

THE STATE CENTER
CONSUMER
PROTECTION REPORT

February 2017

About the State Center Consumer Protection Report

The National State Attorneys General Program at Columbia Law School's Consumer Protection Report is now the State Center Consumer Protection Report ("Consumer Protection Report"). Published by **The Center for State Enforcement of Antitrust and Consumer Protection Laws** ("State Center") in partnership with **StateAG.org**, the Consumer Protection Report is a monthly compilation of state attorney general press releases on local and national consumer protection efforts, including investigations, court cases, consumer alerts and advocacy initiatives. It makes no effort to prioritize, analyze or comment on the information presented in the press releases and their potential impact on consumers.

The Consumer Protection Report relies solely and exclusively on state attorney general press releases, and thus is not an exhaustive representation of state attorney general consumer protection activity.

The Consumer Protection Report is produced through the State Center's State AG Consumer Protection Initiative: a website featuring all current and previous editions of the Report and a database, allowing visitors to conduct key-word and drop-down menu searches of all previous editions. To visit the Initiative website, please visit **www.statecenterinc.org/cpi-newsletter**.

- If an office would like their consumer protection activity included in subsequent newsletters, please **contact us**.
- **Newsletter sign up:** To sign up for the monthly Consumer Protection Report, please **sign up here**.



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State Center: <http://www.statecenterinc.org>

StateAG.org: www.stateag.org

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Consumer Protection Cases

ALABAMA

February 03, 2017

AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES GUILTY PLEA, JAIL SENTENCE FOR RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE FRAUD IN AUTAUGA COUNTY

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange announced that a Prattville woman pleaded guilty on October 31, 2016, to three counts of residential mortgage fraud and yesterday was sentenced to serve time in jail. Lynda Branch, who formerly operated Professional Closing and Title LLC doing business in Prattville as Pro Close, was sentenced in Autauga County Circuit Court to 46 months, which was suspended for her to serve 18 months in jail and to be placed on probation for the remainder of her sentence.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ago.state.al.us/News-981>

February 03, 2017

AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES GUILTY PLEA, JAIL SENTENCE FOR RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE FRAUD IN AUTAUGA COUNTY

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➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ago.state.al.us/News-981>

February 23, 2017

TWO INDIVIDUALS CHARGED FOR A GAS STATION DEBIT CARD SKIMMING OPERATION THAT INVOLVED MULTIPLE STATES

(MONTGOMERY)--Two individuals are facing federal charges for using skimming devices on gas pumps, announced George Beck Jr., U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Alabama, and Steven T. Marshall, Attorney General for the State of Alabama. These charges are the result of a continuing multi-agency investigation that was initiated by the Alabama Attorney General's Office, the Ozark Police Department, the United States Secret Service and the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ago.state.al.us/News-1000>

ARIZONA

February 09, 2017

Arizona Moves Forward with Consumer Fraud Lawsuit Against Volkswagen for False Advertising Claims

Phoenix, AZ - Today a judge ruled Arizona can proceed with a Consumer Fraud Lawsuit against Volkswagen despite a federal settlement reached in 2016. "This appears to be one of the largest cases of false advertising we have ever seen," said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. "Our office will continue to fight to hold Volkswagen financially accountable and to ensure Arizonans get the restitution they're entitled to." ...

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.azag.gov/press-release/arizona-moves-forward-consumer-fraud-lawsuit-against-volkswagen-false-advertising>

February 13, 2017

AG Brnovich Warns of Romance Scams on Dating Websites

PHOENIX – As Valentine’s Day approaches, Attorney General Mark Brnovich is warning Arizonans to watch out for online dating romance scams. A State Grand Jury indicted Daylon Pierce on 29 felony charges for his alleged involvement in an online dating scam. Eleven additional victims came forward after Pierce was arrested and indicted in June 2016. Pierce is now accused of scamming a total of 13 women.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.azag.gov/press-release/ag-brnovich-warns-romance-scams-dating-websites>

February 14, 2017

AG Brnovich Announces Indictment in Credit Card Scheme Targeting Dead Credit Card Holders

PHOENIX – Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted Jason Siebert-Thomas and Daylon G. Pierce for their alleged involvement in a credit card scheme targeting deceased credit card holders. Nine victims in Arizona have been identified, however the investigation continues.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.azag.gov/press-release/ag-brnovich-announces-indictment-credit-card-scheme-targeting-dead-credit-card-holders>

ARKANSAS

February 16, 2017

Rutledge Files Lawsuit Against The Resort Place

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today filed a consumer-protection lawsuit in Pulaski County Circuit Court against Barling-based The Resort Place and its owners, Jay Allen and Dora Ann Edmondson. The Resort Place also conducts business under the names of Resort Place Travel and C4Success. “This business has been over promising and under delivering, ruining many vacations in the process,” said Attorney General Rutledge.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/news-releases/lawsuit-against-the-resort-place/>

CALIFORNIA

February 22, 2017

Attorney General Xavier Becerra Announces Five-Year Prison Sentence for Oswaldo Cabrera of Coalición Latinoamericana Internacional for Defrauding Immigrants

LOS ANGELES – Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced that Oswaldo Rafael Cabrera, the owner and operator of a Los Angeles-based business known as the Coalición Latinoamericana Internacional (CLI), was sentenced to five years and two months in state prison after pleading guilty to felony charges involving grand theft, attempted perjury and conspiracy to violate the Immigration Consultants Act. Cabrera’s wife, Maria Marcelina Rodas, was sentenced to three years of felony probation for charges that she conspired to violate the Immigration Consultants Act.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-xavier-becerra-announces-five-year-prison-sentence-oswaldo>

CONNECTICUT

February 02, 2017

State Initiates False Claims Act Lawsuit against Fairfield County Doctor, Husband over Alleged Compound Drug Prescribing Scheme

The state has initiated a lawsuit in Hartford Superior Court under the Connecticut False Claims Act alleging that a Fairfield County doctor and her husband, a University of Connecticut employee, engaged in a scheme designed to prescribe expensive medically unnecessary compounded medications to state employees enrolled in the state employee pharmacy benefit

plan at a high cost to the state and its taxpayers, Attorney General George Jepsen said today. The lawsuit stems from an investigation launched by the Office of the Connecticut Attorney General in 2014 after a request from State Comptroller Kevin Lembo, who administers the State of Connecticut Employee and Retiree Prescription Drug Plan.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ct.gov/ag/cwp/view.asp?Q=589896&A=2341>

FLORIDA

February 07, 2017

Attorney General Bondi Shuts Down Scam Debt Relief Operations

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced federal court approval of proposed consent judgments against several Florida-based debt relief service providers. The consent judgments, filed jointly in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida by the Attorney General’s Office and the Federal Trade Commission, resolve allegations that the defendant debt relief companies targeted individuals deeply in debt with promises of lower credit card payments and substantial savings and collected upfront fees for the promised services, but never delivered on those services or provided refunds. As a result, consumers fell even deeper into debt.

➤ *Original Press Release:*
<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/A2D9DDE246FD78A8852580C000726376>

February 10, 2017

Deceptive Travel Club Sales Tactics Thwarted

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced an agreement that permanently shuts down a travel company operation and stops its alleged deceptive sales tactics. Map Destinations, LLC and its owners, operators and managers, 1st Choice Sales and Marketing, Inc., Peggy Bronaugh-Lehman, Kevin V. Lehman and Charles B. McIntyre III reached an agreement with the Attorney General’s Office resolving allegations that the defendants misled consumers who purchased the company’s travel club memberships.

➤ *Original Press Release:*
<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/89EBB9071AF2D48A852580C3006EE3D7>

February 14, 2017

Attorney General Bondi Secures Refunds for Victims of Loan Scam

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced the multimillion dollar resolution of a lawsuit against several related unsecured loan services companies and operators. The three consent judgments and one settlement agreement obtained by Attorney General Bondi’s Office resolve allegations that the defendant companies and their principals unlawfully charged cash-strapped consumers fees ranging from \$500 to more than \$1,000 for online lending services that consumers could perform on their own for free. The defendants allegedly convinced consumers to pay illegal up-front fees by falsely guaranteeing that a lender in the defendants’ lender network had pre-approved the consumers for loans.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/83B23B913B4594BD852580C70053784E>

February 21, 2017

Final Settlement Reached in Massive Robocalling Case

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi, the Federal Trade Commission and nine other state attorneys general today announced the entry of the last consent judgment shutting down an illegal robocalling scheme used to sell Florida cruise line vacations. The unlawful telemarketing campaign flooded consumers from across the country with billions of unwanted robocalls, averaging 12 to 15 million illegal calls a day, and generated millions of dollars for the companies.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/C5C74F3CABA3C688852580CE00716105>

February 21, 2017

Attorney General Bondi Continues Efforts to Shut Down Tech Support Scams

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi filed a complaint against Fast Fix 123, LLC, Paul Cozzolino, Tyler Foss and Dennis Rinker for operating a tech support scam. According to the complaint, the scam exploited consumers’ fears about computer hackers, malware, viruses and other security threats, in order to convince consumers to purchase costly technical support services and software products.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/7315FFA7566E4970852580CE0055FF14>

GEORGIA

February 08, 2017

Attorney General Chris Carr Announces \$40 Million Plus Settlement with Online Payday Lender

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr today announced that the Office of the Attorney General’s multi-year legal battle against payday lenders Western Sky Financial, LLC, CashCall, Inc. and related entities has concluded in a settlement providing over \$40 million in monetary relief to Georgia consumers. “This settlement sends a strong message that our office will not tolerate unscrupulous lenders who prey on consumers by charging illegal interest and fees,” said Attorney General Carr. “Our team has been working diligently on this case since 2013, and we are proud that we were able to stop on-going collection efforts and provide refunds of illegally charged interest and fees to our citizens. This case should serve as a major warning for those looking to violate the laws designed to protect our Georgia consumers.”

