NATIONAL STATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL PROGRAM:
CONSUMER PROTECTION REPORT

March 2014
CONSUMER PROTECTION REPORT:
MARCH 1 –31, 2014

This newsletter is the fifth of a monthly circulation that describes consumer protection activity announced by state attorneys general. This information was gathered solely from attorney general press releases. It makes no effort to prioritize or analyze the impact of any of these cases and initiatives.

The following press releases are organized by state and multistate activity. In addition, certain Medicaid fraud cases that touch on consumer protection and advocacy initiatives have been included.

If an office would like their activity to be included in subsequent newsletters, please notify attorneygeneral@law.columbia.edu.

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The National State Attorneys General Program at Columbia Law School is a legal research, education, and policy center that examines the implications of the jurisprudence of state attorneys general. Working closely with attorneys general, academics, and other members of the legal community, the program is active in the development and dissemination of legal information used by state prosecutors in carrying out their civil and criminal responsibilities.

For more information about the National State Attorneys General Program and resources, please visit our website www.stateag.org.
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Attorney General Tom Horne Continues To Target Telemarketing Scams

As part of National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), Attorney General Tom Horne wants to remind consumers to “just hang up” on telemarketing scammers. Every year, consumers lose thousands of dollars by paying fraudulent telemarketers for products or services that are never received, business opportunities that fail to produce income, or lotteries that provide no payout.

“Telemarketing fraud is a pervasive and devastating problem that makes victims out of innocent consumers, especially seniors,” said Attorney General Horne. “Consumer protection and aggressive prosecution continues to be a priority for my office and we remain vigilant in our efforts to put illegal telemarketers out of business.”

Defendants Corey and Tesha McCormick operated Consumer Benefits Research Group, Inc., falsely told consumers their company had conducted investigations and discovered personal information was being resold. Defendants then offered to sell an identity theft protection program that did little to protect them from actual fraud. Although the Defendants were permanently prohibited from engaging in future violations, they changed the name of their business to Active Fraud Solutions and IDMAX and continued to engage in the deceptive conduct. The Attorney General’s Office filed a contempt petition based on the violations of the 2011 order and in January, 2014, a Consent Judgment was filed that prohibited the McCormicks from being involved in any entity that engages in the telemarketing of services or business opportunities, accepting payments from their customers and selling the personal information of their customers. The defendants also were required to pay restitution to their victims, attorneys’ fees and costs to the State and civil penalties.

Attorney General Tom Horne Files Lawsuit Against Phoenix Rental Car Company

As the result of more than 150 consumer complaints and an undercover investigation by the State, Attorney General Tom Horne has filed a Consumer Fraud lawsuit against Dennis N. Saban and his companies, Saban’s Rent-A-Car, L.L.C., D S Rentco, Inc., and A-AAAble Rental Ltd., also doing business as Phoenix Car Rental and Saban’s Rent a Car.

In the undercover operation conducted by the State, an investigator was promised a rental vehicle for $129 a week, a rate also advertised on the company website. After additional fees and taxes, the total rental was more than $250. The agent was denied a copy of the rental agreement and falsely told he would be arrested if he left the Phoenix area because of specially coded license plates. An employee also informed the investigator that an additional charge was the “county tax” when in fact it was a surcharge imposed by Saban’s. Upon inspection, investigators also discovered that although the rental car’s odometer displayed 99,840 miles the vehicle’s actual mileage was 199,840 miles.


AR KANSAS

March 18, 2014

Attorney General Dustin McDaniel Announces Telemarketer Ordered To Pay Penalties, Restitution

One of five Florida-based telemarketing companies accused by Attorney General Dustin McDaniel of violating state and federal law has been ordered to stop its illegal practices and pay more than $168,000 in penalties and restitution, McDaniel announced today.

U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright on Monday ordered Financial Management Partners Inc. and its owner, Eric Pugh, to pay $78,000 in penalties and $90,277.50 in restitution to consumers for violations of the federal Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Prevention Act, the
Telemarketing Sales Rule, the Arkansas Consumer Telephone Privacy Act, the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act and the Arkansas Advance Fee Loan Brokerage Act.

McDaniel filed suit against Financial Management Partners and others in 2012, accusing the companies of engaging in illegal, automated and prerecorded calls, known as “robocalls,” to hundreds of Arkansas consumers. The companies touted their ability to help consumers reduce their credit-card interest rates in those calls. Despite being paid for the services, the companies did little or nothing to help Arkansas consumers.


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**COLORADO**

*March 3, 2014*

**Attorney General John Suthers’ Office Files Lawsuit Against Apollo Credit Agency**

Attorney General John Suthers announced today that his office has filed a civil lawsuit against Apollo Credit Agency, Inc. and General Manager James P. Saddoris. The lawsuit was filed after Apollo’s clients contacted the Consumer Protection Section of the Office claiming they had not been paid on accounts placed with Apollo for collection. The Attorney General’s Office alleges that Apollo, as a licensed collection agency, was violating the Colorado Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (CFDCPA) by failing to remit payments it owed clients. The complaint also claims that Apollo failed to maintain its trust account with sufficient funds to pay amounts due and owed to its clients.

“At this point, a receiver was appointed to ensure clients of Apollo are notified of the situation and that there is some accounting of what may ultimately be due to them,” said Suthers. “The receiver will assist in the process so correct credits on payments are accounted for and to prevent additional collection efforts due to Apollo’s lack of remittance of payments to creditors,” Suthers explained.

http://www.coloradoattorneygeneral.gov/press/news/2014/03/03/attorney_general%E2%80%99s_office_files_lawsuit_against_apollo_credit_agency
CONNECTICUT

March 18, 2014

Consumer Counsel Katz, AG Jepsen: Settlement to Provide $29 Million in Refunds to Aquarion Water Company Customers

Due to changes in the federal Internal Revenue Service’s (IRS) accounting regulations, Aquarion Water Company of Connecticut (Aquarion) stands to recover approximately $29 million for taxes paid since 2007 and, under a settlement agreement finalized today, the company will refund those dollars to its customers over a three-year period, Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz and Attorney General George Jepsen announced.

Under the settlement, Aquarion will provide a credit to its customers on water bills for the total income tax refund, and the company agreed that it would not apply for a general rate increase to go into effect prior to October 2017. Consumers would begin receiving credits on their bills in January 2015. Customers will see their bills decrease by approximately 5.6 percent.


DELAWARE

March 21st, 2014

Attorney General Beau Biden Announces Delaware DOJ’s Investor Protection Unit Secures Indictment Against New Jersey Man

Attorney General Beau Biden today announced that the Delaware Department of Justice Investor Protection Unit has obtained an indictment charging Michael A. Kwasnik with theft, securities fraud, sale of unregistered securities, and acting as an unregistered broker dealer following its investigation of a scheme to defraud investors. Kwasnik, age 45, of Marlton, New Jersey, was indicted March 17, by the New Castle County Grand Jury.

“We are protecting Delaware’s investors and enforce our securities laws,” Biden said. “I urge any investor who believes they may be a victim of investment fraud to contact our Investor Hotline at (302) 577-8424.”

http://news.delaware.gov/2014/03/21/delaware-dojs-investor-protection-unit-secur...
Florida

March 18, 2014

Attorney General Pam Bondi Files Lawsuit against a Hollywood, Florida Moving and Storage Company

Today Attorney General Pam Bondi announced the filing of a lawsuit against Storage & Moving Services, Inc. d/b/a Ryder Moving and Storage and its owners Jose Pino, Jodi Socher and Joshua Socher. The lawsuit follows an investigation by the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division during which more than a hundred consumer complaints were reviewed.

According to the lawsuit, filed late last week, Ryder Moving and Storage picked up customer’s belongings but never delivered them, collected money for services never provided, and refused to pay for damage to customers property, among other things.

The filed complaint also alleges that Ryder Moving and Storage induced consumers to use its moving services by misrepresenting to them that the Hollywood, Florida company was affiliated with the national moving company, Ryder System, Inc. There is no connection between the two companies.

“These customers entrusted their clothing, furniture and family heirlooms to this company, only to have them broken and, in many cases, lost,” said Attorney General Pam Bondi. “We will continue to shut down intrastate moving companies within the state of Florida that prey on our consumers.”


March 6, 2014

Attorney General Bondi’s Office Obtains Settlement with Gatorland Toyota

Attorney General Pam Bondi’s office today announced a settlement with Gatorland Toyota, resolving allegations that former sales representatives engaged in high-pressure sales tactics and failed to clearly and conspicuously disclose the cost of products and services associated with the purchase or
lease of an automobile. Gatorland cooperated with the investigation, which found that former sales representatives failed to follow company sales guidelines.

Consumer complaints, several of which were from senior citizens, alleged that while at the dealership getting repairs done, they were subjected to high pressure sales and not informed that the vehicle’s service was complete. Consumers complained they felt pressured into buying an automobile and that the price they paid exceeded the price they agreed to pay. Consumers also complained they did not receive the appropriate trade-in value for their old vehicle.

“The purchase or lease of an automobile is a major financial obligation, and my office will enforce Florida’s laws in order to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive dealership practices,” stated Attorney General Pam Bondi. “Consumers deserve to have complete and accurate information so they can make informed decisions when purchasing a vehicle.”

http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/9075C567841A375C85257C93006AE0F4

HAWAII

March 19, 2014

Attorney General David M. Louie Files Suit Against Manufacturers And Distributors Of The Prescription Drug Plavix

The allegations against the manufacturers and distributors of Plavix include unfair and deceptive acts in the marketing, promotion, labeling, sale and distribution of Plavix to Hawaii consumers and the State of Hawaii.

Today, Attorney General David M. Louie filed a lawsuit in the First Circuit Court pursuing civil penalties and disgorgement of profits for deceptive and unfair marketing practices related to the blockbuster antiplatelet drug Plavix.

The suit alleges that Plavix’s manufacturers, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Sanofi-Aventis, began deceptively and unfairly labeling and marketing the drug in 1998 by failing to disclose that Plavix has a diminished or no effect on approximately 30 percent of the population because they metabolize the drug poorly, due to their genetic traits or because they take other drugs that affect
the body’s ability to metabolize Plavix. Plavix does not prevent heart attacks, strokes, or vascular death in such patients. Rather, Plavix puts them at considerable risk for gastrointestinal bleeding and other complications associated with Plavix. It has been reported that 38-79 percent of Pacific-Islanders and 40-50 percent of East Asians may respond poorly to Plavix due to a genetic predisposition to poorly metabolize the drug.


ILLINOIS

March 19, 2014

Attorney General Lisa Madigan Files Suit Against Chicago Area Lender For Selling Short-Term Loan Designed To Evade State Reforms

Attorney General Alleges All Credit Lenders’ Loans Trap Borrowers in Cycle of Debt

Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed suit today against a Chicago area short-term lender for designing and selling a new emerging short-term loan intended to thwart important protections in Illinois law against predatory lending and trap borrowers in an inescapable cycle of debt.

Madigan filed the lawsuit late yesterday in Cook County Circuit Court against CMK Investments Inc., which operates as All Credit Lenders, selling small consumer loans and lines of credit. All Credit Lenders is based in Elgin but operates storefronts across Illinois, Wisconsin and South Carolina.

Madigan alleges All Credit Lenders is evading the state’s 36 percent interest-rate cap by offering a short-term loan product that acts like a revolving line of credit but offers none of the protections of a credit card. The lender allegedly offers these credit card-like products with advertised interest rates of 18 percent to 24 percent. Madigan alleges the company thwarts the state interest rate cap by tacking on bogus “required account protection fees.” When the extra fees are factored into the total cost of the short-term loan, the interest rates soar to 375 percent to more than 500 percent, according to Madigan’s lawsuit.

After a borrower takes out the short-term loan, All Credit Lenders allegedly provides a payment schedule and instructs the borrower to make minimum
payments, which consumers who filed complaints with Madigan’s office believed was a timeline to pay off the full debt.

Madigan’s lawsuit alleges that none of the minimum payment goes to paying down the principal of the loan. Instead, the minimum payments only cover the extra fees, which are charged to consumers on a bi-weekly basis.

http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2014_03/20140319.html

INDIANA

March 27, 2014

Attorney General Greg Zoeller Files Lawsuit Accusing Ron-Mar Travel Of Taking Its Customers For A Ride

A Chicago-based travel company is the subject of a state lawsuit after it took over $6,690 from customers, including seniors, for a sightseeing tour that never happened.

Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller’s office filed a lawsuit in Marion County against Ronald Bryant doing business as Ron-Mar Travel for cancelling a bus tour one day before the scheduled departure date and then failing to provide refunds.

“These customers trusted that their tour and hotel rooms were booked, but instead they were misled by the company and left without refunds,” Zoeller said. “This lawsuit highlights the efforts by our Consumer Protection Division to ensure consumers are treated fairly and violators are held accountable.”

Customers received trip schedules and hotel information regarding their tour through New York, Washington, D.C. and Canada in August 2013. Zoeller said customers were surprised when the trip was cancelled, but the company promised to issue refunds.

Since three consumers were over the age of 60, the state alleged the company violated the Indiana Senior Consumers Protection Act. Under the law, violators must pay senior victims three times the amount paid. Ron-Mar Travel and its owner are also accused of violating the Deceptive Consumer Sales Act. The state seeks a permanent injunction, restitution for the consumers, civil penalties and attorneys’ fees.
March 21, 2014

**Attorney General Greg Zoeller Accuses A Terre Haute Event Company Of Running Off With $95K**

More than 1,400 people registered to participate in various out-of-state running events all organized by a local for-profit event company – except the races never happened.

According to a lawsuit filed by Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller’s office, Rapid Running Event Management, LLC., and its owner Dave Mason are accused of registering participants for at least five events before cancelling and taking off with more than $95,400 in upfront payments. During 2011 and 2012, the company reported it was hosting half marathons, 5Ks and kid’s fun run events in Wisconsin, Georgia, New York and South Carolina.

“This company misled consumers by not following through on its commitments to reschedule the races or refund customers their registration fees as promised,” Zoeller said. “My office will use all available resources to determine where the consumers’ money went and seek restitution for those harmed.”

