NATIONAL STATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL PROGRAM: CONSUMER PROTECTION REPORT

November 2015
CONSUMER PROTECTION REPORT:
November 1-30, 2015

This newsletter is 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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CONSUMER PROTECTION CASES, SETTLEMENTS AND ADVOCACY STATEMENTS

ARIZONA
November 17, 2015

Attorney General Mark Brnovich Seeks Contempt of Court Order Against Used Car Dealer

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich filed a petition asking a court to shut down a Phoenix used car dealership accused of repeatedly defrauding Arizona consumers. This is the State’s 3rd enforcement action against Prieto’s Auto Sales, Inc. and its owners Gustavo Prieto and Rita Prieto.

The Petition for Order to Show Cause alleges Prieto’s and its owners disregarded court orders by continuing to violate a Consumer Fraud Judgment and the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act. The State has requested a court order requiring the owners of Prieto’s to show cause why they should not be held in contempt for multiple violations of the State’s July 3, 2014 Consent Judgment.


November 9, 2015

Attorney General Mark Brnovich Obtains $162,000 in Consumer Restitution From Construction Materials Supplier

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich obtained $162,000 in restitution for customers who filed complaints against Rastra Holding, LLC, based in Scottsdale. Rastra markets and sells construction materials made from recycled foam plastics to consumers throughout the United States. The restitution was obtained as part of an Assurance of Discontinuance. Rastra is solely owned and managed by Karl Holik.

Approximately fifteen consumers filed complaints with the Attorney General’s Office against Rastra. Consumers claimed they contracted with Rastra for the
ARIZONA CONT’D

purchase and delivery of post-recycled plastic and concrete construction materials, but the materials were never shipped. Based on the allegations in the consumer complaints, Rastra marketed and processed orders it could not fulfill, continued to accept down-payments for products it knew would not ship, deceptively misrepresented fulfillment dates and fabricated excuses for non-delivery, misappropriated consumer funds, and failed to make good on refund promises.


November 4, 2015

**Attorney General Mark Brnovich Announces Arizona Woman Accused of Stealing From Cancer Support Charity Arrested**

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Special Agents with his office arrested a Glendale woman accused of stealing from a non-profit cancer support charity. A grand jury indicted 42-year-old Melissa Talal on 1 count of theft and 2 counts of fraudulent schemes and artifices.

In September 2006, Talal began working as a finance coordinator for Cancer Support Community Arizona (CSCAZ) formerly known as The Wellness Community Arizona, a non-profit organization that provides support to individuals diagnosed with cancer and their families. It is alleged Talal had exclusive access to CSCAZ financial and bookkeeping records. From March 10, 2007 to March 30, 2011, Talal allegedly took out a CSCAZ credit card and used the organization’s credit card to make more than $150,000 in unauthorized personal purchases for items such as concert tickets, clothing, and electronics.


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ARIZONA CONT’D

November 3, 2015

Attorney General Mark Brnovich Shuts Down Fake Veterans Charity Telemarketing Scam

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced today his office shut down a fake veterans charity that used aggressive telemarketing calls to scam seniors across the nation out of thousands of dollars. A Stipulated Consent Judgment dissolves three Phoenix telemarketing companies owned by Robert Foster - Happy Hands, LLC, Standing Tree, LLC, and Action Point, LLC (collectively “Defendants”). The Defendants used a telemarketing scheme to target vulnerable seniors suffering from Alzheimer’s disease and other memory-related disorders. The seniors were convinced to purchase household products for an 1,800% markup, claiming the surplus money paid would help disabled or disadvantaged veterans. None of the proceeds were used for charitable purposes.


CALIFORNIA

November 2, 2015

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris Announces Settlement with JPMorgan Chase for Unlawful Debt-Collection Practices

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris today announced a stipulated judgment resolving allegations that JPMorgan Chase (Chase) committed credit card debt-collection abuses against tens of thousands of Californians. The settlement specifically addresses debt collection wrongdoing that includes collecting incorrect amounts, selling bad credit card debt, and running a debt collection mill that involved illegally “robo-signing” thousands of court documents and improperly obtaining default judgments against military servicemembers.

As part of the settlement, Chase will pay $50 million in restitution to consumers nationwide, including an estimated $10 million to California consumers, and significant restitution to servicemembers in California, some of whom were on active duty when Chase obtained illegal default judgments.
against them. Chase will also pay $50 million in penalties and other payments to California, through the Office of the Attorney General. The judgment includes injunctive terms that fundamentally change Chase’s credit card debt-collection practices to prevent similar misconduct in the future.


DELAWARE
November 16, 2015

**Attorney General Matt Denn Sues Manufactured Housing Community Owner**

Attorney General Matt Denn’s office has filed suit against the owner of three Delaware manufactured housing communities for attempting to financially pressure tenants to give up their legal right to arbitrate proposed rent increases.

The Department of Justice’s Consumer Protection Unit filed the lawsuit Friday against Chicago-based Hometown America Communities, Inc., the fifth-largest owner of manufactured housing communities in the United States. The lawsuit alleges that Hometown America violated Delaware law by issuing rent increase notices to tenants of its Barclay Farms, Angola Beach Estates, and Rehoboth Bay communities that attempt to factor Hometown America’s anticipated litigation costs into its rent increase, by requiring homeowners to waive their right to arbitrate the proposed rent hikes in exchange for giving them a purported “discount” to a substantial rent increase. Such conduct is forbidden under Delaware’s manufactured housing laws, which prohibit community owners from factoring arbitration and other litigation-related costs into the rent charged to homeowners under any circumstances, and prohibit community owners from trying to include in their rental terms provisions where homeowners waive rights provided to them by law.

**IDAHO**
November 18, 2015

**Attorney General Lawrence Wasden Announces Settlement with Idaho Travel Guide Publisher**

Attorney General Lawrence Wasden has reached a settlement with a publishing company that allegedly misrepresented its affiliation with the Idaho Department of Commerce and other agencies.

The settlement was announced today with The Travel Council, LLC, which publishes Idaho travel and recreation guides. The company, which operates under the name “The Idaho Travel Council,” agreed to disclose on its website and in ads that it is a private commercial business and unrelated to the State of Idaho.

[Website Link]

November 17, 2015

**Attorney General Lawrence Wasden Announces Settlement Reached with Annual Business Services LLC Requires; Company to Refund Idaho Businesses**

Attorney General Lawrence Wasden has reached a settlement with a Florida company that charged dozens of Idaho business owners for bogus compliance certificates.

The settlement requires that Annual Business Services LLC pay more than $5,700 to 80 small business owners who paid up to $72 for certificates in 2015.

The agreement also prohibits the company, which operated in Idaho as Business Compliance Division, from advertising in the state under a name that could make a consumer believe the solicitation originated from a government agency.

[Website Link]
ILLINOIS
November 18, 2015

Attorney General Lisa Madigan Sues Chicago Company for Mexico Vehicle Transport Scam

Attorney General Alleges Legalizauto Rey Scammed Consumers Seeking to Transport Vehicles to Mexico for Vacations & Extended Stays

Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit against an unlicensed Chicago company for scamming over $100,000 from consumers who sought to transport their vehicles to Mexico.

Madigan filed the lawsuit earlier today in Cook County Circuit Court against Legalizauto Rey LLC and its owners Oscar and Orfilda Flores, who are married. The company operates two locations at 3720 W. Fullerton Ave. in Chicago and 308 S. McLean Blvd. in Elgin. The company also previously operated as Issac Transport Corporation and Jacob’s Transportation Inc.