- **Original Press Release:** <http://law.ga.gov/press-releases/2017-02-08/attorney-general-chris-carr-announces-40-million-plus-settlement-online>

IOWA

February 07, 2017

New Jersey List Broker Barred from Selling Names of Defrauded Elderly Iowans to Con Artists, Pays State \$40,000

DES MOINES – A Fairfield, New Jersey customer list broker late last week completed a \$40,000 payment to the state and will remove Iowans from customer lead lists tied to sweepstakes and psychic scams, through an agreement with Attorney General Tom Miller. The agreement reached in December with Saavoy List Management Inc., called an assurance of voluntary compliance, requires the company to carefully monitor its lead lists. If Iowans appear on a lead list, Saavoy must ensure that no fraud was involved in creating the list, and that no fraud would be committed by anyone using the list. The company’s only alternative, according to Miller, is to remove all Iowa residents.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/newsroom/new-jersey-list-broker-barred-from-selling-names-of-defrauded-elderly-iowans-to-con-artists-pays-st>

KENTUCKY

February 24, 2017

Attorney General Secures Guilty Plea from Fraudulent Roofer for Thefts in Kentucky

FRANKFORT, KY. (Feb. 24, 2017) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today announced the guilty plea of an Illinois man who took nearly \$25,000 from customers in Hardin County to repair their roofs and never completed the work. James Pilotte, 37, of Somonauk, Illinois pleaded guilty last week in Hardin Circuit Court to six counts of failure to make required disposition of property over \$500, a Class D felony. As part of the plea agreement, Pilotte was sentenced to five years and was placed on probation for a period of five years, diverted for five years and will repay the victims.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=267>

February 28, 2017

Beshear: Settlement with National Mortgage Recording Company Provides Better Protections for Kentucky Homeowners

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 28, 2017) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today announced a multimillion dollar settlement with a national mortgage recording company that will provide Kentucky homeowners with some of the best protections in the country. The settlement resolves claims against MERSCORP Holdings Inc. and its wholly owned subsidiary Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems Inc., or MERS, over allegations the company named itself as the mortgagee in public land records, thereby hiding the identity of the big banks who were the actual owners of the mortgages, while also failing to monitor the conduct of those banks.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=270>

MAINE

February 22, 2017

Attorney General Mills announces joint FTC action against sellers of supplements

AUGUSTA – Maine Attorney General Janet T. Mills today announced that her office and the Federal Trade Commission have filed a complaint against nine defendants, including three corporations and six individuals, for their roles in a deceptive campaign to sell a joint health supplement and a cognitive health supplement in violation of state and federal laws. The defendants marketed and sold two products which are the focus of this court action, Flexiprin for joint health and Cogniprin for memory improvement. The complaint alleges that the

defendants employed unfair or deceptive acts or practices in the advertising, marketing, distribution, and sale of FlexiPrin and CogniPrin. The defendants sold these products directly to consumers, primarily through radio and print advertising nationwide and in Canada, which has garnered in excess of \$6.5 million in gross sales from January 1, 2012 ...

➤ **Original Press Release:** <http://www.maine.gov/ag/news/article.shtml?id=731902>

MARYLAND

February 09, 2017

Attorney General's Office Accepting Claims from Members of Closed Montgomery County Health Club

Baltimore, MD (February 9, 2017) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that consumers who were members of Live Healthy Studio, a recently closed Montgomery County health club, can file refund claims with the Consumer Protection Division of his office. Live Healthy Studio was operated by Patricia Oholeguy at 130 Rollins Avenue, Suite F2 in Rockville, Maryland. The club closed in November, 2016, without advance notice to members.

➤ **Original Press Release:** <http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2017/020917.pdf>

MASSACHUSETTS

February 17, 2017

Wellesley Dental Provider and Billing Agent to Pay \$1.5 Million to Resolve Allegations of Improper Billing

BOSTON – A Wellesley-based dental provider and its billing agent have agreed to pay \$1.5 million to the state's Medicaid program (MassHealth) to resolve allegations of improper billing for visits to MassHealth members living in nursing homes, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today. The settlement resolves allegations that dental provider Alec H. Jaret, DMD, PC d/b/a HealthDrive Dental Group and its billing agent, HealthDrive Corporation, overbilled MassHealth for nursing home visits.

➤ **Original Press Release:** <http://www.mass.gov/ago/news-and-updates/press-releases/2017/2017-02-17-dental-provider-settlement.html>

MICHIGAN

February 14, 2017

Florida Charity to Pay Over \$100k to Breast Cancer Research, and is Banned from Soliciting in Michigan for Ten Years Due to Deceptive Fundraising

LANSING - Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced a settlement with Florida nonprofit Breast Cancer Outreach Foundation, Inc. The settlement resolves the Attorney General's claims that, in 2015, the group deceptively raised \$1.4 million nationwide, including at least \$36,372 in Michigan. The group's solicitations told donors that funds raised would be used for breast cancer research grants. In reality, all the money raised, except for one \$8,235 grant, went to professional fundraisers and other expenses—not breast cancer research.

- **Original Press Release:** http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-164-46849_47203-404719--,00.html

February 28, 2017

Schuette: Dearborn-based Fundraiser to Pay \$35k for Improperly Operating Clothing Donation Bins

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced that professional fundraiser Golden Recyclers, Inc., of Dearborn, Michigan, has agreed to pay \$35,000 for violating the Charitable Organizations and Solicitations Act. In addition, before operating any clothing donation bins in Michigan, Golden Recyclers will also revise the labels and disclosures on its bins to comply with state law.

- **Original Press Release:** http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-164-46849_47203-405859--,00.html

MONTANA

February 08, 2017

Attorney General Fox Files for Intervention on Behalf of the State of Montana in Washington Utility Rate Case

On Wednesday, Montana Attorney General Tim Fox filed for intervention on behalf of the state of Montana in the electricity rate proceeding of Washington utility Puget Sound Energy, before the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission. PSE is a part-owner of the Colstrip generating facility, and entered into a legal settlement last year establishing a shut-down date of July 2022 for Colstrip Units 1 and 2. "It's important that the state of Montana has a seat at

the table throughout this rate proceeding so our interests can be adequately represented,” said Attorney General Tim Fox.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://dojmt.gov/attorney-general-fox-files-for-intervention-on-behalf-of-the-state-of-montana-in-washington-utility-rate-case/>

NEVADA

February 13, 2017

Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing of Las Vegas Woman for Foreclosure Rescue Scheme

Las Vegas, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Alicia Ruiz, 45, of Las Vegas, was sentenced for two felony counts of theft, a category “C” felony, for her role in a foreclosure rescue scheme. The fraud was committed between December 2011 and May 2013. Ruiz and two co-defendants operated a business known as “National Prevention Center” that defrauded homeowners using a foreclosure rescue scheme. Together, they solicited homeowners and promised their clients that they would purchase their foreclosed homes and then subsequently sell their homes at current value. After placing their trust in this business and paying thousands of dollars in upfront fees, clients’ homes were never purchased as promised, and the victims were not reimbursed.

- **Original Press Release:** http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2017/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Sentencing_of_Las_Vegas_Woman_for_Foreclosure_Rescue_Scheme/

NEW HAMPSHIRE

February 07, 2017

Attorney General Brings Enforcement Action Against Nashua Used Car Dealer For Multiple Violations Of The Consumer Protection Act

Attorney General Joseph A. Foster announces that his office brought a consumer protection enforcement action against Platinum Auto Brokers, Inc., formerly located at 535 Amherst St., Nashua, now doing business as Derry Auto Brokers located at 4 Peabody Road Annex, Derry. The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Bureau received multiple complaints that Platinum Auto Brokers sold unsafe and uninspected motor vehicles without providing the buyers with a Notice of Sale of Unsafe Motor Vehicle or advising them of their right to have the car inspected with the defects noted on the form as is required by RSA 358-F. The company failed to remove old inspection stickers prior to the sale and failed to inform their customers

that the car they bought was unsafe for operation on the roads of New Hampshire. The company also failed to provide buyers with the federally mandated Buyer's Guide. ...

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.doj.nh.gov/media-center/press-releases/2017/20170207-platinum-auto-brokers.htm>

February 10, 2017

Attorney General Brings Enforcement Action Against Michigan Company For Unfair Or Deceptive Business Practices

Attorney General Joseph Foster announced today his office has reached a consent judgment with Mandatory Poster Agency (MPA), a Lansing, Michigan corporation, arising from a complaint filed on January 31, 2017 which alleged unfair and deceptive practices. MPA sent out a mass solicitation to New Hampshire businesses under the assumed name of Corporate Records Service offering to provide annual corporate minutes for a fee of \$125. The mailing was designed to deceive businesses into concluding they came from a state agency. Rather than disclosing their actual business address, MPA only used an address of 75 South Main St., Unit 7 #502, Concord, NH.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.doj.nh.gov/media-center/press-releases/2017/20170210-mandatory-poster-agency.htm>

NEW JERSEY

February 01, 2017

New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Reaches Settlement with Advance Stores over Allegations of Pricing Violations

NEWARK – Advance Stores Company, Inc., an automotive parts and accessories retailer, will reform its business practices and make a settlement payment of more than \$69,000 after a joint investigation by the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Office of Consumer Protection (“OCP”) and the State Office of Weights and Measures (“OWM”) that discovered a number of pricing violations at seven of the company’s stores. The stores, doing business as “Advance Auto Parts,” were found to have sold parts and accessories at prices in excess of the price listed at the point of display. Prices would be displayed for these items on the store shelves, but different prices would be charged when items were scanned at the register.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases17/pr20170201a.html>

February 06, 2017

New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, Federal Trade Commission Reach \$2.5 Million Settlement with Smart TV Manufacturer to Settle Allegations of Invasive Data Collection

NEWARK – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that Smart TV manufacturer VIZIO, Inc. (“VIZIO”) and its subsidiary VIZIO Inscape Services, LLC, (“Inscape”) have agreed to pay the State and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) \$2.5 million and change their business practices to settle allegations they violated consumer protection laws by surreptitiously tracking consumers’ television viewing habits and selling the information to marketing companies and data brokers. The settlement ends parallel investigations conducted by the Division and the FTC into the use of data-collecting technology installed on VIZIO’s “Smart TVs.” The State obtained \$1 million and the FTC obtained \$1.5 million in the settlement.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases17/pr20170206a.html>

February 16, 2017

On-Line Children’s Fashion Retailer Agrees to Drop Policy Denying Refunds to Buyers from Certain Areas of State

TRENTON – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino announced today that on-line children’s clothing retailer Shan and Toad has agreed to drop its policy of not offering refunds – only store credit or merchandise exchange – to shoppers from two specific New Jersey communities. According to Porrino, Shan and Toad agreed to rescind an advertised policy that excluded from refund eligibility any returns originating from addresses in Lakewood and Passaic – two communities that contain large populations of Orthodox Jews. Shan and Toad agreed to drop its exclusion of Lakewood and Passaic buyers from refund eligibility after two agencies within the Attorney General’s Office – the Division on Civil Rights and the Division of Consumer Affairs – contacted the retailer to advise that it appeared to be in violation of state anti-discrimination and consumer protection laws. ...