March 19, 2014

**Attorney General Greg Zoeller Announces Local Auto Dealer To Repay Customers For Charging Excessive Doc Fees**

A Westfield-based auto dealer is set to refund some of its customers up to $129 after overcharging for document fees.

The refunds stem from a voluntary agreement Tom Roush, Inc. reached with the Office of the Indiana Attorney General. Under Indiana law, a document fee must be negotiable and may only include those costs directly incurred in the processing of a vehicle purchase.
In many cases, Tom Roush, Inc. wrongfully included a charge for vehicle etch insurance in its $279 document fee or charged the same fee to customers who didn’t purchase the insurance. Etching is a process in which a vehicle identification number is engraved onto the vehicle’s windows to deter theft. According to the agreement, all consumers who were overcharged on their document fee are to be refunded by the company within the next six months.


**KANSAS**

*March 10, 2014*

**Attorney General Derek Schmidt Announces A Minnesota Roofer Barred From Operating In Kansas**

Minnesota-based roofing company has been banned from doing business in Kansas until it cooperates with the attorney general’s investigation into its business practices, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt announced today.

In a lawsuit filed in Shawnee County District Court, Schmidt accused Pinnacle Exteriors LLC, Eagan, Minn., of violating the Kansas Consumer Protection Act while operating in Kansas. The lawsuit accuses the company of engaging in deceptive and unconscionable practices while selling roofing services door-to-door and of attempting to collect money from consumers for work never performed.

KENTUCKY

March 19, 2014

Attorney General Jack Conway Announces Roofing Contractor Pleads Guilty to Theft Charge

Attorney General Jack Conway and his Office of Consumer Protection today announced that a roofing contractor accused of failing to perform repair services for Kentucky residents, despite being paid to do so, has pleaded guilty to one count of theft by deception under $10,000, a class D felony. James Twaddle, 41, entered the plea on March 18 in Bullitt Circuit Court. His two-year prison sentence is suspended for five years on the condition that he repays $7,389.96 to the victims. He must pay the restitution in full by June 30, 2014 or he will be taken into custody.

Twaddle was previously indicted on 26 counts of theft by deception in Jefferson, Larue, Scott, and Grayson counties. Many of these cases are still pending and involve victims who were solicited following storm events.


MASSACHUSETTS

March 31, 2014

AG Coakley Sues Discount Travel Companies for Misleading Consumers with Membership Sales

Deceptive Postcards Offered “Free” Airline Tickets, Cruises; AG’s Office Obtains Court Order Prohibiting Violations, Seeks More than $278,000 in Restitution and Civil Penalties

A Pittsfield-based discount travel company and its affiliate have been ordered by a court to stop using alleged deceptive marketing to sell travel memberships, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced today. The AG’s Office sued the companies and its owners for offering memberships to book travel at deeply discounted prices, and misleading consumers into paying several thousands of dollars for promised benefits that were never provided or refunded.
“Vacation or travel scams offer free or discounted deals that often never materialize, and our office alleges these companies stole thousands of dollars from consumers through their deceptive memberships,” AG Coakley said. “While many travel opportunities are genuine, we want to educate the public as much as possible to protect themselves and be wary of deals that sound too good to be true.”

The complaint, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, alleges that Berkshire Concepts, LLC and Netrate Concepts, LLC, together with their affiliate CRW Marketing, Inc. in Yarmouthport, and owners Charles Whiteman of Dennis and Daniel Merritt of Pittsfield, used high pressure sales tactics to offer consumers free travel incentives and extreme discounts on travel, but instead charged consumers thousands of dollars for access to a “proprietary software” database that failed to provide the promised discounts.


March 24, 2014

**Attorney General Martha Coakley Announces Former Treasurer of Figure Skating Club Ordered to Pay $50,000 for Alleged Misappropriation of Charity’s Funds**

*Also Barred from Holding Any Role Involving a Charity for Ten Years*

A former treasurer of a figure skating club in Marlborough has been ordered to pay $50,000 in restitution for allegedly misappropriating club funds for his own personal use, Attorney General Martha Coakley’s Office announced today. He has also been barred from holding any role involving a charity for the next ten years.

The consent judgment, signed on Friday by Suffolk Superior Court Judge Garry Inge, resolves allegations against Barry Eavzan, of Sherborn, the former treasurer of a Marlborough-based public charity, New England Figure Skating Club (NEFSC).

“Misuse of charitable funds not only harms well intentioned organizations and their members, it undermines the public trust and good will of all charitable organizations,” said AG Coakley. “Through this judgment, this defendant will be required to pay restitution to resolve allegations that he abused his
authority by misappropriating tens of thousands of dollars of charitable funds for his own personal use.”


March 17, 2014

Attorney General Martha Coakley Announces Former Personal Banker Pleads Guilty, Sentenced to Prison for Stealing Millions of Dollars From Investors, Customers: Sentenced to Three to Five Years in State Prison

A former personal banker at Bank of America has pleaded guilty and been sentenced to three to five years in state prison for stealing more than $2.1 million from 31 investors and customers, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced today. During the scheme, the defendant conducted fraudulent transactions worth approximately $6 million and made payments back to investors and customers of nearly $3.8 million.

“This defendant’s gross violation of trust negatively impacted more than 30 victims, many of whom were her friends and family, and others who were long-time and often elderly customers,” AG Coakley. “Through today’s state prison sentence, she is being held accountable for her deceitful and illegal actions.”


MICHIGAN

March 13, 2014

Attorney General Bill Schuette Announces Conviction of Bay City Woman for Scamming Seniors Out of Millions

Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced a Midland County jury has convicted a Bay City woman on nine felony charges for her role in an extensive multi-county Ponzi scheme. Shawn Dicken, 39, of Bay City, defrauded senior citizens out of millions of dollars. The charges were filed following an Attorney General investigation.
"Con artists try new tricks every day to make a quick buck from vulnerable Michigan citizens," said Schuette. "We are cracking down on criminals who target the life savings of Michigan seniors. Be wary and ask questions of anyone promising investments that seem too good to be true."

Beginning in 2011, Dicken was employed as the lead salesperson for The Diversified Group Advisory Firm LLC, an investment company. During her tenure with Diversified, misrepresented the investments she marketed to investors, saying investments offered by Diversified were without risk, completely liquid, featuring a guaranteed rate of return of between 9.5% and 10.44%.

http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-164-46849_47203-323712--,00.html

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**MINNESOTA**

*March 13, 2014*

**Attorney General Swanson Files Lawsuit Against Charity For Misuse Of Charitable Assets**

Attorney General Lori Swanson today filed a lawsuit against Eden Prairie A Brighter Day Foundation (“ABDF”), an Eden Prairie charity to help at-risk youth, and its executive director, alleging that they misspent charitable assets for the personal benefit of the executive director.

“Minnesotans are generous with their charitable giving, and a charity should spend funds to further its charitable mission, not for personal gain,” said Attorney General Swanson.

ABDF was formed in 1995 with the nonprofit mission of offering students from at-risk backgrounds the opportunity to attend Eden Prairie public schools and to provide a “stable and supportive home environment in Eden Prairie.” Mr. Gardner Gay of Eden Prairie is its executive director and a board member. The lawsuit names both ABDF and Mr. Gay as defendants.

http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/PressRelease/03132014MisuseofCharitableAssets.asp
Minnesota Attorney General Files Suit Against “Trust Mill” That Charged Senior Citizens $2,300 For Trusts And Wills Prepared By Arizona Non-Attorney

Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson today filed a lawsuit against Heritage Partners, LLC, a Minnesota company, for operating a “trust mill” through which senior citizens and future retirees were charged $2,295 for living trusts, wills, and related documents that were supposed to be prepared by an “experienced estate planning attorney.” Instead, Heritage had the legal documents prepared by an Arizona man—who is not licensed as an attorney in Minnesota or Arizona and who was previously enjoined from setting up sham business trusts in a lawsuit brought by the federal government.

“With an aging population, many people are thinking of estate planning, and they should be on guard against “trust mills” that churn out legal documents with the ulterior motive of selling insurance products,” said Attorney General Swanson.

Through flyers and newspaper ads, Heritage invites senior citizens and people approaching retirement throughout Minnesota to “free” dinners at popular local steakhouses to learn more about estate planning, probate, and trusts. At the dinners, Heritage extolls the virtues of living trusts and exaggerates the dangers of dying without a trust. Heritage salesmen—who are insurance agents—then arrange individual meetings at prospective clients’ homes. During the home visits, the sales agents recommend that clients purchase a trust, will, and related documents from Heritage, usually for $2,295.

Heritage tells clients that the trusts, wills, and other documents will be prepared by an “experienced estate planning attorney” and states this in its contracts with consumers. Instead, Heritage uses an Arizona man—Dennis Harold Lawrence and his company Legal-Ease, L.L.C.—to prepare the trusts and wills. In 2005, the Internal Revenue Service filed a lawsuit against Lawrence for running a fraudulent trust scheme in which he obtained sales leads from insurance agents and then sold trusts to businesses to unlawfully shield them from taxes. The IRS called those trusts “shams.” Lawrence was permanently enjoined from operating that trust scheme in 2006. Even though Lawrence is not licensed as an attorney in Minnesota or Arizona, he tells Heritage customers and leads them to believe that he is an attorney. Lawrence is certified as a “legal document preparer” in Arizona, but that does not allow
him to provide legal advice. Minnesota law defines as the unauthorized practice of law the drafting of wills and trusts and giving of associated advice by non-attorneys.

http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/PressRelease/140203TrustMills.asp

MISSOURI

March 14, 2014

Attorney General Koster Files Lawsuit Against Florida Legal Services Company -- Business Falsely Claimed Affiliation With Legal Aid

Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster today announced he has filed a lawsuit against a Florida business for misleading Missouri consumers by claiming it was affiliated with legitimate Legal Aid offices. The lawsuit also alleges the business illegally took payments from at least one Missouri consumer for legal work not performed by a licensed Missouri attorney.

According to Koster, the business and its owner, Yoram Rozenberg, operated under the names "Legal Aid" and "The Legal Aid Society," and misrepresented to Missouri consumers that these companies were associated with Legal Services of Southern Missouri. Legal Services of Southern Missouri serves elderly and low-income citizens, usually without charge.

http://ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2014/Attorney_General_Koster_files_lawsuit_against_Florida_legal_services_company/

March 7, 2014

Attorney General Chris Koster Sues Two Travel Clubs

Attorney General Chris Koster announced today he has sued two travel-club companies for deceiving consumers about the benefits of memberships.

In one suit, Koster sued Anytime Vacations in Taney County Circuit Court. Koster's suit alleges that Anytime Vacations promised consumers discounts on airfare, hotel accommodations, cruises, and other travel benefits for joining its travel club and paying fees of hundreds and even thousands of dollars. After joining, however, consumers found the "discounts" were nonexistent, and that they could get better deals going through standard, free services such as Travelocity and Orbitz.
Koster said his office received 50 complaints against Anytime Vacations, alleging that consumers paid fees to the companies totaling more than $140,000. In one case, a consumer paid $6,995 to join the club. Anytime Vacations refused to cancel the consumer's contract and refund his money after he discovered it cost more to book a flight through Anytime Vacations than through routine travel websites.

In the second suit, Koster also sued Red Rock Travel, LLC, doing business in Missouri as Endless Travel Vacations, and its owners, Jack Keefe and Sherri Wolff, in St. Louis County Circuit Court for the same type of fraudulent business practices.

http://ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2014/AGKoster_sues_two_travel_clubs/

March 6, 2014

AG Koster Sues Eight Telemarketers For Violating No Call And Telemarketing Laws

Attorney General Chris Koster announced today multiple lawsuits filed across Missouri against telemarketers for violating Missouri's No Call and Telemarketing laws. In addition, Koster announced recent settlements and judgments against telemarketers, totaling several hundred thousand dollars.

Koster filed three lawsuits against companies selling home security and monitoring systems, alleging they falsely told consumers that the FBI had reported increased neighborhood burglaries. The cases were against North Carolina-based ISI Alarms, Inc., and its owner William Jayson Waller, filed in Boone County; Californian Peter B. Tolman, doing business as Leads Direct Marketing, filed in St. Charles County; and Florida-based Central Security and its owner Joseph Versacio, filed in Jackson County. Home security companies generate the second highest number of complaints to the Attorney General's No Call Unit, behind credit card debt servicing companies.

In addition, Attorney General Koster filed suit in Greene County against Ozark Liquidation, Inc., and its President Phillip Zieser for soliciting Missourians on the No Call registry for timeshare liquidation services and seminars, and in St. Charles County against Floridian Michael Major, who was doing business as "Major Data," for soliciting Missourians on the No Call registry, to buy home health care supplies.

http://ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2014/AGKoster_sues_eight_telemarketeters_NoCall/
Attorney General Koster Recovers $39,000 For Joplin Rebuilding Efforts

Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster today announced that a New Orleans-based fundraiser has agreed to pay $39,200 to the Community Foundation of the Ozarks for rebuilding efforts in Joplin, after an investigation revealed that she had taken a large portion of the money she collected for Joplin-tornado relief and spent it on herself instead.

Koster said Sidney Ray-Bazan collected more than $133,000 in donations and illegally diverted more than $39,000 – nearly 30 percent – of that money for personal use. The investigation revealed she made frequent cash withdrawals and transfers to her personal account from the charity’s banking account and spent donated funds at New Orleans restaurants, coffee shops, upscale children’s clothing boutiques, veterinary offices, grocery stores, and even on her children's babysitter.

http://ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2014/AG_Koster_recovers_for_Joplin_rebuilding_efforts/

Attorney General Koster Sues Home-Repair Businesses For Consumer Fraud

Attorney General Chris Koster today filed lawsuits against three home-remodeling companies for taking upfront payments from consumers without finishing the work as promised.

The lawsuits target:

**JD Global, LLC**, and its owner, Jeremiah Osterhoff, in Clay County, alleging Mr. Osterhoff and JD Global, LLC, sold bathroom fixtures and hot tubs to Missouri consumers, took upfront deposits, and then failed to provide the fixtures or hot tubs. The suit alleges that the defendants received more than $10,000 for goods that they did not provide, an amount that continues to grow as new consumers come forward.

