

Senate Bill No. 1239

CHAPTER 860

An act to amend Section 1785.15 of, and to add Section 1785.15.3 to, the Civil Code, relating to consumer credit.

[Approved by Governor September 25, 2002. Filed with Secretary of State September 25, 2002.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1239, Figueroa. Consumer credit reporting agencies.

Existing law, the Consumer Credit Reporting Agencies Act, governs the disclosure of consumer credit reports. A consumer credit reporting agency is required to make specified disclosures of information contained in a consumer credit report upon the request of a consumer and to provide a free disclosure if the consumer has been turned down for credit, employment, insurance, or a rented dwelling because of information in his or her credit report within the preceding 60 days. Existing law also requires consumer credit reporting agencies to provide a specified written summary of rights to consumers.

This bill would enact provisions, effective July 1, 2003, that would additionally require a consumer credit reporting agency to provide a statement describing the statutory rights of victims of identity theft, as specified, and to provide one free copy each month, for up to 12 consecutive months, of a consumer's file, upon the request of a consumer who is a victim of identity theft. The bill would except from its provisions certain credit reporting agencies that act only as resellers of credit information collected from other credit reporting agencies, as specified.

The bill would also revise the content of the written summary of rights provided to consumers, as specified.

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

SECTION 1. Section 1785.15 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1785.15. (a) A consumer credit reporting agency shall supply files and information required under Section 1785.10 during normal business hours and on reasonable notice. In addition to the disclosure provided by this chapter and any disclosures received by the consumer, the consumer has the right to request and receive all of the following:



(1) Either a decoded written version of the file or a written copy of the file, including all information in the file at the time of the request, with an explanation of any code used.

(2) A credit score for the consumer, the key factors, and the related information, as defined in and required by Section 1785.15.1.

(3) A record of all inquiries, by recipient, which result in the provision of information concerning the consumer in connection with a credit transaction that is not initiated by the consumer and which were received by the consumer credit reporting agency in the 12-month period immediately preceding the request for disclosure under this section.

(4) The recipients, including end users specified in Section 1785.22, of any consumer credit report on the consumer which the consumer credit reporting agency has furnished:

(A) For employment purposes within the two-year period preceding the request.

(B) For any other purpose within the 12-month period preceding the request.

Identification for purposes of this paragraph shall include the name of the recipient or, if applicable, the fictitious business name under which the recipient does business disclosed in full. If requested by the consumer, the identification shall also include the address of the recipient.

(b) Files maintained on a consumer shall be disclosed promptly as follows:

(1) In person, at the location where the consumer credit reporting agency maintains the trained personnel required by subdivision (d), if he or she appears in person and furnishes proper identification.

(2) By mail, if the consumer makes a written request with proper identification for a copy of the file or a decoded written version of that file to be sent to the consumer at a specified address. A disclosure pursuant to this paragraph shall be deposited in the United States mail, postage prepaid, within five business days after the consumer's written request for the disclosure is received by the consumer credit reporting agency. Consumer credit reporting agencies complying with requests for mailings under this section shall not be liable for disclosures to third parties caused by mishandling of mail after the mailings leave the consumer credit reporting agencies.

(3) A summary of all information contained in files on a consumer and required to be provided by Section 1785.10 shall be provided by telephone, if the consumer has made a written request, with proper identification for telephone disclosure.

(4) Information in a consumer's file required to be provided in writing under this section may also be disclosed in another form if authorized by



the consumer and if available from the consumer credit reporting agency. For this purpose a consumer may request disclosure in person pursuant to Section 1785.10, by telephone upon disclosure of proper identification by the consumer, by electronic means if available from the consumer credit reporting agency, or by any other reasonable means that is available from the consumer credit reporting agency.

(c) “Proper identification,” as used in subdivision (b) means that information generally deemed sufficient to identify a person. Only if the consumer is unable to reasonably identify himself or herself with the information described above, may a consumer credit reporting agency require additional information concerning the consumer’s employment and personal or family history in order to verify his or her identity.

(d) The consumer credit reporting agency shall provide trained personnel to explain to the consumer any information furnished him or her pursuant to Section 1785.10.

(e) The consumer shall be permitted to be accompanied by one other person of his or her choosing, who shall furnish reasonable identification. A consumer credit reporting agency may require the consumer to furnish a written statement granting permission to the consumer credit reporting agency to discuss the consumer’s file in that person’s presence.

(f) Any written disclosure by a consumer credit reporting agency to any consumer pursuant to this section shall include a written summary of all rights the consumer has under this title and in the case of a consumer credit reporting agency which compiles and maintains consumer credit reports on a nationwide basis, a toll-free telephone number which the consumer can use to communicate with the consumer credit reporting agency. The written summary of rights required under this subdivision is sufficient if in substantially the following form:

“You have a right to obtain a copy of your credit file from a consumer credit reporting agency. You may be charged a reasonable fee not exceeding eight dollars (\$8). There is no fee, however, if you have been turned down for credit, employment, insurance, or a rental dwelling because of information in your credit report within the preceding 60 days. The consumer credit reporting agency must provide someone to help you interpret the information in your credit file.

You have a right to dispute inaccurate information by contacting the consumer credit reporting agency directly. However, neither you nor any credit repair company or credit service organization has the right to have accurate, current, and verifiable information removed from your credit report. Under the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, the consumer credit reporting agency must remove accurate, negative information from your



report only if it is over seven years old. Bankruptcy information can be reported for 10 years.