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases17/pr20170216a.html>

February 17, 2017

Horizon Blue Cross/Blue Shield of New Jersey Agrees to Pay \$1.1 Million, Tighten Data Security to Settle Allegations of Privacy Lapses Concerning Personal Information of Policyholders

NEWARK –The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that the state’s largest healthcare provider, Horizon Healthcare Services, Inc., has agreed to pay \$1.1 million and improve data security practices to settle allegations it failed to properly protect the privacy of nearly 690,000 New Jersey policyholders whose personal information was contained on two laptops stolen from the insurer’s Newark headquarters. The insurance giant, which does business as Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey (“Horizon BCBSNJ”), agreed to the settlement after a Division investigation concluded that the company’s failure to comply with federal healthcare data security standards threatened to expose private information of its members - including their names, addresses, birthdates, insurance identifications and, in some instances, Social Security Numbers and limited clinical data. ...

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases17/pr20170217a.html>

NEW MEXICO

February 23, 2017

AG Balderas Sues California Lawyers for Scamming New Mexico Homeowners Out of Tens of Thousands of Dollars

Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that he filed a lawsuit last night against a group of California lawyers who are scamming New Mexico homeowners out of tens of thousands of dollars in a mass joinder lawsuit scheme. The out of state attorneys file sham mass joinder lawsuits in other states for upfront fees of \$5,000 or more plus a monthly payment from each New Mexico homeowner. The lawsuit alleges that these lawsuits are merely a front for charging upfront fees for mortgage modification services, a practice prohibited by federal law and by the New Mexico Mortgage Foreclosure Consultant Fraud Prevention Act.

➤ *Original Press Release:* http://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/AG_Balderas_Sues_California_Lawyers_for_Scamming_New_Mexico_Homeowners.pdf

NEW YORK

February 01, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Lawsuit Against Spectrum-Time Warner Cable And Charter Communications For Allegedly Defrauding New Yorkers Over Internet Speeds And Performance

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a lawsuit against Charter Communications Inc. (“Charter”) and its subsidiary Spectrum Management Holdings, LLC, (f/k/a Time Warner Cable, Inc.,) (together, “Spectrum-TWC”) for allegedly conducting a deliberate scheme to defraud and mislead New Yorkers by promising internet service that they knew they could not deliver. The complaint alleges that since January 2012 Spectrum-TWC’s marketing promised subscribers who signed up for its Internet service that they would get a "fast, reliable connection" to the Internet from anywhere in their home. But a 16-month investigation by the Attorney General’s office – which included reviewing internal corporate communications and hundreds of thousands of subscriber speed tests – found Spectrum-Time Warner subscribers were getting dramatically short-changed on both speed and reliability. ...

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-lawsuit-against-spectrum-time-warner-cable-and-charter>

February 07, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman And Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Announce Lawsuit Against RD Legal For Scamming 9/11 Heroes Out Of Millions Of Dollars In Compensation Funds

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) announced today a lawsuit against RD Legal Funding, LLC, two related entities, and Roni Dersovitz, the companies’ founder and owner, for allegedly scamming 9/11 heroes out of money intended to cover medical costs, lost income, and other critical needs. RD Legal also allegedly conned National Football League (NFL) concussion victims. The Attorney General’s office and the CFPB allege that the illegal scheme deceived 9/11 first responders with cancer and other illnesses and football players with brain injuries out of millions of dollars by luring them into costly advances on compensation fund and settlement payouts by lying about the terms of the deals.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-and-consumer-financial-protection-bureau-announce-lawsuit-against-rd>

February 08, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Convictions In Syracuse Mortgage Fraud And Witness Tampering Cases

SYRACUSE - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced today the convictions of Alexander March on two indictments for his role in a residential mortgage fraud scheme and a conspiracy to tamper with witnesses who had testified against him. Today, in Onondaga County Court, before the Honorable Thomas J. Miller, Alexander March pleaded guilty to 16 felonies and 17 misdemeanors to satisfy both indictments and was ordered to pay \$127,123.49 in restitution. Alexander March, 34, of Brooklyn, pleaded guilty to six counts of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and six counts of Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree for engaging in a scheme whereby he and his wife, Sima March, defrauded lending institutions by submitting refinance applications which contained false information, thereby fraudulently obtaining over \$127,000 in mortgage funds. ...

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-convictions-syracuse-mortgage-fraud-and-witness-tampering>

February 09, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlements With Mobile App Developers For Failure To Disclose Data Collection Practices

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced settlements with mobile application (“apps”) developers AB Mobile Apps LLC and Bizness Apps LLC for their failure to disclose their data collection practices in a privacy policy. Both companies have agreed to clearly inform users in a privacy policy about their policies and procedures with respect to user information, among other reforms. “New Yorkers have a right to know if a company collects and uses their personal information,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “In an age where data itself has become a commodity, companies must post privacy policies in a way that clearly and conspicuously discloses their data collection practices.”

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-settlements-mobile-app-developers-failure-disclose-data>

February 10, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement Of Martin Act Case Against Former AIG CEO Maurice R. Greenberg And Former AIG CFO Howard I. Smith

NEW YORK, NY -- The Office of Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced today that it has reached a settlement of the Office's securities fraud suit under the Martin Act against Maurice R. ("Hank") Greenberg, the former CEO of American International Group, Inc. ("AIG"), and Howard I. Smith, AIG's former Chief Financial Officer. The lawsuit, *People v. Maurice R. Greenberg and Howard I. Smith*, Index No. 401720/05 (New York County Supreme Court), was brought by Attorney General Eliot Spitzer in 2005, following the admission by AIG that the company had engaged in certain improper reinsurance transactions while Mr. Greenberg was the company's CEO and Mr. Smith the CFO, including two sham deals--known as the GenRe and Capco transactions--that materially misrepresented AIG's loss reserves and misstated its underwriting results, respectively, during the period 2000 to 2004. ...

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-settlement-martin-act-case-against-former-aig-ceo-maurice-r>

February 13, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With JFK Airport Hotel That Illegally Price Gouged Hundreds Of Guests Stranded By Jonas Ice Storm

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Granite JFK LLC and Crossroads Hospitality Company, which own and operate respectively the Courtyard by Marriott New York JFK Airport hotel, following an investigation finding that the hotel illegally price gouged more than 300 guests during the Jonas Ice Storm in January 2016. The Jonas Ice storm was the second biggest blizzard in New York City since 1869.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-settlement-jfk-airport-hotel-illegally-price-gouged-hundreds>

February 15, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Sues David Barton Gyms Following Sudden Closing; Seeks Refunds For Members

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced today a lawsuit against Club Ventures Investments LLC d/b/a David Barton Gyms (DBG) and related entities that own and operate four David Barton Gyms in New York City. The suit alleges that DBG suddenly closed its doors on December 21, 2016 without any prior notice to members or staff and failed to make

refunds to those consumers who prepaid for services not provided.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-sues-david-barton-gyms-following-sudden-closing-seeks-refunds-members>

February 22, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Networking Website For Sending Millions Of Deceptive Email Solicitations

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with The International Women’s Leadership Association, Inc. (“IWLA”) regarding a deceptive email campaign in which the company sent millions of emails misrepresenting how it selected its recipients for a business networking program. Recipients were likely to believe that IWLA reviewed their education, employment history, and contributions to their friends, family and neighborhood community prior to receiving the solicitation, which invited them to become a member of an exclusive women’s business networking community. Over 100,000 women responded to this solicitation in the last 3 years. Yet despite the claims in the solicitation, which was sent to over 7 million people in the United States, IWLA did not actually consider the person’s contribution to “family, career, and community” or any other qualifications.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-settlement-networking-website-sending-millions-deceptive>

February 23, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Oxford Health For Improperly Denying Claims Of Hundreds Of Members For Infusion Services

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced an agreement with Oxford Health Plans (NY) and Oxford Health Insurance, Inc. (together, “Oxford”), requiring that Oxford provide refunds to hundreds of small group plan members in New York State for improperly denying coverage of infusion services, including necessary supplies and nurse visits, since November 2015. As a consequence of Oxford’s denials, these chronically ill members who needed infusion therapy for serious medical conditions were billed by infusion service providers.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-settlement-oxford-health-improperly-denying-claims-hundreds>

NORTH DAKOTA

February 21, 2017

SOUTH DAKOTA ASPHALT PAVING COMPANY BANNED IN ND

BISMARCK, ND – Deanna Perry of Nisland, SD, doing business as Protective Coatings, has been banned from doing business in this state after violating the state’s transient merchant and consumer fraud laws, announced Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem. Protective Coatings is an asphalt paving company. The Consumer Protection division initiated an investigation in July 2016, after receiving a complaint from a homeowner that the asphalt work to fill cracks and seal the driveway had already failed and damaged the driveway. Investigators determined Perry was not licensed to do business in North Dakota, and also had failed to provide the homeowner with the required cancellation notices.

- *Original Press Release:* <https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/news/south-dakota-asphalt-paving-company-banned-nd>

February 22, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL OBTAINS CONSUMER FRAUD JUDGMENT AGAINST GLEN ROBERT COLLINS

BISMARCK, ND – The Consumer Protection division sued Glen Robert Collins of West Fargo, ND, doing business as Tri City Building Services and Collins Handyman & Restoration, for violations of the consumer fraud and contractor licensing laws. Collins, who has never had a contractor’s license, solicited advance payments from at least six homeowners but did not purchase the materials or issue refunds, instead using the money for his own personal expenses. The Cass County District Court found Collins in violation of consumer fraud laws and entered a Judgment against him on February 17, 2017, for \$6,900 in restitution, civil penalties and attorney fees.

