About the State Center Consumer Protection Report

The Center for State Enforcement of Antitrust and Consumer Protection Laws ("State Center") is pleased to present the latest edition of the State Center Consumer Protection Report ("Consumer Protection Report") Published in partnership with StateAG.org, the Consumer Protection Report is a monthly compilation of state attorney general press releases on local and national consumer protection efforts, including investigations, court cases, consumer alerts and advocacy initiatives. It makes no effort to prioritize, analyze or comment on the information presented in the press releases and their potential impact on consumers.

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

The Consumer Protection Report is produced through the State Center’s State AG Consumer Protection Initiative: a website featuring all current and previous editions of the Report, and a database, allowing visitors to conduct key-word and drop-down menu searches of all previous editions.

- For more information on the State AG Consumer Protection Initiative, please visit our website: www.statecenterinc.org/cpi-newsletter.
- If an office would like their consumer protection activity included in subsequent newsletters, please contact us.
- Newsletter sign up: To sign up for the monthly Consumer Protection Report, please sign up here.

For more information about the State Center and StateAG.org, please visit our websites:

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

StateAG.org: www.stateag.org
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Consumer Protection Cases

ARIZONA

December 12, 2017

Chris Gatling Sentenced to 2.5 Years in Prison for Telemarketing Scam

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced former NBA player Raymond Christopher Gatling was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for his involvement in a telemarketing scam selling fake websites to vulnerable seniors. Gatling was also sentenced to 3 years of probation once he is released from prison.

In October 2016, the Attorney General’s Office indicted Gatling for Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, Fraudulent Schemes and Practices, and Forgery. A Scottsdale Police Department investigation found Gatling owned and operated a telemarketing business selling fictitious websites for thousands of dollars. Gatling promised the 12 victims they would receive thousands of dollars each month if they purchased a website from him.

From October 2014 to February 2015, Gatling collected over $155,000 charging victims upwards of $42,000 for a website and marketing materials. The victims did not receive the promised website or any profits. Some of the victims gave Gatling their life savings.

Gatling spent the victims’...


December 08, 2017

Fake Doctor Sentenced to 8 Years in Prison

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Craig Allen Scherf was sentenced to 8 years in prison and 5 years of probation after operating an illegal botox and laser clinic in Tempe. In August, Scherf pleaded guilty to Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices and Illegal Control of an Enterprise.

Between January 2015 and January 2017, Craig Scherf misrepresented to his victims that he was a doctor licensed to perform cosmetic injections and laser treatments out of a clinic in Tempe. Scherf injected his victims with the drugs Juvederm and Botox which he bought from the manufacturer by illegally using the identity of a licensed physician. More than 30 people were victimized by Scherf during this time period.

Scherf is also required to pay restitution to his victims. Restitution will be determined by the court at a later date.

Assistant Attorney General Adam J Schwartz is prosecuting this case.

Attorney General Becerra Takes Education Secretary DeVos To Court For Withholding Student Loan Debt Relief For Defrauded Corinthian Students

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education and its Secretary, Betsy DeVos, for refusing to process debt relief claims submitted by tens of thousands of students who took out federal student loans to attend Corinthian Colleges, Inc. (Corinthian). Students became eligible to apply for this relief after the courts found that Corinthian defrauded these students in violation of California consumer protection laws. More than 1 in 4 of those students with pending debt relief claims resided in California.

“What Secretary DeVos is doing is unconscionable,” said Attorney General Becerra. “After having their American Dreams stolen by a so-called higher education institution, Corinthian students are now being denied critical relief by a Secretary of Education hostile to their plight. It is hard to believe that we are forced to sue the Department of Education to compel Secretary DeVos to carry out...


Attorney General Becerra Sues Distributor For Selling Jewelry With Excessive Levels of Lead and Cadmium

LOS ANGELES – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today filed a lawsuit against Luxy Accessory, Inc. (Luxy), a jewelry distributor based in Los Angeles, and its owner Hyun Sook Kim, for selling jewelry with excessive levels of lead and cadmium. Much of the jewelry is intended for children, and some have been mislabeled as “lead free.” These acts constitute a violation of California’s Metal Containing Jewelry Law and the Unfair Competition Law, and also constitute unlawful advertising. Attorney General Becerra filed today’s lawsuit jointly with the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) seeking injunctive relief to prevent Luxy from selling its stockpiles of non-compliant jewelry.

“Lead and cadmium are highly toxic metals that can cause a host of physical and behavioral health problems at low levels of exposure, especially for our children,” said Attorney General Becerra. “Luxy has continued to blatantly violate our laws, and in the process, jeopardized the...


Attorney General Becerra: Stockton Lawyer Pleads Guilty to Defrauding Immigrant Families

STOCKTON – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced that defendant Yehlen “Mary” Dorothea Brooks pled guilty to 15 felony counts of grand theft for defrauding...
immigrant clients seeking citizenship. The defendant entered her guilty plea in San Joaquin County Superior Court for an expected five-year split sentence to be served locally. Under the terms of the plea agreement, Brooks agreed to pay a total of $371,709 in restitution to the victims.

“This is a cruel case in which a scam artist exploited hard-working immigrants to benefit her own pocket,” said Attorney General Becerra. “The California Department of Justice has zero tolerance for those who prey on and defraud families in need of legal help. Criminals like Brooks ruin lives and tear families apart – and they will be held accountable.”

Brooks operated an immigration law practice in Stockton, California from 2003 to 2017. She targeted vulnerable immigrant clients who sought her...
controlled apartments and about how much rent could legally be raised in the future. The complaint alleges that Smith Properties Holdings Van Ness, L.P. and Equity Residential Management, L.L.C. use rent concessions to mislead consumers into signing leases without providing them with all the material terms. As a result, consumers face rent increases that are significantly higher than they would normally expect under District rent control laws. Attorney General Racine is seeking to end these misleading practices and to recover restitution for consumers who have been harmed, as well as penalties and costs.

