1 EDMUND G. BROWN JR. **[EXEMPT FROM FILING FEES** UNDER GOVT. CODE SEC. 6103] Attorney General of California FRANCES T. GRUNDER 2 Senior Assistant Attorney General 3 KATHRIN SEARS Supervising Deputy Attorney General 4 SHELDON H. JAFFE (State Bar 200555) ALEXANDRA ROBERT GORDON (State Bar 207650) 5 CONOR P. MOORE (State Bar 230079) AMY C. TENG (State Bar 228133) 6 Deputy Attorneys General 455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 11000 7 8 9 Attorneys for Plaintiff THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 10 11 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 12 **COUNTY OF ORANGE** 13 14 15 THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF Case No. CALIFORNIA, 16 COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES, Plaintiff, PERMANENT INJUNCTION AND 17 OTHER EQUITABLE RELIEF V. 18 STATEWIDE FINANCIAL GROUP, INC., a 19 California corporation doing business as US HOMEOWNĖRS ASSISTĂNCE; US 20 HOMEOWNERS PRESERVATION CENTER, INC., a California corporation; 21 HAKIMULLAH SARPAS, an individual; ZULMAI NAZARZAI, an individual; 22 SHARON FASELA, an individual; RASHA YEHIA MELEK, an individual; and DOES 1 23 through 100, inclusive, 24 Defendants. 25 26 27 28 COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES, PERMANENT INJUNCTION

AND OTHER EQUITABLE RELIEF

Plaintiff, the People of the State of California, by and through Edmund G. Brown Jr., Attorney General of the State of California, alleges the following on information and belief:

- 1. This action is brought against Defendants, who regularly violate California law while preying on consumers facing foreclosure and the loss of their homes. Defendants have unlawfully charged customers up front fees (ranging in the thousands of dollars) while falsely promising to help them negotiate better mortgage terms from their lenders and to rescue them from foreclosure. Despite taking these exorbitant advance fees, Defendants provide little or no assistance to their customers.
- 2. Numerous California consumers have fallen prey to Defendants' unlawful scam, losing thousands of dollars that could have been used toward mortgage payments or finding new housing. In this action, Plaintiff seeks an order permanently enjoining Defendants from engaging in their unlawful business practices, granting restitution for affected consumers, imposing civil penalties, and all other relief available under California law.

DEFENDANTS AND VENUE

- 3. Defendant Statewide Financial Group, Inc. (Statewide Financial), is a California corporation with its principal place of business at 2575 McCabe Way, Suite 240, Irvine, California 92614. At all relevant times, Defendant Statewide Financial does business under the names US Homeowners Assistance (USHA), We Beat All Rates, and Homeowner Preservation Center of America. Defendant Statewide Financial is not a law corporation or licensed as a real estate broker or an entity authorized to make loans or extensions of credit. Defendant Statewide Financial operates a web site at www.webeatallrates.com. At all relevant times, Defendant Statewide Financial has transacted and continues to transact business throughout California, including Orange County.
- 4. Defendant US Homeowners Preservation Center, Inc. (US Homeowners Preservation), is a California corporation with its principal place of business at 2575 McCabe Way, Suite 240, Irvine, California 92614. Defendant US Homeowners Preservation is not a law corporation or licensed as a real estate broker or an entity authorized to make loans or extensions

of credit. At all relevant times, Defendant US Homeowners Preservation Center has transacted and continues to transact business throughout California, including Orange County.

- 5. Defendant Hakimullah "Sean" Sarpas (Sarpas), an individual, is a principal of Defendants Statewide Financial and US Homeowners Preservation. According to a Statement of Information filed with the Secretary of State on February 14, 2007, Defendant Sarpas was the Chief Executive Officer, Secretary, and Director of Defendant Statewide Financial. Defendant Sarpas resides at 266 Quail Meadows, Irvine, California 92603. Defendant Sarpas, acting alone or in concert with others, has formulated, directed, controlled, authorized, or participated in the acts and practices set forth in this Complaint. At all relevant times, Defendant Sarpas was a real estate salesperson licensed by the California Department of Real Estate (DRE). At all relevant times, Defendant Sarpas has transacted and continues to transact business throughout California, including Orange County. Defendant Sarpas is a resident of Orange County.
- 6. Defendant Zulmai Nazarzai (Nazarzai), an individual, is a principal of Defendant Statewide Financial. According to a Statement of Information filed with the Secretary of State on February 14, 2007, Defendant Nazarzai was the Chief Financial Officer and Director of Defendant Statewide Financial. Defendant Nazarzai resides at 13712 Onkayha Circle, Irvine, California 92620. Defendant Nazarzai, acting alone or in concert with others, has formulated, directed, controlled, authorized, or participated in the acts and practices set forth in this Complaint. Defendant Nazarzai is not an attorney and is not licensed as a real estate broker or person authorized to make loans or extensions of credit. At all relevant times, Defendant Nazarzai has transacted and continues to transact business throughout California, including Orange County. Defendant Nazarzai is a resident of Orange County.
- 7. Defendant Sharon Fasela (Fasela), an individual also known as Fasela Sheren, is an employee of Statewide Financial doing business as USHA. Defendant Fasela resides at 22771 La Vina Drive, Mission Viejo, California. Defendant Fasela, acting alone or in concert with others, has formulated, directed, controlled, authorized, or participated in the acts and practices set forth in this Complaint. Defendant Fasela is not an attorney and is not licensed as a real estate broker or person authorized to make loans or extensions of credit. At all relevant times,