**Granite World, LLC**, and its owner, William Becker, in St. Louis City, alleging Mr. Becker and Granite World, LLC took upfront payment from consumers of at least $6,000 to cut and install granite in their homes, and then failed to provide the goods and services as agreed.

**Metro St. Louis** and its owner, Benjamin Gaddy, in St. Louis County, alleging Mr. Gaddy and Metro St. Louis contracted with consumers to repair and
replace roofs damaged in hail storms, promised warranties for future repairs but then failed to return. The suit further alleges that Mr. Gaddy accepted an upfront payment from a consumer to replace the consumer's roof but failed to do the work or refund the money.

http://ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2014/AG_Koster_sues_home_repair_businesses/

March 3, 2014

**Attorney General Koster Sues Car Dealers For Failing To Provide Buyers With Title; Warns Consumers Not To Leave Lot Without Title.**

Attorney General Chris Koster today announced that his office is filing seven civil lawsuits and two criminal cases against Missouri car dealers and financers in Springfield, St. Louis, Lee’s Summit, and Ozark, for failing to provide titles for sold vehicles as required by law. Koster warned Missouri consumers purchasing new or used vehicles to make sure they receive a valid title before taking possession of their purchased vehicle.

"Under Missouri law, consumers purchasing vehicles do not legally own those vehicles until they have the titles signed over to them, in their possession," said Koster. "Even if a consumer pays for the car and drives it away, he or she does not own that car without a title. Missourians should not complete a vehicle purchase unless they will have the title when they drive that vehicle off the lot."

http://ago.mo.gov/newsreleases/2014/Attorney_General_Koster_sues_car_dealers_for_failing_to_provide_buyers_with_title/

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**MONTANA**

March 6, 2014

**Attorney General Fox Announces $5.9 Million Pharmaceutical Settlement; Launches New Rx Drug Abuse Prevention Program**

Montana Attorney General Tim Fox announced today his office has settled a lawsuit with a major pharmaceutical company and will use most of the proceeds to pay for a new prescription drug abuse prevention program,
mental health services and mental health programs in the state, and ongoing consumer protection services.

In 2008, the Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against Janssen Ortho LLC and Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (collectively, “Janssen”) over its illegal unfair and deceptive marketing of Risperdal®, an atypical antipsychotic drug used to treat certain psychological disorders in adults. Janssen actively deceived Montana physicians and consumers when it promoted Risperdal as safe and effective for a variety of conditions, when in fact, Janssen was aware of dangers associated with its drug that it hid from the public.

Last month, Janssen agreed to settle the lawsuit for $5.9 million. The settlement also restricts Janssen from making misleading claims in the promotion of its drugs in the future and present information about the benefits and risks of its product in a balanced manner in promotional materials. Janssen did not admit wrongdoing through the settlement.


NEW JERSEY

March 20, 2014

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman Announces Prominent Atlantic County Lawyer Who Practices Elder Law and Owner of In-Home Senior Care Company Charged With Preying on Elderly Clients and Stealing More Than $2 Million from 10 Victims

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman announced that a prominent Atlantic County attorney who specializes in elder law and the owner of an in-home senior care company were arrested on charges they conspired to prey on elderly clients and steal their life savings. The two women allegedly stole over $2 million from at least 10 victims. The company owner’s sister and a former employee also are charged in the investigation by the State Police and the Division of Criminal Justice.

http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases14/pr20140320b.html
March 7, 2014

**Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman Announces Two New Jersey Men Sentenced for Operating Bogus Charity Using 9/11 Truck and Never Giving Money to Victims’ Families**

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman announced that two New Jersey men were sentenced today for operating a fraudulent 9/11 charity using a pickup truck painted with the Twin Towers and the names of police and firefighters who died at Ground Zero. They collected thousands of dollars by selling T-shirts and soliciting donations at 9/11 events, but never gave any of the proceeds to the victims’ families or to 9/11 charities as promised.

[http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases14/pr20140307a.html](http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases14/pr20140307a.html)

March 4, 2014

**Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman and Division of Consumer Affairs File Suit Against Woodbridge Towing Company for Allegedly Charging Excessive Fees and Other Violations of the Predatory Towing Prevention Act**

The Office of the Attorney General and State Division of Consumer Affairs have filed suit against a Middlesex County-based towing company that allegedly charged excessive towing fees when removing vehicles from private parking lots, exceeding the fees charged by area towing companies by an average of 76%.

The State’s five-count Complaint, filed in State Superior Court in New Brunswick, alleges that Scott Flowers’ Towing, also known as Scott’s Towing, committed multiple violations of the Predatory Towing Prevention Act and Regulations and also a violation of the Consumer Fraud Act. Scott Flowers, 52, of Woodbridge is the owner/operator of the company.

Acting on a consumer complaint filed in mid-2012, Consumer Affairs launched an investigation of the business practices of Scott’s Towing at three residential parking lots in Woodbridge. Investigators found allegedly inadequate signage that did not fully disclose required information to consumers about non-consensual towing. Scott’s Towing also misrepresented the amount of its towing fees on its signage, as the company actually charged consumers higher amounts.

[http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases14/pr20140304c.html](http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases14/pr20140304c.html)
NEW MEXICO

March 20, 2014

Attorney General Gary King Defends Used Car Sales Regulation in Lawsuit; Dealers Claim AG Exceeded His Authority to Help Consumers

Attorney General Gary King today said he will vigorously defend a newly approved rule affecting used vehicles that requires detailed inspections and disclosure of damages prior to sale to the public.

The New Mexico Independent Automotive Dealers Association, the New Mexico Automotive Dealers Association, six car dealers, and one motorcycle dealer are now suing AG King, claiming he exceeded his authority by requiring that sellers must inspect used vehicles for damage and tell customers about any damage before selling them the vehicle. In three separate lawsuits, the dealers are seeking to prevent implementation of this consumer protection regulation.

“This regulation protects the buying public from unscrupulous dealers who would sell them a wrecked vehicle without telling them about the damage, why is that so unreasonable?” states AG King. “The regulation was adopted because of ongoing problems with the practices of some licensed car dealers. We have evidence that some dealers have failed to provide disclosures when the dealer knew of the prior wreck damage; attempted to shift the burden to the customer to conduct an inspection; or failed to conduct a basic inspection that would disclose whether prior wreck damage had occurred. The Unfair Practices Act prohibits deceptive and unfair practices in the marketplace and a dealer’s willful ignorance of evidence of a car’s condition or prior damage to avoid disclosing this information to a buyer clearly violates state law.”

http://www.nmag.gov/News
NEW YORK

March 27th 2014

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Agreements Barring National Tanning Salon Chain Hollywood Tans And Manhattan Franchise From Making Health Claims

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office has reached agreements with HT Franchising Management LLC, doing business as Hollywood Tans, and Hollywood Tans NYC, a Manhattan-based franchise of the national chain, requiring them to stop making health-related representations to promote tanning services. The parent corporation has six other franchises in New York State and more than 100 franchises across the country. The agreements prohibits all Hollywood Tans franchises in New York from making health claims, from offering “unlimited” tanning packages, and from targeting high school students.

Concerned with the cancer risks associated with indoor tanning, particularly for young people, the Attorney General launched an investigation last year into suspected misleading advertising in the indoor tanning salon industry. As part of that investigation, the office found that Hollywood Tans NYC, through its website, blog and social media outlets, made numerous misleading and false representations about the safety and health benefits associated with UV tanning. These included health benefits associated with increased vitamin D production, such as: “Tanning booths can be therapeutic. It can help your body create vitamin D to prevent cancer,” and, “More Sun Means Less Cancer: New Study.”


March 24th 2014

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Crackdown On Deceptive Auto Dealer Advertising

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced settlements with six Capital District auto dealers found to have advertising practices that were deceptive and misleading. The six dealerships have pledged to reform their advertising practices; meanwhile, the attorney general has announced his
intention to file suit against a seventh dealer on related charges. The dealerships widely promoted sale and lease prices that were illusory because they reflected discounts or rebates that were not available to most consumers, and thus, were not the actual sale or lease price.

“A car is one of the most expensive and significant purchases a consumer can make. When shopping for a car, New Yorkers deserve to be dealt with honestly and fairly—not misled by deals that are too good to be true,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “These settlements ensure that consumers won’t be lured into dealerships by unrealistic prices that have no basis in reality. Those who violate the law will be held accountable by my office.”


March 21th 2014

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Prison Sentences For Fake Nursing School Operators In $1m Larceny Scheme

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the jail sentences of Salvatrice Gaston, Robinson Akenami and Joceyln “JoJo” Allrich for their role in a massive scheme to defraud prospective nursing students. The defendants were each sentenced to 2 1/3 to 7 years in prison by Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Joel Goldberg today, after a jury found them guilty on all counts last month, including grand larceny charges. The jury found that, over a period of about five years, the defendants and their co-conspirators operated a network of fake nursing schools in Kings and Nassau counties and engaged in an elaborate scheme to defraud their victims, including by advertising the fake programs in media outlets that cater to New York’s Caribbean communities.

More than 100 students collectively paid more than $1 million between April 2006 and February 2011 to enroll in the programs that the defendants claimed would qualify them for careers in nursing. However, the certifications and transcripts the schools provided were fraudulent.

“These defendants were convicted of orchestrating a fraudulent get-rich-quick scheme and targeting people who hoped to pursue a brighter future for themselves and their families. They lined their own pockets with their victims’ hard-earned money, and now they are going to prison,” Attorney General
Schneiderman said. “Their convictions and sentences send a clear message to those looking to profit by conning New Yorkers: You will not get away with it.”


March 20th 2014

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Health Insurer That Wrongly Denied Mental Health Benefits To Thousands Of New Yorkers

After an investigation uncovered widespread violations of mental health parity laws, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Schenectady-based MVP Health Care, requiring the health insurer to reform its behavioral health claims review process, cover residential treatment and charge the lower primary care co-payment for outpatient visits to most mental health and substance abuse treatment providers. The settlement, the second against a health insurer so far this year enforcing the parity laws, also requires the health insurance plan -- which has more than 500,000 members in the Albany region, Central New York and the Hudson Valley -- to submit previously denied mental health and substance abuse treatment claims for independent review, which could result in more than $6 million being returned to its members.


March 4, 2014

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Arraignment Of Wall Street Advisor For Stealing $4.3m From Investors

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the arraignment of Wing K. Lim, also known as Kent Lam, for operating a multi-million-dollar securities fraud scheme spanning more than a year. In a 31-count indictment, a New York County grand jury indicted Lim on felony charges of money laundering, grand larceny and falsification of business records, as well as securities fraud violations under the Martin Act. If convicted, Lim faces up to 25 years in prison.
Lim’s scheme brought in more than $4.3 million from five victims between August 2012 and December 2013 alone. The investigation into Lim’s activities is ongoing and includes evidence he may have stolen money from dozens of other victims.

“This investment advisor duped unsuspecting clients by providing them with fake statements while helping himself to their hard-earned money,” Attorney General Schneiderman said. “My office will hold accountable criminals who perpetrate investment fraud schemes such as this.”

To conceal his Ponzi-style scheme, Lim regularly issued false statements to investors that showed a current balance in their alleged stock accounts. In reality, the statements were entirely false, since investors’ money had been transferred to other accounts belonging to Lim and his family members almost immediately after their initial deposits.


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

*March 21, 2014*

**Attorney General Roy Cooper’s Office Urges Consumers To Reclaim Missing Packages From Medrano Express**

Items shipped from North Carolina to Central America found in Miami warehouse

Raleigh: North Carolina residents who shipped packages through Medrano Express that never arrived may be able to reclaim their missing items, Attorney General Roy Cooper said Friday.

Medrano Express specialized in shipping items to Columbia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico but is no longer operating. A total of 57 North Carolina consumers have complained to the Attorney General that items they had shipped via Medrano Express never arrived at their destinations, and Cooper’s Office began investigating Medrano Express in 2013.

The Federal Maritime Commission and Miami Dade Consumer Protection recently found more than 200 boxes collected by Medrano Express for shipment abandoned in a warehouse in Miami. The Commission cannot
determine the names of the people who had shipped those items but did recover the invoice numbers. At least some of the packages appear to have been shipped from Medrano Express locations in Charlotte or Raleigh and could belong to North Carolina residents.

“People shipped packages that never got delivered as promised, but now we may be able to return some of these items to their rightful owners,” Cooper said. “We’re urging consumers to contact us right away if one of these packages could be theirs.”


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NORTH DAKOTA

March 18, 2014

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem Announces Unlicensed Contractors Banned From Doing Business In ND

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem today issued Cease and Desist Orders against seven unlicensed contractors for violations of North Dakota’s consumer fraud laws, banning them from doing any business in North Dakota.

• Michael Knudson of Minot, ND, doing business as MLK Construction,
• Ed McDonald, d/b/a Asphalt Seal Coating and E. McDonald Seal Coating with addresses in Texas, Idaho and ND,
• Thomas J. Zimmerle of Mandan, ND, d/b/a From Old To New Construction, LLP.
• Jaymason W. Bottin of Bigfork, MT, d/b/a J2 Roofing & General Contracting,
• Ryan Dalbec of Big Lake, MN, d/b/a Dalbec Property Management, Inc.,
• Thomas Dohleman of Dilworth, MN, d/b/a Tom’s Painting, and
• Kenny & Jessica Huffstutler of Dickinson, ND, d/b/a BCS Fence & Services, LLC.,

The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division initiated investigations after receiving complaints from consumers regarding the contractors’ failure to start, or to properly complete, projects for which consumers had made advance payments. None of the seven contractors had the required licenses,
and none cooperated with investigators from the Consumer Protection Division.
“Never put down any money until you have made sure the contractor is properly licensed. Hiring an unlicensed contractor may prove to be very expensive as it is extremely difficult to recover money once they have fled the state,” said Stenehjem.