November 13, 2015

Attorney General Lisa Madigan Lawsuit Alleges Immigrant Worker Abuse by Employment Agencies And Chinese Buffet Restaurants

Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a lawsuit against three underground employment agencies and two suburban Chinese buffet-style restaurants alleging numerous federal and state civil rights violations, as well as wage violations, in their treatment of immigrant Latino workers.

Madigan’s lawsuit alleges the employment agencies target Latino workers and act as central suppliers for Chinese buffet-style restaurants that seek to profit from illegal and exploitative wages and abysmal working conditions. The lawsuit alleges the restaurants consistently underpay these workers, discriminate against them based on their race and national origin, and house them in substandard conditions.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan Sues Operators of Suburban Concrete Businesses

Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced a lawsuit against the operators of two Kane County concrete businesses for scamming suburban Chicago residents out of over $85,000 for work that was either substandard or never performed.

Attorney General Madigan filed the lawsuit in Cook County Chancery Court against Thomas Patrick Ratz, of Aurora, doing business as Pathways Concrete and Envision Concrete, and Ola S. Williams, also of Aurora, doing business as Envision Concrete. The lawsuit accuses the businesses of violating the state’s Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act.

According to Madigan’s lawsuit, the businesses were owned and operated by Ratz, who partnered with Williams to run Envision Concrete. The lawsuit alleges Ratz and Williams cheated consumers out of money for home repair work that was shoddy or incomplete. In several cases, the lawsuit states, consumers were not refunded deposits they had already paid.


Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Cook County State’s Attorney Alvarez File Joint Consumer Fraud Lawsuits

Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez today announced the owner of a south suburban company has been named in consumer fraud lawsuits filed today on behalf of senior citizens and homeowners who were defrauded out of thousands of dollars in deposits for electrical power generators that were never delivered or installed.

The lawsuits, filed today in the Circuit Court of Cook County, allege that the contractor defrauded consumers primarily by taking deposits and failing to begin or complete the agreed upon work and failing to provide the purchased equipment, among other practices. Several senior citizens were also victimized, including one who needed the back-up electrical power of a
generator to operate her oxygen machine. As a result of this scheme, affected consumers filing complaints with the Attorney General or the State’s Attorney’s Office claim to have lost a combined total of more than $73,000.


INDIANA
November 23, 2015

**Attorney General Greg Zoeller Files Lawsuit Against Circle City Auto Exchange for Selling “Total Loss” Vehicles to Customers Without Disclosures**

Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller filed a lawsuit today against Indianapolis used car dealer, Circle City Auto Exchange, and its affiliates Circle City Auto Connection and Circle City Sales and Service Inc. for selling “total loss” vehicles to customers without disclosures, charging unfair prices and offering useless warranties.

Zoeller filed the lawsuit in Marion County court today alleging abusive, unconscionable and intentional violations of Indiana’s Deceptive Consumer Sales Act. According to the lawsuit, the defendants have sold at least 60 previously declared “total loss” vehicles to Indiana consumers since November 2013 without properly informing them of the status or receiving the appropriate titles from the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV).


November 6, 2015

**Attorney General Greg Zoeller Announces Customers Of Auto Dealer Jeff Wyler Clarksville To Receive An Expected $624K In Restitution For Fee Overcharges**

An expected 4,400 former customers of auto dealer Jeff Wyler Clarksville will be receiving refunds in the amount of $142 over the next several months as part of a settlement agreement reached with the Indiana Attorney General’s Office to resolve allegations that the company charged unfair processing fees
when selling vehicles. The total amount of restitution is expected to reach $624,800.

Under Indiana’s Motor Vehicle Dealer Unfair Practices Act, auto dealers cannot require a motor vehicle purchaser to pay a document preparation fee unless the fee reflects expenses actually incurred for the preparation of documents and was negotiated by and disclosed to the customer. Jeff Wyler Clarksville consistently charged car buyers a processing or document preparation fee of $479, far higher than the actual costs the company could justify were incurred in preparing documents.


IOWA
November 20, 2015

Attorney General Tom Miller Announces Door-to-Door Satellite TV Seller to Honor Cancellations, Pay $5,000, and Follow Door-to-Door Sales Laws

Consumer Protection Division alleges that Clear Satellite LLC failed to provide adequate three-day right to cancel notice

A Utah-based door-to-door satellite TV seller will allow Iowans who ordered DIRECTV satellite service this year through its sales staff to cancel if they request it, pay the state $5,000, and agrees to follow the state’s door-to-door sales laws, through an agreement this week with Attorney General Tom Miller.

The agreement, called an assurance of voluntary compliance, alleges that Clear Satellite LLC, of Orem, Utah, violated the Iowa Door-to-Door Sales Act by failing to provide customers with a proper three-day notice of a consumer’s right to cancel. The company denies the allegations.

Clear Satellite agrees to cancel any 2015 contract in Iowa without penalizing the consumer and will notify more than 20 customers who were previously denied a request to cancel. The company agrees to follow the Iowa Door to Door Sales Act and not make deceptive representations to consumers. The $5,000 payment goes to Iowa’s consumer education and litigation fund.

MASSACHUSETTS
November 24, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Takes Action Against Unlawful Student Debt Relief Companies, Announces New Initiative to Help Students and Families Navigate Loan Repayment**

*Latest Phase in AG’s Efforts to Address Abuses In Student Lending Industry; Settlements to Provide $96,000 to Eligible Students, Bans Companies from Operating in Massachusetts*

In an effort to help students and families struggling under a mounting student loan debt crisis, Attorney General Maura Healey today announced that her office is cracking down on a “cottage industry” of unlawful debt relief companies in Massachusetts. The AG’s Office is also launching a new effort to assist borrowers who are having trouble paying their student loans.

According to the AG’s Office, many federal loan servicers often fail to do their jobs to help students enter into affordable payment plans, resulting in debt relief companies offering their services in exchange for exorbitant fees that violated state law. Many of these companies falsely associate themselves with the federal government and fail to make it clear that they are generally filing the same applications for income-based repayment programs that student borrowers could fill out themselves online and for free.


November 23, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Announces Insurance Company to Refund Massachusetts Homeowners for Improperly Charged Force-Placed Premiums**

*Insurer to be Audited by the Attorney General’s Office and Will Make Payment to Commonwealth*

The largest force-placed insurance company in Massachusetts has agreed to provide refunds to homeowners who were improperly charged for force-placed insurance policies, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.
Under the terms of the assurance of discontinuance, filed today in Suffolk Superior Court, American Security Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Assurant, Inc. (Assurant), will refund premiums to thousands of Massachusetts homeowners who were required to purchase unnecessary or overpriced force-placed insurance policies.

The settlement provides full refunds for the periods of duplicative insurance coverage for any person who had acceptable homeowners insurance at the same time he or she was force-placed by a mortgage servicer. The settlement also requires refunds for policyholders who were overcharged for force-placed insurance policies because they were mistakenly sold commercial policies rather than less expensive residential policies.


November 10, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Announces Taunton Property Owner Fined $1.7 Million for Misuse of Charitable Funds, Unfair and Deceptive Practices**

**Michael O’Donnell Banned From Future Real Estate and Mortgage Lending Transactions**

A Taunton property owner has been ordered to pay more than $1.7 million for misappropriating charitable assets for his own personal use, for using unfair and deceptive practices, and for failing to comply with charity reporting laws, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today. He has also been barred from engaging in any real estate and mortgage lending transactions and from serving in any role involving charities.