Defendant Fasela has transacted and continues to transact business throughout California, including Orange County. Defendant Fasela is a resident of Orange County.

- 8. Defendant Rasha Yehia Melek (Melek), an individual, is an employee of Statewide Financial doing business as USHA. Defendant Melek resides at 6956 Shamrock Lane, Rancho Cucamonga, California 91701. Defendant Melek, acting alone or in concert with others, has formulated, directed, controlled, authorized, or participated in the acts and practices set forth in this Complaint. Defendant Melek is not an attorney and is not licensed as a real estate broker or person authorized to make loans or extensions of credit. Defendant Melek has an expired real estate salesperson license issued by DRE. At all relevant times, Defendant Melek has transacted and continues to transact business throughout California, including Orange County
- 9. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate or otherwise, of defendants sued herein as Does 1 through 100, inclusive, presently are unknown to Plaintiff, who therefore sues said defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend this Complaint to allege the true names of Does 1 through 100 when the same have been ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and based thereon alleges, that each of the fictitiously named defendants participated in some or all of the acts alleged herein.
- 10. The defendants identified in Paragraphs 3 through 9 above are referred to collectively in this Complaint as the "Defendants."
- 11. At all times mentioned herein, each of the Defendants acted as the principal, agent, or representative of each of the other Defendants, and in doing the acts herein alleged, each Defendant was acting within the course and scope of the agency relationship with each of the other Defendants, and with the permission and ratification of each of the other Defendants.
- 12. At all relevant times, Defendants have controlled, directed, formulated, known and/or approved of, and/or agreed to the various acts and practices of each of the Defendants.
- 13. Whenever reference is made in this Complaint to any act of any Defendant or Defendants, such allegation shall mean that such Defendant or Defendants did the acts alleged in this Complaint either personally or through the Defendant's or Defendants' officers, directors,

respective lenders. Defendants falsely represented both their success rate in negotiating loan

- 33. In some cases, Defendants have promised consumers that they could obtain principal reductions of 20% or more (leading to promises of principal reductions of \$100,000 or more) and reductions of monthly payments by \$200 or more. Based on Defendants' promises of such favorable terms, consumers are induced to sign contracts to engage Defendants' loan modification services.
- 34. Defendants tell consumers that the loan modification process may be completed in as few as 30 days or between 30 and 60 days. In reality, however, most customers never obtain a loan modification.
- 35. Defendants also tell consumers that if Defendants are unable to obtain a loan modification for them, they will be able to receive a refund of fees paid (or, in some cases, minus a processing fee). Defendants have even told customers that their lenders would refund their money at closing. In the majority of cases, however, customers who request refunds are denied them by Defendants, or Defendants fail to respond to the refund requests.
- 36. Defendants also falsely state to consumers that attorneys affiliated with Defendants review customers' financial paperwork and also negotiate with the lenders on their behalf. In reality, however, customers are not given any opportunity to speak with or have any contact with any attorneys affiliated with Defendants about their loans, and no attorneys affiliated with Defendants review customers' financial documents or negotiate with lenders on their behalf. Moreover, Defendants' customers are told by their lenders that the lenders have not been contacted by Defendants or any of Defendants' representatives on the customers' behalf.
- 37. Defendants tell consumers that they will be acting as their agent and negotiator with their lenders. To that end and to control what is communicated to the lenders, Defendants instruct customers not to speak to their lenders about their financial circumstances and to avoid responding to any communications they receive from the lender. Defendants instruct customers to forward all communications from the lender to Defendants. In this way, Defendants' customers are shut out of negotiations with their lender and depend on Defendants for information about the progress of their loan modifications. However, when Defendants fail to contact or remain in contact with their lenders, and the customers proceed under the Defendants'

advice and steadfastly refuse to communicate with their lenders, the lenders cancel or reject the loan modification application altogether, due to the borrowers' perceived lack of interest or cooperation with the lenders.