- *Original Press Release:* <https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/news/attorney-general-obtains-consumer-fraud-judgment-against-glen-robert-collins>

February 23, 2017

MAN OPERATING FRAUDULENT MOVING COMPANY IS BANNED IN ND

BISMARCK, ND - A man fraudulently advertising that he provides moving services has been banned from doing business in North Dakota, announced Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem. His Consumer Protection division conducted an investigation into violations of the consumer fraud laws for false advertising and deceptive acts. Steven Robert Engebos advertises his supposed moving services on Craigslist under various names including Great Plains Moving and Logistics, Integrity Movers, and IDIS. In his online ads, he falsely claims to be associated with

legitimate North Dakota businesses, to have several employees and vehicles of his own, and that he is affiliated with military veterans. All these claims are lies.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/news/man-operating-fraudulent-moving-company-banned-nd>

OHIO

February 03, 2017

Cincinnati-Area Man Sentenced to Prison for Roofing Scam

(CINCINNATI)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced that a Cincinnati-area man has been sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to pay \$104,000 in restitution for running a roofing scam that affected dozens of consumers in southwest Ohio. David M. Nelson, 36, of Norwood, pleaded guilty today to one count of engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity and one count of insurance fraud....According to investigators, Nelson scammed 24 homeowners in multiple counties within the greater Cincinnati area between 2014 and 2015. He contacted consumers at their homes, claimed their roofs were damaged, and encouraged them to file an insurance claim.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/February-2017/Cincinnati-Area-Man-Sentenced-to-Prison-for-Roofin>

February 06, 2017

Attorney General DeWine Seeks Consumer Restitution from Home Contractor Accused of Failing to Deliver

(WASHINGTON COURT HOUSE, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a Jeffersonville man accused of failing to deliver promised home improvement services to consumers in Fayette County and Clinton County. James M. Day, doing business as M&D Construction and as M&D Improvements, is accused of violating Ohio's Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act. In the lawsuit, filed in the Fayette County Common Pleas Court, Attorney General DeWine seeks reimbursement for affected consumers and an end to any violations of the law.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/February-2017/Attorney-General-DeWine-Seeks-Consumer-Restitution>

February 23, 2017

Ohio Man Charged with Grand Theft, Unlawful Securities Practices

(NEW PHILADELPHIA, Ohio)— Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and the Ohio Department of Commerce - Division of Securities announced today that a New Philadelphia man has been indicted on 31 felony charges related to the fraudulent sale of securities in Tuscarawas County. Keith Elsesser, 50, is charged with 29 counts of unlawful securities practices and two counts of grand theft. Prosecutors with Attorney General DeWine's Special Prosecutions Section presented the case to a Tuscarawas County grand jury last week. An investigation by the Ohio Department of Commerce - Division of Securities found that Elsesser allegedly sold phony securities to two local investors between 2011 and 2013. Elsesser is accused of leading the victims to believe that they were investing in an energy drink venture, but he allegedly spent the victims' investments on himself.

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/February-2017/Ohio-Man-Charged-with-Grand-Theft-Unlawful-Securi>

February 24, 2017

Attorney General DeWine Announces Settlement to Recover Misused Charitable Funds

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a settlement with a former clergyman who previously lived in Steubenville and who was accused of creating and using a charity primarily to pay for personal expenses. Under the settlement, John Sillup, of Sherman Oaks, California, agreed to dissolve his organization, the Society of Notre Dame, to pay \$26,519 in restitution, and to pay a \$10,000 civil fine. He also agreed not to work for or solicit for charities in Ohio and to shut down websites and social media accounts related to the organization. Sillup claimed that the Society of Notre Dame (previously known as the Society of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament) was an international organization that helped child refugees, but investigators found no evidence of any programming to support child refugees ...

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/February-2017/Attorney-General-DeWine-Announces-Settlement-to-Re>

PENNSYLVANIA

Attorney General Josh Shapiro calls abandonment of Aetna-Humana merger the “right result for Pennsylvania’s seniors”

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today issued a statement following the announcement that Aetna Inc. and Humana Inc. are abandoning their merger plans. The health insurers’ decision follows a recent Federal court order blocking the merger. The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General opposed the merger. The Aetna-Humana merger would have

impacted 454,000 Pennsylvanians who have health insurance through either Aetna or Humana, and would have led to higher insurance premiums and lower quality health insurance for seniors.

➤ **Original Press Release:**

https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=3038

➤ *See, State Center Consumer Protection Report (January 2017) at p. 25*

<http://statecenterinc.org/cpi-newsletter/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2017-01-JanuaryReport.pdf>

February 09, 2017

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Details Case Against Funeral Home Director Charged with Stealing \$340K from SW Pennsylvanians

WASHINGTON, Pa. — Today, Attorney General Josh Shapiro detailed an array of charges against a Washington County funeral home director charged with stealing \$340,000 from her elderly clients in part to support her gambling habit. The arrest of Lynn S. Taucher, 56, of Burgettstown, revealed that over a 9 ½ year period, she collected advance payments from 49 clients to cover their funeral expenses at the Taucher Funeral Home. Instead of placing the money in individual escrow accounts as required by state law, Taucher co-mingled the funds with her personal finances and misappropriated her clients' money, investigators from the Attorney General's Office charged in a criminal complaint.

➤ **Original Press Release:**

https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=3030

TEXAS

February 22, 2017

AG Paxton Files Lawsuit to Stop Housing Scam Targeting Hispanic Consumers in Texas

Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced that his office filed a lawsuit in Hidalgo County against a Mission, Texas-based construction company, and that a court has granted a restraining order stopping the company and its administrators from allegedly targeting Hispanics in a home building scam. According to the lawsuit, Briseno Construction claimed in ads targeted to Spanish-speaking consumers that it could complete a new home in five months with “no financing” and “no interest.” An investigation by Attorney General Paxton's Consumer Protection Division, however, found that prospective home buyers were required to make

deposits of up to 60 percent in order to start construction of their homes, but the company would often delay starting or neglect to complete. In addition, a number of consumers complained about facing local fines because their homes were built without proper permits.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/news/releases/ag-paxton-files-lawsuit-to-stop-housing-scam-targeting-hispanic-consumers-i>

VERMONT

February 16, 2017

Attorney General Settles Security Breach Case

Attorney General Thomas J. Donovan, Jr. reached a settlement yesterday with the Grand Buffet restaurant in Essex Junction. The investigation arose from security breaches where at least one employee stole customers' credit card numbers. The thefts, which took place in 2014, involved at least 100 customers. The resulting credit card fraud totaled approximately \$35,000. The settlement resolves the investigation with the restaurant, and its owner and manager. The employer had previously been notified about its employees' mishandling of customer credit cards and failed to implement corrective action.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://ago.vermont.gov/focus/news/attorney-general-settles-security-breach-case.php>

VIRGINIA

February 17, 2017

FORMER HSBC MORTGAGE BORROWERS TO BEGIN RECEIVING SETTLEMENT PAYMENTS

RICHMOND (February 17, 2017) -- Attorney General Mark R. Herring announced today that more than 2,100 Virginia borrowers who were harmed by the mortgage servicing and foreclosure practices of HSBC will begin receiving checks of approximately \$1,200. Eligible borrowers included those who had mortgages serviced by HSBC Mortgage, and who lost their homes to foreclosure between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2012. Checks will be distributed beginning February 17 and all checks should be received by consumers in the coming weeks.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.oag.state.va.us/media-center/news-releases/889-february-17-2017-former-hsbc-mortgage-borrowers-to-begin-receiving-settlement-payments>

February 02, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING AND CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU REACH SETTLEMENT WITH VIRGINIA PAWNBROKER

RICHMOND (February 2, 2017) - Attorney General Mark Herring and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director Richard Cordray announced today that their agencies have reached a settlement with Woodbridge Coins and Jewelry Exchange, Inc. d/b/a Woodbridge Gold & Pawn to provide \$56,763.60 in refunds to approximately 1,000 consumers as a result of the company's alleged violations of the Virginia statutes applicable to pawnbrokers, the Virginia Consumer Protection Act, and the federal Truth-in-Lending Act. "In recent years we have seen a rash of pawn brokers around Virginia skirting laws and overcharging consumers," said Attorney General Herring. "If you're considering using a pawn shop or other small dollar loan, you should always closely review the terms and know your rights before signing anything that might result in even more money coming out of your pocket."

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.oag.state.va.us/media-center/news-releases/881-february-2-2017-attorney-general-herring-and-consumer-financial-protection-bureau-reach-settlement-with-virginia-pawnbroker>

WASHINGTON

February 08, 2017

AG: 5-hour ENERGY® makers ordered to pay nearly \$4.3 million for consumer violations

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced that a King County judge ordered the makers of 5-hour ENERGY® to pay nearly \$4.3 million in penalties, attorneys' fees and costs for multiple violations of the state Consumer Protection Act. Ferguson filed a lawsuit against the companies in 2014, alleging violations of the state Consumer Protection Act. After a three-week trial last September, Judge Beth Andrus ruled in the state's favor, finding that claims in the companies' advertising were deceptive, and therefore violated the Consumer Protection Act. The deceptive claims — that the popular flavored energy shots is superior to coffee, that doctors recommend 5-hour ENERGY®, and that its decaffeinated formula provides energy, alertness and focus that lasts for hours — appeared in press releases, on the internet and in thousands of print and broadcast ads.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.atg.wa.gov/news/news-releases/ag-5-hour-energy-makers-ordered-pay-nearly-43-million-consumer-violations>

Multistate Cases

Pain Management Physician to Resolve False Medicaid Claims Act Allegations

Date: February 02, 2017

Details: From *GA AG Press Release*: ATLANTA – Today, Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr joined the United States Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Georgia, the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Kentucky and Attorney General Andy Beshear of the Commonwealth of Kentucky in announcing that pain management physician, Dr. Robert Windsor, has agreed to the entry of a \$20 million consent judgment to resolve allegations that he violated the Georgia False Medicaid Claims Act, the federal False Claims Act and other state laws and regulations by billing federal healthcare programs, including Georgia Medicaid, for medically unnecessary diagnostic tests and for billing Medicare and Tricare for surgical monitoring services that he did not perform.

States: Georgia, Kentucky

Example Press Release: <http://law.ga.gov/press-releases/2017-02-02/pain-management-physician-resolves-georgia-false-medicaid-claims-act>

Western Union Settlement Development of Anti-Fraud Program

Date: February 02, 2017

Details: The settlement requires Western Union to develop and put into action a comprehensive anti-fraud program designed to help detect and prevent incidents where consumers who have been the victims of fraud use Western Union to wire money to scam artists.