November 5, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Announces Hundreds of Massachusetts Drivers to Receive $5.4 Million in Relief on High-Interest Auto Loans**

*Santander to Pay Refunds, Forgive Interest on Subprime Auto Loans Made to Consumers*

A national auto lender has agreed to provide $5.4 million in relief to more than 450 Massachusetts consumers over allegations that it charged excessive interest rates on its subprime auto loans, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Under the terms of the assurance of discontinuance, filed Wednesday in Suffolk Superior Court, Santander USA Holdings Inc. has agreed to eliminate interest on certain loans it purchased that allegedly included excessive interest rates due to the inclusion of so-called GAP coverage. Santander has also agreed to forgive outstanding interest on the loans, and reimburse consumers for the interest they have already paid on the debts.


November 5, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Announces Just Energy Customers to Receive Payment for Deceptive Marketing, Conduct**

*Under Agreement with AG’s Office, Just Energy Sending Checks to 7,655 Customers Who Qualify for $2.5 Million in Restitution Over Five Week Period*

Customers of a competitive electricity supplier are beginning to receive restitution payments as part of a $4 million settlement reached with company to settle allegations of deceptive marketing, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

The payments are part of an assurance of discontinuance the AG’s Office negotiated with Just Energy Inc. and its affiliates in December 2014. The AG’s Office alleged that Just Energy, through its door-to-door agents and a third-party telemarketing vendor, engaged in deceptive marketing and sales tactics.
that misled consumers into signing contracts based on attractive introductory pricing, only to later experience an increase in their electricity supply costs.


November 5, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Announces Peabody Store Cited More Than $43,000 for Failing to Pay Minimum and Overtime Wages to Employees, Inaccurate Recordkeeping**

A Peabody convenience store and its owner have been cited more than $43,000 for failing to properly pay an employee in violation of the state’s wage and hour laws and for failing to keep accurate payroll records, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Ad Market Inc., d/b/a Peabody Market, and its president, Azhar Ali, have been cited more than $32,000 in restitution for failure to pay minimum wage and failure to pay proper overtime to an employee. They were also cited $6,400 in penalties, along with an additional $5,000 penalty for failure to keep accurate payroll records.

In May 2014, the AG’s Office began its investigation of Peabody Market, following a complaint from a former employee. The office determined that, from August 2012 to March 2014, the complainant worked as a clerk handling various duties at the store. In place of the legally required minimum wage, the market provided temporary accommodations for the employee to reside inside a broken walk-in cooler at the store for the majority of time he worked there.

MISSOURI
November 19, 2015

**Attorney General Chris Koster Files Suit Against Owner Of Columbia Business**

Attorney General Chris Koster today filed a lawsuit against ZK Guns, LLC and its owner, Zachariah Kean, for failing to provide firearms and accessories to Missouri consumers who had made upfront payment for the merchandise.

The lawsuit, filed in Boone County Circuit Court, alleges that Kean failed to deliver merchandise that Missouri consumers had ordered and prepaid for, and that he also failed to give refunds to all of the affected consumers. The lawsuit came after at least 15 consumers filed complaints with the Attorney General’s Office and the Better Business Bureau. Koster is seeking an injunction prohibiting the company from selling firearms and firearms-related accessories going forward, as well as full restitution for consumers and civil penalties.


November 17, 2015

**Attorney General Chris Koster Sues St. Charles-Area Excavator For Violation Of Missouri’s One Call Law**

Attorney General Chris Koster today filed suit against a St. Charles-area excavator for violating the Missouri Underground Facility Safety and Damage Prevention Act, known as One Call. The law requires individuals to call the Missouri One Call System at least two days before digging anywhere in the state so that utility owners can mark the location of underground lines.

The suit alleges that the excavator, Site Demolition, LLC, failed to notify the Missouri One Call System before beginning an excavation in St. Charles. The suit further alleges that Site Demolition struck a gas line in the course of the excavation.

MISSOURI CONT’D

November 17, 2015

**Attorney General Chris Koster Obtains Court Order Against St. Louis Cash-For-Gold Business**

*order says Missouri Gold Buyers must comply with five-day waiting period for resale of items, and to produce records to law enforcement*

Attorney General Chris Koster announced today his office has obtained a preliminary injunction prohibiting Missouri Gold Buyers, L.L.C, its owner Michael Duke, and their employees, from altering or re-selling precious metals within five working days of purchase. The court order also requires Missouri Gold Buyers and Michael Duke to produce copies of their transaction records to law enforcement upon request and to inform law enforcement if they have any reason to believe any precious metals may have been obtained illegally by a seller. Koster’s office sued the business and Duke in September. The injunction was entered by St. Louis City Circuit Judge David Dowd.

The court found that Defendants Missouri Gold Buyers and Michael Duke violated Missouri law by failing to retain purchased precious metals in an unaltered condition for at least five working days and by refusing to make records of purchases available to law enforcement upon request, without a warrant. The preliminary injunction specifically prohibits Missouri Gold Buyers and Mr. Duke from violating the law as the lawsuit continues.


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NEVADA

November 3, 2015

**Attorney General Adam Laxalt Announces Three Guilty Pleas for Timeshare Resale Fraud**

Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Claudia Benedetti, 42, and Richard Hughes, 41, pleaded guilty for their roles in a multi-state timeshare resale scam. Benedetti pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit theft, while Hughes entered a guilty plea for two counts of obtaining money under false pretenses. The fraudulent acts were committed between January and March of 2012.
Benedetti and Hughes participated in a scheme to defraud timeshare property owners by claiming they would take over timeshares for owners who were no longer interested. The defendants worked for companies that would initiate cold calls, promising to sell owners’ unwanted timeshares. In order to transfer title, the defendants required an up-front fee that they alleged would be repaid once the timeshare was sold. Despite paying thousands of dollars in hefty fees, victims were never reimbursed, and the sale of the timeshares never closed. Most victims never heard from their callers again, and only learned that they still owned their timeshares after receiving maintenance fee statements.

http://ag.nv.gov/News/PR/2015/Attorney_General_Laxalt_Announces_Three_Guilty_Pleas_for_Timeshare_Resale_Fraud/

NEW JERSEY
November 20, 2015

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman Announces New Jersey Bureau of Securities Takes Action Against Principals of Monmouth County Investment Firm that Defrauded Clients of Millions of Dollars

The New Jersey Bureau of Securities today filed legal action against, and separately revoked the registrations of, two individuals who operate a Tinton Falls broker-dealer who defrauded over 170 investors in a scheme involving investment in a Florida condominium complex called Esplanade at Millennia Condominiums.

Bureau Chief Laura H. Posner revoked the registrations held by Anthony J. Cantone and his wife, Christine L. Cantone, following the Bureau’s investigation. Anthony J. Cantone is President and CEO of broker-dealer Cantone Research Inc. (CRI), and was registered by the Bureau as an agent and investment adviser representative at CRI. He also is Managing Member of Cantone Office Center, LLC (COC). Christine Cantone is Vice President and was Chief Compliance Officer of CRI when the fraudulent scheme was ongoing, and was registered by the Bureau as an agent at CRI. They both reside in Thompson, Pennsylvania.

http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases15/pr20151120b.html
NEW JERSEY CONT’D

November 10, 2015

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman Announces New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Obtains $2.6 Million Default Judgment Against South Jersey Pool Contractor for Violations of the Consumer Fraud Act

Hammonton-based Waterworld Fiber Glass Pools (N.E.) Inc. and its vice-president, Donald Tallman, have been ordered to pay $2.6 million in civil penalties, consumer restitution and other costs after the Division of Consumer Affairs proved in court that the defendants committed 229 violations of the state’s consumer protection laws and regulations.