“Landlords should clearly inform consumers up-front about the base rent from which subsequent increases will be calculated – but, we...


December 04, 2017
AG Racine Wins Judgment for More Than $425K From Company Running Student Loan Debt Relief Scam
WASHINGTON, D. C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine announced today that his office obtained a judgment for more than $425,000 in restitution and civil penalties from a company that deceived student borrowers into paying fees for services they could have obtained for free. The Superior Court of the District of Columbia ordered the company, Student Aid Center, Inc., to repay 233 District consumers for all fees the company had unlawfully collected, which total $192,824.95. The court also permanently barred the company from misleading consumers and charging up-front fees for student loan debt relief services.

In addition, the court also ordered Student Aid Center to pay $233,000 as a civil penalty.

“We will not tolerate scammers preying on District residents who worked hard to get an education and are now struggling to repay their student loans,” said Attorney General Racine. “There are many free resources available to make repaying student loans easier,...


FLORIDA

December 27, 2017
Court Orders Tobacco Company to Honor Florida’s Historic Tobacco Settlement
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced a major ruling in a case involving Florida’s historic tobacco settlement agreement. The litigation centers around R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company’s sale of three iconic cigarette brands, Winston, Kool and Salem, along with a legacy Lorillard Tobacco Company brand, Maverick, to Imperial Tobacco Group in June 2015 for $7 billion.

From the time of the tobacco settlement in 1997 through 2015, RJR paid the state tens of
millions of dollars annually for these cigarette brands in compliance with the historic settlement. After the June 2015 sale, RJR stopped making payments on these brands, costing the state an estimated $30 million a year in perpetuity.

“Today’s ruling will ensure Florida’s landmark tobacco settlement is honored and our state receives the money it is owed,” said Attorney General Bondi. “My office is committed to pursuing all appropriate remedies when companies try to evade their monetary obligations to the...

➢ Original Press Release:

December 18, 2017

Attorney General Bondi Takes on Charity Exploiting Families of Fallen Firefighters and Breast Cancer Patients

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today filed a complaint seeking to shut down a Florida charity falsely claiming to use charitable donations to provide financial support to families of firefighters lost in the line of duty. Community Charity Advancement, Inc. also allegedly falsely claims to use donations to provide assistance to breast cancer research organizations and breast cancer patients, but in some instances uses donations for different purposes. According to the complaint, CCAI’s deceptive acts and practices mislead generous donors into contributing to CCAI instead of the many legitimate charitable organizations operating bona fide programs that support breast cancer research, breast cancer and fire victims, as well as firefighters.

“It is absolutely abhorrent to exploit families of fallen firefighters and breast cancer patients to steal from generous Floridians. Charity scams prey on people’s goodwill and discourage people from giving. Furthermore, every dollar given to a deceptive charity is a dollar that...

➢ Original Press Release:

December 001, 2017

Attorney General Bondi Confirms Investigation into Uber Data Breach

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today confirmed that her office issued a subpoena to ride sharing company Uber as part of an investigation into Uber’s alleged cover up of a data breach that occurred more than a year ago. According to the company, millions of Uber drivers nationwide may have had personal information accessed as a result of the breach. There are at least 32,000 Uber drivers in Florida who may have been affected.

Instead of reporting the breach to the Florida Attorney General’s Office within the 30 days required by the Florida Information Protection Act, Uber reportedly paid a ransom and then concealed the hack by entering into a nondisclosure agreement with the hackers.

“Uber’s delay to provide timely notice to affected individuals is inexcusable,” said Attorney
General Bondi. “I have always been a strong advocate for Uber’s innovative technology, but if these revelations prove true, I am disgusted by this...

➢ Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/9A74DFD5AF2202B4852581E900763283

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ILLINOIS

December 04, 2017

MADIGAN SUBPOENAS TRANSPORTATION COMPANY REGARDING COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today issued a subpoena to a transportation company over potential civil rights violations based on a recent advertisement directed at college students traveling during the holiday season.

Madigan issued the subpoena to Champaign, Ill.-based Suburban Express, Inc., a company that offers bus services to college students traveling between Chicago and the suburbs and downstate Champaign-Urbana. The subpoena seeks documents, records and information that will help determine whether the company's policies and practices violate the Illinois Human Rights Act. Under the Act, public accommodations cannot be denied to a person or group of people based on factors including age, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Madigan's subpoena directs Suburban Express to reply within 30 days.

"I am concerned that this advertisement may reflect that Suburban Express is discriminating against potential customers," Madigan said. "Under the law, access to transportation must not be...

➢ Original Press Release:

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IOWA

December 22, 2017

Seller of Intellux Barred from Iowa after Falsely Claiming that Older Users Experienced “Drastic” Improvements in Memory

(DES MOINES, Iowa) The marketer of an herbal remedy touted online as able to “reduce memory loss” and “ignite your brain’s true powers and potential” paid $35,000 to the state last week and must stop targeting Iowans, as part of a court-approved agreement finalized in November.

The agreement, through a consent judgment filed in Polk County District Court, bars JGG
Enterprises Inc. and its owner, Joseph Gregory Grelock, from any further Iowa marketing of Intellux or any other dietary supplement that involves claims of health benefits that are not supported by “competent and reliable scientific evidence.”

“These ads preyed on the understandable desire of older Iowans to restore a keen memory and mental focus that may have deteriorated with age,” Miller said. “These defendants claimed benefits for their pills without having the required scientific support, and that’s consumer fraud.”

The defendants, who deny liability, agreed to pay $25,000 in refunds to more than...


KANSAS

December 19, 2017

**Wichita roofer banned from doing business in Kansas**

TOPEKA – (December 19, 2017) – A Wichita man operating as a roofing contractor has been banned from doing business in Kansas, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today. Joshua White, doing business as Old Town Roofing & Remodeling, LLC, was permanently banned from operating as a roofing contractor in the State of Kansas. District Judge Warren Wilbert approved the default judgment last week in Sedgwick County District Court after White failed to respond to a lawsuit filed against him. White was also ordered to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs and a civil penalty.