Example Press Release: <https://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/news/48409>

Fed Agency: Department of Justice

States: 49 States and the District of Columbia (California did not participate in final settlement).

Anthem and Cigna Merger Blocked

Date: February 08, 2017

Details: From [NH AG Press Release](#): Yesterday evening, the federal court for the District of Columbia ruled in favor of a civil antitrust lawsuit to block the proposed combination of two national health insurance companies, Anthem, Inc. and Cigna Corp. The federal lawsuit was filed in July 2016 by the United States Department of Justice and the Attorney General for the State of New Hampshire, the District of Columbia, and ten additional states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, New York, Tennessee and Virginia). "The Court's decision is a tremendous win for consumers, employers, healthcare providers, and other health insurers who compete in this State," said Attorney General Joseph Foster.

Example Press Release: <https://coag.gov/press-room/press-releases/02-08-17>

Fed Agency: Department of Justice

States: New Hampshire, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, New York, Tennessee, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Documents: Order ([pdf download](#))

Walgreens settlement for Unlawful Prescription Marketing Scheme

Date: February 08, 2017

Details: From [AK AG Press Release](#): Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge has joined with the federal government and other states to settle allegations that the Walgreen Co., or Walgreens, unlawfully solicited and allowed Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries to enroll in its Prescription Savings Club program in order to encourage such individuals to self-refer prescriptions to Walgreens' pharmacies. The investigation resulted from an action originally filed in January 2012 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York under the federal False Claims Act and various state false claims statutes.

A National Association of Medicaid Fraud Control Units team participated in the investigation and conducted the settlement negotiations with Walgreens on behalf of the states. The team included representatives from the Offices of the Attorneys General for the states of California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan and New York.

Example Press Release: <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/news-releases/settlement-with-walgreens/>

States: 30 states.

Settlement Shutting Down Caribbean Cruise Line Robocall

Date: February 23, 2017

Details: From *NC AG Press Release:* Attorney General Josh Stein announced today that North Carolina successfully settled charges against a company that assisted the cruise line in making unwanted robocalls. The Florida-based cruise line company flooded consumers with billions of unwanted robocalls nationwide. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the State of North Carolina collaborated on the case. In settling the charges, Fred Accuardi and his companies are barred from robocalling and illegal telemarketing, as well as helping anyone else make such calls.

Example Press Release: <http://www.ncdoj.gov/News-and-Alerts/News-Releases-and-Advisories/AG-Stein-Announces-Settlement-Shutting-Down-Caribb.aspx>

States: North Carolina, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Washington

Henson v. Santander Consumer USA case Amicus Brief

Date: February 24, 2017

Details: From *MA AG Press Release*: In her efforts to protect consumers from unlawful debt collection practices, Attorney General Maura Healey joined a multistate amicus brief links to PDF file filed in the United States Supreme Court arguing that debt buyers who purchase defaulted consumer debt and attempt to collect it are subject to the federal fair debt collection law. “Debt buyers purchasing defaulted consumer debt for pennies on the dollar, only to turn around and pursue consumers using unlawful and harassing collection tactics should be subject not only to state law, but also federal law,” AG Healey said. “It is vital that states have all the resources at their disposal to protect consumers from unscrupulous debt collectors.”

Example Press Release: <http://www.ncdoj.gov/News-and-Alerts/News-Releases-and-Advisories/AG-Stein-Announces-Settlement-Shutting-Down-Caribb.aspx>

States: Oregon, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, and the District Of Columbia

Documents: <http://www.mass.gov/ago/docs/press/2017/amicus-brief-in-henson-v-santander-consumer-usa.pdf>

Medicaid Fraud

ARKANSAS

February 09, 2017

Rutledge Announces Arrest of Two Northeast Arkansas Women for Medicaid Fraud

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of a Craighead County woman and a Green County woman. Both cases were referred to the Attorney General’s office by the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General upon which a joint investigation and audit were conducted.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/news-releases/2-nea-women-arrested-for-medicaid-fraud>

February 14, 2017

Rutledge Announces Helena-West Helena Woman Sentenced for Medicaid Fraud

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the conviction of a Phillips County woman for Medicaid fraud. Jacqueline Young pleaded guilty in Pulaski County Circuit Court and was sentenced to three years probation and to pay nearly \$1,400 in restitution to the Arkansas Medicaid Program and more than \$4,000 in fines and court costs.

- *Original Press Release:* <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/news-releases/helena-west-helena-woman-sentenced/>

COLORADO

February 16, 2017

AG Coffman Charges Pharmacist for Alleged Theft of Millions in Medicaid Funds

DENVER- Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman today announced the filing of charges against George Sackey, owner of Havana Pharmacy and Alameda Pharmacy. Sackey was charged with one count of felony theft and one count of felony computer fraud after allegedly fraudulently billing Medicaid for over \$4.4 million...Sackey allegedly created a specially branded pain cream the “Havana Pain Cream,” and provided physicians with pre-printed prescription forms to order this cream for their patients. Two of the primary ingredients for the cream were Ketoprofen and Lidocaine ...

- *Original Press Release:* <https://coag.gov/press-room/press-releases/02-16-17>

FLORIDA

February 07, 2017

Two Seminole County Women Arrested for Medicaid Fraud

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the Seminole County Sheriff's Office today announced the arrests of two Seminole County women for allegedly defrauding the Medicaid program out of more than \$4 million. Maria Navarro, 44, owner of Angels Creative Children Therapy, and office manager Judith Benech, 37, allegedly billed Medicaid for behavioral therapy services for disabled children that the defendants never provided.

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/0008648DED3E1481852580C000622892>

February 14, 2017

Duval County Nursing Assistant Arrested for Neglect

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office today arrested a certified nursing assistant for neglect of an elderly and disabled patient. Renita D. Wilson, 48, is a Duval County resident formerly employed as a CNA at Terrace of Jacksonville LLC, a skilled nursing facility. According to the MFCU investigation, Wilson failed to provide care, supervision and services necessary for the well-being of the patient, and failed to make a reasonable effort to protect the patient from further neglect.

➤ **Original Press Release:**

<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/FAEB58DEFA571CDC852580C7006DF197>

February 15, 2017

Manatee County Man Arrested for Grand Theft and Medicaid Fraud

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Manatee County Sheriff’s Office today arrested a Manatee County resident for Medicaid fraud and grand theft. David Makynen, 30, is a former sub-contractor of Oasis Health Care, a provider of at-home services to disabled adults. According to the MFCU investigation, Makynen claimed to meet with a disabled adult for months and provide services multiple times. The victim’s mother and caregiver reported that Makynen met the victim once for an appointment, but never made contact again. At Makynen’s direction, and not knowing the claims to be false, Oasis Health Care submitted the claims to the Medicaid program and paid the defendant for allegedly providing the services. Oasis Health Care no longer employs Makynen.

➤ **Original Press Release:**

<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/B77C8CBC2EFCB5CC852580C80068ABD8>

February 28, 2017

Marion County Woman Arrested for Abuse of an Elderly Person

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Ocala Police Department today arrested a Marion County woman for allegedly abusing an elderly and disabled adult.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

<http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/8A86BFE3E705BD60852580D5006CC686>

MASSACHUSETTS

February 21, 2017

Middleborough Woman Pleads Guilty, Sentenced for Defrauding State’s Medicaid Program

PLYMOUTH – A Middleborough woman has pleaded guilty and been sentenced in connection with making duplicative claims for personal care services, causing an overpayment of more than \$140,000 from the state’s Medicaid Program (MassHealth), Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://www.mass.gov/ago/news-and-updates/press-releases/2017/middleborough-woman-guilty-defrauding-state-medicaid.html>

NEVADA

February 08, 2017

Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing of Behavioral Health Provider(1)

Las Vegas, NV – Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Anthony Staten, 37, of Las Vegas, was sentenced today in a Medicaid fraud case involving the submission of false Medicaid claims. Staten was sentenced for one misdemeanor offense of submitting false claims, Medicaid fraud, by Justice Court Judge Eric Goodman. Goodman sentenced Staten to performance of 100 hours of community service and payment of \$3,781 in restitution. The fraud occurred from February 2014 to February 2015.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

[http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2017/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Sentencing_of_Behavioral_Health_Provider\(1\)/](http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2017/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Sentencing_of_Behavioral_Health_Provider(1)/)

February 08, 2017

Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing of Behavioral Health Provider

Las Vegas, NV – Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Samantha Thomas, 30, of Las Vegas, was sentenced today in a Medicaid fraud case involving the submission of false Medicaid claims. Thomas was sentenced for one misdemeanor offense of submitting false claims, Medicaid fraud, by Justice Court Judge Eric Goodman. Goodman sentenced Thomas to six months incarceration, suspended, performance of 50 hours of community service and payment of \$581 in restitution. The fraud occurred during October 2015.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2017/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Sentencing_of_Behavioral_Health_Provider/

February 14, 2017

Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing of Behavioral Health Provider (2)

Las Vegas, NV – Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Tiffany Day, 35, of Las Vegas, was sentenced today in a Medicaid fraud case involving the failure to maintain adequate records. Day was sentenced for one gross misdemeanor offense of intentional failure to maintain adequate records by District Court Judge Jennifer Togliatti. Togliatti sentenced Day to performance of 20 hours of community service and payment of \$1,229 in restitution.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

[http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2017/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Sentencing_of_Behavioral_Health_Provider_\(2\)/](http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2017/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Sentencing_of_Behavioral_Health_Provider_(2)/)

NEW YORK

February 25, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Arrest Of Brooklyn Medical Supply Company Owner For Allegedly Defrauding Medicaid

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the arrest of Kester Atumonyogo, 43, of Valley Stream, N.Y., and his company Monack Medical Supply, Inc. (“Monack”) for allegedly stealing over \$1.5 million from Medicaid and Healthfirst, a Medicaid managed care organization. The defendants are accused of using a false Social Security number to enroll Monack as a participating medical supply provider in Medicaid. Thereafter, the company allegedly filed false claims that misrepresented to Medicaid and Healthfirst that

Monack dispensed a highly specialized, expensive enteral, nutritional formula to needy pediatric patients.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-arrest-brooklyn-medical-supply-company-owner-allegedly>

Consumer Advocacy

Multistate – AG’s urge Education Secretary And Congressional Leaders To Maintain Federal Protections For Higher Education Students

Date: February 22, 2017

Details: From *IL AG Press Release*: Attorney General Lisa Madigan today sent a letter urging the U.S. Department of Education Secretary and Congressional leaders to express their support for recent federal protections for students in higher education and taxpayers.

