 2. Section 2924d of the Civil Code is amended to read:

2924d. (a) (1) Commencing with the date that the notice of sale is deposited in the mail, as provided in Section 2924b, and until the property is sold pursuant to the power of sale contained in the mortgage or deed of trust, a beneficiary, trustee, mortgagee, or his or her agent or successor in interest may demand and receive from a trustor, mortgagor, or his or her agent or successor in interest or any beneficiary under a subordinate deed of trust, or any other person having a subordinate lien or encumbrance of record those reasonable costs and expenses, to the extent allowed by subdivision (c) of Section 2924c, that are actually incurred in enforcing the terms of the obligation and trustee's or attorney's fees that are hereby authorized to be in an amount as follows:

(A) If the unpaid principal sum secured is fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) or less, then in a base amount that does not exceed four hundred seventy-five dollars (\$475).

(B) If the unpaid principal sum secured is greater than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) but does not exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000), then in a base amount that does not exceed four hundred seventy-five dollars (\$475) plus 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

(C) If the unpaid principal sum secured is greater than one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) but does not exceed five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), then in a base amount that does not exceed four hundred ten dollars (\$410) plus 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) up to and including one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000), plus one-half of 1 percent of any portion of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000).

(D) If the unpaid principal sum secured exceeds five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), then in a base amount that does not exceed four hundred ten dollars (\$410) plus 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) up to and including one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000), plus one-half of 1 percent of any portion of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) up to and including five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000), plus one-quarter of 1 percent of any portion of the unpaid principal sum secured exceeding five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, the unpaid principal sum secured shall be determined as of the date the notice of default is recorded. Any charge for trustee's or attorney's fees authorized by this subdivision shall be conclusively presumed to be lawful and valid where that charge does not exceed the amounts authorized in this subdivision. Any charge for trustee's or attorney's fees made pursuant to this subdivision shall be in lieu of and not in addition to those charges authorized by subdivision (d) of Section 2924c.

(b) Upon the sale of property pursuant to a power of sale, a trustee, or his or her agent or successor in interest, may demand and receive from a beneficiary, or his or her agent or successor in interest, or may deduct from the proceeds of the sale, those reasonable costs and expenses, to the extent allowed by subdivision (c) of Section 2924c, that are actually incurred in enforcing the terms of the obligation and trustee's or attorney's fees that are hereby authorized to be in an amount which does not exceed four hundred seventy-five dollars (\$475) or 1 percent of the unpaid principal sum secured, whichever is greater. For purposes of this subdivision, the unpaid principal sum secured shall be determined as of the date the notice of default is recorded. Any charge for trustee's or attorney's fees authorized by this subdivision shall be conclusively presumed to be lawful and valid where that charge does not exceed the amount authorized herein. Any charges for trustee's or attorney's fees made pursuant to this subdivision shall be in lieu of and not in addition to those charges authorized by subdivision (a) of this section and subdivision (d) of Section 2924c.

(c) (1) No person shall pay or offer to pay or collect any rebate or kickback for the referral of business involving the performance of any act required by this article.

(2) Any person who violates this subdivision shall be liable to the trustor for three times the amount of any rebate or kickback, plus reasonable attorney's fees and costs, in addition to any other remedies provided by law.

(3) No violation of this subdivision shall affect the validity of a sale in favor of a bona fide purchaser or the rights of an encumbrancer for value without notice.

(d) It shall not be unlawful for a trustee to pay or offer to pay a fee to an agent or subagent of the trustee for work performed by the agent or subagent in discharging the trustee's obligations under the terms of the deed of trust. Any payment of a fee by a trustee to an agent or subagent of the trustee for work performed by the agent or subagent in discharging the trustee's obligations under the terms of the deed of trust shall be conclusively presumed to be lawful and valid if the fee, when combined with other fees of the trustee, does not exceed in the aggregate the trustee's fee authorized by subdivision (d) of Section 2924c or subdivision (a) or (b) of this section.

(e) When a court issues a decree of foreclosure, it shall have discretion to award attorney's fees, costs, and expenses as are reasonable, if provided for in the note, deed of trust, or mortgage, pursuant to Section 580c of the Code of Civil Procedure.