

**ACT 186**

**S.B. NO. 1543**

**A Bill for an Act Relating to Residential Leaseholds and the Acquisition by the State Through Condemnation of Lands in Fee Simple and the Disposition Thereof.**

*Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:*

**SECTION 1. Findings and purpose.** Act 307, Session Laws of Hawaii 1967, now Chapter 516, Hawaii Revised Statutes, was intended to lessen the adverse consequences of the excessive concentration of the fee title to lands in Hawaii in the hands of a few owners by allowing residential leaseholders to acquire the fee simple title absolute or otherwise, to real property they were leasing.

The legislature finds that although the Act has been in full effect for nearly six years it has not been implemented. Many reasons have been cited for the failure to put the Act into effect including possible legal or constitutional difficulties inherent in the original Act.

The purpose of this Act is to reaffirm and reiterate the findings and declarations of necessity originally set forth in Act 307 and to amplify and clarify those findings and declarations of necessity.

**SECTION 2.** Chapter 516, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read:

**"Sec. 516- Legislative findings and declaration of necessity; purpose.**

(a) The legislature finds that:

- (1) There is a concentration of land ownership in the State in the hands of a few landowners who have refused to sell the fee simple titles to their lands and who have instead engaged in the practice of leasing their lands under long-term leases;
- (2) The refusal of such landowners to sell the fee simple titles to their lands and the proliferation of such practice of leasing rather than selling land has resulted in a serious shortage of fee simple residential land and in an artificial inflation of residential land values in the State;
- (3) Due to such shortage of fee simple residential land and such artificial inflation of residential land values, the people of the State have been deprived of a choice to own or take a lease of the land on which their homes are situated and have been required instead to accept long-term leases of such land which contain terms and conditions that are financially disadvantageous, that restrict their freedom to fully enjoy such land and that are weighted heavily in favor of the few landowners of such land;
- (4) The economy of the State and the public interest, health, welfare, security, and happiness of the people of the State are adversely affected by such shortage of fee simple residential land and artificial inflation of residential land values and by such deprivation of the people of the State of the choice to own or take a lease of the land on which their homes are situated and the required acceptance of such long-term leases of such lands;
- (5) The acquisition of residential land in fee simple, absolute or otherwise, at fair and reasonable prices by people who are lessees under long-term leases of such land and on which such land their homes are situated and the ability of such people to fully enjoy such land through

ownership of such land in fee simple will alleviate these conditions and will promote the economy of the State and public interest, health, welfare, security, and happiness of the people of the State;

- (6) The cost of living in Hawaii is and has been high. In recent years inflation has drastically increased the cost of living in the State. The spiraling cost of living affects all people through erosion of the purchasing power of whatever monetary resources they command. For a growing proportion of Hawaii's population, quite possibly a majority, the high cost of living is denying them such basic necessities as sufficient nutritional intake, safe and healthy housing accommodations, clothing, and adequate preventive and curative health services. A substantive and significant contributing factor to the high and rising cost of living is the high cost of land whether leasehold or fee. Stabilizing the costs of land or, at least, slowing the artificial inflation of land values would curb the rising cost of living in Hawaii and, ultimately, contribute to the welfare of all people of the State by improving their standard of living.
- (7) The Constitution of the State of Hawaii provides the State the power to provide assistance for persons unable to maintain a standard of living compatible with decency and health. The rising cost of land tied to other cost of living increases is swelling the ranks of those persons unable to maintain a decent and healthful standard of life. If the inflationary trend of land continues unchecked, the resultant inflationary total cost of living could create such a large population of persons deprived of decent and healthful standards of life that the consequent disruptions in lawful social behavior could irreparably rend the social fabric which now protectively covers the life and safety of all Hawaii's people. The threat posed by this possibility is sufficiently real and imminent to warrant State action to redistribute land as a means of curbing continuing inflationary rises in land values.
- (8) The right to own land is not an irrevocable grant of a special privilege where it operates against the general welfare of the many for the particular benefit of the few.
- (9) Land, in common with other natural resources, is of finite quantity; a fact particularly obvious in Hawaii. In recent decades there has been growing general agreement that the wise conservation, preservation, use and management of exhaustible natural resources such as land are matters mandating an active governmental role. There is an intimate relationship between the monetary values accorded land in Hawaii and the stability and strength of the State's economy as a whole. Land values, artificially inflated by the high concentration of ownership, skew the State economy toward unnecessarily high levels. The pervasive and substantial contribution made to inflation by high land values creates a potential for economic instability and disruption. Economic inflation, instability and disruptions have real and potential damaging consequences for all members of an affected society. Checking inflation, improving the stability of the economy, and fore-

stalling disadvantageous economic disruptions all are productive of general benefit to all members of the Hawaiian society. The sound and wise conservation, preservation, use and management of land cannot be separated from the subject of patterns of land ownership. To accomplish the public purposes of wisely conserving, preserving, using, and managing the land in the State requires changing present patterns of land ownership. Public laws, expenditures, programs, and policies which contribute to the realization of these public purposes serve a public use since they ultimately benefit the entire community. Changing present patterns of land ownership by allowing lessees under long-term leases of residential land to purchase in fee simple, absolute or otherwise, the land on which their homes are situated, through governmental intervention including exercise of the power of eminent domain to acquire fee simple title to such land and public financing of such purchase and such condemnation and payment through the issuance of bonds, the expenditure of general revenue funds, and the use of private funds which are at the disposal of the State, will help satisfy the pressing public necessity for a secure, strong and stable economy.

- (10) The State's acquisition of residential lands held in fee simple, through the exercise of the power of eminent domain, for the purposes of this Act is for the public use and purpose of protecting the public safety, health and welfare of all people in Hawaii.
- (11) Inflation lessens the quality of life of all members of this afflicted society and is particularly invidious in its impact on the 90 plus per cent of the population who are in the poverty, and low through middle income groups. The State has limited abilities to curb inflation and, perhaps, the only useful means available is the State's power to control land values. There is a pressing public necessity for the State to do whatever it can to curb inflation and to keep the cost of living at a level where it is possible and manageable to provide all citizens a decent and healthful standard of life. The public use and purpose of providing all citizens a decent and healthful standard of life will be directly and substantially furthered by the State's acquisition of residential lands held in fee simple, through the exercise of the power of eminent domain, for the purposes of this Act.
- (12) The use of the power of eminent domain to condemn the fee simple title to residential land and the payment of just compensation therefor for the purpose of making the fee simple title thereto and the use thereof available for acquisition by people who are lessees under long-term leases of such land and on which such land their homes are situated is for a public use and purpose;
- (13) Legislation providing to people who are lessees under long-term leases of residential land on which their homes are situated the ability to fully enjoy such land through ownership of such land in fee simple, absolute or otherwise, is for a public purpose.
  - (b) It is therefore declared to be necessary and it is the purpose of this

chapter to alleviate the conditions found in subsection (a) of this section by providing for the right of any person who is a lessee under a long-term lease of residential land in the State to purchase at a fair and reasonable price the fee simple title to such land, by providing for the condemnation of the fee simple title to such land and the payment of just compensation therefor by the State through the use of the power of eminent domain and by providing for the public financing of such purchase and such condemnation and payment through the issuance of bonds, the expenditure of general revenue funds, and the use of private funds which are at the disposal of the State.”

SECTION 3. New statutory material is underscored. In printing this Act, the revisor of statutes need not include the underscoring.\*

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 2, 1975.)

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\*Edited accordingly.