**OHIO**

*March 28, 2014*

**Charges Filed Against TEEN USA for Violations of Agreement**

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine announced today that civil charges have been filed against TEEN USA and Darien E. Smith of Cleveland for violating the terms of an Assurance of Discontinuance — a legal agreement the organization made with the Attorney General’s Office in November of 2013. According to the agreement, Smith agreed to dissolve TEEN USA, to not hold any position in or participate in soliciting donations for any charitable organization in Ohio, and to pay $10,000 to the Attorney General’s Office. Through TEEN USA, teens went door-to-door selling candy, but the money raised was not used for charitable purposes.

The complaint filed alleges Smith violated the agreement by failing to dissolve Teen USA and for failing to make payments due to the Attorney General’s Office. According to the allegations, Smith and TEEN USA are still actively soliciting in the Cleveland area.

“Repeated violations committed by phony charitable organizations such as TEEN USA will not be taken lightly,” said Attorney General DeWine. “My office will do everything in its power to make sure justice is served in this case.”

http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/March-2014/ChargesFiledAgainstTEENUSAforViolations-of-A
March 24, 2014

**Attorney General DeWine Seeks Restitution from Miami Valley Contractor**

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a Springfield home improvement contractor accused of failing to deliver promised services to consumers.

The lawsuit charges David D. Rose, who did business as All-Star Powerhouse Disciples Landscaping and Tree Service, with violations of Ohio’s consumer laws.

“Consumers gave this contractor thousands of dollars for work that was not performed as promised,” Attorney General DeWine said. “While we attempt to resolve these types of complaints out of court, when months go by with no resolution for consumers, we must seek justice through the court system.”


March 18, 2014

**Attorney General DeWine Announces Agreement with Dynamite TKD Kids Foundation to Stop Charitable Solicitations**

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine announced today an agreement with Dynamite TKD Kids Foundation and Abbie M. Taylor of Warren to cease charitable solicitations in Ohio and to pay $5,000 to the Attorney General’s Office. The organization provided scholarships for students to attend Tae Kwan Do classes at Taylor’s husband’s Tae Kwan Do school.

“Taking advantage of charitable donors’ good faith for personal gain is unacceptable,” Attorney General DeWine said. “It is our ongoing mission to make sure these organizations are shut down.”

Dynamite TKD Kids Foundation was founded in 2009 “to operate a Tae Kwan Do school for underprivileged children within the state of Ohio and surrounding states.”

The Attorney General’s Charitable Law Section began an investigation in August of 2012 after receiving a complaint alleging that Taylor and her husband were using the organization’s debit card to pay for vacations,
groceries, and personal expenses. The investigation revealed that the foundation rewarded very few scholarships in over three years of operation and all of the students attended Taylor’s husband’s Tae Kwan Do school. Taylor also failed to manage the foundations’ accounts by not keeping appropriate financial records.


March 4, 2014

Attorney General DeWine Announces Seven Indicted in Scam; New Scam Prevention Efforts Announced For Ohio Seniors

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced indictments in connection with an organized scam that targeted elderly victims in Ohio, along with new scam prevention efforts to protect Ohio seniors during National Consumer Protection Week.

A Ross County Grand Jury indicted Charles Kuhn Jr. and six others for ripping off seniors in a scam that promised a big return on money given up front.

Kuhn and his associates impersonated lawyers, judges, and even Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, while stealing about $400,000 since 2011.

“It’s unbelievable the lies these scammers told, including impersonating me as part of their elaborate fraudulent scheme,” said Attorney General DeWine during a news conference this afternoon. “To prey on the elderly is despicable. This is exactly why I created our Consumer Economic Crimes Unit – to investigate the worst scammers and hold them accountable. Just like in this case, we want to help local law enforcement anywhere our help is needed.”

http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Media/News-Releases/March-2014/Attorney-General-DeWine-Announces-Seven-Indicted-i
OREGON

March 20, 2014

Attorney General Rosenblum Announces Evergreen Air And Space Museum Audit Findings

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum today announced that, following a public audit and investigation of the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum by the state Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Charitable Activities Section, she will be asking the IRS to look into whether the museum’s operations are consistent with its tax exempt status under federal law. The department also identified significant concerns regarding the governance of the museum, and made several recommendations for improvement, some of which the museum has already agreed to adopt. A report detailing DOJ’s findings was released today and is available on the DOJ website.

DOJ’s investigation began after a whistleblower reported concerns that the museum had transferred more than $700,000 to a for-profit Evergreen International Aviation company. Although the money was repaid with interest shortly after DOJ’s inquiry began, the department had already identified additional areas of concern and the investigation continued. One of the most significant concerns relates to the operation of a popular waterpark under the auspices of the nonprofit museum. Also problematic are the significant interrelationships between the museum and Evergreen companies controlled by Delford Smith, the primary benefactor of the museum. DOJ found that a number of museum board members were affiliated with Evergreen companies, and concluded that at least some of the board members had likely violated their duties to the museum by failing to pursue the best interests of the museum. The department also identified a handful of questionable financial transactions between the museum and various Evergreen enterprises. Evergreen’s for-profit enterprises are now engaged in bankruptcy proceedings.

“Charities are subsidized by taxpayers and depend on public trust,” Rosenblum said. "That trust is shaken when nonprofits stray from their charitable purposes, and when charitable assets are used to benefit affiliated for-profit companies.”

http://www.doj.state.or.us/releases/Pages/2014/rel032014.aspx
March 12, 2014

Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum Announces Investment Advisor Sentenced In Aggravated Theft Case Targeting Retirees

Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum announced today that Randy Gray of Albany, Oregon has been sentenced in Linn County Circuit Court to 36 months in prison after a jury convicted him of 16 counts of aggravated theft by deception. Gray was also ordered to pay nearly $3 million in restitution to his 16 victims. Gray will not be eligible for early release.

Gray was a licensed investment advisor who persuaded victims to withdraw savings from their Individual Retirement Accounts and invest in a speculative real estate scheme to build houses in Albany. In fact, however, no houses were built. Instead, nearly all of the money went to pay off the debts of a co-defendant, real estate developer Derek Dunmyer. Gray withheld information from his victims, including the actual intended use of the money and the dire financial status of Dunmyer’s company, Absolute General Contracting. Nearly all of Gray’s victims were retired or nearing retirement. Several lost their entire life savings.

http://www.doj.state.or.us/releases/Pages/2014/rel031214.aspx

TEXAS

March 21, 2014

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott Announces Purported Veterans’ Charity Charged with Violating Texas Law, Deceiving Texas Donors

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott charged Veterans Support Organization (VSO) and four of its principals with unlawfully soliciting charitable contributions and misrepresenting to Texas donors that the donations would benefit local veterans in need.

Court documents filed by the State Wednesday explained that the defendants claimed to offer assistance to local needy veterans through VSO’s work, housing, and grant programs. However, the State’s investigation found that VSO’s so-called “work program” was merely structured panhandling that the defendants used to solicit funds for VSO. While publicly claiming to hire veterans, the State charged that the defendants actually hired both veterans
and non-veterans to stand in front of various storefronts for up to 12 hours a day to raise at least $225 a day in donations for VSO. In seeking permission to place its solicitors in front of a store, the defendants misrepresented to store management that the solicitors were veterans whose main purpose is to raise awareness about veterans’ programs and provide resource information to store customers – not to solicit donations from them.

https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/oagnews/release.php?id=4678

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UTAH

March 21st, 2014

Attorney General Sean Reyes Announces Elderly Woman Scammed, More Utah Victims Suspected

Richard A. Loveday of Alpine, Utah, was booked into the Utah County Jail this week for allegedly scamming an 88-year old St. George widow out of $100,000 from April to September of last year. Attorney General Sean D. Reyes and Assistant Attorney General Jacob S. Taylor filed Charging Information documents and an Affidavit of Probable Cause in the Fifth Judicial District Court of Washington County against Loveday. He was later transported to the Washington County Jail where he is currently being held on $100,000 cash only bail. As detailed in the Affidavit of Probable Cause, Loveday is being charged with Securities Fraud, Theft, and Communications Fraud, all second degree felonies.

Francine A. Giani, Executive Director, Utah Department of Commerce commented on the allegations stating: “We applaud the AG’s office for their swift action against this swindler who preyed upon an 88-year old widow’s trust and stole $100K for his own selfish financial gain.”

http://attorneygeneral.utah.gov/2014/03/21/elderly-woman-scammed-more-utah-victims-suspected/
VERMONT

March 31, 2014

Attorney General William H. Sorrell Settles Consumer Protection Claims Against Irving Energy For $425,000

Irving Energy, one of the largest propane retailers in New England, has agreed to pay $165,938 to Vermont consumers, $160,000 to LIHEAP -- the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program -- and $100,000 in civil penalties to the State of Vermont, to settle claims that the company violated Vermont consumer protection laws. The Attorney General found that for many Vermonters, Irving delayed removing propane storage tanks and issuing refund checks after consumers terminated propane service. “When Vermont propane customers terminate service, a supplier must promptly remove its tank and reimburse any monies due the customer,” said Attorney General Sorrell. “A failure to meet these obligations can be expensive. We encourage Vermont consumers to let us know if their legal rights have not been satisfied.”

Current Vermont law generally requires companies to remove propane tanks within 20 days of a customer’s request to terminate service, and to issue refund checks within 20 days of disconnection. Statutory penalties apply for delays beyond the allowable timeframes.

Irving identified 197 consumers who, between January 1, 2010, and October 10, 2012, experienced delays in removing a tank or receiving a refund. Within the next 4-6 weeks, these consumers will receive an envelope from the Attorney General’s Office containing an explanatory letter and payment (with an average payment of $500 for tank delays, and almost $1,000 for refund delays). Before the settlement, Irving had a practice of issuing refunds to consumers as a “credit” on the terminated account, rather than mailing a check.

Attorney General Herring Announces Settlement On Illegal Automobile Title Loans

Attorney General Mark R. Herring announced today that the Commonwealth has reached a settlement with Liberty Pawnshop & Gold, LLC, a Fredericksburg-based pawnbroker, for violations of the Virginia statutes applicable to motor vehicle title lenders, the Virginia statutes applicable to consumer finance companies, and the Virginia Consumer Protection Act (VCPA.) Between August 8, 2011 and February 23, 2013, Liberty made no fewer than 54 motor vehicle title loans without a valid license from the State Corporation Commission, committing violations of the VCPA and motor vehicle title loan statutes, as well as charging interest in a way that broke the law.

"When Liberty's actions were brought to our attention, the Office of Attorney General moved quickly to end these illegal loans," said Attorney General Herring. "I am pleased we were able to reach a fair and reasonable agreement with Liberty that provides refunds of all interest paid and other relief to the Virginians who received the illegal loans. Liberty’s cooperation throughout our investigation should be noted and we will continue to monitor the situation to ensure compliance with terms of the settlement."

http://www.oag.state.va.us/Media%20and%20News%20Releases/News_Releases/Herring/031114_Illegal_Title_Loans.html
WASHINGTON  
March 28, 2014  
Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s Legal Action Against Quality Loan Service Results In Payment To Homeowners, Delays Foreclosures And Stops Deceptive Practices  

Legal action taken by the Washington State Attorney General (AGO) against foreclosure trustee Quality Loan Service Corp. of Washington (QLS) has stopped unfair and deceptive business practices. QLS is one of the largest foreclosure trustees in Washington state.  

It is estimated more than 450 homeowners will receive approximately $500 each.  

In addition, a moratorium was placed on all QLS foreclosures on February 27 and will extend through April 3, 2014. The AGO estimates hundreds of homeowners will benefit from this moratorium.  

Foreclosure trustees are legally required to act in good faith as neutral parties between borrowers and lenders while conducting foreclosure proceedings.  

“Foreclosure trustees have a duty to treat borrowers fairly under the law,” said Attorney General Bob Ferguson. “I will make sure that all parties involved in the foreclosure process, including trustees like QLS, play by the rules.”  

http://www.atg.wa.gov/pressrelease.aspx?id=32004#.UzXTeIX3_D4  

WISCONSIN  
March 20, 2014  
The Wisconsin Department of Justice Obtains Judgment Against Florida Resident for Fraudulent Marketing of Attic Insulation Product to Wisconsin Homeowners  

Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen has announced that his office has obtained a judgment ordering the seller of attic insulation to Wisconsin homeowners to pay a total of $215,560.85 for violations of state consumer protection laws. The lawsuit, filed in Fond du Lac County Circuit Court in 2013, alleged that Mark Stitt, currently a resident of Panama City, Florida, through his business ES Technology, used fraudulent representations to sell an attic
insulation product called ProGuard AB to Wisconsin homeowners, a number of whom were elderly.

According to the state’s complaint, Stitt and ES Technology marketed its product by sending postcards to Wisconsin homeowners inviting them to attend sales presentations at various locations. Stitt misrepresented to consumers that installing the product in their attic could cut their utility bills by up to one-third, and that ProGuard AB was used by NASA in the Space Shuttle. In reality, ProGuard AB is a thin, foil insulation product less than one-eighth of an inch thick, with an R-value of less than one.

MULTISTATE CASES AND SETTLEMENTS

March 25, 2014

Attorneys General and Class E-book Settlements

https://ebooksagsettlements.com/Home.aspx

March 25, 2014

Four Loko Settlement With State Attorneys General

States joining the settlement include Arizona, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts Mississippi, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington, along with the City Attorney of San Francisco.

http://www.ag.ny.gov/pdfs/Phusioin%20Projects,%20LLC%20AOD.PDF

March 4, 2014

Dram Memory Chips Antitrust Settlements

http://dramclaims.com/

March 2014

Genzyme Corp. to Pay $22.28 Million to Resolve False Claims Allegations Related to “Slurry” Used in Patients

Genzyme Corp. has agreed to pay $22.28 million to resolve allegations that it marketed, and caused false claims to be submitted to federal and state health care programs for use of, a “slurry” version of its Seprafilm adhesion barrier, the Justice Department announced today. Seprafilm is a thin film intended to reduce adhesions after surgery by forming a bio-resorbable barrier between abdominal tissue and organs. Genzyme is a biotechnology corporation based in Cambridge, Mass., and was acquired by Sanofi-Aventis SA in April 2011.
“There will be consequences when medical device companies alter products to increase sales and profits without regard for risks to patient safety,” said Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department’s Civil Division Stuart F. Delery. “Federal health care participants should receive only devices that are medically reasonable and necessary.”

