

Squatters, Fake Leases and Title Claims Can Derail California Home Sales

Lawyers Realty Group releases new guidance for California homeowners facing disputed occupants, questionable claims, or title issues that interfere with a sale

IRVINE, CA, UNITED STATES, August 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Lawyers Realty Group has released a new [California homeowner advisory](#) addressing a difficult type of real estate transaction: a home that cannot be sold normally because someone else is living there or claiming rights to the property.

The problem may involve a relative who remains in an inherited home or an unauthorized occupant who moved into a vacant property. In other cases, someone may produce a lease the owner disputes, claim a right to purchase the property, or assert an ownership interest.



When disputed possession, questionable documents, or competing ownership claims stand between a homeowner and a sale, resolving the legal issues and the real estate transaction together can provide a clearer path to closing.

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Derik Lewis

At that point, the issue is no longer simply how to market the home.

“Homeowners often think they have a listing problem when they really have a possession or title problem that has to be solved before the sale can close,” said Derik Lewis, attorney and owner of Lawyers Realty Group.

The new advisory explains that the first step is determining what rights actually exist. An occupant may have no

ownership interest at all, but the owner still needs to know whether there is a valid tenancy, whether any agreement exists, and whether possession can actually be delivered to a buyer.

In some cases, negotiation may be more practical than immediate litigation.



A carefully documented move-out agreement can sometimes save substantial time and expense. Relocation funds may be conditioned on surrender of possession, removal of personal property, delivery of keys, and a firm move-out date.

In the end, the economic analysis matters more than the emotional reaction to the situation.

An owner may understandably resist paying someone who should not be in the property. But if a negotiated resolution avoids months of legal fees, carrying costs, property damage, or foreclosure exposure, it may preserve more of the owner's equity.

The situation becomes more serious when the occupant produces a disputed document.

A claimed lease can affect possession. A claimed purchase option can interfere with a pending sale. A disputed deed or ownership claim can create a title issue that prevents escrow from closing.

According to Lawyers Realty Group, those problems should be addressed before the seller assumes that finding a buyer will solve everything. A willing buyer does not necessarily mean the property can close. The seller may still need to establish authority to sell, resolve competing claims, satisfy title requirements, and make sure possession can be delivered.

For homes already in foreclosure, timing can become especially important.

The homeowner may be trying to complete a sale before a trustee's sale while also dealing with an occupant or title dispute. That creates two separate problems moving on the same timeline.

"Clear title without possession can derail a sale. Possession without marketable title can do the same thing," Lewis said. "The legal strategy and the real estate strategy have to work toward the same closing."

Lawyers Realty Group approaches these matters as an attorney-owned real estate brokerage. That allows the firm to address both the legal dispute and the transaction itself.

The advisory encourages California homeowners to identify these problems early, before a purchase contract is signed or valuable time is lost. Some homes do not simply need to be listed. They need to be untangled before they can be sold.

California homeowners facing an occupant dispute, a questionable lease, an ownership claim, or a title problem may request an attorney-broker review through Lawyers Realty Group.

About Lawyers Realty Group

Lawyers Realty Group is a California attorney-owned real estate brokerage focused on complex homeowner transactions involving foreclosure, title, mortgage, equity, probate, trust, reverse mortgage, short sale, and disputed-property issues. If you're facing an occupancy problem that is preventing a California property from being sold, contact Lawyers Realty Group today for a free Attorney-Realtor review of your situation. Call (949)613-5918 or visit www.lawyersrealtygroup.com

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Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome. Every foreclosure, Home Equity Sales Contract Act, cash investor purchase agreement, foreclosure purchaser transaction, rescission, title, escrow, grant deed, refinance, reverse mortgage, loan modification, short sale, and real estate matter depends on its specific facts, documents, timing, equity, property value, lender requirements, purchaser conduct, and applicable law. Lawyers Realty Group, 7700 Irvine Center Drive, Suite 800, Irvine, CA 92618, California DRE No. 01870511. Derik Neil Lewis, Broker of Record, CA DRE #01439110, CA State Bar #219981.

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