Schmidt accused White of operating as a roofing contractor without properly registering as required by the Kansas Roofing Registration Act.


December 12, 2017

**AG Derek Schmidt sues company for failing to protect nursing home patients’ personal information**

INDEPENDENCE – (December 12, 2017) – A company that had operated a nursing home in Caney violated Kansas law by failing to secure or properly dispose of patient records containing personal information, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said in a lawsuit filed last week.

The attorney general filed suit against a Kansas company that had operated a nursing home in Caney. That nursing home is now closed. The filing in Montgomery County District Court alleges that Caney Guest Home, Inc., d/b/a Caney Nursing Center, and James R. Laidler, owner of the
facility, were aware that patient and employee records were contained unsecured in the building that used to operate as Caney Nursing Center. The building has been unoccupied since February and has been burglarized, sometimes unsecured, and trespassed upon during that time. Despite this knowledge, the defendants failed to secure or properly dispose of the records containing personal information, the lawsuit alleges.

District...


MBSSCHUSETTS

December 18, 2017

AG Obtains Court Order Against Lawrence Man Operating a Mortgage Scam

Boston — A Lawrence man has been ordered by a judge to stop engaging in the unauthorized practice of law and offering deceptive advice about mortgage loan modifications and bankruptcy to financially distressed homeowners, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

The AG’s Office has obtained a preliminary injunction against Homayoun Maali in Essex Superior Court after filing a lawsuit against him. The lawsuit alleges that Maali charged consumers fees and promised to help them lower their mortgage payments or avoid foreclosure or eviction by preparing loan modification applications and filing bankruptcy petitions. In fact, when consumers followed Maali’s instructions, it often resulted in foreclosure or eviction proceedings instead of avoiding them.

“Consumers struggling to keep their homes were misled by this defendant with harmful legal advice and false promises that only made their situations worse,” said AG Healey. “This court order prohibits this man from engaging in the unauthorized practice of law...


MICHIGAN

December 20, 2017

Schuette: Oakland County Mortgage Auditor Pleads Guilty in Mortgage Assistance Scheme

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced that Robert Shumake, 49, of Southfield, has pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor violations of the Credit Services Protection Act, while his business Mortgage Auditors of America has pleaded guilty to two felony counts of Obtaining Money by False Pretenses Over $1,000 and 13 misdemeanor violations of the Credit Services Protection Act.
“Today’s plea brings victims of Mr. Shumake one step closer to resolution,” said Schuette. “Mr. Shumake is now required to pay restitution to his victims and while it will not replace the homes that many lost, I hope it will help his victims regain their financial footing. Crimes that take advantage of residents at a vulnerable financial time are despicable and my office will continue to seek justice for individuals in these situations.”

Shumake entered a guilty plea on Wednesday, December 20, 2017 before Judge Alexander in Oakland County. The pleas were...


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**MONTANA**

December 04, 2017

**Attorney General Fox Sues Maker of Prescription Opioid OxyContin**

At a press conference Monday, Montana Attorney General Tim Fox announced his office filed a consumer protection lawsuit in Montana District Court against Purdue Pharma LLC., for ongoing deceptive marketing practices involving its prescription opioids, including OxyContin.

“Pharmaceutical companies that knowingly and deceptively harm consumers must be held accountable,” said Attorney General Fox. “As our investigation revealed and our complaint alleges, for years, Purdue knew the damage caused by OxyContin, and rather than scale back or eliminate distribution of the drug, it ramped-up deceptive marketing tactics to present the drug as ‘safe.’ Purdue manipulates doctors, lies to consumers, and its actions contributed to thousands of deaths across the country.”

The violations committed by Purdue for which Attorney General Fox’s office claims in the suit include:

- Misrepresenting the likelihood that long-term use of its drug would lead to addiction;
- Falsely claiming that use of OxyContin would improve overall health quality, and failing to...


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**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

December 01, 2017

**Former Financial Advisor Indicted for Theft and Financial Exploitation of the Elderly**

Deputy Attorney General Ann M. Rice announce the indictment of former financial advisor Karen A. McKinley, age 53, of Bedford, New Hampshire.

On November 17, 2017, McKinley was indicted by the Hillsborough County North Grand Jury on 7 counts of Theft by Unauthorized Taking and 4 counts of Financial Exploitation of the Elderly in connection with her handling of bank and brokerage accounts of an elderly Peterborough client...
while she was employed by a major brokerage and investment advisory firm in Manchester. The alleged conduct took place between early 2013 and early 2016. Ms. McKinley was also indicted on 1 count of Falsification of Physical Evidence in connection with a document she caused to be submitted to the State during the investigation. Each of the Theft and Financial Exploitation of the Elderly charge carries a maximum penalty of 10-30 years of imprisonment and a $4,000 fine. The Falsification of Physical Evidence charge carries...


NEW JERSEY

December 28, 2017

Middlesex Doctor’s License Temporarily Suspended for Allegedly Reusing Disposable Anorectal Catheters on Multiple Patients

NEWARK – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that a Committee of the State Board of Medical Examiners (“the Committee”) has temporarily suspended the license of a Middlesex surgeon amid allegations he jeopardized his patients’ health and safety by reusing single-use catheters on multiple patients during anorectal diagnostic testing.

Dr. Sanjiv K. Patankar, an East Brunswick practitioner, allegedly washed and reused the small, flexible catheters inserted into patients’ rectums during medical procedures, according to a Verified Complaint filed by the State.

The catheters are meant to be thrown away after a single use, but Patankar used them on at least five patients before discarding them because supplies for replacement catheters were on backorder, the State alleges.

After taking testimony and reviewing evidence during a hearing last week, the Committee unanimously found that Patankar demonstrated a fundamental lack of judgment and placed patients in clear and imminent danger...