- 38. Defendants require consumers to pay Defendants an upfront fee ranging from \$1,200 to \$3,500 before Defendants will render loan modification services. Many of the distressed homeowners solicited do not have sufficient financial resources to make their mortgage payments at all, much less pay Defendants' upfront fee and continue making their mortgage payments.
- 39. Defendants inform consumers that they may suspend their mortgage payments (or continue to miss payments, as the case may be) while they have engaged Defendants for loan modification services. By doing so, consumers could then apply whatever money they would have normally used to make mortgage payments to pay Defendants' upfront fee. Defendants assure consumers that their lenders will either forgive these missed payments altogether or include them as part of a future modification agreement. Defendants also advise consumers that lenders will not modify mortgages that are not already in default, and that lenders will not be convinced that consumers are in financial distress until they actually fail to make their monthly mortgage payment. As a result, Defendants' customers, in reliance on this advice and assurance, miss mortgage payments or continue to do so. In fact, heeding this advice causes many customers to have their foreclosure proceeding accelerated by their lenders.
- 40. Defendants also prepare false financial statements that do not reflect their customers' actual income and expenses and submit the fraudulently modified information to lenders. Defendants counsel their customers that Defendants will determine how much the customers can afford and draft the financial worksheets to submit to the lenders. In doing so, Defendants invariably inflate income amounts or create additional income streams, while also reducing expenses and debts in some cases flagrantly inventing income and debt streams and amounts such that the financial worksheet ultimately submitted to the lender reflects the debtor's inability to pay the current loan amount. In some instances, Defendants knowingly

agreement is imminent or that Defendants have, in fact, finalized modification agreements with their lenders. These representations are false and Defendants know they are false at the time they are stated.

- 45. In fact, despite assurances to their customers to the contrary, Defendants make very little effort to initiate contact or negotiate with lenders. Beyond forwarding to the lenders authorization forms signed by their customers allowing Defendants to discuss the consumers' loan with the lenders and sending the doctored financial worksheets that the Defendants themselves drafted, Defendants make no attempt to seek a loan modification on behalf of their customers. This essentially represents the entirety of the actual services provided by Defendants.
- 46. When customers contact their lenders to confirm Defendants' statements about the progress of their modification application, lenders tell them that they received no communications from Defendants; or at most, that the only communication the lenders received from Defendants was the signed authorization form allowing Defendants to discuss the consumers' loan with the lenders and the financial worksheet. Many times, the lenders will try to contact Defendants for more information regarding their clients' loans to no avail.
- 47. After customers realize that Defendants are not going to provide assistance with a loan modification, the customers demand the promised refund of their fees, and Defendants regularly deny these refund requests.
- 48. Defendants fail to obtain for their customers the promised mortgage loan modifications that would lower their interest rates and/or principal. Instead, despite having paid thousands of dollars to Defendants to prevent such an occurrence, their customers lose their homes to foreclosure, or must secure a short sale, or are forced to attempt to negotiate a modification with their lenders without any assistance from Defendants.
- 49. Consumers have suffered and continue to suffer substantial monetary loss to Defendants as a result of Defendants' unlawful acts and practices. Defendants have been unjustly enriched as a result of the unlawful practices set forth in this Complaint. Absent injunctive relief from the Court, Defendants are likely to continue to injure consumers and harm the public interest.

1	FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS			
2	VIOLATIONS OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTION 17500			
3	(UNTRUE OR MISLEADING REPRESENTATIONS)			
4	50. Plaintiff realleges Paragraphs 1 through 49 and incorporates these Paragraphs by			
5	reference as though they were fully set forth in this cause of action.			
6	51. Defendants have violated and continue to violate Business and Professions Code			
7	section 17500 by making or causing to be made untrue or misleading statements with the intent to			
8	induce members of the public to purchase Defendants' services, as described in Paragraphs 26			
9	through 36 above. Defendants' untrue or misleading representations include, but are not limited			
10	to, the following:			
11	(a) That Defendants are a governmental agency;			
12	(b) That Defendants are a non-profit organization;			
13	(c) That Defendants had been approved by the government to provide loan			
14	modification services and were working with the Obama administration to help consumers save			
15	their homes;			
16	(d) That Defendants' success rate in modifying loans is 90%, 95%, or 98%;			
17	(e) That Defendants have significant negotiating experience and success with			
18	particular lenders;			
19	(f) That Defendants guarantee a loan modification for customers;			
20	(g) That Defendants will be able to secure lower interest rates, including fixed			
21	rates for adjustable loans, for customers;			
22	(h) That Defendants will be able to secure principal reductions of the			
23	customers' mortgages;			
24	(i) That Defendants will be able to secure lower monthly mortgage payments			
25	for customers;			
26	(j) That Defendants will be able to eliminate a customer's second mortgage			
27	through a loan modification;			
28	11			
	1			

