Legal Rights and Protections Under the SCRA

Servicemembers on "active duty" or "active service," or a spouse or dependent of such a servicemember may be entitled to certain legal protections and debt relief pursuant to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 USC App. §§ 501-597b) (SCRA).

Who May Be Entitled to Legal Protections Under the SCRA?

- Regular members of the U.S. Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force Marine Corps and Coast Guard).
- Reserve and National Guard personnel who have been activated and are on Federal active duty
- National Guard personnel under a call or order to active duty for more than 30 consecutive days under section 502(f) of title 32, United States Code, for purposes of responding to a national emergency declared by the President and supported by Federal funds
- Active service members of the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- Certain United States citizens serving with the armed forces of a nation with which the United States is allied in the prosecution of a war or military action.

What Legal Protections Are Servicemembers Entitled To Under the SCRA?

- The SCRA states that a debt incurred by a servicemember, or servicemember and spouse jointly, prior to entering military service shall not bear interest at a rate above 6 % during the period of military service and one year thereafter, in the case of an obligation or liability consisting of a mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage, or during the period of military service in the case of any other obligation or liability.
- The SCRA states that in a legal action to enforce a debt against real estate that is filed during, or within one year after the servicemember's military service, a court may stop the proceedings for a period of time, or adjust the debt. In addition, the sale, foreclosure, or seizure of real estate shall not be valid if it occurs during or within one year after the servicemember's military service unless the creditor has obtained a valid court order approving the sale, foreclosure, or seizure of the real estate.
- The SCRA contains many other protections besides those applicable to home loans.

How Does A Servicemember or Dependent Request Relief Under the SCRA?

- In order to request relief under the SCRA from loans with interest rates above 6% a servicemember or spouse must provide a written request to the lender, together with a copy of the servicemenber's military orders. [Note: Lender should place its name, address, and contact information here.]
- There is no requirement under the SCRA, however, for a servicemember to provide a written notice or a copy of a servicemember's military orders to the lender in connection with a foreclosure or other debt enforcement action against real estate. Under these circumstances, lenders should inquire about the military status of a person by searching the Department of Defense's Defense Manpower Data Center's website, contacting the servicemember, and examining their files for indicia of military service. Although there is no requirement for servicemembers to alert the lender of their military status in these situations, it still is a good idea for the servicemember to do so.

How Does a Servicemember or Dependent Obtain Information About the SCRA?

- Servicemembers and dependents with questions about the SCRA should contact their unit's Judge Advocate, or their installation's Legal Assistance Officer. A military legal assistance office locator for all branches of the Armed Forces is available at http://legalassistance.law.af.mil/content/locator.php

- "Military OneSource" is the U. S. Department of Defense's information resource. If you are listed as entitled to legal protections under the SCRA (see above), please go to www.militaryonesource.mil/legal or call 1-800-342-9647 (toll free from the Unites States) to find out more information. Dialing instructions for areas outside the United States are provided on the website.