December 26, 2017

Attorney General Porrino and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Files Complaint Against Contractor Alleging Fraud in Connection with Rebuilding and Repair of Sandy-Damaged Homes

NEWARK – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs have filed a Complaint alleging that a South Jersey-based contractor used deceptive practices to obtain more than $348,000 in federal relief funds from nine homeowners who sought to have their damaged homes rebuilt, elevated and/or repaired after Superstorm Sandy.
According to the Complaint, filed in the Superior Court Chancery Division in Ocean County, D.J.M. Households Inc., doing business as Jersey Pride Home Renovations, and its owner, William A. Wolford, allegedly violated the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act and a number of regulations governing contractors and advertising by failing to perform contracted-for home improvements and/or home elevations after receiving federal Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Elevation and Mitigation (RREM) Program funds, Landlord Rental Repair Program (LRRP) funds, and consumer payments. The Complaint alleges that D.J.M. Households, which maintained an office in Cherry Hill and later in Mullica Hill, pressured consumers to...

[Relevant link provided]

December 20, 2017

Attorney General Porrino and New Jersey Bureau of Securities Announce $275,000 Civil Monetary Penalty Against Red Bank Brokerage Firm For Supervisory Failures and Books and Records Violations

NEWARK – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, Bureau of Securities, have announced that a Red Bank brokerage firm will pay a $275,000 civil monetary penalty for failing to reasonably supervise one of its brokers who managed an account for a quasi-public entity. The Bureau of Securities, in an Administrative Consent Order signed on December 7, 2017, found that Garden State Securities Inc. failed to address red flags in a Newark Watershed Conservation and Development Corporation (NWCDC) account, managed by Darnell Deans, a broker associated with Garden State. The Consent Order contains findings that Garden State permitted Deans to engage in “aggressive and speculative trading activity” without a reasonable basis to believe the activity was suitable for NWCDC. Garden State also failed to make and/or preserve a record of investment objectives for NWCDC and certain other customer accounts. Certain irregularities in the NWCDC account were first...

[Relevant link provided]

December 04, 2017

Somerset County Auto Retailer Agrees to Pay $37,500 to Reimburse Consumers Who Alleged a Salesman Pocketed Their Cash Deposits Before Being Fired by the Dealership

NEWARK – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that a Somerset County auto dealership has agreed to pay $37,500 to reimburse six consumers whose cash deposits were allegedly stolen by a sales representative who has since been fired from the dealership. Liccardi Ford, Inc. (“Liccardi Ford”), which does business as Liccardi Ford Lincoln and Liccardi Auto Group in Watchung, agreed to reimburse the consumers to resolve the Division’s investigation into their complaints.
The consumers allege they gave cash - ranging from $2,000 to $15,000 - to a Liccardi Ford sales representative as down payments on new and used vehicles that were supposed to be ordered from other sellers and brought to the Watchung dealership for their purchase. When the consumers returned to Liccardi Ford to finalize their sales, they were told that the representative had been fired and the dealership had no record of them.


NEW MEXICO

December 20, 2017

Attorney General Balderas Adds New Defendants & Claims to Opioid Lawsuit

Albuquerque, NM – Today, New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas announced the addition of new claims and three new defendants to his lawsuit against companies he alleges are responsible for the opioid epidemic in New Mexico. Following additional investigation, Balderas made the decision to amend New Mexico’s original complaint both to allege an industry-wide effort among manufacturers and distributors to unlawfully increase opioid sales in New Mexico, and to name additional defendants for their part in creating the epidemic.

“The entire pharmaceutical opioid industry, including both manufacturers and distributors together, has been in on the scheme to illegally market and sell opioids to New Mexicans, and we’ve modified our complaint to show that,” said Attorney General Balderas.

Through his office’s Consumer and Environmental Protection Division, Balderas filed his original complaint on September 7th of this year. A month later, 60 Minutes and The Washington Post jointly published a story detailing...
they will face the consequences of action by the Office of the Attorney General.”

The registration and reporting requirements imposed by the Charitable...

- **Original Press Release:**

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**NEW YORK**

December 26, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Seeks Criminal & Civil Contempt Charges Against Phony Lawyer Scamming New York Immigrants**

NEW YORK – Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman filed for a criminal and civil contempt order against Vincent Gonzalez, alleging that Gonzalez has violated a 2010 court order and continued to provide legal advice and immigration services to the Latino immigrant community, defrauding immigrants out of legal fees in at least 527 court appearances since 2010. Gonzalez now faces millions in penalties, fines, and restitution, as well as imprisonment for contempt of court.

“It’s unconscionable that a scammer would prey on immigrants in order to make a quick buck – and it’s even more egregious to continue to do so in violation of a court order,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “With fear on the rise in communities across the state, my office won’t hesitate to use all tools at our disposal to bring to justice those who try to defraud New York’s immigrant families.” …


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December 20, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Unprecedented Consent Decree With NYC Landlord Steven Croman**

Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced an unprecedented settlement with Steven Croman, a major New York City landlord, for engaging in illegal conduct, including harassment, coercion, and fraud, to force rent-regulated tenants out of their apartments and convert their apartments into highly profitable market-rate units.

The consent decree requires Croman to pay $8 million into a Tenant Restitution Fund – the largest-ever monetary settlement with an individual landlord. The settlement also requires over 100 Croman residential properties to be run by a new, independent management company with no ties to Croman, for five years – the longest-ever term for independent management in OAG history. Moreover, the settlement requires seven years of a monitor who will oversee compliance with the terms of the consent decree and provide regular reporting to the Attorney General – the longest-ever monitorship required in any tenant harassment case.
Croman is currently serving one year in...