Consumers who paid for in-ground pools that either were not built or not completed, or had unresolved quality of work issues, are owed a collective $277,550 in restitution, under terms of the Final Order on Default issued by Superior Court Judge Mark Sandson. About 15 consumers are eligible for restitution.

http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases15/pr20151110a.html

NEW YORK

November 24, 2015

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Agreement With Planet Fitness To Cease Advertising Practices That Encourage Frequent Indoor Tanning

A.G. Investigation Finds That National Fitness Chain Was Lax In Training Personnel About Indoor Tanning Health Risks And Dangers

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office has reached an agreement with Planet Fitness Holdings LLC, and its subsidiaries, Pla-Fit Franchise, LLC, franchisor of Planet Fitness brand fitness facilities and Planet Fitness National Advertising Fund, LLC, (collectively “Planet Fitness”) requiring that they not offer “unlimited” tanning as part of premier Black Card level memberships and that they provide adequate training to employees who oversee indoor tanning services at Planet Fitness gym locations. Planet Fitness also agreed not to make health-related claims to promote red lamp devices and to comply with all New York State tanning regulations. Planet Fitness paid $50,000 in costs and penalties.
November 18, 2015

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces $216,000 Settlement With Suffolk County Auto Dealership For Deceptive Practices That Resulted In Inflated Car Prices**

Nissan 112 Will Pay Restitution To Consumers Who Were Unlawfully Duped Into Purchasing Credit Repair And Identity Theft Item

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a $216,689 settlement with Nissan 112, a car dealership in Suffolk County, which returns more than $195,000 in restitution to consumers. This settlement concludes an investigation into the dealerships for alleged unlawful sale of credit repair and identity theft prevention services, and other “after-sale” items to over 1,000 consumers, as well as for charging consumers unlawful “administrative fees.” Under an Assurance of Discontinuance signed by the company, Nissan 112 will also pay $21,000 in penalties and costs to New York State.

November 16, 2015

**A.G. Schneiderman and U.S. Department of Labor Announce Jail Time For Bronx Papa John’s Franchisee Convicted of Wage Theft**

Franchisee Sentenced To 60 Days In Jail And Payment Of $230,000 In Restitution To Workers For Unpaid Wages; Restitution Is In Addition To $280,000 In Damages And Penalties Pursuant To Prior USDOL Settlement

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the conviction and sentencing of Abdul Jamil Khokhar and BMY Foods, Inc., which together owned and operated nine Papa John’s franchises throughout the Bronx. Khokhar pled guilty to failure to pay wages under the New York Labor Law, a misdemeanor, and BMY Foods pled guilty to falsifying business
records in the first degree, an E felony. Khokhar was sentenced to spend 60
days in jail and to pay $230,000 in restitution to underpaid workers at his
Papa John’s franchises.

labor-announce-jail-time-bronx-papa-john%E2%80%99s

November 13, 2015

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement That Returns Manhattan
Apartment Building To Rent Stabilization, Provides Tenants With
Homeownership Opportunities

Landlord Operated Market-Rate Rental Building Despite Official Status As Co-
Op Will Return Rental Units To Rent Stabilization And Explore Homeownership

Case Marks First Time Attorney General’s Office Has Used Dissolution Power
Against A Housing Cooperative To Protect Tenants

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the settlement of a
dissolution action against a cooperative housing corporation, Ft. George Apt.
Corp., and its shareholders, the affiliated entities Fort George Property, LLC,
Fort George Realty, LLC, and NY Tryon Realty LLC. The settlement resolves
allegations that Ft. George Apt. Corp. exploited the rent stabilization
exemption available to housing cooperatives – an exemption that is meant to
promote homeownership by protecting individual homeowners, not landlords.
Under the settlement, all tenants residing in the building will be entitled to
rent-stabilized leases at affordable rents. Additionally, the developer can
either restate the existing cooperative plan to provide an exclusive opportunity
for tenants to purchase their apartment at a 25% discount from market
prices, with access to first time homebuyer counseling, down payment
assistance, and access to conventional financing at competitive rates, or the
developer may convert the building to a limited-equity housing cooperative
into the future.

http://www.ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-announces-
settlement-returns-manhattan-apartment-building-rent
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement with Local Store to Return Fees Customers Incurred From Illegal Towing

Family Dollar Pays Consumer Tow Bills Totaling Over $4,500 After Employee Placed Tow Requests

Consumers who had vehicles towed from the parking lot at City Center this past spring are getting their tow fees back. Attorney General Eric Schneiderman today announced that Family Dollar agreed to reimburse identified consumers for tow fees and in one instance damage occasioned after a Family Dollar employee called for tows from the lot. Checks are currently being distributed to impacted consumers.


A.G. Schneiderman Announces Agreement with Lowe’s Home Centers Over Deceptive Sales Practices Used for Flooring Installations

Lowe’s Will Refund Over $1 Million To More Than 16,000 New York Consumers and Will Establish New Guidelines For Installation Services

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Lowe’s Home Center, LLC, which has 64 retail locations in New York State, over allegations of deceptive sales practices for flooring installations. The agreement provides cash refunds of up to 10% of per-square-foot basic flooring installation fees charged to over 16,000 New York consumers and establishes new disclosure guidelines relating to “per square foot” installation charges. The agreement will return up to $1,100,000 in cash refunds to consumers and concludes an investigation into Lowe’s per square foot billing practices for alleged deceptive acts and practices and deceptive advertising relating to per square foot installation charges. Under an Assurance of Discontinuance signed by the company, they will also pay $900,000 in costs and fees to New York State.
November 3, 2015

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Company That Deceptively Solicited Consumers To Enroll In Service Plans

HomeServe Mailed Solicitations That Appeared To Come from Consumer’s Utility Company Or Municipality

Company Must Reform Business Practices, Pay $100,000 for Restitution, Penalties And Costs, And Establish $100K Fund To Provide Free Repairs To Qualifying Low-Income New Yorkers

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with HomeServe USA Corp, headquartered in Norwalk, CT., which markets a variety of service contracts to residential property owners, including contracts covering consumers’ external water, sewer and electrical lines. The settlement, which also binds HomeServe USA Repair Management Corporation, an affiliated company that arranges for repairs and service to consumers who are covered by HomeServe service contracts, requires HomeServe to make a number of reforms to its business practices.

Ohio

November 20, 2015

Attorney General Mike DeWine Announces Lawsuit Against California Loan Modification Company for Failure to Deliver

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a California company accused of failing to deliver promised mortgage loan modification services to Ohio consumers.

The lawsuit accuses Legal Aid Services Inc., last operating in California, of violating Ohio’s Consumer Sales Practices Act and Debt Adjuster’s Act.
According to the lawsuit, Legal Aid Services Inc. promised mortgage loan modification services, including interest rate reductions, to Ohio consumers and represented itself as a law firm, even though it did not employ attorneys who were licensed in Ohio.


November 18, 2015

**Attorney General Mike DeWine Announces Lawsuit Against Door-to-Door Meat Seller Accused of Violating Ohio Consumer Protection Laws**

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against US Beef Cincinnati LLC for misrepresenting its products and failing to notify consumers of their right to cancel.

The Ohio Attorney General’s Office currently is aware of 22 unresolved complaints against the company, and reported losses total about $5,300. Many of the consumers are elderly.