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST ALL DEFENDANTS VIOLATION OF SECTION 2945.45 OF THE CIVIL CODE

- 57. Plaintiff realleges Paragraphs 1 through 56 and incorporates these Paragraphs by reference as though they were fully set forth in this cause of action.
- 58. In addition to the conduct alleged as part of the Second and Third Causes of Action in this Complaint, Defendants also violate section 2945.45 of the Civil Code by failing to register with the Department of Justice as foreclosure consultants, as described in Paragraph 42 above.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION AGAINST DEFENDANTS SARPAS AND MELEK VIOLATION OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTION 17200 (UNFAIR COMPETITION)

- 59. Plaintiff realleges Paragraphs 1 through 58 and incorporates these Paragraphs by reference as though they were fully set forth in this cause of action.
- 60. In addition to the conduct alleged as part of the Second, Third, and Fourth Causes of Action in this Complaint, Defendants Sarpas and Melek, as real estate professionals licensed at any time during the transactions alleged in this Complaint, engaged in unfair competition as defined in Business and Professions Code section 17200 by engaging in acts and practices which include, but are not necessarily limited to, violating the fiduciary duty and duties of good faith and fair dealing owed to their clients/customers by failing to negotiate with lenders on their behalf, as described in Paragraphs 43, 45, and 48 above.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment as follows:

1. That Defendants, their successors, agents, representatives, employees, assigns and all persons who act in concert with Defendants be permanently enjoined from making any untrue or misleading statements in violation of Business and Professions Code section 17500, including, but not limited to, the untrue or misleading statements alleged in this Complaint, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17535;

- 2. That Defendants, their successors, agents, representatives, employees, assigns and all persons who act in concert with Defendants be permanently enjoined from engaging in unfair competition as defined in Business and Professions Code section 17200, including, but not limited to, the acts and practices alleged in this Complaint, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17203;
- 3. That the Court make such orders or judgments as may be necessary, including preliminary injunctive and ancillary relief, to prevent the use or employment by any Defendant of any practice which violates section 17500 of the Business and Professions Code, or which may be necessary to restore to any person in interest any money or property, real or personal, which may have been acquired by means of any such practice, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17535;
- 4. That the Court make such orders or judgments as may be necessary, including preliminary injunctive and ancillary relief, to prevent the use or employment by any Defendant of any practice which constitutes unfair competition or as may be necessary to restore to any person in interest any money or property, real or personal, which may have been acquired by means of such unfair competition, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17203;
- 5. That the Court assess a civil penalty of \$2,500 against each Defendant for each violation of Business and Professions Code section 17200, in an amount according to proof but not less than \$7,500,000, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17206;
- 6. That the Court assess a civil penalty of \$2,500 against each Defendant for each violation of Business and Professions Code section 17500, in an amount according to proof but not less than \$7,500,000, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17536;
- 7. That the Court assess a civil penalty of \$2,500 against each Defendant for each violation of Business and Professions Code section 17200 perpetrated against a senior citizen or disabled person, in an amount according to proof but not less than \$7,500,000, under the authority of Business and Professions Code section 17206.1;

//

28 //

1	8.	That the Court asses	ss a fine of not more than \$10,000 against each Defendant for		
2	each violation of Civil Code section 2945.4, in an amount according to proof but not less than				
3	\$ 7,500,000, under the authority of Civil Code section 2945.7;				
4	9.	9. That the Court assess a fine of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$25,000			
5	against each Defendant for each violation of Civil Code section 2945.45(a), in an amount				
6	according to proof, under the authority of subdivision (d) of Civil Code 2945.45;				
7	10.	10. That Plaintiff recovers its costs of suit, including costs of investigation; and			
8	11. For such other and further relief that the Court deems just, proper, and equitable.				
9	Dated: July_	_, 2009	Respectfully Submitted,		
10			EDMUND G. BROWN JR. Attorney General of California		
11			FRANCES T. GRUNDER Senior Assistant Attorney General		
12			KATHRIN SEARS Supervising Deputy Attorney General		
13			Supervising Deputy Attorney General		
14					
15			Amy C. Teng		
16			Deputy Attorney General Attorneys for Plaintiff		
17			THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA		
18					
19					
20		_			
21					
22					
23					
2425					
26					
27					
28					
20			17		