December 20, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Files Lawsuit Alleging Bronx & Westchester Car Dealerships Illegally Charged Consumers For Bogus Theft Protection Product**

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a lawsuit against Victory Motors, LLC (Victory Mitsubishi of Larchmont) and Victory Auto Group, LLC (Victory Suzuki of the Bronx) alleging that the car dealerships deceptively charged as many as 1,100 consumers for an unwanted and bogus anti-theft product that cost up to $4,000 per consumer. The lawsuit alleges that this item, known as an “after-sale” product, was often added onto the final cost of the vehicle without the consumer’s knowledge or consent, after the customer had agreed upon the purchase price of a vehicle but before the sale transaction was finalized. Since 2015, Attorney General Schneiderman has obtained approximately $19 million in restitution and penalties from auto dealers; nearly 29,000 consumers were eligible for restitution under these settlements.

“Consumers shouldn’t have to worry about being scammed by auto dealers when they buy a car,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “We will continue to...


December 14, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Lawsuit Against Syracuse Student Storage Company**

SYRACUSE - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a lawsuit against Brian A. Jagodzinski and Not My Parents Garage, LLC, a Syracuse moving and storage company that promised to transport, store, and deliver college students’ household goods during the summer and semesters abroad, but failed to follow through on their contractual agreements. Not My Parents Garage was marketed as a “Door to Door student storage service” that provided college students and their parents with an affordable alternative to transporting possessions back and forth each year. Jagodzinski also owned and operated Not My Garage, which offered similar services for residential customers.

“Students entrust storage companies with their valuables, expecting that their items will be protected and returned—not mishandled,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “With help from my office, most of the impacted students have retrieved their possessions— and we are taking legal action to ensure those responsible are fully held to account....

December 14, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Cortland Landlord For Allegedly Refusing To Return Over $43,000 In Security Deposits**

CORTLAND – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Cortland County landlord Jeff D. Grodinsky and several corporate entities that owned and rented at least 36 properties, primarily to students attending the State University of New York at Cortland. As alleged in a petition filed today, Grodinsky—doing business as Vida Social Living, and in affiliation with Cortland Habitats, Inc., College Hill Realty, LLC, Campus Habitats, LLC, Committed 2 Cortland LLC, 77-79 Main Street, LLC, and Walk 2 Class, LLC—failed to return rent security deposits to at least 96 students. In papers filed with the Onondaga County Supreme Court, Grodinsky agreed to settle the matter. This agreement, which requires court approval, would settle an investigation into whether Grodinsky improperly transferred tenants’ deposits to his personal bank accounts and failed to return the deposits to tenants after their leases ended. If approved, Grodinsky and the associated parties will be...


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December 07, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Judgment Against Buffalo Area Home Improvement Contractor Following AG Lawsuit**

BUFFALO – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office won a lawsuit for consumers against John Kniery, a Buffalo-based home improvement contractor that bilked New Yorkers out of over $10,000. Kniery, who did business as Tree Service by John, must now pay $10,000 in restitution to consumers and $34,500 in penalties and costs. An investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s office uncovered that Kniery defrauded consumers by taking deposits and keeping their money without performing the tree removal services he was contracted to do, or by performing shoddy work. In addition to the restitution and penalties, the order issued by New York State Supreme Court Justice Tracey A. Bannister bans Kniery from engaging in any business in New York until he posts a $50,000 insurance bond. The bond will protect consumers and ensure that they can file a claim against Kniery to get their money back if he fails...


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December 06, 2017

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Lawsuit Alleging Buffalo Music Promoter Defrauded Consumers Of Over $14,000 In Music Festival Scam**

BUFFALO – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a lawsuit against Cody Conway, a Buffalo music promoter, and his company, Buffalove Music Festival, LLC. Conway promoted the Buffalove Music Festival 2017, which was to take place from July 20 to July 23 in
Franklinville, NY. The complaint alleges that Conway cancelled the festival weeks before the scheduled date and failed to refund customers who purchased tickets to event. In total, 146 New Yorkers purchased tickets from Conway for a combined $14,896.42 including service fees, with tickets ranging from $85 to $125 a piece, the complaint alleges. "New Yorkers should get what they pay for – and they’re entitled to timely refunds if event organizers don’t follow through on their promises," said Attorney General Schneiderman. "My office won’t tolerate scammers who trick hardworking consumers into forking over cash for performances they’ll never see."

After receiving consumer complaints, the Attorney General’s office launched...


**December 06, 2017**

**Court Allows A.G. Schneiderman’s Lawsuit Against Northern Leasing Systems, Inc. To Proceed**

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced today that New York State Supreme Court Justice Lucy Billings has allowed his office’s lawsuit against Northern Leasing Systems, Inc. and related entities to proceed, finding that the lawsuit had adequately alleged that the companies engaged in fraud.

In April 2016, the Attorney General’s office filed a lawsuit against Northern Leasing Systems, Inc., a New York company, and several of its affiliated companies, as well as principal Jay Cohen a/k/a Ari Jay Cohen and others involved in Northern Leasing’s operations. The lawsuit alleges that Northern Leasing traps small businesses into never-ending lease agreements for over-priced credit card processing equipment and abused the judicial process by suing to collect on these leases in the Civil Court of the City of New York.

“This decision validates our efforts to take on those who deceive hard-working small business owners – and then abuse the court system to harass...”


**NORTH CAROLINA**

**December 21, 2017**

**Attorney General Josh Stein Takes Opioid Manufacturer Insys to Court**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today filed a lawsuit against drug manufacturer Insys Therapeutics, Inc. alleging an extensive scheme involving kickbacks, deception and fraud in marketing its drug Subsys. Subsys is a spray form of the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which is approximately 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine.

“As millions of Americans were becoming addicted to and dying from prescription painkillers, it appears Insys and its sales representatives pushing its incredibly potent opioid on North
Carolina patients just to make more money,” said Attorney General Stein. “This is unconscionable, it’s unacceptable and it’s illegal. Today, I am acting to hold them accountable.” Subsys is approved only for adult cancer patients who are already on round-the-clock opioids for pain, but experience additional, breakthrough pain and for whom no other pain medications are effective.