November 3, 2015

**Attorney General Mike DeWine Seeks Reimbursement from Used Car Seller Accused of Failing to Deliver Titles**

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a Canton used car dealership accused of failing to deliver motor vehicle titles to customers.

The lawsuit accuses Automotion Car Sales and its owner of violating Ohio’s Certificate of Motor Vehicle Title Act. In the complaint, the Attorney General seeks restitution for affected consumers, reimbursement to the state’s Title Defect Rescission Fund, civil penalties, and an end to any violations of Ohio’s consumer protection laws.

PENNSYLVANIA
November 16, 2015

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane Announces Legal Action Against Midstate Home Improvement Contractor

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane today announced the filing of a legal action against a midstate home improvement contractor accused of failing to complete services for which he was paid.

The legal action against Christopher G. Wilson, and his company, Wilson Construction Associates, LLC, was filed in the Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas by the Office of Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=2223

November 10, 2015

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane Files Civil Action Against Philadelphia-Area Businesses Accused Of Failing To Timely Deliver Cemetery Memorials

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane today announced her office has filed a civil complaint against two Philadelphia-area businesses and their owner, who are all accused of failing to deliver cemetery markers, memorials and engravings after accepting advance payments.

The complaint was filed against Lifestone by Stefan, LLC, Stefan Memorials, Inc. and Gregory J. Stefan Sr., the president and officer for both companies, which operate mainly in the southeast region of Pennsylvania. The complaint was filed by the Office of Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=2203
RHODE ISLAND  
November 17, 2015

**Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin Announces RI Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board Shuts Down Fraudulent Contractor, Secure $32,450 in Restitution for Consumers**

Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin and George Whalen, Director of the Rhode Island Contractors' Registration and Licensing Board (CRLB), located within the Rhode Island Department of Administration, announced that the Office of Attorney General and the CRLB successfully shut down a fraudulent paving contractor recently and secured $32,450 in restitution for 12 customers.

In July, the CRLB and Office of Attorney General received a number of complaints from consumers alleging negligent and improper work, breach of contract as well as allegations of elder abuse and price gouging by MTY Paving.

[http://www.ri.gov/press/view/26249](http://www.ri.gov/press/view/26249)

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TEXAS  
November 25, 2015

**Attorney General Ken Paxton Shuts Down Unlawful Dating Service Company’s Texas Operations**

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton announced today a final judgment and permanent injunction has been filed in a Bexar County district court ordering Lone Star Introductions, Inc. also doing business as eLove Matchmaking to cease operations at its Texas offices, pay civil penalties and consumer restitution. The dating service company, a corporation based in Massachusetts, will have to shut down its San Antonio and Austin offices, and add a notification on its websites and advertising that it no longer provides dating services to Texas consumers.

ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON OBTAINS JUDGMENT HALTING UNLAWFUL OPERATIONS OF DALLAS-AREA SOLAR PANEL COMPANY

Defendants are ordered to pay more than $8.5 million in restitution, civil penalties

The Texas Attorney General’s Office today filed an agreed final judgment and permanent injunction that resolves the state’s legal action against 1SolTech Inc. and its three principals, Sandy Fardi, Hossein “Zak” Fardi and Ali Enrique Razavi. Under the agreed judgment, filed in Travis County District court, the defendants are ordered to cease making misrepresentations on the geographical origin and certifications of their solar panels. 1 SolTech will pay $5.8 million in civil penalties and attorney’s fees, as well as more than $2.7 million in restitution to affected consumers.


ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON ANNOUNCES PURPORTED VETERANS ORGANIZATION ORDERED TO SHUT DOWN IN TEXAS FOR DECEIVING TEXAS DONORS

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced a settlement resolving the State’s enforcement action against the Veterans Support Organization (VSO) and four of its principals. Under the agreed final judgment and permanent injunction, the defendants must cease engaging in unlawful solicitation of charitable contributions in Texas, and must dissolve VSO as a charitable organization in our state.

WASHINGTON

November 10, 2015

Attorney General Bob Ferguson Announces Student Loan Adjustment Firm to Pay $418,000 Judgment for Illegal Actions

Washington consumers will receive full restitution

Following a legal victory in August, Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced a $418,000 judgment has been entered against a student loan debt adjusting company that overcharged Washington state students and collected unlawful fees.

StudentLoanProcessing.US (SLP) and its president, James Krause, will pay $144,896 to refund its customers for illegal charges and an additional $124,000 for costs, attorney’s fees, monitoring and future enforcement of the Consumer Protection Act. Another $150,000 in penalties will be suspended as long as SLP abides by the terms of the agreement.

All 86 Washington student victims will receive full refunds of the money they paid to SLP. The Attorney General’s Office will distribute the refunds. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has an ongoing lawsuit against the company.


November 4, 2015

Attorney General Bob Ferguson Cracks Down On Unlawful Debt Collection Practices

Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced six enforcement actions undertaken this year to protect Washington consumers from unlawful debt collection practices. These cases — three of which have already resulted in favorable resolutions — were filed as part of Operation Collection Protection (OCP), the largest-ever coordination of law enforcement actions to hold unlawful debt collectors accountable for illegal collection practices.

WEST VIRGINIA
November 25, 2015

Attorney General Patrick Morrisey Reaches $13M Settlement with CashCall Inc.

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced today a $13 million settlement with CashCall Inc., a non-bank private lender found to have engaged in abusive debt collections.

The settlement, finalized last week in Kanawha Circuit Court, requires CashCall to make an immediate, $10 million lump sum payment – those monies will be distributed to affected consumers beginning in 90 days. The additional $3 million will be paid in $375,000 installments over the course of two years.

MULTISTATE CASES AND SETTLEMENTS

November 23, 2015

49 States and the District of Columbia Announces Millennium Health Agrees to Pay $256 Million for Unnecessary Drug and Genetic Testing and Illegal Remuneration to Physicians

Attorney General Pam Bondi, 48 other attorneys general and the District of Columbia, today announced a settlement, totaling $256 million, with Millennium Health, formerly Millennium Laboratories, to resolve alleged violations of the False Claims Act. Millennium allegedly billed Medicare, Medicaid and other federal health care programs for medically unnecessary urine drug and genetic testing, and for providing free items to physicians who agreed to refer expensive laboratory testing business to Millennium. Millennium, headquartered in San Diego, is one of the largest urine drug testing laboratories in the United States and conducts business nationwide.

http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/7022CD419BF1B8585257F060070E926

November 13, 2015


Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane, in partnership with the Federal Trade Commission and the Connecticut Office of the Attorney General, today announced a federal court has granted a request to shut down a technical support company accused of using a telemarketing scheme to charge consumers for unnecessary computer repairs. The scheme allegedly bilked consumers nationwide out of more than $17 million.

Attorney General Kane made the announcement in partnership with the FTC and Connecticut Attorney General George Jepsen. The parties all filed a joint civil complaint in federal court against Click4Support, LLC, several related companies and individuals with alleged involvement. The complaint seeks restitution for consumers.

https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=2221
49 States and the District of Columbia Announces $54 Million Multistate Settlement With AstraZeneca LP and Cephalon, Inc. to Resolve Allegations of Overcharging Medicaid for Drugs

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that New York has joined with all other states and the federal government to settle allegations with AstraZeneca LP and 48 other states, District of Columbia and the federal government with Cephalon that the companies overcharged state Medicaid programs for their pharmaceutical products. AstraZeneca, a Delaware limited partnership with its principal place of business in Delaware, and Cephalon, Inc. a Pennsylvania-based subsidiary of Teva Pharmaceutical Industries. Ltd., will pay the states and the federal government $54 million, of which AstraZeneca LP will pay $46.5 million and Cephalon, $7.5 million. $7,493,604.39 will go to the New York State Medicaid Program based on the AstraZeneca agreement and $996,110.12 will go to the New York State Medicaid Program based on the Cephalon, Inc. agreement.