The government alleges that Genzyme sales representatives taught doctors and other staff to cut the Seprafilm sheets into small pieces, add saline and allow the pieces to dissolve until the desired consistency was reached. This mixture was referred to as “slurry.” Genzyme sales representatives traded recipes for slurry, and trained each other in how to create it. The slurry was used in laparoscopic or “key hole” surgeries by inserting a catheter filled with the mixture into the body and squirting it into the abdominal cavity. Seprafilm is FDA-approved for use in open abdominal surgery but not for minimally invasive surgeries, such as laparoscopic or key hole surgery. Allegedly, as a result of this conduct, Genzyme knowingly caused hospitals and other purchasers of Seprafilm to submit false and fraudulent claims to federal health care programs for uses of Seprafilm that were not reimbursable.

MEDICAID FRAUD CASES AND SETTLEMENTS

ARKAÑAS

March 06, 2014

Attorney General Dustin McDaniel Announces a Craighead County Woman Guilty Of Medicaid Fraud

A Craighead County woman arrested as part of an investigation by the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit has been convicted of felony Medicaid Fraud, Attorney General Dustin McDaniel announced today.

Amanda Fielder, 28, of Bono pleaded guilty in Pulaski County Circuit Court on Wednesday to one count of Medicaid Fraud, a Class C felony. She was sentenced by Circuit Judge Leon Johnson to five years of probation. She was ordered to pay a $6,648 fine and $2,216.16 in restitution.


DELAWARE

March 6th, 2014

Attorney General Beau Biden Announces The Arrests Of Two Healthcare Workers On Abuse Charges

Today, Attorney General Beau Biden announced that separate investigations by his Medicaid Fraud Control Unit have led to the arrest of two healthcare workers on patient abuse and other charges.

“We have a special obligation to protect our most vulnerable citizens who often can’t speak out for themselves,” Biden said. “Residents of nursing homes, group homes and patients in healthcare facilities are especially vulnerable and often isolated,” Biden said. “Those who harm them, while being entrusted with their care and safety, need to be held accountable for their crimes.”
FLORIDA

March 27, 2014

Attorney General Bondi’s Office Announces the Arrest of a Tallahassee Woman for More Than $25,000 in Medicaid Fraud

Attorney General Pam Bondi announced today that following an investigation by her Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, Tallahassee resident Melinda Warren turned herself in to the Leon County Jail, for more than $25,000 in Medicaid fraud. The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit began its investigation into Warren’s billing practices after receiving a referral from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/63C35AFA91FE36EA85257CA8004A8179

GEORGIA

March 21, 2014

Attorney General Sam Olens Announces DeKalb Physician Sentenced to Prison for Medicaid Fraud

On March 21, 2014, DeKalb Superior Court Judge C. J. Becker sentenced Tyrone Cecil Malloy, M.D., to four years in prison and six years probation on two counts of Medicaid Fraud, O.C.G.A. § 49-4-146.1(b)(2). Malloy was found guilty by a jury on both counts of the indictment on March 10, 2014, following a two-week trial.

Malloy was the owner of Old National Gynecology, a medical practice devoted to the performance of first-trimester elective abortions. Federal funds may not be used to pay for abortions and services associated with abortions, except in circumstances under which the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest or circumstances under which continuation of the pregnancy would endanger the life of the mother. The Georgia Medicaid program is supported by state and federal tax dollars. For several years, Malloy engaged in a scheme to defraud Georgia Medicaid by billing for office visits associated with abortions
and for ultrasound procedures which were never performed. In total, he fraudulently billed Georgia Medicaid for over $386,000.


March 3, 2014

Attorney General Sam Olens Announces Clayton County Woman Sentenced to Ten Years in Prison for Medicaid Fraud

On Friday, February 28, 2014, a Clayton County jury convicted Catherine Pinkard, of Clayton County, Ga., of one felony count of Medicaid Fraud (O.G.G.A. § 49-4-146.1(b)) and one felony count of Theft by Taking (O.C.G.A. § 16-8-2) for fraudulently billing Georgia Medicaid. Clayton County Chief Superior Court Judge Deborah C. Benefield sentenced Pinkard to ten years in prison.

“Ms. Pinkard thought she could cheat Georgia Medicaid without getting caught,” said Attorney General Sam Olens. “She was sorely mistaken, and her actions have earned her a substantial prison sentence. My office, working together with the Department of Community Health, will continue to aggressively pursue Medicaid fraud.”


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ILLINOIS

March 11, 2014

Madigan: Teva Pharmaceutical To Pay $27.6 Million To Settle False Claims To Federal And State Health Care Programs

Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced today that Teva Pharmaceuticals USA Inc. and subsidiary IVAX LLC will pay the United States and the state of Illinois more than $27.6 million to resolve false billing allegations, under terms of a settlement agreement.
The agreement settles claims that Teva and IVAX violated the federal False Claims Act by making payments to Dr. Michael J. Reinstein, a Chicago physician, in return for Reinstein prescribing an anti-psychotic medication to thousands of Medicare and Medicaid patients at dozens of area nursing homes and hospitals.

“Teva Pharmaceuticals pushed its drug onto thousands of vulnerable patients without regard to their health and at the expense of the state Medicaid program and Illinois taxpayers,” Madigan said.

Within 10 days, Teva will pay the federal government nearly $15.5 million and the state of Illinois more than $12.1 million, plus interest from September 2013. The settlement was reached jointly by Madigan’s office, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Northern District of Illinois on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. Teva Pharmaceuticals USA, located in North Wales, Pa., and IVAX LLC, a Florida company, are both subsidiaries of Teva Pharmaceuticals Industries Ltd., which is headquartered in Israel.

“Pharmaceutical companies must not be allowed to improperly influence physicians’ decisions in prescribing medication for their patients,” said Zachary T. Fardon, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. “Instead, those decisions must be made solely on the basis of the patient’s best medical interests.”

http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2014_03/20140311.html

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**KENTUCKY**

*March, 24, 2014*

**Attorney General Conway Announces Indictment & Arrest of Former Director of Caretaker Service**

Attorney General Jack Conway and his Medicaid Fraud and Abuse Control Unit today announced that a former director of a Kentucky caretaker service has been indicted on charges involving forgery and fraud.

On March 4, a Fayette County grand jury charged Cheron L. Miller, 35, with four counts of second-degree forgery and one count of defrauding the
Kentucky Medicaid program, which are class D felonies. Miller was arrested today by an investigator with Attorney General Conway’s Medicaid Fraud and Abuse Control Unit and the Lexington Police Dept.

Miller is the former executive director of Support Source, Inc., a company that provided caretaking services to disabled individuals. While employed at Support Source, Miller allegedly obtained a false diploma and falsified her credentials on numerous waiver services forms. Those forms were then submitted to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.


MARYLAND

March 6, 2014

AG Gansler: Montgomery Co. Woman Pleads Guilty to Medicaid Fraud

Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler announced today that Deanne Grant, 47, of Montgomery Village, pleaded guilty to one count of Felony Medicaid Fraud for submitting multiple false claims over a period of more than two-and-a-half years. Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Marcus Z. Shar sentenced Grant to 364 days probation, 80 hours of community service and ordered restitution of $3,385.14 to the Maryland Medicaid program, plus $2,500 to be paid to the Office of the Attorney General. The payments are in addition to a civil settlement reached last summer.

http://www.oag.state.md.us/Press/2014/030614.html

MASSACHUSETTS

March 31, 2014

Former Personal Care Attendant Pleads Guilty to Defrauding $63,000 From State Medicaid System

A former Personal Care Attendant (PCA) from Agawam has pleaded guilty to stealing close to $63,000 from the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth) for services that were not provided, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced today.
James Lynch, 45, pleaded guilty today in Hampshire Superior Court to charges of Medicaid False Claims (1 count) and Larceny over $250 (1 count).

“This man conducted a scheme that charged the state Medicaid program for hours in care and services that was never provided,” AG Coakley said. “Our office is committed to holding accountable those who take advantage of MassHealth, which many people rely on for critical health care coverage.”

After the pleas were entered, Superior Court Judge C. Jeffrey Kinder sentenced Lynch to five years of probation. As a condition to his probation, Judge Kinder ordered that Lynch not be involved in the PCA program in any capacity, and pay more than $63,000 in restitution.


March 20, 2014

Worcester Woman Charged for Alleged Scheme with Son to Steal $96,000 From MassHealth

Personal Care Attendant Services Billed Under Names of Children Out of State, Including Incarcerated Son

A Worcester woman and her son have been charged in multiple schemes using family names to falsely bill the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth) for more than $96,000 of Personal Care Attendant (PCA) services that were never provided, allegedly using the proceeds for their own benefit, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced today.

Beverly Cousin, 66, was indicted today by a Worcester County Grand Jury on the charges of Medicaid False Claims (5 counts) and Larceny over $250 by False Pretenses (5 counts). Her son, Rashad Cousin, 31, was also indicted on the charges of Medicaid False Claims (3 counts) and Larceny over $250 by False Pretenses (3 counts).

“We allege this woman, with the help of her son, conducted an extensive scheme to steal thousands of dollars from our Medicaid program instead of getting the care she needs,” AG Coakley said. “Fraud committed against the MassHealth is simply unacceptable as we continue to aggressively prosecute those who take advantage of its true purpose to serve our most vulnerable citizens.”

March 10, 2014

**AG Coakley Sues Wellesley Dental Provider for Allegedly Overbilling MassHealth More Than $1 Million**

A Wellesley-based dental provider has been sued for allegedly overbilling the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth) for more than $1.1 million of house calls to patients in multiple nursing homes, Attorney General Martha Coakley announced today.

The complaint against HealthDrive Corporation, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, alleges that since July 2010, the dental provider overbilled for nursing home visits by charging a separate “house call” fee for multiple patients treated at the same facility on the same day. While providers can charge for treating multiple patients on the same day, MassHealth limits the separate “house call” charge to one per facility per day, regardless of the number of patients who receive dental care.


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**TEXAS**

March 18, 2014

**Garland Doctor Ordered to Prison for Health Care Fraud in Case Investigated by State and Federal Officials**

Dr. Nicolas Alfonso Padron, 54, of Garland, Texas, was sentenced this morning by U.S. District Judge David C. Godbey to 57 months in federal prison and ordered to pay $9,484,111 in restitution to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Dr. Padron pleaded guilty in September 2013 to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud stemming from his role as medical director of a physician house-call company, A Medical House Calls (A Medical). Dr. Padron has been in custody since his arrest in June 2012. The announcement was made today by U.S. Attorney Sarah R. Saldaña of the Northern District of Texas.

https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/oagnews/release.php?id=4670
UTAH

March 4th, 2014

Attorney General Sean Reyes Announces Medicaid Fraud Unit Recovers $87,000 For Victims Of A Scheme By A Former Provider Of Services For The Disabled

Over the past five years the Utah Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) has recovered over $50 million dollars from providers who have fraudulently billed Medicaid. According to Robert Steed, director of MFCU, this extreme financial scheme is manifested in all areas of Medicaid and is not only taken from the general tax payer, but at times from individuals with sincere needs.


VERMONT

March 26, 2014

Attorney General William H. Sorrell Announces Brandon Man Convicted For Falsely Obtaining Monies From The Vermont Medicaid Program

Richard Weldon of Brandon, Vermont, was convicted on March 25, 2014, in Vermont Superior Court, Windsor Criminal Division, of five misdemeanor counts of False Pretenses. The convictions stemmed from Mr. Weldon's submission of falsified timesheets in order to obtain payment for services that were not provided while he was an employer-of-record for a home-based health care worker under the Developmental Disability Services program, a Vermont Medicaid program.

Mr. Weldon was sentenced to two-and-a-half to five years in jail, all suspended, and placed on two years of probation subject to standard conditions and special conditions, including 60 hours of community service and a prohibition that he not work as a home-based care provider under a Medicaid waiver program. Mr. Weldon was also ordered to pay $9,620 in restitution to Vermont Medicaid.

March 26, 2014

Attorney General William H. Sorrell Announces Four Individuals Charged With Medicaid Fraud Related To In Home/Community-Based And Personal Care Services That Were Not Provided

Four individuals enrolled as either caregivers or employers-of-record in Vermont’s Medicaid-funded Home and Community Based (HCBS) or Personal Care programs were separately arraigned yesterday in Vermont Superior Court for Windsor County on felony counts of Medicaid Fraud for allegedly billing for care to children and vulnerable adults that was not provided. Collectively, these individuals are alleged to have submitted thirty-four fraudulent timesheets for almost two thousand hours of care that was not rendered, resulting in overpayments by the Vermont Medicaid program of approximately $18,000.

Theresa Ambrose, age 55, of Springfield, Vermont, was arraigned on one felony count of Medicaid Fraud. According to court documents, Ms. Ambrose was employed as the caregiver for a vulnerable adult enrolled in the Choices for Care Medicaid program. She is alleged to have submitted seven timesheets purporting to have provided 512 hours of care on days when she purported to have worked 24 hours per day, factoring in time spent at another job, including five days in a row. The timesheets resulted in at least $4,600 in overpayments by the Vermont Medicaid program.


WASHINGTON

March 03, 2014

AGO Files Medicaid Fraud Charges In Thurston County: Woman Billed Medicaid In Washington More Than $87,000 While Living In Nevada

The Attorney General’s Office on Friday filed charges in Thurston County Superior Court against a woman the state alleges billed Washington Medicaid for more than $87,000 in healthcare provider services while living in Nevada.