Highlighting how many for-profit schools have harmed student borrowers, Madigan and the attorneys general sent a letter to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Elisabeth DeVos and U.S. Senate and House leadership detailing their concerns over rolling back federal protections that would signal “open season” on students for some of the worst actors in the for-profit school industry. Madigan referenced the thousands of complaints her office receives concerning higher education every year and her work to help students across the country who have incurred crushing amounts of debt for worthless degrees from many for-profit schools ...

Example Press Releases and Documents:

http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2017_02/20170222.html

<https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/attorney-general-schneiderman-urges-education-secretary-and-congressional-leaders>

States: Illinois, New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, the and District of Columbia

Document: https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/multistate_ag_letter_on_for-profit_schools_feb_2017.pdf

ARIZONA

February 02, 2017

SCAM ALERT: “Can You Hear Me?” Calls Reported in Arizona

PHOENIX – Attorney General Mark Brnovich is warning Arizonans to beware of the “Can You Hear Me?” robocall scam. Over the last few days, concerned Arizonans have contacted the Attorney General’s Office to report suspicious calls from someone asking “Can you hear me?” Here’s how it works: You get a call from someone and there may be some static on the line or fumbling around. The caller then says something like, “I’m having trouble with my headset” and asks “Can you hear me?” Their goal is to get you to answer “Yes.” Scammers use the recorded response to place unauthorized charges on phone, utility, or credit card bills.

➤ *Original Press Release: <https://www.azag.gov/press-release/scam-alert-can-you-hear-me-calls>*

ARKANSAS

February 01, 2017

Scam artists are posing as the Attorney General’s Office

Scammers are posing as the Attorney General’s office to try and trick Arkansans into turning over personal information. The Attorney General’s office recently received reports of Arkansans receiving a phone call from a Utah phone number stating that the consumer needs to contact the Attorney General’s office to inquire about a legal account. This is a scam.

➤ *Original Press Release: <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/consumer-alerts/scam-artists-posing-as-attorney-generals-office/>*

February 08, 2017

‘Can you hear me?’ Scam

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansans are being victimized by con artists who use audio editing equipment to create false authorization recordings to make unauthorized purchases on credit cards or add-ons to utility bills. The Arkansas Attorney General’s office has received a number of reports of the scam in which callers are asking “Can you hear me?” in order to elicit a “yes” response from the consumer which the scammer will then use for illegal or fraudulent purposes.

➤ *Original Press Release: <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/consumer-alerts/can-you-hear-me-scam>*

February 15, 2017

VETERAN ALERT: Lost Military Records Can Be Replaced

Military medical or personnel records can get lost or misplaced, which can be frustrating if a service member has passed away and the family would like the deceased person's records for posterity. These records may be obtained from the National Personnel Records Center by the next of kin, normally at no cost. Next of kin is considered the surviving spouse who has not remarried, father, mother, son, daughter, sister or brother. Proof of death of the veteran must be provided.

- *Original Press Release: <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/consumer-alerts/lost-military-records-can-be-replaced/>*

February 22, 2017

Refund Anticipation Loans and Checks Can Cost Consumers

Some car salesman use high pressure tactics to slither their way into a consumer's wallet. Car dealerships and other large-item retailers are trying to encourage Arkansans to let their salesmen do the consumer's taxes. The salesmen can "predict" the tax refund amount and encourage the consumer to enter into a loan with the business to purchase a large ticket item. This is also called a Refund Anticipation Loan and may end up costing the consumer more than filing his or her own return.

- *Original Press Release: <https://arkansasag.gov/media-center/consumer-alerts/refund-anticipation-loans-and-checks-can-cost-consumers/>*

CALIFORNIA

February 13, 2017

Attorney General Xavier Becerra Issues Consumer Alert Concerning Price Gouging in Wake of Oroville Dam Auxiliary Spillway Incident

SACRAMENTO - California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today issued a consumer alert concerning price gouging in the wake of the Oroville Dam Auxiliary Spillway Incident and related evacuations. The Attorney General also warns donors to carefully vet anyone who is promising to help evacuees. The Attorney General's website provides valuable donor tips. <https://oag.ca.gov/donations>

- *Original Press Release: <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-xavier-becerra-issues-consumer-alert-concerning-price-gouging>*

COLORADO

February 07, 2017

AG Coffman Announces New Financial Literacy Program for Colorado Kids

Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman today announced the statewide launch of a new kid's financial literacy initiative, Colorado MoneyWiser. This interactive, web-based financial education program will bring critical financial education to elementary school students across Colorado. "I want every child in our State to have the skills they need to confidently navigate the increasingly complex financial world we live in," said Attorney General Coffman. "Providing young people an early financial education fosters individual responsibility and lays a solid foundation for success in life." The Attorney General's Office is partnering with EverFi, Inc., a leading education technology company, to provide this financial management program to local students at no cost to schools. Colorado MoneyWiser uses the latest in simulation and gaming technologies to bring complex financial concepts ...

➤ *Original Press Release:* <https://coag.gov/press-room/press-releases/02-07-17>

DELAWARE

February 03, 2017

Attorney General Warns Delawareans About Bogus Online Lead Generators

Attorney General Matt Denn's office warns Delawareans to be wary of online lead generators or list services that claim to provide potential client leads to certain professionals, particularly real estate agents. The Consumer Protection Unit of the Delaware Department of Justice has investigated complaints about lead generators or list services that claim to provide advanced or superior advertising services for local professionals to drive more potential clients to those professionals. In exchange, they often require large up-front payments and include contracts that protect the lead generator more than the professional.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://news.delaware.gov/2017/02/03/cpulg/>

GEORGIA

February 02, 2017

CONSUMER ALERT: Attorney General Chris Carr Recognizes Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week

ATLANTA, GA – In recognition of Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week, Attorney General Chris Carr wants consumers to be on alert for tax-related scams as the season approaches. Here's what consumers should be aware of: IRS Impersonation Scams In this type of scam, a fraudster contacts consumers by phone, claiming to be an IRS agent and insisting that the consumer owes the IRS money. The caller asks the consumer to pay by wiring money or loading money onto a pre-paid debit card and often threatens arrest or legal action if the consumer does not comply. Consumers can easily be convinced that these calls are real as the scammer may know a consumer's full or partial Social Security number or even use spoofing software that causes the IRS name and/or number to show up in your caller ID.

- *Original Press Release: <http://law.ga.gov/press-releases/2017-02-02/consumer-alert-attorney-general-chris-carr-recognizes-tax-identity-theft-0>*

February 24, 2017

SCAM ALERT: Attorney General Carr Warns of Fake Email from Scammers Posing as Government Agency

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is warning the public about a phony email circulating that purports to be from the "Department of Consumer Affairs." The email, which allegedly targets attorneys, says that a complaint has been filed against the recipient's company and urges recipients to click on a link to view the complaint. This email is NOT from the Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Unit or any other legitimate government entity. It is a fake email. Clicking on the link or attachment provided may allow the scammer to install malware on your computer. The scam has been reported in Georgia and South Carolina.

- *Original Press Release: <http://law.ga.gov/press-releases/2017-02-24/scam-alert-attorney-general-carr-warns-fake-email-scammers-posing>*

IDAHO

February 09, 2017

Attorney General Warns Idaho Businesses and Organizations of Dangerous Phishing Scam

(Boise) – Attorney General Lawrence Wasden is asking Idahoans to be on the lookout for a particularly dangerous phishing scam that could compromise sensitive employee data. The IRS notified the Attorney General’s Office this week of a scam that’s targeting schools, restaurants, hospitals, tribal groups and others. A number of Idaho organizations have been targeted by this threat. “Cybercriminals continue to seek to plunder confidential information from Idaho businesses and employees,” Attorney General Lawrence Wasden said. “This is a particularly nefarious scam and a reminder that we should all remain vigilant when it comes to protecting sensitive data.” According to the IRS, the scam works like this: Cybercriminals use various spoofing techniques to disguise an email to make it appear as if it is from an organization executive. The email is sent to an employee in the payroll or human ...

➤ *Original Press Release:*

http://www.ag.idaho.gov/media/ConsumerAlerts/2017/ca_02092017.html

ILLINOIS

February 01, 2017

MADIGAN ISSUES TAX SEASON REMINDERS

Chicago — As tax season gets underway, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today urged Illinois taxpayers to avoid applying for expensive refund anticipation products that deplete as much as a thousand dollars from their eventual tax refund. Madigan issued advice for Illinois residents in light of a recent announcement by the IRS that as a way to reduce identity theft and tax-related fraud, it is delaying tax refunds until February 15 for more than 40 million low-income families claiming the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2017_02/20170201.html

February 02, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: HANG UP ON PHONY COMPUTER TECH SUPPORT SCAMS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today alerted Illinois residents to a current wave of phone scams in which callers pose as computer security experts in an attempt to gain access to computer networks to download software that may contain viruses. Madigan’s office has seen a recent increase in complaints about these scam calls from Illinois residents and employees in her office.

Callers inform people that they have identified a problem on their computer and direct people to call a toll-free number for assistance. If people call the toll-free number, they will likely be prompted to unknowingly allow remote access to their computer. This allows scammers to access personal information and allows them to install malware, viruses or keylogging software to record personal information.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2017_02/20170202.html

February 03, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN CONDEMNS EXECUTIVE ORDERS DECIMATING FINANCIAL REFORMS AND THE CFPB

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan condemned Executive Orders issued today that could upend and decimate major consumer financial protections implemented after the country's 2008 economic collapse, including the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act that created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Madigan issued the following statement against the Executive Order directing the U.S. Department of Treasury to review all of the regulations established under the Dodd-Frank Act, as well as the Executive Order halting the implementation of the U.S. Department of Labor's Fiduciary Rule that would ensure financial advisors handling individual retirement accounts act in the best interest of their clients.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2017_02/20170203b.html

February 07, 2017

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN HIGHLIGHTS SAFER INTERNET DAY

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today recognized 2017 Safer Internet Day and offered advice to parents and educators to help students practice safe online habits and to identify signs of cyberbullying. Madigan said it is important for parents and teachers to talk to children and teens about their online followers and posts, and promote safety and respect on the internet. Families and educators can learn about safe online habits on Madigan's website.