50 States and the District of Columbia Reaches Settlement to Resolve Kickback Allegations Against a Pharmaceutical Company, Warner Chilcott PLC

Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced that Arkansas, along with all 50 States, the District of Columbia, the National Association of Medicaid Fraud Control Units and the federal government have reached a $102 million settlement with Warner Chilcott PLC, a pharmaceutical company based in Ireland with U.S. headquarters in New Jersey.

The settlement resolves civil and criminal allegations that the company paid kickbacks to induce prescriptions of nine of its drugs and falsified health program coverage paperwork to ensure federal and State reimbursement, a violation of the False Claims Act.

MEDICAID FRAUD CASES AND SETTLEMENTS

ARKANSAS

November 19, 2015

Attorney General Leslie Rutledge Announces Charges Against Mental Health Practitioner Program for Submitting False Claims to Medicaid

Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced that a five-month investigation by the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) has culminated in 20 felony charges against the two highest billers in the Arkansas Medical Licensed Mental Health Practitioner Program. Over the past three years, Al Dodds, 55, of Camden and Joseph Brannon Randolph, 41, of Fayetteville have billed the Medicaid program $1.3 million.


November 13, 2015

Attorney General Leslie Rutledge Announces Lake City Woman Sentenced For Fraudulently Billing Medicaid For Services Not Provided

Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge announced today that a Craighead County woman has been sentenced to three years of probation on a Medicaid fraud charge.

Martha Renshaw, 51, of Lake City pleaded guilty to billing for Medicaid services not provided, a Class C felony. Renshaw must also pay a total of $4,210.95 in restitution and $6,632.85 in fines.

FLORIDA
November 19, 2015

Attorney General Pam Bondi Announces Doctor Claiming to Remove Foreign Objects From Patients’ Bodies Arrested for Medicaid Fraud

Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit arrested a Miami doctor, Roberto Fernandez, 49, for defrauding the Medicaid program out of more than $17,000. For more than two years, Fernandez, owner of Latin Foundation for Health, Inc., allegedly billed for medical procedures that were never performed.

According to the investigation, Fernandez billed for multiple unusual and specific procedures recipients stated they never received. Fernandez allegedly falsely billed for removing foreign objects from at least 19 patients’ noses or eyes.

http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/F5DD42D92480126E85257F020051EC5B

November 17, 2015

Attorney General Pam Bondi Announces Duval County Pediatric Dentist Arrested for Medicaid Fraud; Defrauded Medicaid by Submitting Claims For Dental Procedures He Performed Without Parental Consent

Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office today announced the arrest of former pediatric dentist, Dr. Howard S. Schneider, 78, for defrauding the Florida Medicaid program.

The MFCU’s investigation revealed that Schneider, the sole owner of Howard S. Schneider, D.D.S. P.A., defrauded Florida Medicaid by submitting claims for dental procedures he performed without parental consent. The procedures allegedly fell below the standard of care and produced unauthorized claims submitted to the Medicaid program for reimbursement.

http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/F6E2AE742652A17F85257F0000531450
MISSISSIPPI
November 24, 2015

Attorney General Jim Hood Announces Crystal Springs Husband and Wife Indicted for Identity Theft Medicaid Fraud

A Crystal Springs husband and wife were arrested Monday after being charged in a multi-count indictment with two counts each of felonious identity theft and two counts each of felonious Medicaid fraud, announced Attorney General Jim Hood.

James Jefferson, Jr., age 55, and his wife, Pamela T. Jefferson, age 53, of Crystal Springs, Mississippi were arrested Monday morning, after being indicted by a Hinds County Grand Jury, by investigators of the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Copiah County Sheriff’s office. According to the indictment, they are each charged with two counts of felonious Medicaid fraud and two counts of felonious identity theft.

Jefferson and his wife owned and operated Garden of Angels, LLC at the time the crimes allegedly occurred. The indictment charges the defendants with using the identity of a medical doctor and a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) to bill Medicaid for services that neither the medical doctor, nor the LCSW provided. Counts I and II of the indictment charge that approximately 269 false claims totaling $408,685.69 were filed against Medicaid in 2013 and 2014.

http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/crystal-springs-husband-and-wife-indicted-for-identity-theft-medicaid-fraud/
MISSOURI
November 6, 2015

Attorney General Chris Koster Announces Guilty Pleas for Two Healthcare Workers Who Submitted False claims to Medicaid

Attorney General Chris Koster announces that two personal care aides pleaded guilty in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri to six counts of making false statements to Medicaid. The aides, Janise Lampley, 31, St. Louis, and Mykeila McKindall, 23, St. Louis County, defrauded Missouri’s Medicaid program by claiming to have provided personal care services to Medicaid participants that were not provided. The Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Division assisted the United States Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of Missouri, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Offices of the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the investigation.


NEW YORK

November 3, 2015

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Guilty Plea Of Rochester Nurse Who Allegedly Defrauded Medicaid Of Over Eight Thousand Dollars

Schmeka Morgan Billed Medicaid For Hours She Never Worked Over A Four Month Period

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced the guilty plea of Schmeka Morgan, a licensed practical nurse who stole $8,838 from the Medicaid program. Morgan, who provided private nursing services to a special needs young adult, was charged with billing for numerous hours that she did not work. Morgan pleaded guilty yesterday to Petit Larceny, a class A misdemeanor. As a result of her guilty plea, Morgan faces three years’ probation and restitution of $8,838 to the state.

Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane today announced the filing of criminal charges against a Philadelphia-area home health agency and its president amid allegations the company defrauded the Medicaid program out of more than $100,000.

https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=2227
Nine Attorneys General Call for Expedited Implementation of Chip and PIN Credit Card Technology

Attorney General George Jepsen was joined today by eight fellow attorneys general from around the country in urging leadership of the nation's largest credit card issuers to speed up implementation of chip and PIN technology, which is widely considered a more secure means of processing credit card transactions than traditional magnetic-stripe payment cards and the chip-and-signature card process now being rolled out.

The attorneys general asked leaders at companies including MasterCard, Visa, Discover Financial Services, Bank of America, Capital One, Citigroup, American Express and JP Morgan Chase—who have collectively begun the nationwide transition to a chip-and-signature card—to move to full chip and PIN technology as soon as possible. The attorneys general said that doing so would be in the best interest of consumers, who are now routinely impacted by breaches involving credit and debit cards, and of local businesses, which are at risk of increased financial risks as well as harm to their reputations and loss of consumer trust if they experience a breach.


47 State Attorneys General and the FTC Announces Collaboration to Stop Illegal Debt Collection

The Colorado Department of Law announced today Colorado’s participation in the Operation Collection Protection “OCP.” OCP is a collaborative effort led by the FTC involving 73 participating agencies which includes 47 state attorneys general plus the District of Columbia. This coalition of federal, state and local enforcement and regulatory organizations is jointly announcing actions taken against illegal debt collection operations since the first of the year. These actions include civil filings in court, administrative actions, and cease and desist orders.
ARIZONA
November 24, 2015

Attorney General Mark Brnovich Issues Scam Alert: Scammers Impersonate Attorney General’s Office

Attorney General Mark Brnovich today is warning Arizonans of an alarming new phone scam in which con artists pose as representatives of the Attorney General’s Office to steal money from consumers. The scammers appear to be targeting consumer fraud victims who have lost money in past telemarketing scams. The con artists falsely claim they can help victims get their money back. Victims are conned into paying hundreds of dollars and receive nothing in return.