Dr. Christopher Grubb, a Greenville, North Carolina pain specialist who lectures on behalf of the...


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**NORTH DAKOTA**

December 13, 2017

**INJUNCTION ISSUED HALTING PROPOSED SANFORD-MID DAKOTA MERGER**

BISMARCK, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem announced that the United States District Court for the District of North Dakota today issued a preliminary injunction blocking the proposed merger between Sanford Health and Mid Dakota Clinic until the Federal Trade Commission administrative hearing scheduled in January 2018.

North Dakota and the FTC alleged that the merger would substantially lessen competition for adult primary care, pediatric, obstetrics & gynecology, and general surgical services in the Bismarck-Mandan area, and cause significant harm to consumers. The magistrate judge held a four-day hearing on the joint motion for preliminary injunction, receiving over 1600 exhibits and hearing testimony from sixteen witnesses, before issuing today’s order.

“Competition in the marketplace benefits consumers, including when that competition is for medical care,” said Stenehjem. “I am very pleased with the Court’s decision and feel confident that the Court recognized the potential negative consequences for patients in the Bismarck-Mandan area. Today’s...


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**OHIO**

December 29, 2017

**Lawsuit Settlement on Insider-Trading Case**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Today Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine announced a settlement of $290 million in the insider-trading lawsuit against William A. Ackman, his hedge fund Pershing Square Capital Management LP, pharmaceutical company Valeant Pharmaceuticals International, Inc., and related defendants, on allegations that the defendants violated the
insider-trading laws and reaped illicit profits by buying up billions of dollars of shares from unsuspecting Allergan, Inc. investors who were not privy to Valeant’s plans to acquire Allergan at a significant premium. DeWine filed the case on behalf of the Ohio State Teachers Retirement System (STRS), which was a co-lead plaintiff in the case along with a public employee retirement system in Iowa. The amount that Ohio STRS will receive from the settlement will be determined as part of the claims administration process. “We filed this case to send a message that all investors have to play by the same rules,” said Attorney General...


December 19, 2017
Attorney General DeWine Announces Consumer Protection Action Against Columbus Used Car Seller

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a Columbus used car seller accused of failing to deliver vehicle titles to customers. The lawsuit accuses Amazing Auto Sales LLC and its operators Patrick Franklin, Charles R. White, and Laura Lassiter of violating Ohio’s consumer protection laws. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office has received 14 complaints against Amazing Auto Sales, which previously operated at 3586 Westerville Road in Columbus but is now closed. In their complaints, consumers generally said that they never received titles to vehicles they bought from the dealership. To help resolve consumers’ title complaints, claims totaling $14,135 were paid from the state’s Title Defect Recission Fund. The Attorney General’s lawsuit, filed in the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, seeks reimbursement to affected consumers, reimbursement to the Title Defect Recission Fund, and an order prohibiting Patrick Franklin, Charles R. White, and Laura Lassiter from applying for or...


December 08, 2017
Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Action Against Cleveland Used Car Seller

(CLEVELAND)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a Cleveland used car seller accused of failing to deliver vehicle titles to customers. The lawsuit accuses New School Auto LLC and owner Abigail Ferry of violating Ohio’s consumer protection laws. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office has received dozens of complaints against New School Auto of 3855 Ridge Road in Cleveland. Some consumers complained that they never received titles to
vehicles they bought from the dealership, resulting in 15 claims totaling $33,876 being paid from the state’s Title Defect Recision Fund to help resolve consumers’ title complaints. The Attorney General’s lawsuit seeks an end to any violations of the law, reimbursement to affected consumers, reimbursement to the Title Defect Recision Fund, and an order prohibiting Abigail Ferry from maintaining, renewing, or applying for an auto dealer license until reimbursement and penalties are paid. Consumers who have title problems should contact the...


OKLAHOMA

December 28, 2017

Attorney General Hunter Files Motions for Utility Customer Rate Reduction After Corporate Tax Rate Cut

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter has filed five motions with the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC), asking for an immediate reduction in customer rates from the state’s leading utility companies.

The attorney general’s request came the day that a sweeping overhaul of federal income taxes was signed into law, to take effect Jan. 1. The new law lowers the highest corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent.

The estimated annual savings for Oklahoma Gas & Electric, Public Service Company of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Natural Gas, CenterPoint Energy, and Arkansas Oklahoma Gas is approximately $100 million, not including additional savings from other affected utility accounts.

Attorney General Hunter said he is requesting customer rates be reduced by an amount reflecting lower federal corporate income tax rates.

“These companies will begin seeing major savings after the tax cut is implemented on Monday,” Attorney General Hunter said. “Oklahomans who are customers of these companies...


PENNSYLVANIA

December 15, 2017

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Settles Case Against Company for Violating PA’s “Do-Not-Call” Law

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced a $50,000 settlement with
Sperian Energy Corp, a retail energy supplier that violated Pennsylvania’s Do-Not-Call Law and called Pennsylvanians on the list who do not want to receive these kinds of calls. Sperian, a Nevada company, will pay $50,000 to the Office of Attorney General as part of the settlement. 80 Pennsylvania consumers who filed complaints with the Bureau of Consumer Protection about the unsolicited phone calls will receive a total of $8,000 as part of the settlement, or $100 apiece. The remaining funds will go to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Treasury and the Office of Attorney General.

“If a Pennsylvania resident registers their phone number on the Pennsylvania ‘Do-Not-Call’ List, it’s illegal to call them,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “Every company is obligated to comply with the Do-Not-Call Law, and Sperian failed to comply. These invasive telemarketing calls are a growing problem...

➢ Original Press Release:
https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4223

December 06, 2017
In Wake of Latest Data Breach, PayPal Responds to Attorney General Shapiro Demands for More Disclosure

HARRISBURG — PayPal has contacted the Office of Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection to alert it of a data breach impacting 1.6 million users in the United States and Canada. In response, Attorney General Shapiro has requested more information from PayPal about the breach.