Prosecutors with the Attorney General’s Office Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) charged Peggy Ruth Kerr with one count of First Degree Theft and one count of Medicaid False Statement.
The state alleges that from 2007 to 2013 Kerr failed to disclose and intentionally concealed information from the Medicaid program that would have affected Kerr’s ability to continue to be a paid healthcare provider in Clark County, Wash. She is alleged to have stolen a total of $87,462.

http://www.atg.wa.gov/pressrelease.aspx?id=31947#.UzXQzYX3_D4
CONSUMER ADVOCACY

ARIZONA

March 7, 2014

Attorney General Tom Horne To Arizonans: "Protect Your Personal Information"

As National Consumer Protection Week Wraps Up, AGO Reminds Consumers to Arm Themselves with Information

National Consumer Protection Week comes to a close, Attorney General Tom Horne is reminding Arizonans that financial fraud has many different forms (data breaches, identity theft, and telemarketing scams) and providing tips to help consumers protect themselves.

“Scammers often target the most vulnerable people in society, a sobering fact made clear by some of the statistics coming out of our office. We answer more than 165 calls and emails per day on the consumer hotline, and assisted nearly 1,000 consumers through our senior task force number last year,” said Attorney General Tom Horne. “Our Office will continue to investigate and aggressively prosecute those who try to defraud and steal from innocent bystanders, but it is important that people educate themselves so they are protected from this kind of abuse.”


March 7, 2014

Attorney General Tom Horne Announces Contest to Raise Awareness of Elder Abuse

In an effort to make young people aware of the tragedy of elder abuse, Attorney General Tom Horne and the Arizona Elder Abuse Coalition have partnered in the 2014 “Why Should I Care About Elder Abuse?” Junior High School Arts Competition.
“This competition increases awareness of elder abuse to the younger generations,” said Horne. “While my office continues to prosecute perpetrators of elder abuse, only through awareness can we stop abuse before it begins.”


**COLORADO**

*March 4, 2014*

**Attorney General John Suthers Unveils Top Consumer Complaints For 2013**

In recognition of National Consumer Protection Week, the Attorney General’s Office unveiled its list of the top ten consumer complaints of 2013. Consumers filed 8,654 complaints with Office’s Consumer Protection Section.

“The numbers tell us that every year Colorado consumers grow increasingly savvy of scams and fraud and the steps to take to report and stop abuse,” said Attorney General John Suthers. “One of the most important missions of the Attorney General’s Office is protecting Colorado consumers and we do this through consistent outreach, warnings about prevalent scams, and efforts to inform consumers on how to protect themselves.”


**CONNECTICUT**

*March 7, 2014*

**Consumer Counsel And Attorney General Jepsen Warn Electric Customers About Providing Account Data Over The Phone**

Elin Swanson Katz, Connecticut Consumer Counsel, together with George Jepsen, Connecticut Attorney General, are urging consumers to use caution when they receive a sales call from an electric supplier asking for account data over the phone. They are specifically warning consumers not to give their Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) or United Illuminating (UI) account numbers, or any other confidential information, to electric suppliers over the telephone or to a door-to-door salesperson unless they have made the decision to switch suppliers. Both agencies have received reports of
Consumers being switched to an electric supplier without their permission or knowledge. 

March 4, 2014

Attorney General Jepsen Offers Tips for Consumers During National Consumer Protection Week

This week – March 2 through March 8 – marks National Consumer Protection Week: a nationwide campaign to encourage individuals to take full advantage of their consumer rights and to be better-informed. Today, Attorney General George Jepsen offered Connecticut consumer several tips to help protect their personal and financial information.

“National Consumer Protection Week is an ideal time for all of us to take a moment and evaluate the steps we’re each taking to help protect our personal information and avoid falling victim to scams,” said Attorney General Jepsen. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and some simple precautions as well as exercising good judgment can make all the difference when going about a day-to-day routine.”


DELAWARE

March 13th, 2014

Attorney General Biden Announces Free Housing Workshops With Mortgage Lenders on March 22

Delaware homeowners who are behind on mortgage payments, face foreclosure, or have questions about their mortgage can meet face-to-face with mortgage lenders at free housing workshops next week in Dover and Newark, Attorney General Beau Biden announced today.

Homeowners can attend the events on March 22 to discuss their loans with their banks, connect with a non-profit housing counselor, get information from the Attorney General’s Office and Delaware State Housing Authority about government programs, and learn how to prevent foreclosure-related frauds and scams. http://news.delaware.gov/2014/03/13/biden-announces-free-housing-workshops-with-mortgage-lenders-on-march-22/
Attorney General Pam Bondi Reminds Consumers to File Refund Claims by April 12

Attorney General Pam Bondi reminds eligible consumers who were allegedly billed for unauthorized charges by DADATA, Inc. that they have until April 12th to file their claims. The claims administrator recently mailed more than 12,000 reminder postcards to consumers, as only approximately 25 percent of eligible consumers have filed claims. Refunds may total approximately $2.3 million depending on the number of claims made. Individual refund checks are estimated to average $134, and they may be as high as $700.

DADATA, Inc. is a Pinellas County-based company that placed charges on telephone bills for voicemail, e-fax, or other services on behalf of numerous companies. In December, Attorney General Bondi announced a settlement with DADATA, Inc. and others resolving allegations that they charged customers’ telephone bills for these services without the customers’ consent. The agreement requires the companies to refund all charges billed since July 1, 2009 to eligible Florida customers who did not consent to the service for which they were charged.

http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/F2BFC7E659F3920B85257CA8005E0C1E

Attorney General Pam Bondi Offers Tips and Shares Accomplishments for National Consumer Protection Week

This week is National Consumer Protection Week, and Attorney General Pam Bondi is dedicated to protecting Florida’s consumers. Floridians work hard to earn a living and businesses work hard to remain profitable. Deceptive and unfair business practices can be costly to both consumers and legitimate businesses. Attorney General Bondi’s Division of Consumer Protection works tirelessly to enforce Florida’s Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act, which is intended to protect individual consumers and legitimate businesses from various types of illegal conduct in trade or commerce. Through its enforcement efforts, the Attorney General’s Office has obtained $207 million
in judgments and settlements on behalf of Florida consumers since January 2011. In addition, the Attorney General’s Office played a lead role in achieving the second largest civil settlement ever obtained by state attorneys general—the National Mortgage Settlement. Combined, Attorney General Bondi’s Office has achieved $9.85 billion in consumer protection judgments and settlements.


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**ILLINOIS**

*March 6, 2014*

**Attorney General Lisa Madigan Alerts Illinois Consumers to Risk of Costly Refund Anticipation Products**

In recognition of National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today alerted Illinois consumers to the costly risk of tax refund anticipation products as they work to file their tax returns by April 15.

Tax preparers offer refund anticipation loans, checks and temporary debit cards as an option for consumers to receive an instant cash deposit based on their anticipated tax refund instead of waiting for their official IRS refund. But in reality these options are in essence short-term, high-cost loans that only saddle consumers with high interest rates and fees that are deducted from their tax refund. Particularly egregious is the fact that consumers who obtain refund anticipation checks and debit cards do not actually receive their returns faster because the business must still wait for the IRS to deposit the refund into the temporary account.

http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2014_03/20140306.html
IOWA

March 5, 2014

Attorney General Tom Miller Warns Of IRS Scam: Caller Claims Taxpayer Will Be Arrested If They Don’t Pay Immediately

Attorney General Tom Miller is warning Iowans about callers who impersonate themselves as IRS agents and threaten victims with arrest if they don’t pay immediately for what the callers claim are back taxes.

“Iowans who have reported this scam to our Consumer Protection Division tell us the callers are very aggressive and use high-pressure scare tactics,” Miller said. “Callers are threatening to have victims arrested, and we’ve also heard of callers threatening other false penalties, like revoking driver’s licenses.” The division is currently receiving several reports daily, Miller added.


March 3, 2014

Attorney General Tom Miller Calls For New Debt Collection Rules To Help "Even Playing Field For Consumers"

Attorney General Tom Miller joined attorneys general in 30 states plus the District of Columbia in urging the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to adopt strong new debt collection rules that will better protect consumers and military service members.

"We're providing input to the CFPB as it considers implementing new rules to ensure that debt buyers and debt collectors are following the law and that consumers are better protected," Miller said. The CFPB has sought input from regulators, the collection industry, and consumers about the debt collection system and avenues for rulemaking.

In comments Miller and his colleagues submitted Friday to the CFPB, attorneys general urged the consumer watchdog agency to "better enable debt collectors to abide by the law, create a more even playing field for consumers, provide greater consumer protections, and assist consumers in better understanding their rights."
KANSAS

March 31, 2014

AG Schmidt: 700 Roofers Registered, Check The Directory Before Having Work Done

As the spring storm season approaches, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt today reminded Kansans to make sure roofers are complying with a new Kansas law requiring them to register with the Attorney General’s Office.

“As of today, 700 roofers have registered with our office and may lawfully provide roofing services in Kansas,” Schmidt said. “As storm season begins across our state, it’s important for homeowners to make sure their roofer has registered before signing any contract, paying any money or having any work done.”


March 21, 2014

AG Schmidt Praises Legislature For Adding Cellphones To No-Call Act

Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt today issued the following statement on passage by the House of Representatives of Senate Bill 308, which extends the Kansas No-Call Act to protect consumers’ cellphones from unwanted telemarketing calls:

“The Legislature deserves credit for its pro-consumer action in passing this legislation. When the Kansas No-Call Act first became law more than a decade ago, cellphones were far less widely used. Today, many Kansans are abandoning landlines entirely and using only wireless numbers for telephone service. By updating and strengthening the Kansas No-Call Act, the Legislature is ensuring that Kansans’ privacy is protected and consumers can enjoy the same freedom from unwanted telemarketing calls on their cellphones that they now can expect on their landlines.”
LOUISIANA

March 7, 2014

Attorney General's Workshop Puts Focus On Consumers

Dozens of consumer protection advocates and government agency representatives today tuned in to learn how to combat fraud. The Louisiana Attorney General’s 10th Annual Consumer Protection Workshop, celebrating National Consumer Protection Week, furnished participants in Baton Rouge with the latest information on protecting privacy, managing finances and avoiding scams.

“We’re all on the front line when it comes to protecting consumers, and keeping everyone in the loop is very important for a positive outcome,” Attorney General Buddy Caldwell said. “These types of workshops are valuable, as the representatives here also exchange ideas and share information.”

March 5, 2014

Businesses Can Benefit From National Consumer Protection Week

The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section wants Louisiana business owners to know that National Consumer Protection Week — March 2-8 — is not just for traditional consumers.

“Con artists prey on business owners too,” said Sanettria “Sam” Pleasant, Director of the Attorney General’s Public Protection Division. “Business entities are included in our education campaign because we want business owners to be aware of resources designed to help them avoid scams and fraud.”

National Consumer Protection Week is a national awareness campaign geared toward empowering and protecting consumers and businesses. Each year, the
Attorney General’s Office joins government and nonprofit organizations across the country in recognition of the campaign.

https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx?articleID=822&catID=5

MARYLAND

March 5, 2014

AG Gansler Warns Consumers About Property Deed Services Offers

As part of National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler warned consumers to decline any solicitation charging a large sum of money to provide copies of their property deeds. These records can typically be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office for a much smaller fee than what private deed retrieval services charge.

"These are basic, yet sophisticated sales pitches that attempt to take consumers' hard-earned money," said Attorney General Gansler. "Homeowners should avoid paying a private company for a copy of public records they might already have and that can be easily obtained if they don't."

In the mail solicitations, which have been reported across the country, companies using official-sounding names advise consumers to pay up to $100 - or more in some cases - to obtain copies of their property deeds.

http://www.oag.state.md.us/Press/2014/030514.html

MASSACHUSETTS

March 04, 2014

AG Coakley Urges Adoption of Greater Consumer Protections Against Unfair Debt Collection Practices

Letter to Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Calls for New Debt Collection Rules to Help Even Playing Field for Consumers, Members of the Military

In a push for the adoption of tough new debt collection rules that will better protect consumers and members of the military, Attorney General Martha Coakley joined a coalition of states in urging the Consumer Financial
Protection Bureau (CFPB) to help improve the overall performance of the debt collection market.

AG Coakley joined 30 states plus the District of Columbia in a letter sent to the CFPB, asking CFPB to “create a more even playing field for consumers, provide greater consumer protections, and assist consumers in better understanding their rights.” The agency sought input from regulators, the collection industry, and consumers about the debt collection system and avenues for potential rulemaking.

“Our office continues to see consumers harmed by deceptive and abusive debt collection practices, and we are seeking federal rulemaking that supports our state regulations and helps ensure that all consumers are treated fairly,” AG Coakley said. “We urge the CFPB to create comprehensive and balanced new rules that better enable debt buyers and debt collectors to follow the law and put more robust consumer protections in place.”


MICHIGAN

March 12, 2014

Attorney General Schuette: Modest Improvement But Fundraisers Still Take Too Much From Charities

Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced the publication of Michigan's second annual Professional Fundraising Charitable Solicitation Report, which helps consumers know how to be smart donors. This year's report found that charities received only thirty-eight cents for every dollar raised by professional fundraisers licensed in Michigan, up three percent from last year.

"Michigan citizens who give to their favorite causes deserve to know how much of their donation actually makes it to their intended charity and with our new report they can give wisely," said Schuette. "While I'm pleased we've seen a three percent improvement since last year, it's not enough. I will continue promoting this transparency in hopes consumers and charities will be able to do more to help their intended causes."

Consumers may access the report directly here, or by visiting the "Charities" section of the Attorney General's website at
NEBRASKA

March 27, 2014

AG Bruning Issues Consumer Alert: Fake IRS Call Scam Targeting Nebraska

Attorney General Jon Bruning today issued a consumer alert for Nebraskans to be wary of a phone scam reported by the IRS as the largest of its kind. Victims have reported threats of driver’s license suspension, arrest and deportation.

“My office has received 20 reports of this scam since January,” said Bruning. “Calls may appear legitimate because the scammer has spoofed an IRS number for caller IDs. And, the caller often knows the last four digits of the victim’s Social Security number.”

The scammers impersonate Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agents and demand payment for taxes owed. The scammer may also contact the victim via bogus follow-up emails.

NEVADA

March 7, 2014

Attorney General Masto Warns Consumers Against IRS Telephone Scam

Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto warns tax payers about an ongoing phone scam using the Internal Revenue Service’s (IRS) name to gain sensitive financial information from consumers.

