

Senate Bill No. 376

CHAPTER 17

An act to amend Sections 17204 and 17206 of the Business and Professions Code, relating to unfair competition.

[Approved by Governor June 28, 2007. Filed with
Secretary of State June 28, 2007.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 376, Migden. Unfair competition: actions by city attorneys.

Existing law authorizes specified governmental agencies to bring an action for unfair competition and to recover a civil penalty from the defendant in those actions. Under existing law, a city attorney for a city or city and county with a population in excess of 750,000 or for a city and county if the district attorney has consented may bring an unfair competition action and recover a civil penalty.

This bill would instead allow an unfair competition action to be brought and allow recovery of a civil penalty by a city attorney for any city and county.

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

SECTION 1. Section 17204 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:

17204. Actions for Injunctions by Attorney General, District Attorney, County Counsel, and City Attorneys

Actions for any relief pursuant to this chapter shall be prosecuted exclusively in a court of competent jurisdiction by the Attorney General or any district attorney or by any county counsel authorized by agreement with the district attorney in actions involving violation of a county ordinance, or any city attorney of a city having a population in excess of 750,000, or by a city attorney in any city and county and, with the consent of the district attorney, by a city prosecutor in any city having a full-time city prosecutor in the name of the people of the State of California upon their own complaint or upon the complaint of any board, officer, person, corporation, or association, or by any person who has suffered injury in fact and has lost money or property as a result of the unfair competition.

SEC. 2. Section 17206 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:

17206. Civil Penalty for Violation of Chapter

(a) Any person who engages, has engaged, or proposes to engage in unfair competition shall be liable for a civil penalty not to exceed two

thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) for each violation, which shall be assessed and recovered in a civil action brought in the name of the people of the State of California by the Attorney General, by any district attorney, by any county counsel authorized by agreement with the district attorney in actions involving violation of a county ordinance, by any city attorney of a city having a population in excess of 750,000, by any city attorney of any city and county, or, with the consent of the district attorney, by a city prosecutor in any city having a full-time city prosecutor, in any court of competent jurisdiction.

(b) The court shall impose a civil penalty for each violation of this chapter. In assessing the amount of the civil penalty, the court shall consider any one or more of the relevant circumstances presented by any of the parties to the case, including, but not limited to, the following: the nature and seriousness of the misconduct, the number of violations, the persistence of the misconduct, the length of time over which the misconduct occurred, the willfulness of the defendant's misconduct, and the defendant's assets, liabilities, and net worth.

(c) If the action is brought by the Attorney General, one-half of the penalty collected shall be paid to the treasurer of the county in which the judgment was entered, and one-half to the General Fund. If the action is brought by a district attorney or county counsel, the penalty collected shall be paid to the treasurer of the county in which the judgment was entered. Except as provided in subdivision (e), if the action is brought by a city attorney or city prosecutor, one-half of the penalty collected shall be paid to the treasurer of the city in which the judgment was entered, and one-half to the treasurer of the county in which the judgment was entered. The aforementioned funds shall be for the exclusive use by the Attorney General, the district attorney, the county counsel, and the city attorney for the enforcement of consumer protection laws.

(d) The Unfair Competition Law Fund is hereby created as a special account within the General Fund in the State Treasury. The portion of penalties that is payable to the General Fund or to the Treasurer recovered by the Attorney General from an action or settlement of a claim made by the Attorney General pursuant to this chapter or Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 17500) of Part 3 shall be deposited into this fund. Moneys in this fund, upon appropriation by the Legislature, shall be used by the Attorney General to support investigations and prosecutions of California's consumer protection laws, including implementation of judgments obtained from such prosecutions or investigations and other activities which are in furtherance of this chapter or Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 17500) of Part 3.

(e) If the action is brought at the request of a board within the Department of Consumer Affairs or a local consumer affairs agency, the court shall determine the reasonable expenses incurred by the board or local agency in the investigation and prosecution of the action.

Before any penalty collected is paid out pursuant to subdivision (c), the amount of any reasonable expenses incurred by the board shall be paid to

the Treasurer for deposit in the special fund of the board described in Section 205. If the board has no such special fund, the moneys shall be paid to the Treasurer. The amount of any reasonable expenses incurred by a local consumer affairs agency shall be paid to the general fund of the municipality or county that funds the local agency.

(f) If the action is brought by a city attorney of a city and county, the entire amount of the penalty collected shall be paid to the treasurer of the city and county in which the judgment was entered for the exclusive use by the city attorney for the enforcement of consumer protection laws. However, if the action is brought by a city attorney of a city and county for the purposes of civil enforcement pursuant to Section 17980 of the Health and Safety Code or Article 3 (commencing with Section 11570) of Chapter 10 of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, either the penalty collected shall be paid entirely to the treasurer of the city and county in which the judgment was entered or, upon the request of the city attorney, the court may order that up to one-half of the penalty, under court supervision and approval, be paid for the purpose of restoring, maintaining, or enhancing the premises that were the subject of the action, and that the balance of the penalty be paid to the treasurer of the city and county.