If you have notified a consumer credit reporting agency in writing that you dispute the accuracy of information in your file, the consumer credit reporting agency must then, within 30 business days, reinvestigate and modify or remove inaccurate information. The consumer credit reporting agency may not charge a fee for this service. Any pertinent information and copies of all documents you have concerning an error should be given to the consumer credit reporting agency.

If reinvestigation does not resolve the dispute to your satisfaction, you may send a brief statement to the consumer credit reporting agency to keep in your file, explaining why you think the record is inaccurate. The consumer credit reporting agency must include your statement about disputed information in a report it issues about you.

You have a right to receive a record of all inquiries relating to a credit transaction initiated in 12 months preceding your request. This record shall include the recipients of any consumer credit report.

You may request in writing that the information contained in your file not be provided to a third party for marketing purposes.

You have a right to place a “security alert” in your credit report, which will warn anyone who receives information in your credit report that your identity may have been used without your consent and that recipients of your credit report are advised, but not required, to verify your identity prior to issuing credit. The security alert may prevent credit, loans, and services from being approved in your name without your consent. However, you should be aware that taking advantage of this right may delay or interfere with the timely approval of any subsequent request or application you make regarding a new loan, credit, mortgage, insurance, rental housing, employment, investment, license, cellular phone, utilities, digital signature, Internet credit card transaction, or other services, including an extension of credit at point of sale. If you place a security alert on your credit report, you have a right to obtain a free copy of your credit report at the time the 90-day security alert period expires. A security alert may be requested by calling the following toll-free telephone number: (Insert applicable toll-free telephone number).

You have a right to place a “security freeze” on your credit report, which will prohibit a consumer credit reporting agency from releasing any information in your credit report without your express authorization. A security freeze must be requested in writing by certified mail. The security freeze is designed to prevent credit, loans, and services from being approved in your name without your consent. However, you should be aware that using a security freeze to take control over who gets



access to the personal and financial information in your credit report may delay, interfere with, or prohibit the timely approval of any subsequent request or application you make regarding a new loan, credit, mortgage, insurance, government services or payments, rental housing, employment, investment, license, cellular phone, utilities, digital signature, Internet credit card transaction, or other services, including an extension of credit at point of sale. When you place a security freeze on your credit report, you will be provided a personal identification number or password to use if you choose to remove the freeze on your credit report or authorize the release of your credit report for a specific party or period of time after the freeze is in place. To provide that authorization you must contact the consumer credit reporting agency and provide all of the following:

- (1) The personal identification number or password.
- (2) Proper identification to verify your identity.
- (3) The proper information regarding the third party who is to receive the credit report or the period of time for which the report shall be available.

A consumer credit reporting agency must authorize the release of your credit report no later than three business days after receiving the above information.

A security freeze does not apply to a person or entity, or its affiliates, or collection agencies acting on behalf of the person or entity, with which you have an existing account, that requests information in your credit report for the purposes of reviewing or collecting the account. Reviewing the account includes activities related to account maintenance, monitoring, credit line increases, and account upgrades and enhancements.

You have a right to bring civil action against anyone, including a consumer credit reporting agency, who improperly obtains access to a file, knowingly or willfully misuses file data, or fails to correct inaccurate file data.

If you are a victim of identity theft and provide to a consumer credit reporting agency a copy of a valid police report or a valid investigative report made by a Department of Motor Vehicles investigator with peace officer status describing your circumstances, the following shall apply:

- (1) You have a right to have any information you list on the report as allegedly fraudulent promptly blocked so that the information cannot be reported. The information will be unblocked only if (A) the information you provide is a material misrepresentation of the facts, (B) you agree that the information is blocked in error, or (C) you knowingly obtained possession of goods, services, or moneys as result of the blocked



transactions. If blocked information is unblocked you will be promptly notified.

(2) Beginning July 1, 2003, you have a right to receive, free of charge and upon request, one copy of your credit report each month for up to 12 consecutive months.”

SEC. 2. Section 1785.15.3 is added to the Civil Code, to read:

1785.15.3. (a) In addition to any other rights the consumer may have under this title, every consumer credit reporting agency, after being contacted by telephone, mail, or in person by any consumer who has reason to believe he or she may be a victim of identity theft, shall promptly provide to that consumer a statement, written in a clear and conspicuous manner, describing the statutory rights of victims of identity theft under this title.

(b) Every consumer credit reporting agency shall, upon the receipt from a victim of identity theft of a police report prepared pursuant to Section 530.6 of the Penal Code, or a valid investigative report made by a Department of Motor Vehicles investigator with peace officer status regarding the public offenses described in Section 530.5 of the Penal Code, provide the victim, free of charge and upon request, with up to 12 copies of his or her file during a consecutive 12-month period, not to exceed one copy per month, following the date of the police report. Notwithstanding any other provision of this title, the maximum number of free reports a victim of identity theft is entitled to obtain under this title is 12 per year, as provided by this subdivision.

(c) Subdivision (a) does not apply to a consumer reporting agency that acts only as a reseller of credit information by assembling and merging information contained in the database of another consumer reporting agency or agencies and that does not maintain a permanent database of credit information from which new credit reports are produced.

(d) The provisions of this section shall become effective July 1, 2003.