“Nevadans should be alert to these fraudulent calls,” said Masto. “Take caution when receiving phone calls that appear to be fraudulent and to report the concern as soon as possible.”
March 6, 2014

**Attorney General Masto Promotes Awareness for “Home Owners’ Bill of Rights”**

Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto urges consumers to become familiar with increased protections. Senate Bill 321 became effective October 1, 2013.

“The ‘Homeowners’ Bill of Rights’ provides homeowners with greater protections before and during the foreclosure process,” said Masto. “It is important that homeowners stay informed about their options regarding foreclosures.

March 5, 2014

**Nevada Attorney General Urges Consumers to Take Control of Their Privacy**

Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto urges consumers to be proactive in safeguarding their personal information in all transactions as they go about their daily business.

“Some consumers may not realize that the personal information provided on social networking sites can make them vulnerable to strangers and potential criminals,” said Masto. “Furthermore, sensitive information in the wrong hands can have harmful results for the consumer. Consumers should carefully select their privacy settings on social networking sites in order to control who can view their personal information.
March 5, 2014

Attorney General Masto Reports Debt Collection is One of Nevada’s Biggest Consumer Protection Issues

Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto reports that Nevada consumers are the second most likely in the country to file complaints about debt collection with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) according to a U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) Education Fund report released last Thursday.

“One of the biggest consumer protection issues Nevadan’s face today is debt collection and targeting from collection departments,” said Masto. “As always, we will continue to hold those accountable for taking advantage of consumers.”


March 3, 2014

Nevada Attorney General Encourages Consumers To Learn More About New Mortgage Rules

Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto and the Bureau of Consumer Protection encourage consumers to learn more about the new mortgage lending rules that took effect January 1, 2014.

“It is important for consumers to stay informed and up to date about mortgage lending practices,” said Masto.

The Federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) regulations provide new rights and greater protections for homeowners and consumers who are seeking a home mortgage. These rules improve mortgage lending requirements and help people better understand the lending process.

The new rules include increased responsibility for lenders in approving Qualified Mortgages, or loans for which borrowers who qualify are presumed to be able to repay; new crediting and reporting requirements for payments and monthly statements; new early notice requirements for interest rate changes; and new restrictions for mortgage servicers in initiating foreclosures.


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NEW HAMPSHIRE

March 17, 2014

Possibly Fraudulent Phone Calls Related to the Use of Surgical Mesh

Attorney General Joseph Foster announced today that his office received information regarding what appears to be a series of phone calls being made to New Hampshire citizens purporting to inform people of their eligibility for payments under a class-action settlement related to the use of surgical mesh. The targets of the calls appear primarily to be women, some, but not all of whom, may have had surgery involving surgical mesh. The callers allegedly represent that they are calling on behalf of a federal agency or on behalf of a law firm. These representations appear to be false.


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NEW JERSEY

March 20, 2014

New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Warns About “IRS Call” Scam

The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today warned consumers about a scam in which New Jerseyans received phone calls from con artists claiming to be representatives of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

The con artists threaten the consumers that they will face incarceration or other penalties unless they make an immediate payment for back taxes. The Division of Consumer Affairs has received approximately 12 complaints from New Jersey consumers who received such calls in recent weeks.
The IRS also warns about this scam in its list of the “Dirty Dozen” Tax Scams for 2014, noting that it has seen an increase in such phone scams across the country.

http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases14/pr20140320a.html

NEW MEXICO

March 13, 2014

Attorney General Gary King Warns About New Mortgage Scam in NM

Attorney General Gary King is warning New Mexico homeowners about a mortgage scam that attempts to trick the victim into paying for what the scammers call a “reinstatement” of their home loan or for a trial loan modification plan.

The fraudsters advertise by mailings and phone calls, including a mailing titled "Payment Reduction Notification." The homeowner is promised a lower home loan payment. The scammers tell the consumer to send money orders or cashier's checks to an address in Long Beach, California and to make the payments to "US Recovery Program" or "Legal Department." The scammers give homeowners documents that have a Making Home Affordable logo and appear to set out a payment plan to reinstate the loan or modify the loan terms.

http://www.nmag.gov/News

NEW YORK

March 26th 2014

A.G. Schneiderman Issues Consumer Alert Warning New Yorkers Of Tax-Season Scams

With this year’s tax deadline less than one month away, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today offered New Yorkers tips to avoid falling victim to tax-prep scams. The Internal Revenue Service has already received thousands of reports this year of various scams. The Attorney General also asked taxpayers
to notify his office of any suspected fraudulent schemes designed to steal personal and financial information from consumers.

“Tax season is stressful enough. New Yorkers trying to file their taxes on time should not also have to worry about being ripped off by tax scammers,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Taking advantage of vulnerable people in this tough economy is shameful. That’s why my office is helping to provide New Yorkers with the information they need to make sure they don’t get ripped off by scam artists.”


NORTH CAROLINA

March 4, 2014

Attorney General Roy Cooper Warns Don’t Let Scammers Play On Your Emotions, AG Cooper Warns

AG urges consumers to learn about sweetheart, grandparent scams during National Consumer Protection Week

Watch out for scammers and con artists who play on your emotions to try to win your trust and steal your money, Attorney General Roy Cooper warned consumers today.

“Con artists will use your search for romance or your desire to help a loved one to rip you off,” Cooper said. “Don’t let scammers manipulate your feelings to worm their way into your heart and your wallet.”

Cooper urged consumers to educate themselves about frauds and rip offs during National Consumer Protection Week, March 2-8, 2014. Consumers should be especially wary of two popular types of scams, sweetheart scams and grandparent scams, Cooper said.

NORTH DAKOTA

March 3, 2014

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem Warns Old Telephone Scam Uses New Trick

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem warned North Dakotans that an old telephone scam has resurfaced in North Dakota, but with a new twist; the scam artists are spoofing the real customer service number of a North Dakota bank.

The scam is a variation of the old “security alert” phishing calls, in which a recorded message, claiming to be from a financial institution, warns that the account (or bank card) has been locked and the account holder must provide confidential information before the account (or card) will be unlocked. Stenehjem’s office issued warnings about this type of phishing scam in 2012 and again in 2013.

“The best way to respond to these calls is to simply hang up,” said Stenehjem. “Never give out any personal information in response to a call claiming your account has been locked,” he continued.


OHIO

March 12, 2014

Attorney General DeWine Announces New Help for Number One Ohio Consumer Complaint: Motor Vehicles

Attorney General Mike DeWine announced today a new tool to help consumers buy used cars. The Attorney General’s Used Car Buyer Checklist covers purchasing, maintenance, and contract issues.

“Any time a consumer invests in a car, it is a big financial decision,” Attorney General DeWine said. “This Checklist will equip consumers with information we hope will save them time, money, and hassle.”

March 11, 2014

Attorney General DeWine, Reps. Dovilla and Blair Push for Harsher Penalties for Identity Thieves Who Target Active-Duty Military Families

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and State Representatives Mike Dovilla (R-Berea) and Terry Blair (R-Washington Township) today pushed for harsher penalties against scammers who commit identity fraud and other theft crimes against active-duty service members and their spouses.

House Bill 471 amends the current identity fraud, theft, and securing writings by deception statutes to increase penalties for felons whose targets are active-duty service members or their spouses. Currently, the felony enhancement is reserved only for victims who are over the age of 65 or disabled.

“Military service members protect our country day in and day out, and it’s unforgivable that anyone would commit such crimes against these brave men and women and their spouses,” said Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine. “Identity fraud against the military is increasing in our state. This newly introduced bill would give Ohio one of the toughest laws in the country with respect to punishing felons who commit identity fraud against our active-duty service members.”


OKLAHOMA

March 12, 2014

AG Pruitt Statement on Claremore Veterans Abuse Case

Attorney General Scott Pruitt Wednesday issued a statement on the district court’s decision in the case against former physician assistant Kenneth Adams, who is accused in the deaths of two veterans at Claremore’s veterans center.

On Tuesday, a preliminary hearing for Adams was held in Rogers County District Court where prosecutors presented their case in the deaths of Peter “Jay” Minter, 85, and Louis Arterberry, 86. The judge ordered Adams to face
trial on all four felony counts and set his arraignment for 9:30 a.m. April 10 before Judge Steidley in Rogers County District Court.

“We’re encouraged by the latest court decision to send this case to trial and give the state an opportunity to hold this defendant accountable for his actions in the deaths of Mr. Minter and Mr. Arterberry,” Attorney General Pruitt said. “The families of these dedicated veterans deserve justice and we look forward to presenting the case to a jury.”

http://www.oag.state.ok.us/oagweb.nsf/0/FC0AD94217928A886257C99007860C6!OpenDocument

March 12, 2014

AG Pruitt Warns Oklahomans of Misleading Solicitations by National Animal Welfare Organizations

Attorney General Scott Pruitt on Wednesday issued a warning to Oklahomans regarding solicitations and advertisements by national animal welfare organizations. Attorney General Pruitt is concerned such groups are giving Oklahomans the impression their donations are assisting Oklahoma animal shelters, when in fact the donations of Oklahomans may go toward unrelated efforts like lobbying in other states or at the federal level.

Attorney General Pruitt said he is looking into concerns over fundraising advertisements in the wake of the May 2013 tornadoes. Those advertisements gave Oklahomans the impression their donations would go to help animals displaced by the storm as well as support local shelters impacted by the storm. The concern is the donations of Oklahomans made to national animal welfare organizations in the wake of the tornadoes may have gone instead to lobbying activities. The Attorney General’s Office has consulted with central Oklahoma animal shelters most impacted by the 2013 tornadoes who indicated their organizations have not received assistance from the national groups.

“Oklahomans are caring people and gave generously to assist our friends and neighbors devastated by the deadly May 2013 tornadoes,” Attorney General Pruitt said. “In the wake of the storm, there are concerns some national animal welfare organizations may have misled Oklahomans by giving the impression their donations would help displaced animals and animal shelters in Oklahoma. Our review has found the Oklahoma shelters have not received
assistance from national groups. Our concern is that Oklahomans’ donations may instead have gone toward lobbying activities in other states or at the national level. We all want the best for displaced animals and appreciate the work animal welfare organizations do to provide care for dogs, cats and other animals. But it’s important to ensure Oklahomans are not being deceived, and that the donations they made to help Oklahoma-based animal shelters are doing just that.”

http://www.oag.state.ok.us/oagweb.nsf/0/D80A317C9BBDA32286257C99005F002C!OpenDocument

PENNSYLVANIA

March 28, 2014

Attorney General Kane Cautions Consumers To Be On The Lookout For Income Tax Scams

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane today advised consumers to be wary of potential scams surrounding the upcoming deadline for filing taxes.

Specifically, the "Internal Revenue Service" phone scam involves a caller claiming to be from the IRS and that taxes are owed. The caller threatens arrest or deportation, unless the victim settles the debt using a pre-paid debit card or wire transfer.


March 27, 2014

Attorney General Kane Warns Of Popular Travel Scams As Summer Vacation Season Approaches

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane today cautioned consumers planning summer vacations to be wary of popular travel scams.

"Scammers are always adjusting their tactics and looking for new ways to lure victims," Attorney General Kane said. "Whether you’ve been vacationing at the same destination for 20 years or are planning an adventure in a foreign city, educate yourself so that you don’t become the next victim."
One of the newer scams targeting travelers is often called the "Pizza Scam" because pizza delivery menus, conveniently slipped under a hotel room door, often contain a telephone number that is not connected to a pizza parlor, but rather to identity thieves. The Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection recommends that any time consumers order take-out from a hotel room they check with the concierge or front desk for a list of suggestions.

Consumer protection agents also cautioned consumers about an increase in "where is my bag" scams, which involve a cab driver, who insists on unloading luggage at your hotel or the airport. The cabbie then tells the passenger that he is in a rush, slams the trunk and speeds away. It is only later that travelers notice one of their bags is missing. Be aware of your surroundings at all times and take note of the driver's name, cab number and cab company when you get in.


March 21, 2014

Consumer Advisory: Pennsylvanians In York And Adams County Cautioned About Illegal Hearing Aid Fitter

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane and Health Secretary Michael Wolf today cautioned residents in Adams and York Counties that Timothy John Rooney Jr., a former hearing aid fitter who is no longer permitted to do business in Pennsylvania, may be continuing to operate.

Rooney has operated under the name American Hearing Aid Centers Inc. and American Hearing Centers Inc. He has had offices located at 380 Lincoln Highway East and 2230 Oxford Road in New Oxford, Adams County, and in Grandview Plaza, Suite E, 1446 Baltimore St., Hanover, York County.

Rooney's registration with the Department of Health, was suspended on Aug. 21, 2013 for a period of five years, and was later revoked. This was based on Rooney's past unsatisfactory conduct while engaging in the business of fitting and selling hearing aids. Since that time, the Office of Attorney General has received reports that Rooney has, despite his revocation, been posing as a registered hearing aid fitter.

RHODE ISLAND

March 25, 2014

**AG Kilmartin and Senator Jabour Legislation to Extend Statute of Limitations on Elder Financial Exploitation to be Heard Before Senate Judiciary Committee**

Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin's legislation extending the statute of limitations for elder exploitation from three years to ten years is scheduled to be heard before the Senate Judiciary Committee today, Tuesday, March 25, 2014.

The legislation, sponsored by Senator Paul V. Jabour (D - District 5, Providence), recognizes the complexities of financial crimes and the challenges of protecting with a population that may have physical and mental limitations by extending the statute of limitations of elder exploitation allowing law enforcement the necessary time to build a proper case for charging and subsequent prosecution, bringing it in line with other financial crimes.

[http://www.ri.gov/press/view/21561](http://www.ri.gov/press/view/21561)

March 20, 2014

**Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin and Director of Health Warn Consumers of Possible Medical Phone Scam**

Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin and Director of Health, Michael Fine, MD, are warning the public of a possible scam in which individuals, primarily women, are being called by a "medical compensation company" or "the state department of health" asking about recent surgeries and other personal information.