CALIFORNIA
November 10, 2015

Attorney General Kamala D. Harris Issues Consumer Alert on Veteran “Pension Poaching” Scams Targeting Military Veteran Seniors and Their Families

As we honor our military service members on Veterans Day, Attorney General Kamala D. Harris today issued a consumer alert to Californians regarding scams targeting seniors who served in the military and their survivors. These scams have been reported to the California Department of Justice’s Public Inquiry Unit.

These reported “pension poaching” scams prey on veterans and target the financial assistance offered through the Veterans Administration Aid and Attendance Program, which provides pension benefits to financially disadvantaged wartime veterans and their survivors over 65 years of age.

ILLINOIS
November 18, 2015


Phone Scammers Posing as Government Officials Attempt to Con Illinois Residents Into Sending Money

Attorney General Lisa Madigan today alerted Illinois residents to a phone scam in which callers pose as IRS officials in an attempt to con people into sending money to pay for allegedly unpaid taxes.

Madigan has seen an increase in the number of calls to her office in recent weeks from residents throughout Illinois who have been contacted by scammers pretending to be government officials with false claims that the residents are under investigation or that they owe money to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).


INDIANA
November 11, 2015

Attorney General Greg Zoeller Launches “Freeze Identity Thieves” Effort To Prevent ID Theft, Urge Credit Freeze During Holiday Shopping Season

Every two seconds someone in America has their identity stolen. The U.S Department of Justice reports that identity thieves stole more than $18 billion from 17.6 million U.S. victims last year.

To combat this growing criminal industry that destroys the good names and credit ratings of innocent people, Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller launched the “Freeze Identity Thieves” statewide public awareness effort today aimed at arming Hoosiers with a simple, effective ID theft prevention tool: the credit freeze.

Zoeller is urging Hoosiers to sign up for a credit freeze to guard against fraud this holiday shopping season, when cybercrime is common.

The free credit freeze prevents any new lines of credit from being opened in someone’s name unless that person lifts the freeze himself or herself. This
effectively stops identity thieves from using any stolen information, for example a Social Security Number, to access and rack up peoples’ credit.


November 16, 2015

**Attorney General Greg Zoeller: IRS Imposter Scam, Spoofing Among Top 2015 Phone Scam Trends**

Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller said nearly 1,300 complaints were filed with his office this year about the IRS imposter scam, making it the most common telephone privacy complaint of 2015. Phone scams offering credit services and tech support services are the second and third most common complaints this year.

In the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) imposter scam, callers claim to be with the IRS and demand immediate payment of past-due taxes. Scammers might threaten arrest and jail time if the payment is not received immediately, and usually request that the money be paid back though the purchase of pre-paid cards.


**LOUISIANA**

November 18, 2015

**Attorney General James D. “Buddy” Caldwell Issues Consumer Alert: Watch Out For Grant Scams**

Attorney General James D. “Buddy” Caldwell is warning Louisiana citizens about a government grant scam that is targeting consumers across the nation.

The scam starts with a call from a phone number that seems to be from Washington, D.C. The caller gives an official-sounding agency name like the “Federal Grant Education Department” or “U.S. Grant Commission” and announces that you have been selected to receive a free grant worth thousands of dollars. The caller may say you were selected because you pay your bills on time, have no arrest record, or were chosen in a demographic study. The scammer then asks you to pay a transfer fee or application fee,
give out your bank account number, or send a check before you get the supposed grant.

https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx?articleID=1143&catID=5

November 10, 2015

**Attorney General James D. “Buddy” Caldwell Issues Consumer Alert: Veterans Can Stay Empowered To Fight Fraud**

Veterans Day is intended to honor and thank all who served in the United States Armed Forces. Despite the country’s appreciation for these great American heroes, Attorney General James D. “Buddy” Caldwell reminds consumers that there are con artists who target veterans and servicemembers.

Attorney General Caldwell said the scams can take many forms, from promises for quick and easy credit and car title loans to sky-high returns on bogus investment deals. Or they might lure you with hopes for online romance, interest in charitable giving, or the appeal of getting good housing at eye-catching prices.

https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx?articleID=1140&catID=5

**MASSACHUSETTS**

November 30, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Submits Application to U.S. Department of Education to Cancel Thousands of Loans for Former Corinthian Students**

Attorney General Maura Healey today submitted an application to the U. S. Department of Education requesting the immediate cancellation of loans taken out by former students of Corinthian Colleges in Massachusetts who were victimized by the for-profit school’s illegal conduct.

The 2,700-page submission, complete with investigatory findings, supporting evidence, and compiled attestations from former Corinthian students, was sent today to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Special Master Joseph Smith, who is charged with reviewing the debts of students who attended
Corinthian schools and establishing state law discharge procedures. The application asks for a group discharge of all federal loans taken out by approximately 7,200 student borrowers who attended Corinthian’s Everest Institute campuses in Brighton and Chelsea between 2007 and when Corinthian closed its Everest campus operations over the last two years.


November 19, 2015

**Attorney General Maura Healey Proposes Strong Consumer Protection Regulations for Daily Fantasy Sports Operations in Massachusetts**

*First-of-Their-Kind Rules Protect Minors, Target Advertising, Level Field for All Players*

Attorney General Maura Healey today proposed first-of-their-kind consumer protection regulations for the new and rapidly evolving Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS) industry to ensure that players are protected and that minors can’t access the sites.

The draft regulations, to be filed with the Secretary of State’s Office Friday, lay out a significant number of consumer protections that include prohibiting play by minors, ensuring more truthful advertising, and an increase in transparency. The regulations also require protection of players’ deposits and robust data and security measures, address problem gamblers, and require changes to games to provide a more level playing field for all consumers.

The AG’s Office began its review of the industry earlier this year, and continues that investigation. The regulations proposed today are an immediate response to some of the concerns the Office has uncovered in the course of its review to protect consumers immediately.

MASSACHUSETTS

November 17, 2015

Attorney General Maura Healey’s Office Hosting Training Series for Consumers on Winter rights, Retail Rights, Identity Theft, Lemon Laws

New Consumer Trainings Focus on Preparing Consumers for the Winter and Holiday Season, Tax Season and Buying a Car

Continuing her commitment to bring the resources of her office into communities across the state, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today that her office will be introducing a monthly training series in the City of Springfield to educate residents on fundamental consumer protection issues.

The training series will kick off this week with a training this Wednesday on utility rights, landlord-tenant rights, and home repair scams that often emerge during the winter months. The series will continue with one training per month at the same location and time.