The breach occurred on a platform PayPal acquired in July – TIO Networks – and prior to PayPal buying the company. TIO suspended operations last month after discovering the breach.

“PayPal did the right thing in alerting our office of the breach, and now is working with us to protect Pennsylvania consumers,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “I expect other businesses that experience hacks or breaches moving forward will do the same. We will remain vigilant.”

Without prompting, PayPal informed the Bureau of Consumer Protection that hackers may have obtained names, addresses, bank account information, Social Security numbers and login details of 1.6 million TIO users. TIO Networks, formerly...

➢ Original Press Release:
https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4206

TEXAS

December 08, 2017
AG Paxton Announces Temporary Injunction in Tech Support Scam Case

Attorney General Ken Paxton announced that the Travis County District Court granted a
temporary injunction halting the deceptive practices of HPC Techs LLC, Escutcheon Technologies, LLC, The Rhombus Techs LLC, and nine other tech support companies, as well as the four individuals who own and operate them. To preserve as much money as possible for consumer restitution, the temporary injunction also froze all business assets—along with the personal assets of two individual defendants—while the case is pending.

“My office will not tolerate deceptive sales tactics, especially those that utilize fear to make a buck,” Attorney General Paxton said. “We will do what is necessary to hold these fraudsters accountable for duping Texans out of their hard-earned money.”

The lawsuit alleges that the defendants used deceptive sales tactics to convince consumers to pay for unnecessary computer repair services. Consumers were contacted through phone calls and/or pop-up messages that appeared on their...


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WASHINGTON

December 26, 2017

**AG Ferguson files lawsuit against family for pocketing hundreds of thousands of donations meant for disadvantaged children**

SEATTLE — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced a lawsuit against a Leavenworth man and his family for pocketing most of $1.5 million in donations that thousands of Washingtonians thought were going to disadvantaged children. Roy Bronsin Haueter’s family instead used most of the donations to pay themselves and go on family vacations.

The Attorney General’s investigators have not found any evidence that the charities provided any direct benefit to children since at least 2012. The charities instead only have provided a small number of gift cards to a few nonprofit entities.

The lawsuit, filed in King County Superior Court, alleges that Roy Bronsin Haueter, his wife, and his children and their spouses operated four charities and a commercial fundraiser that continually violated the state Charitable Solicitations Act and Consumer Protection Act. The Attorney General’s Office asks the court to halt all deceptive activities by the organizations. The lawsuit seeks civil penalties...


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December 21, 2017

**AG Ferguson’s lawsuit reveals Comcast deceived customers, charged for service plans without consent**

SEATTLE — Today Attorney General Bob Ferguson amended his lawsuit against Comcast to
include new evidence revealing even more deceptive conduct than previously alleged.
Ferguson filed a more than one-hundred-million-dollar lawsuit against the cable television and
internet giant in King County Superior Court in August of 2016. The suit asserts Comcast
misrepresented the scope of its Service Protection Plan (SPP) as part of more than 1.8 million
violations of Washington’s Consumer Protection Act (CPA).
More than half a million Washingtonians subscribed to the SPP since 2011, paying at least $73
million to Comcast for the service plan from 2011 through the end of 2015.
A sample of recorded calls between SPP subscribers and Comcast representatives obtained by
the Attorney General’s Office reveal that Comcast may have signed up more than half of all SPP
subscribers without their consent. Comcast deceived consumers even when mentioning the
SPP, telling them the SPP plan was “free”...

reveals-comcast-deceived-customers-charged-service-plans

December 20, 2017
AG Ferguson files multi-million dollar lawsuit against for-profit Value Village
SEATTLE — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced a consumer protection lawsuit
against the for-profit company that owns Value Village, alleging Bellevue-based TVI, Inc. has
deceived thousands of Washington consumers and donors for more than a decade.
The company is the largest for-profit thrift retailer in the world, generating more than $1 billion
in annual revenue. It runs 330 stores worldwide and 20 Value Village stores in Washington
state.
The 37-page complaint, filed in King County Superior Court, contains numerous photos of actual
advertisements used in Washington, and details the widespread deception created by Value
Village’s aggressive marketing campaign. The numerous alleged deceptions mainly involve
misleading consumers and donors to believe that all types of donations and purchases
benefitted charity, and creating the impression that Value Village itself is a non-profit or charity.
In fact, no portion of Value Village in-store sales benefits its charity partners, and contrary to
Value Village's marketing, for...

million-dollar-lawsuit-against-profit-value-village

December 08, 2017
AG Ferguson, Amazon sue over “get rich quick” scam
OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a consumer protection lawsuit today against a
Massachusetts-based company, alleging it deceptively advertises and sells training packages to
potentially thousands of Washingtonians for as much as $35,000 with promises of inside
information on how to make money selling on Amazon.
Instead, the company, FBA Stores LLC, peddled bad advice and in some cases bad products
likely to cause Amazon to shut down consumers’ accounts, leaving them without the promised
income and sometimes in debt.
“The defendants promise easy money, but deliver a scam,” Ferguson said. “I will not tolerate
scammers preying on Washingtonians.”
The lawsuit, filed in King County Superior Court, accuses brothers Adam Bowser and Chris
Bowser and their companies, including FBA Stores, of numerous violations of Washington’s
Consumer Protection Act (CPA) and Business Opportunity Fraud Act.
Separately, Amazon has filed its own lawsuit against the Bowsers.
The company has offered trainings in at least eight...

over-get-rich-quick-scam

WEST VIRGINIA
December 11, 2017
Attorney General Morrisey Secures Quick Judgment In Unlawful Debt Negotiator Case
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey secured a judgment for more
than $49,000 against a California-based lawyer after a court found that his debt negotiation
firm failed to comply with an earlier settlement.
Matthews Law Firm Inc. and Arturo Matthews, Jr., its sole owner and operator, initially agreed
to pay $62,000 to resolve a state investigation – an amount they then failed to pay in full
leaving an owed balance of $49,548.99.
The Attorney General petitioned the court in October to enforce the settlement, which
prompted Matthews to acknowledge his failure to comply and consent to a judgment ordering
that he pay the outstanding balance.
“I am pleased that the owner of this business has agreed to pay for the harm done to West
Virginia consumers,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Any business that violates state law will
be held accountable.” ...