➤ *Original Press Release:*

http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2017_02/20170207.html

INDIANA

February 03, 2017

Consumer Alert from the Office of the Indiana Attorney General

INDIANAPOLIS – The Consumer Protection Division (CPD) of the Office of the Indiana Attorney General is warning people to be suspicious of companies claiming to be affiliated with local high schools and attempting to sell sponsorships. On Jan. 31, the CPD received a consumer complaint against a business claiming to operate as Touchdown Sports. The complainant said the caller claimed to be with Touchdown Sports and to be calling on behalf of Noblesville High School in Indiana. The complainant said the caller was seeking sponsors for the backs of t-shirts that could be passed out during high school sporting events.

➤ **Original Press Release:**

http://www.in.gov/activecalendar/EventList.aspx?fromdate=2/1/2017&todate=3/1/2017&display=Month&type=public&eventidn=256762&view=EventDetails&information_id=255316

February 08, 2017

Attorney General Curtis Hill launches campaign against phone scams, announces 2017 Do Not Call registration schedule

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill today announced the first of four Do Not Call registration deadlines in 2017 as part of a new telephone privacy campaign aimed at protecting Hoosiers from phone scams – “Do Not Call/Do Not Answer”. Indiana residents have until Feb. 21 to register their information with the Office of the Indiana Attorney General “Do Not Call” list. This step will help you avoid calls from telemarketers beginning April 1.

➤ **Original Press Release:**

http://www.in.gov/activecalendar/EventList.aspx?fromdate=2/1/2017&todate=3/1/2017&display=Month&type=public&eventidn=256885&view=EventDetails&information_id=255398

IOWA

February 13, 2017

Iowa Businesses and Organizations Targeted by Wire Transfer Payment Scam FBI Calls “Business Email Compromise” Scam

DES MOINES – Iowa businesses and non-profit organizations should be aware of a sophisticated scam using impersonated emails that attempt to dupe business office employees into making office-related wire transfer payments. The Federal Bureau of Investigation refers to the scam as the “Business Email Compromise,” or BEC scam.

Several businesses and non-profit organizations throughout the state have reported BEC scam attempts to the Consumer Protection Division. Over the past year, several targeted people have reported scam attempts, including employees of companies, a religious organization, a hospital, several non-profit organizations, and multiple county political party offices.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/for-consumers/consumer-alert>

February 15, 2017

Used Auto Sales Complaints Top 2016 Consumer Complaint List

DES MOINES – For the second year in a row, used auto sales topped the list of complaints consumers filed with the Consumer Protection Division in 2016, followed by home improvements and home mortgage complaints. The list of top three complaints consumers filed last year is unchanged from a year earlier. Out of approximately 2,800 written complaints filed in 2016, 207 related to used vehicle sales practices, which include credit issues. Home improvement complaints rank second at 172 complaints, and home mortgage complaints are third on the list at 149 complaints.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/newsroom/used-auto-sales-complaints-top-2016-consumer-complaint-list/>

KANSAS

February 27, 2017

AG Derek Schmidt to provide free document destruction, consumer education for National Consumer Protection Week

TOPEKA – (February 27, 2017) – The Attorney General’s Office will mark National Consumer Protection Week, March 5-11, with free document destruction events and consumer education presentations throughout the state, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today. “Our office works hard year-round to protect consumers,” Schmidt said. “Next week, we will place a particular focus on helping Kansans protect themselves from identity theft and stay safe from scams.” The office will sponsor free document destruction at 10 locations throughout the state.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <http://ag.ks.gov/media-center/news-releases/2017/02/27/ag-derek-schmidt-to-provide-free-document-destruction-consumer-education-for-national-consumer-protection-week>

KENTUCKY

February 01, 2017

Beshear: Warns of Online 'Sweetheart' Scams

FRANKFORT, KY. (Feb. 1, 2017) – As Valentine’s Day approaches, Attorney General Andy Beshear is warning Kentuckians of the “sweetheart” scam, which reports suggest caused Kentuckians to lose more than \$80,000 last year. A sweetheart scammer typically uses a fake photo and identity to approach a victim through social media or online dating sites and acts as if they are interested in getting to know him or her. Over time, the scammer works to develop a long-distance, sham relationship with the victim. Once the scammer gains the victim’s trust, they pretend to need emergency funds and asks the victim to wire money, send prepaid gift cards or other hard-to-trace payment methods.

- *Original Press Release:* <http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=255>

February 17, 2017

Beshear, AARP Partnering with Faith-based Community to Prevent Scams

FRANKFORT, KY. (Feb. 17, 2017) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today joined AARP of Kentucky and members of the faith-based community to launch a partnership to protect local congregations and the communities they serve from con artists and the latest scams. The Interfaith Travel Series Scam Alerts, hosted by Beshear’s Office of Senior Protection, will hold events at more than 20 different locations around the state with members of the faith-based community.

- *Original Press Release:* <http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=262>

February 22, 2017

Beshear Warns of 'Facebook Customer Service' Scam

FRANKFORT, KY. (Feb. 22, 2017) – Attorney General Beshear is warning Kentuckians that a popular web search could result in them becoming a victim of a scam. Reports suggest "Facebook customer service" is searched for about 27,000 times a month in the U.S. and scams linked to those searches are being reported. “A quick online search for a Facebook customer service phone number could connect Kentuckians to a real, live con artist and not a legitimate Facebook employee,” said Beshear. “Kentuckians need to know that Facebook does not offer account customer service over the phone. If users need assistance with their account they should contact Facebook directly via their online account.”

Reports of the scam suggest callers to the phony customer service number will be connected with a scammer who pretends to be a Facebook customer service representative.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=265>

LOUISIANA

February 10, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Landry Offers Consumer Tips to Tornado Victims

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Attorney General Jeff Landry wants victims of this week’s devastating tornadoes to know that contractor fraud is real, and he is offering tips to help those impacted by Tuesday’s storms avoid becoming victimized again. “As many of the hard-working men and women of our State find themselves rebuilding from this natural disaster, our Louisiana Department of Justice wants to ensure they are not taken advantage of in any way,” said General Landry. “Our office is in the affected areas distributing important information to help avoid contractor fraud.” Members of General Landry’s staff spent Friday morning going door-to-door New Orleans East with brochures of helpful consumer tips for tornado victims.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/2357?catID=3>

February 10, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Landry Warns Consumers to Beware of Online Romance Scams

BATON ROUGE, LA – Millions of Americans use dating sites, social networking sites, and chat rooms to meet people; and many find true love. But with Valentine’s Day just around the corner, Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry is warning our State’s people that scammers also use these sites to meet potential victims. “Fraudsters often create fake profiles to form online relationships, and eventually convince people to send money in the name of love,” said General Landry. “While these criminals most commonly target divorced or widowed women over 40, every demographic is vulnerable to romance scams. So I encourage all Louisiana residents to use vigilance.”

- **Original Press Release:** <https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/2356?catID=3>

February 17, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Landry Warns Consumers of Recent Recalls

BATON ROUGE, LA – Attorney General Jeff Landry is urging Louisiana parents and guardians to be aware of several children’s products that have recently been recalled “Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of Louisiana's children is our top priority," said Attorney General Jeff Landry.

➤ *Original Press Release:* <https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/2363?catID=3>

February 25, 2017

Attorney General Jeff Landry Offers Tips for Mardi Gras

BATON ROUGE, LA – As Mardi Gras parades, parties, and balls are in full effect, Attorney General Jeff Landry is issuing safety tips for those who may be celebrating. “The Carnival season is amongst us and people across Louisiana are ready to laissez les bon temps rouler,” said General Landry. “However, it is important to remember to be safe and use good judgment while catching beads, eating king cake, and spending time with friends.”

➤ *Original Press Release:* <https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/2369?catID=3>

MICHIGAN

February 07, 2017

Be Alert: Schuette Recognizes Today as Safer Internet Day

LANSING - Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today encourages everyone to use Safer Internet Day, February 7, 2017, as a way to brush up on a number of practices that help protecting their privacy on the Internet. “Protecting ourselves on the Internet begins by using common sense,” said Schuette. “It’s important to know your privacy options before sharing information online, whether you’re purchasing from business sites, sharing posts on social media, or just using your smart phone. Consumers must always be on alert.” Schuette issued a short video with tips on how to stay safe on the Internet. The tips include: Check privacy settings - filtering by preference who can see your location, posts, photos, and other information. Don’t give out personal information - If someone you don’t know contacts you for payment information, passwords, or other details, don’t give them ...

➤ *Original Press Release:* http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-164-46849_47203-404087--,00.html

MISSISSIPPI

February 16, 2017

Consumer Alert: AG Hood Warns Workers to be Wary of W-2 Scam

Attorney General Jim Hood warned Mississippi taxpayers today that scammers are targeting a wide range of organizations attempting to collect W-2 data that can in turn be used to file fraudulent tax returns.

- *Original Press Release: <http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/consumer-alert-ag-hood-warns-workers-to-be-wary-of-w-2-scam/>*

MISSOURI

February 02, 2017

CONSUMER ALERT: Tax Identity Theft Fraud

Steps taken by consumers may help protect from tax fraud identity theft as the 2016 filing season begins. What is tax identity theft? How severe is the problem? Attorney General Josh Hawley warns consumers to be alert for tax fraud identity theft as the 2016 tax filing season begins. "Tax identity theft fraud has become all too common. Consumers should file their returns as early as they can," Hawley advised. "Missouri consumers who experience tax fraud identity theft can reach out to my Office for help."

- *Original Press Release: <https://www.ago.mo.gov/home/news-archives/2017-news-archives/consumer-alert-tax-identity-theft-fraud>*

MONTANA

February 02, 2017

Tax ID Theft Awareness Week Brings Attention to Common Scams

Attorney General Tim Fox encourages Montanans to read up on the most common tax identity theft scams and how to avoid them during this year's Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week, which is hosted by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). "The IRS reported the average federal tax refund during the 2015 filing season was about \$3,200. Montanans work very hard for their wages, and it's unconscionable that identity thieves are stealing Montanans' well-deserved tax refunds," said Attorney General Tim Fox.

