

Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act of 1940
(excerpts)
50 U.S.C. §§ 530 *et seq.* (Appendix)

see Section 534 for lease termination provisions

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§ 530. Eviction or distress during military service; stay; penalty for noncompliance; allotment of pay of payment

- (a) No eviction or distress shall be made during the period of military service in respect of any premises for which the agreed rent does not exceed \$1,200 per month, occupied chiefly for dwelling purposes by the wife, children, or other dependents of a person in military service, except upon leave of court granted upon application therefor or granted in an action or proceeding affecting the right of possession.
- (b) On any such application or in any such action the court may, in its discretion, on its own motion, and shall, on application, unless in the opinion of the court the ability of the tenant to pay the agreed rent is not materially affected by reason of such military service, stay the proceedings for not longer than three months, as provided in this Act, or it may make such other order as may be just. Where such stay is granted or other order is made by the court, the owner of the premises shall be entitled, upon application therefor, to relief in respect of such premises similar to that granted persons in military service in sections 301, 302, and 500 of this Act to such extent and for such period as may appear to the court to be just.
- (c) Any person who shall knowingly take part in any eviction or distress otherwise than as provided in subsection (a), or attempts so to do, shall be fined as provided in title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not to exceed one year, or both.
- (d) The Secretary of Defense or Secretary of Transportation, with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy, is empowered, subject to such regulations as he may prescribe, to order an allotment of the pay of a person in military service in reasonable proportion to discharge the rent of premises occupied for dwelling purposes by the wife, children, or other dependents of such person.

§ 531. Installment contracts for purchase of property

(1) No person who has received, or whose assignor has received, under a contract for the purchase of real or personal property, or of lease or bailment with a view to purchase of such property, a deposit or installment of the purchase price, or a deposit or installment under the contract, lease, or bailment, from a person or from the assignor of a person who, after the date of payment of such deposit or installment, has entered military service, shall exercise any right or option under such contract to rescind or terminate the contract or resume possession of the property for nonpayment of any installment there under due or for any other breach of the terms thereof occurring prior to or during the period of such military service, except by action in a court of competent jurisdiction.

(2) Any person who shall knowingly resume possession of property which is the subject of this section otherwise than as provided in subsection (1) of this section or in section 107 [section 517 of this Appendix], or attempts so to do, shall be fined as provided in title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not to exceed one year, or both.

(3) Upon the hearing of such action the court may order the repayment of prior installments or deposits or any part thereof, as a condition of terminating the contract and resuming possession of the property, or may, in its discretion, on its own motion, and shall, on application to it by such person in military service or some person on his behalf, order a stay of proceedings as provided in this Act [sections 501 to 593 of this Appendix] unless, in the opinion of the court, the ability of the defendant to comply with the terms of the contract is not materially affected by reason of such service; or it may make such other disposition of the case as may be equitable to conserve the interests of all parties.

§ 532. Mortgages, trust deeds, etc.

(1) The provisions of this section shall apply only to obligations secured by mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage upon real or personal property owned by a person in military service at the commencement of the period of the military service and still so owned by him which obligations originated prior to such person's period of military service.

(2) In any proceeding commenced in any court during the period of military service to enforce such obligation arising out of nonpayment of any sum there under due or out of any other breach of the terms thereof occurring prior to or during the period of such service the court may, after hearing, in its discretion, on its own motion, and shall, on application to it by such person in military service or some person on his behalf, unless in the opinion of the court the ability of the defendant to comply with the terms of the obligation is not materially affected by reason of his military service—

- (a) stay the proceedings as provided in this Act; or
- (b) make such other disposition of the case as may be equitable to conserve the interests of all parties.

(3) No sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property for nonpayment of any sum due under any such obligation, or for any other breach of the terms thereof, whether under a power of sale, under a judgment entered upon warrant of attorney to confess judgment contained therein, or otherwise, shall be valid if made during the period of military service or within three months thereafter, except pursuant to an agreement as provided in section 107, unless upon an order previously granted by the court and a return thereto made and approved by the court.

(4) Any person who shall knowingly make or cause to be made any sale, foreclosure, or seizure of property, defined as invalid by subsection (3) hereof, or attempts so to do, shall be fined as provided in title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not to exceed one year, or both.