The targets of the calls appear primarily to be women, some, but not all of whom, may have had a recent surgery. Based on the information provided to the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) by individuals who have been contacted, the caller will often hang up when asked why they are calling, and the caller refuses to provide an official company name or contact information, two red flags that lend belief that this is a scam and not a legitimate phone call.
The phone calls that have been reported to HEALTH and the Attorney General's Office appear to originate from a 201 area code in New Jersey, although the phone number is not in service when the phone number is dialed. This is another red flag it is a scam and may not be based in the United States at all.

http://www.ri.gov/press/view/21519

March 4, 2014

AG Kilmartin Legislation Would Give Victims of Data Breaches One Free Year of Credit Monitoring

Citing the increasing rate in which consumers information is compromised due to data breaches at companies, Attorney General Kilmartin has authored legislation that would, among other things, require that entities who disclose a breach to a victim who is a Rhode Island resident must provide one year of credit monitoring at no cost to the victim.

The legislation - 2014 H7519 "An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Identity Theft Protection" - introduced by Representative Brian P. Kennedy (D-District 38. Hopkinton, Westerly), is scheduled to be heard before the House Judiciary Committee this afternoon.

"As we have seen recently in the data breaches of Target and Neiman Marcus, data breaches are occurring more frequently, are more sophisticated and are affecting hundreds of millions of consumers. It is imperative that our data breach laws provide better protection for consumers and provide the necessary tools to prosecute those who take advantage of stolen consumer information," said Attorney General in a letter to the Committee.

http://www.ri.gov/press/view/21415
SOUTH DAKOTA

March 27, 2014

Attorney General Marty Jackley Issues Warning on Wire Transfer Scam Targeting South Dakota Company

Attorney General Marty Jackley is warning businesses to be cautious of a scam which targeted a South Dakota company with a substantial fraudulent wire transfer attempt. The scam began with an email exchange which appeared to be within the company’s own network and ended with an attempted fraudulent wire transfer. In this particular incident, the company’s corporate controller received an email from what was believed to be the company’s chief financial officer. The email contained an email chain, which showed a conversation authorizing a wire transfer from the chief executive officer to the chief financial officer. The email instructed the corporate controller to wire a significant dollar amount to the chief financial officer. Internal company procedures prevented the wire transfer, but the use of fraudulent domain name slightly different from the legitimate domain name was used.

"The most common money wiring scams typically involve one individual or company wiring money to an unknown scammer. This case was unusual because it appeared that the email exchange was amongst those from the same company," said Jackley. “Individuals can no longer assume that emails are completely safe and extra precautions should be used with significant financial transactions.


March 19, 2014

Attorney General Marty Jackley Issues Warning on Robocallers Target Consumers in Credit Card Scam

Attorney General Marty Jackley is warning South Dakota consumers to be cautious of robocalls targeting consumers with a scam that implies that their Mastercard has been locked or suspended. The automated phone message prompts the consumer to press a number one to unlock the card. Once the number one is pressed the consumer is prompted to enter their card number.
The number that is showing up on the caller ID is 832-328-3283, which is an insurance business in Houston, Texas. The owner of that business has been inundated with calls from South Dakota consumers and is not associated with the caller.


March 14, 2014

Attorney General Marty Jackley Comments on Legislation Strengthening Consumer Protection Laws and Protecting Businesses Signed into Law

Attorney General Marty Jackley extends his appreciation to the South Dakota Legislature and Governor Dennis Daugaard for signing SB 23 into law that will strengthen consumer protection laws and protect businesses.

“This legislation was aimed to better protect our consumers and legitimate businesses from annoying and costly scam artists by addressing new technologies and strengthening enforcement provisions for deceptive acts,” said Attorney General Jackley.


March 13, 2014

Attorney General Jackley Warns South Dakota Businesses of Credit Card Scam

Attorney General Marty Jackley today warned business owners to be cautious of a telemarketing scam that begins with the potential customer seeking to purchase various retail items with a credit card. Several lumber suppliers have been subject to this scam.

The scam begins with a telephone call to the business for a direct retail purchase with a credit card, typically a large quantity or number of items. Once the sale is completed the scammer will call back to cancel the sale, but will request that the refund be placed on a different credit card than what was used at the time of the original sale.

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“Businesses need to proceed with caution when answering unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages even from potential customers,” said Jackley. “Businesses are being encouraged to obtain additional credit card information from the customer. If the customer is reluctant to provide contact information or requests that a refund be placed on a different credit card then that may signal a concern.”


VERMONT

March 26, 2014

Attorney General William H. Sorrell Issues Consumer Advisory Re: Debit Card Text Message Scam

The Vermont Attorney General’s Office is warning consumers about another text message scam affecting Vermonter’s: Do not respond to calls or texts about a debit card problem. The Attorney General’s Consumer Assistance Program has received a number of reports of fraudulent texts (some claiming to be “Merchants Bank” or different bank) indicating that the consumer’s debit card number has been locked and that the consumer should call 802-373-6589 or similar number for assistance. These are fraudulent text messages and are not affiliated with any bank.

This is a scam to try to obtain confidential personal information. Consumers should not respond to the text messages or call the numbers provided in the messages. Consumers who have already responded should contact the financial institution that issued the debit card immediately to protect their accounts.

VIRGINIA

March 8, 2014

Attorney General Herring Notes Passage Of Important Public Safety And Consumer Protection Legislation

Attorney General Mark R. Herring today marked the adjournment of the 2014 regular session of the General Assembly by highlighting a number of public safety and consumer protection bills that were introduced on behalf of the Attorney General or which the Office of the Attorney General helped craft and pass. In addition to these bills, which were sponsored and passed in a bipartisan fashion, the Attorney General’s office was extremely active throughout the legislative process, working as requested with legislators in both houses to provide legal advice on dozens more bills.

"I offer my sincere thanks to the bipartisan group of legislators who carried these important bills and the staff and attorneys in my office who did great work on these and other bills throughout the session," said Attorney General Herring. "I know from my time in the Senate that public safety and consumer protection are bipartisan concerns and I hope this session is the start of a productive working relationship between my office and the legislature. In the years ahead, I look forward to working with my friends in the Capitol to continue to advance our priorities and promote a safer Commonwealth."


March 6, 2014

Attorney General Herring Warns Homeowners To Be Cautious Of Letters That Urge Them To Buy Copies Of Their Home Deed

As part of National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Mark R. Herring is warning Virginia property owners to be cautious of companies offering to sell them a copy of the deed to their home.

Homeowners throughout the state have been receiving official looking letters, often titled as a "Deed Processing Notice," that offer to sell homeowners a copy of their deed for $83. The letters include language that may result in the homeowner believing he or she must comply by a specific date.
"Even though these letters look like official notices, they are actually solicitations and should be treated as such," Attorney General Herring said. "Most home and property owners will receive a copy of their deed at the time of purchase, but if a deed is lost or needs to be replaced, county clerks can often do so at a much lower price. Consumers should read these letters carefully and know they are under no obligation to take action by any artificial deadline."


WASHINGTON

March 27, 2014

Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s Bills To Protect Veterans And Military Families Signed Into Law: New Laws Will Help Protect Veterans Against Pension Poacher Scams And Increase Economic Protections For Military Servicemembers

Two bills requested by Attorney General Bob Ferguson to protect veterans and military families were signed into law today by Governor Jay Inslee. The bills received broad bipartisan support. The new laws will take effect June 12, 2014.

Economic protection for Washington’s military personnel and veterans

This new law was jointly requested by Ferguson and Governor Jay Inslee. It will increase economic protections for Washington’s military personnel and veterans.


“I am committed to standing up for those who serve our country,” said Ferguson. “This law increases state protections for Washington’s military personnel and their families.”

“The men and women in our military work so hard to serve us,” said Inslee. “There are enough worries that come with deployment and active duty that we want to help make sure their financial affairs are not one of them.”

http://www.atg.wa.gov/pressrelease.aspx?id=32001#.UzXTHIX3_D4
March 24, 2014

Wash. Officials Warn Of Consumer Rip-Offs By Mudslide Charity Scams

As donors consider contributing to relief efforts for the Snohomish County mudslide tragedy, Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Secretary of State Kim Wyman are urging consumers to be on guard against scam artists who try to take advantage of the situation.

The officials joined forces with the Better Business Bureau in reminding consumers that rip-off artists follow news coverage of natural disasters like this one and swoop in under the guise of helping victims, but end up victimizing the well-intended donors.

“All of us in Washington and around the country have deep sympathy for the victims and their loved ones and friends at this tragic time,” Ferguson said.

http://www.atg.wa.gov/pressrelease.aspx?id=31987#.UzXSmYX3_D4

March 07, 2014

Legislature Passes Bill Requested By Governor And Attorney General To Protect Washington’s Military Personnel And Veterans

A bill jointly requested by Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Governor Jay Inslee to increase economic protections for Washington’s military personnel and veterans passed the Legislature today with strong bipartisan support. The Governor looks forward to signing it into law as soon as it hits his desk.


“As someone who comes from a family of veterans, I am committed to standing up for those who serve our country,” said Ferguson. “This bill increases state protections for Washington’s military personnel and their families and gives the Attorney General’s Office the tools to enforce veterans’ rights.”

“These men and women make enormous sacrifices in service to our country, and we have an obligation to support them — not just when they return, but while they're deployed within Washington as well as overseas,” said Inslee. “Deployment shouldn't mean added worries about your financial affairs at home. This is one way we can help our active duty military stay focused on preserving the lives of Washington residents, and protecting critical infrastructure and providing essential services to citizens in times of emergencies.”
WEST VIRGINIA

March 17, 2014

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Alerts West Virginians About False Jury Duty Scam

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey today urged West Virginians to be cautious if they receive a phone call from someone who says the citizen is being fined for not responding to a jury duty notice.

“This is a particularly egregious scam in that it plays on people’s confusion and nervousness about serving as a juror,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It truly targets people who want to participate in the American justice system if asked.”

In the scam, a person calls under the guise of being a representative of a local sheriff’s department. The caller tells the citizen that he or she was summoned for jury duty and is now being fined for not showing up on the assigned date. The caller tells the person that if he or she does not immediately pay the fine, it will either increase or a warrant will be issued for his or her arrest.

March 11, 2014

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Warns Consumers to Avoid Fake Funeral Emails

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey is alerting residents to a disturbing scam that’s been making its way around to inboxes across the country and region.

Scammers are sending fraudulent “funeral notice” e-mails to citizens with the hopes that the recipient will be curious or grief-stricken enough to blindly click on an embedded link in the hopes of getting information about their friend or relative’s “celebration of life” service. But instead of providing information on memorial services, the link enables the computer to be hijacked with malicious software.
“Scammers always seem to be looking for new ways to steal, but this really could be a new low,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Tricking people with fake death notices is really just despicable.”

http://www.wvago.gov/press.cfm?ID=798&fx=more

March 10, 2014

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Warns West Virginians About Callers Offering To Increase Citizens’ Social Security Benefits

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey today warned senior citizens to be aware of a new scam happening in West Virginia in which a caller impersonates a Social Security Administration employee and tells citizens their benefits have been underpaid and need to be adjusted.

The caller says the payment error is in the process of being fixed, but the Administration needs the citizen’s bank routing numbers to complete the transaction.

“These scammers are unfortunately targeting the elderly and making false promises to them in order to get access to their financial information,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Citizens should try to remain alert and do their homework before giving out any personal information over the phone.”

http://www.wvago.gov/press.cfm?ID=796&fx=more

March 6, 2014

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Says Consumers Should Always Be Wary Of Texts From Unknown Individuals

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey today urged West Virginia consumers to think twice before responding to unsolicited text messages that offer gifts or prizes to people.

The Federal Trade Commission recently settled with a marketer who sent millions of unsolicited text messages to consumers telling them they had won electronics or other prizes such as $1,000 gift cards to major national retailers. The messages typically read, “You have been selected for a $1,000
gift card. Enter code ‘FREE’ at [web site address] to claim your prize. 150 left!!"

However, consumers who clicked on those links didn’t end up with the “free” prizes; instead, they ended up signing up for multiple trial offers to “qualify” for the “free” prizes. In some cases, consumers also were billed for monthly recurring charges.

“Much like we saw recently with the ‘One-Ring Scam,’ some scammers have figured out that mobile phones are one of the easiest ways to get directly to a consumer,” Morrisey said. “Unfortunately, for these consumers, clicking those links might add up hundreds of dollars in charges on their bills, which is just wrong.”

http://www.wvago.gov/press.cfm?ID=794&fx=more

March 5, 2014

**Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Urges Consumers To Be Careful When Evaluating Ways To Pay Down Debt**

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey is urging consumers to be cautious when evaluating their options when it comes to paying down their personal debt.

Each year, thousands of consumers find themselves looking for ways to get a handle on their finances by paying off credit cards and loans. However, in some cases, the consumer finds the debt is too much to manage, and they seek help from third-party debt settlement companies.

“Although there are many legitimate credit counseling services out there, some are bad apples,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “They often require already cash-strapped people to pay extraordinary up-front fees under the guise of negotiating on their behalf, but what ends up happening is the debt settlement company holds on to that money, and the consumer is no closer to any kind of help than they were before.”

http://www.wvago.gov/press.cfm?ID=793&fx=more
March 3, 2014

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Alerts Consumers About Fraudulent Microsoft Computer Repair Phone Calls

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey is alerting West Virginia consumers about a new round of phone calls from scammers who claim to be calling from Microsoft or another computer repair company.

The caller tells the consumer that the consumer’s computer has an urgent problem or a virus that must be fixed immediately. The caller says “Microsoft” can connect to the computer remotely and repair it for the customer. Once the scammer is connected to the computer, he either steals the consumer’s financial information through a fraudulent “pay” website or by installing malicious software that can comb the computer for personal information such as usernames, passwords, bank and credit card numbers, tax documents, and more. In other cases, the scammer locks the computer and refuses to unlock it unless the consumer pays a specific amount for the “repairs.”

“These scammers are pretty computer savvy, and will probably use a lot of computer terms to give themselves the appearance of legitimacy,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “But right off the bat, be wary of these kinds of cold calls. It’s highly unlikely someone on the other end of an unsolicited phone call could know anything about your computer.”

http://www.wvago.gov/press.cfm?ID=790&fx=more