- *Original Press Release: <https://dojmt.gov/tax-id-theft-awareness-week-brings-attention-common-scams/>*

February 07, 2017

Attorney General Fox Encourages Montanans to Review On-Line Safety

Attorney General Tim Fox invites Montanans to join internet users and organizations across the United States and around the world to celebrate Safer Internet Day on February 7. This is the fifth year Safer Internet Day has been recognized in the United States, and Attorney General Fox is marking the occasion with a new public service announcement (PSA) detailing several ways to stay safe online.

- **Original Press Release:** <https://dojmt.gov/attorney-general-fox-encourages-montanans-review-line-safety/>

NEW MEXICO

February 21, 2017

SCAM ALERT: New Scam Call Threatening IRS ‘Criminal Lawsuit’ Hits New Mexico

Albuquerque, NM – This afternoon, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a Scam Alert in response to a new scam hitting New Mexico that threatens a ‘criminal lawsuit’ by the IRS if the caller’s message is not returned. The digitized voice in the recording claims to be Officer Edward Jonathon calling from the legal department of the Internal Revenue Service and leaves a call back number along with his threats. Scams of this nature are meant to intimidate and trick New Mexicans into giving up their personal and financial information to the scammers.

- **Original Press Release:**
http://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/New_Scam_Call_Threatening_IRS_%E2%80%98Criminal_Lawsuit%E2%80%99_Hits_New_Mexico_1.pdf

February 24, 2017

SCAM ALERT: “Bahamas Grandkids Scam” Hitting New Mexico

Albuquerque, NM – Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a second Scam Alert this week, this one warning senior citizens to protect themselves against the “Bahamas Grandkids Scam” that is hitting New Mexico. Scammers are calling New Mexico senior citizens from Ontario, Canada and Maryland phone numbers claiming that their grandchild is in jail for drunk driving in another country, namely the Bahamas. The scammers tell elaborate stories including details of a destination wedding the grandchild traveled to and then explain that after the wedding the grandchild was arrested.

- **Original Press Release:**
http://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/SCAM_ALERT_Bahamas_Grandkids_Scam_Hitting_New_Mexico_Senior_Citizens.pdf

NEW YORK

February 02, 2017

A.G. Outlines Impact Of Spectrum-Time Warner Cable's Alleged Fraud In Western NY, Issues Consumer Alert To Assist New Yorkers In Choosing The Best Internet Service

BUFFALO – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman issued a consumer alert today to provide New Yorkers with tips for selecting the best internet service plan. This consumer alert follows the Attorney General’s announcement yesterday of his office’s lawsuit against Charter Communications Inc. (“Charter”) and its subsidiary Spectrum Management Holdings, LLC, (f/k/a Time Warner Cable, Inc.,) (together, “Spectrum-TWC”) for allegedly conducting a deliberate scheme to defraud and mislead New Yorkers by promising internet service that they knew they could not deliver.

- *Original Press Release: <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-outlines-impact-spectrum-time-warner-cables-alleged-fraud-western-ny-issues>*

February 15, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Issues Urgent Fraud Alert On “ICE” Immigration Scams

NEW YORK – Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman issued an urgent fraud alert, warning immigrant communities of potential scams in light of recent reports that fraudsters have been posing as Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents scams and demanding money in order to avoid deportation. The Attorney General’s office has received an increased number of reported scams along these lines following the ICE deportation raids that have taken place over the last few days.

- *Original Press Release: <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-issues-urgent-fraud-alert-ice-immigration-scams>*

February 16, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Encourages New Yorkers To Test Internet Speeds And Submit Results As Part Of Ongoing Investigation Of Broadband Providers

ROCHESTER – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman is encouraging New Yorkers to test their Internet speeds and submit the results via his website as part of an ongoing investigation into whether or not Internet service providers are delivering on the speeds and services promised. He is also urging New Yorkers to use his new consumer alert as a tool in selecting the internet service plan that best suits their needs. This follows the Attorney General’s announcement earlier this month of his office’s lawsuit against Charter Communications Inc. (“Charter”) and its subsidiary Spectrum Management Holdings, LLC, (f/k/a Time Warner Cable, Inc.,) (together,

“Spectrum-TWC”) for allegedly conducting a deliberate scheme to defraud and mislead New Yorkers by promising Internet service that they knew they could not deliver.

- *Original Press Release:* <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-encourages-new-yorkers-test-internet-speeds-and-submit-results-part>

NORTH CAROLINA

February 13, 2017

New Scam Alert: Protect Your Information Online

A dangerous scam is now spreading from businesses to other types of employers. In the scam, a worker in the human resources or payroll department receives an email from the CEO or a top executive. The message requests W-2s or other private information about the organization’s employees. But it is a phishing email, a convincing-looking fake, and the confidential information is delivered into the hands of crooks. The IRS has just issued a warning to all employers about this scam. In North Carolina, phishermen are hauling in record-breaking catches. Back in 2015, six data breaches in the state were blamed on phishing and a total of 156 consumers were affected. In 2016 that number ballooned to 209 data breaches, with more than 19 thousand North Carolinians impacted.

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ncdoj.gov/News-and-Alerts/News-Releases-and-Advisories/Press-Releases/New-Scam-Alert-Protect-Your-Information-Online.aspx>

February 13, 2017

Protect Your Heart and Wallet This Valentine’s Day

RALEIGH, N.C. – Attorney General Josh Stein is reminding people to be cautious on online dating websites this Valentine’s Day. Unfortunately, not all of these sites’ users approach online dating with good intentions. In fact, dating websites have become a top vehicle for online scams. “Scam artists are using social media and dating websites more and more frequently to take their victims’ hard earned money,” said AG Stein. “Sweetheart scams occur when criminals trick people into starting an online romantic relationship. Victims often end up paying money for what the scammer claims is a medical emergency, car accident or even a flight to come visit the victim. People should always be cautious when meeting someone online and never send money to someone they haven’t met in person.”

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ncdoj.gov/News-and-Alerts/News-Releases-and-Advisories/Press-Releases/Protect-Your-Heart-and-Wallet-This-Valentine%E2%80%99s-Day.aspx>

February 15, 2017

New twist on IRS scam

Many consumers have received the call. A recorded message from someone claiming to be with the Internal Revenue Service or Treasury Department threatens arrest if back taxes are not paid immediately. If you return the call you'll be instructed to use a money order, wire transfer or prepaid debit card, perhaps even an iTunes gift card, to send your payment. Sometimes the scam message is delivered by email instead of by phone. Now the scammers are searching for potential victims via a new route: texts. The message begins "WARNING: Criminal Investigation Unit of the I.R.S. is filing lawsuit against you...". It includes a phone number to call for more information, and continues "This is your last chance... arrest warrant will be forwarded to local police..."

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.ncdoj.gov/News-and-Alerts/Alerts/New-twist-on-IRS-scam.aspx>

NORTH DAKOTA

February 16, 2017

WARN ELDERLY RELATIVES ABOUT SCAMS BEFORE THEY GET A CALL

BISMARCK, ND - In just the past month, several elderly North Dakotans have fallen victim to the "grandparent" scam, each losing thousands of dollars to scam artists who pretended to be a grandchild supposedly in a dire situation and in desperate need of money. The grandparent scam is one of the common "imposter" scams that have been circulating in the state for several years, along with the Fake IRS call and the phony Sweepstakes/Lottery win. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has issued numerous warnings about these scams. Unfortunately, the consumer protection division of his office receives reports of new victims every week.

- *Original Press Release:* <https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/news/warn-elderly-relatives-about-scams-they-get-call>

OHIO

February 09, 2017

Attorney General DeWine Warns of Romance Scams on Facebook, Dating Websites

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—As Valentine's Day approaches, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is warning Ohioans that his office has received several recent reports of romance scams that started on Facebook or dating websites. In the scam, a con artist creates a phony profile online, contacts a potential victim, and begins communicating with the person through messages or calls. Eventually, the scammer asks for money.

“Scam artists will pretend to be someone they’re not,” Attorney General DeWine said. “They’ll start to communicate with a person online, and they’ll forge an emotional connection. At some point, they’ll start asking for money.”

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/February-2017/Attorney-General-DeWine-Warns-of-Romance-Scams-on>

PENNSYLVANIA

February 02, 2017

AG Shapiro appears in video with Manheim PA resident duped by scam artists through Western Union

HARRISBURG — The Office of Attorney General is releasing a video today that highlights the personal story of Glenn Parks, a Manheim PA resident who lost a large sum of money when he and his wife were duped by a scam artist into sending funds through a Western Union telegram. Mr. Parks appears in the video with Attorney General Shapiro released today. You can see and use the video here. In the video, Mr. Parks explains how he and his wife sent their “whole bank account” to a scam artist, the Jamaican lottery, through telegrams using Western Union. Investigators believe Mr. and Mrs. Parks lost in excess of \$200,000 as a result of the scam. Attorney General Shapiro made the video with Mr. Parks to publicize the settlement announced this week among 48 states, including Pennsylvania, and Western Union. ...

- **Original Press Release:** https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=3025

RHODE ISLAND

February 03, 2017

Attorney General Kilmartin Warns RI Businesses of Scam Involving Employee W-2 Forms

After receiving a phone call from a local business alerting us to a scam, Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin is warning all businesses of an emerging email scam that purports to be from company executives and requests personal information of employees. The scammers send emails that appear to be from the CEO to human resources or payroll divisions or third-party payroll companies requesting payroll data for employees including W-2 forms that contain Social Security numbers and other personally identifiable information.

- **Original Press Release:** <http://www.ri.gov/press/view/29559>

WASHINGTON

February 02, 2017

AG proposal for improved consumer support for service members passes House unanimously

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s proposal to better support military consumers passed the House of Representatives in an overwhelming, bipartisan 98-0 vote today. House Bill 1056 is sponsored by Rep. Christine Kilduff, D–University Place, and its companion, Senate Bill 5041, is sponsored by Sen. Michael Baumgartner, R–Spokane. “The men and women of our armed forces face unique challenges,” Ferguson said. “As someone who comes from a military family, I believe it is important to do everything we can to support those who serve or have served our country. My proposal ensures military consumers don’t get stuck with contracts they can’t use because they are deployed or ordered to relocate.”

- *Original Press Release:* <http://www.atg.wa.gov/news/news-releases/ag-proposal-improved-consumer-support-service-members-passes-house-unanimously>