§ 533. Settlement of cases involving stayed proceedings to foreclose mortgage on, resume possession of, or terminate contract for purchase of, personal property

Where a proceeding to foreclose a mortgage upon or to resume possession of personal property, or to rescind or terminate a contract for the purchase thereof, has been stayed as provided in this Act, the court may, unless in its opinion an undue hardship would result to the dependents of the person in military service, appoint three disinterested parties to appraise the property and, based upon the report of the appraisers, order such sum, if any, as may be just, paid to the person in military service or his dependent, as the case may be, as a condition of foreclosing the mortgage, resuming possession of the property, or rescinding or terminating the contract.

§ 534. Termination of leases by lessees

(1) The provisions of this section shall apply to any lease covering premises occupied for dwelling, professional, business, agricultural, or similar purposes in any case in which (a) such lease was executed by or on the behalf of a person who, after the execution of such lease, entered military service, and (b) the premises so leased have been occupied for such purposes, or for a combination of such purposes, by such person or by him and his dependents.

(2) Any such lease may be terminated by notice in writing delivered to the lessor (or his grantee) or to the lessor's (or his grantee's) agent by the lessee at any time following the date of the beginning of his period of military service. Delivery of such notice may be accomplished by placing it in an envelope properly stamped and duly addressed to the lessor (or his grantee) or to the lessor's (or his grantee's) agent and depositing the notice in the United States mails. Termination of any such lease providing for monthly payment of rent shall not be effective until thirty days after the first date on which the next rental payment is due and payable subsequent to the date when such notice is delivered or mailed. In the case of all other leases, termination shall be effected on the last day of the month following the month in which such notice is delivered or mailed and in such case any unpaid rental for a period preceding termination shall be proratably computed and any rental paid in advance for a period succeeding termination shall be refunded by the lessor (or his assignee). Upon application by the lessor to the appropriate court prior to the termination period provided for in the notice, any relief granted in this subsection shall be subject to such modifications or restrictions as in the opinion of the court justice and equity may in the circumstances require.

(3) Any person who shall knowingly seize, hold, or detain the personal effects, clothing, furniture, or other property of any person who has lawfully terminated a lease covered by this section, or in any manner interfere with the removal of such property from the premises covered by such lease, for the purpose of subjecting or attempting to subject any of such property to a claim for rent accruing subsequent to the date of termination of such lease, or attempts so to do, shall be fined as provided in title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not to exceed one year, or both.

§ 535. Protection of assignor of life insurance policy; enforcement of storage liens; penalties

(1) Where any life insurance policy on the life of a person in military service has been assigned prior to such person's period of military service to secure the payment of any obligation of such person, no assignee of such policy (except the insurer in connection with a policy loan) shall, during the period of military service of the insured or within one year thereafter, except upon the consent in writing of the insured made during such period or when the premiums thereon are due and unpaid or upon the death of the insured, exercise any right or option by virtue of such assignment unless upon leave of court granted upon an application made therefor by such assignee. The court may thereupon refuse to grant such leave unless in the opinion of the court the ability of the obligor to comply with the terms of the obligation is not materially affected by reason of his military service. For the purpose of this subsection premiums which are guaranteed under the provisions of article IV of this Act shall not be deemed to be due and unpaid.

(2) No person shall exercise any right to foreclose or enforce any lien for storage of household goods, furniture, or personal effects of a person in military service during such person's period of military service and for three months thereafter except upon an order previously granted by a court upon application therefor and a return thereto made and approved by the court. In such proceeding the court may, after hearing, in its discretion, on its own motion, and shall, on application to it by such person in military service or some person on his behalf, unless in the opinion of the court the ability of the defendant to pay the storage charges due is not materially affected by reason of his military service—

- (a) stay the proceedings as provided in this Act; or
- (b) make such other disposition of the case as may be equitable to conserve the interest of all parties.

The enactment of the provisions of this subsection shall not be construed in any way as affecting or as limiting the scope of section 302 of this Act.

(3) Any person who shall knowingly take any action contrary to the provisions of this section, or attempts so to do, shall be fined as provided in title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not to exceed one year, or both.

§ 536. Extension of benefits to dependents

Dependents of a person in military service shall be entitled to the benefits accorded to persons in military service under the provisions of this article upon application to a court therefor, unless in the opinion of the court the ability of such dependents to comply with the terms of the obligation, contract, lease, or bailment has not been materially impaired by reason of the military service of the person upon whom the applicants are dependent.