MICHIGAN

November 19, 2015

Attorney General Bill Schuette Partners with Nonprofits to Help Michigan Citizens Make Smart Donations


As the holiday season approaches and many charities begin end of the year fundraising appeals, the free Giving Wisely handout provides timely and critical advice to anyone considering a donation. The resource informs Michigan citizens how best to avoid scams when making their charitable contributions and recommends caution when dealing with fundraising telemarketers.
MISSISSIPPI
November 30, 2015

Attorney General Jim Hood Warns Consumers of Recent Phishing Emails Sent to Users’ Google Accounts

Attorney General Jim Hood warns consumers to be cautious in clicking links contained in any unsolicited emails sent to their email accounts. One version of this common scam recently reappeared when Google account holders received an email asking the users to review the details of their accounts in order to comply with regulations. These types of scams are commonly referred to as “phishing.”

http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/attorney-general-jim-hood-warns-consumers-of-recent-phishing-emails-sent-to-users-google-accounts/

November 20, 2015

Attorney General Jim Hood Warns Mississippians of a Recent Spoofing Scam

Attorney General Jim Hood is warning Mississippians today of a phone scam that challenges even the savviest consumer. “Scammers realize that consumers are much wiser and more likely to reject calls from unfamiliar numbers,” said Attorney General Jim Hood. “They use caller ID spoofing technology to impersonate a known or trusted phone number to trick potential victims into answering the phone.”

http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/attorney-general-jim-hood-warns-mississippians-of-a-recent-spoofing-scam/
MISSISSIPPI CONT’D

November 3, 2015

**Attorney General Jim Hood Warns Mississippians of IRS Scammers Searching for their Next Victim**

Attorney General Jim Hood wants to remind Mississippi consumers to remain cautious of tax-related phone scams.

Meredith Aldridge, Director of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division said, “These scammers continue to search for their next victim before, during and even after tax season.”

The scammers call claiming to be an agent for the IRS or the Federal Treasury Department. The victim is told “this is their Official Final Notice – the IRS is filing a lawsuit against you”. He or she “owes money to the IRS” and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, the scammer threatens the victim with arrest, deportation or suspension of a business or driver’s license.


MISSOURI

November 23, 2015

**Attorney General Chris Koster Warns of fake IRS calls in Springfield area**

Attorney General Chris Koster today warned Missouri consumers of a possible telephone scam in which the caller pretends to be from the Internal Revenue Service and requests immediate payment. The Attorney General’s Office has received approximately 200 telephone calls today from consumers in the 417 area code in and around Springfield, Missouri, regarding these fake calls.

November 10, 2015

**Attorney General Chris Koster Offers New Consumer Guide For Military And Veterans**

*Guide focuses on protecting service members from consumer fraud and scams*

Attorney General Chris Koster today announced a new consumer guide for military personnel and veterans to offer information regarding laws that protect them from consumer scams and provide tools to help them if they become victims of scams. Topics in the guide include predatory lending, education fraud, residential rental scams, and identity theft.


November 6, 2015

**Attorney General Chris Koster Warns Consumers About Fake Debt Collectors**

Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster today warned Missourians about scammers posing as debt collectors. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Hotline has received reports of phone calls with individuals claiming to be from debt collection agencies attempting to collect a debt the consumers do not owe.


**MONTANA**

November 6, 2015

**Attorney General Tim Fox Warns Montanans of IRS Impersonation Scam**

Today, Attorney General Tim Fox warned Montanans about aggressive and sometimes threatening phone calls from scammers impersonating agents of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
Attorney General Fox added that while the scams are often carried out via telephone, they can also come in the form of an email. Nationwide, millions of dollars have been lost, and the IRS encourages taxpayers to educate themselves on varying IRS related scams, including the IRS Impersonation Phone Scam, by visiting http://www.irs.gov/uac/Tax-Scams-Consumer-Alerts.


November 3, 2015

**Attorney General Tim Fox Warns Montanans of Lottery Scams**

The Montana Department of Justice and the Montana Lottery are teaming up once again to warn the public about two lottery scams making the rounds on social media, e-mail, and other avenues. The messages claim: “Mega Millions/Powerball is giving free $1 million jackpot online instantly.”

Montana Lottery Director Angela Wong said, “These online scams are not connected in any way to the real Powerball or Mega Millions games. The only way to play Powerball or Mega Millions and possibly win a prize is to buy your tickets from a state lottery or a licensed lottery retailer. If you don’t buy a ticket from a licensed lottery retailer, you can’t win.”

https://dojmt.gov/state-warns-montanans-of-lottery-scams/

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**NEVADA**

November 19, 2015

**Attorney General Laxalt Launches Office of Military Legal Assistance to Provide Pro Bono Legal Assistance to Nevada’s Communities**

Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt proudly announced the launch of the Office of Military Legal Assistance, the nation’s first attorney general-led, public-private partnership offering our military communities access to pro bono civil legal services. The program pairs Nevada’s active duty, Guard and reserve service members with local attorneys to receive legal assistance for civil matters including: consumer fraud, military rights, immigration, landlord/tenant, predatory lending and creditor/debtor issues. Nevada veterans may also receive assistance with wills and powers of attorney.
NEW JERSEY
November 12, 2015

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman Announces New Jersey Consumer Affairs Cites 62 Home Improvement Contractors for More Than $1 Million in Consumer Restitution and Civil Penalties in Third Quarter of 2015

The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs has continued its crackdown on noncompliant home improvement contractors with the issuance of Notices of Violation to 62 contractors, seeking $1,046,077.76 in consumer restitution and civil penalties.

The notices, issued in the third quarter of 2015, are part of the Division’s vigilant efforts to police the home improvement marketplace to protect consumers from disreputable contractors.

Of the contractors cited during the third quarter, 23 allegedly violated New Jersey law by acting as unregistered contractors. To become registered, a contractor must disclose the physical location of the business and provide proof of a minimum of $500,000 in liability insurance, among other requirements.

http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases15/pr20151112a.html

November 6, 2015

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman Announces “Anti-Fraud Toolkit,” as New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Achieves Goal of Delivering Fraud Awareness Program to Every County in New Jersey

Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman today announced the creation of a new “Anti-Fraud Toolkit” designed to protect senior citizens from falling victim to scam artists. The kit is the latest phase of the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs’ “Fighting Fraud” awareness education campaign, which has been delivered to seniors in every county in New Jersey in 2015. The “Anti-Fraud Toolkit” will be distributed in early 2016.

http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases15/pr20151106a.html
NEW MEXICO
November 24, 2015

Attorney General Hector Balderas Warns New Mexicans about “Making Home Affordable” Program

Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a scam alert to warn New Mexicans about a dangerous new scam preying on New Mexicans who are having trouble paying their mortgages. “Do not pay Ocwen mortgage payments by Moneygram in response to 'Making Home Affordable' offer letters or calls,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas


OKLAHOMA
November 30, 2015

Attorney General Scott Pruitt Urges Oklahomans to Look Out for Scams During Ice Storm Clean-Up

Price gouging statutes in effect for all 77 counties after emergency declared

Attorney General Scott Pruitt is urging Oklahomans to be wary of criminals streaming into communities targeting homes and businesses damaged by the recent winter weather.

http://www.ok.gov/triton/modules/newsroom/newsroom_article.php?id=258&article_id=17057
VERMONT
November 24, 2015

Attorney General Bill Sorrell Warns Of Ongoing Credit Card Fraud

As we head into the holiday buying season, Attorney General Sorrell reminds consumers to take steps to protect themselves from being the victims of credit card theft and fraud. Data security breaches and credit card fraud continue to be a significant problem, causing millions of dollars in losses each year. Consumers should take the following steps to protect themselves.


November 5, 2105

Attorney General Bill Sorrell Warns About Out Of State Business Soliciting Money On Behalf Of Local School

The Vermont Attorney General’s Office and the Bristol Police Department are warning Vermont businesses about an out of state company operating a scam that solicits local businesses to donate money to support their area school. The scam company hires a salesperson to ask local businesses to pay for an advertisement that will be placed on an educational folder, typically on a subject like drug prevention, that it says will be provided to students free of charge. This is a scheme that allows the out of state company to collect money from local businesses far in excess of the cost of the “folders” that it may actually deliver to the school. Businesses are advised not to contribute to this type of promotional scheme.