debt-negotiator-case?e=5699e8e411

December 08, 2017
Attorney General Morrisey Wins Judgment in Contractor Fraud Case
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced a circuit court
awarded the state judgment against a contractor and his businesses, moments after the
defendant entered a guilty plea in a related criminal case.
The conviction and subsequent civil judgment involve Frederick Tarmon Sr., owner of Tarmon
and Sons as well as Complete Handyman Service. The investigation stemmed from a number of
consumers complaining they paid for projects and services that were never completed.
“Business owners must be held accountable for their actions,” Attorney General Morrisey said.
“Our office will always protect and defend consumers against dishonest business practices.” Jefferson Circuit Judge Debra McLaughlin ruled from the bench Friday in awarding judgment to the state. Restitution will be ordered as part of sentencing in the criminal case, which involved a guilty plea to obtaining money by false pretenses. ... 


Multistate Cases

Dissolution of Charity That Falsely Claimed to Help Veterans
Date: December 1, 2017

Details: A multistate settlement with VietNow National Headquarters, Inc., a charity that falsely claimed to help veterans. As part of the settlement, the organization will be dissolved and its funds will be distributed to two national and well-respected veterans charities, Fisher House Foundation and Operation Homefront. The settlement also places a permanent injunction on VietNow's directors and officers, barring them from any future involvement in running a charity or soliciting donations.

Additional articles may be found in the November 2017 Report.

States:
1. Virginia

Lawsuit Against DoE for Failing to Provide Federal Student Loan Discharges
Date: December 14, 2017

Details: The Attorneys General of Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education and Secretary Betsy DeVos for failing to provide federal loan discharges to students victimized by Corinthian Colleges and for subjecting borrowers to wage garnishment and tax refund interception, even in instances where the Department has made findings of fraud against the school.


States include:
1. Illinois
2. Massachusetts
3. New York
Multistate Settlement for Misleading Claims of Spinal Surgery Device

Date: December 13, 2017

Details: A $12 million settlement was reached with a company that manufactures a device used primarily in spinal surgeries. The settlement with Medtronic Sofamor Danek, Inc. and Medtronic Sofamor Danek USA, Inc. (Medtronic) resolves allegations that the company misled consumers about the safety of its Infuse® Bone Graft Device.

According to the complaint, Medtronic used deceptive company-sponsored scientific literature to make false and misleading claims about Infuse's safety, effectiveness and quality. The false marketing created an artificial demand for Infuse in a range of fusion surgeries. The company's fraudulent conduct was the subject of a 16-month investigation by the U.S. Senate Finance Committee.

States include:

1. California
2. Illinois
3. Massachusetts
4. Oregon
5. Washington

Prescription Drug Settlement of Deceptive Off-Label Marketing

Date: December 21, 2017

Details: A settlement was reached, with attorneys general from all states and the District of Columbia, with Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (BIPI). The settlement ends a multistate investigation into BIPI’s alleged off-label marketing, deceptive and misleading representations made in its promotion of four of its prescription drugs: Micardis®, Aggrenox®, Atrovent®, and Combivent®.

States include:

1. Arkansas
2. California
3. Connecticut
4. Delaware
5. Florida
6. Georgia
7. Idaho
8. Illinois
9. Iowa
10. Kentucky
11. Louisiana
12. Maine
13. Maryland
14. Massachusetts
15. Montana
16. Nebraska
17. Nevada
18. New Hampshire
19. New Jersey
20. New York
21. North Carolina
22. Pennsylvania
23. Texas
24. Vermont
25. Virginia
26. West Virginia
27. Wisconsin
28. Wyoming
**Medicaid Fraud**

**Medicaid Fraud Attorney Appointed to National Opioid Working Group**

**Date:** 14 December 2017

**Details:** Appointments have been made to the National Association of Medicaid Fraud Control Units Opioid Working Group. Members of the group include state attorney general staff from across the country who are in the Medicaid Fraud Units of their respective states.

The group will develop legislative proposals, investigative and prosecution techniques; coordinate with multistate consumer protection investigations; and work with the federal Opioid Task Force.

**States include:**


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**Settlement Against Mylan Regarding its EpiPen Pricing**

**Date:** December 7, 2017

**Details:** The settlement resolves allegations that Mylan demanded massive price increases for its EpiPen in the private market and underpaid its EpiPen rebates to Maryland’s Medicaid program. The participating states will share $213,936,000 of the total settlement.

**States include:**


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**ALABAMA**

December 11, 2017

**AG Steve Marshall Announces Conviction of Three Former Cherokee County Nursing Home Employees in Neglect Case**

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Steve Marshall announced today the conviction of three former employees of a Centre nursing home for failing to properly provide care for a resident of the facility. Sandra Michele Curry, and Kacey Minerva Allen, both residents of Centre, and Shawna Rogers, a resident of Rome, Georgia, each pleaded guilty in Cherokee County Circuit Court to one count of attempted elder abuse, a class C felony. “Alabama law recognizes that the care of those who are vulnerable is a serious responsibility, and those who are entrusted...”
with this charge have a legal obligation to properly fulfill their duties,” said Attorney General Marshall. “These defendants not only failed to provide adequate care, but they were shown to have lied about their negligence that resulted in harm and injury to a nursing home patient.”

Curry had been employed as a licensed practical nurse at Cherokee County Health and Rehabilitation in Centre,...

➤ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#5814

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ARKANSAS

December 07, 2017

Rutledge Announces Phillips County Man Sentenced for

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the conviction of a Helena-West Helena man for . Brett Ford pleaded no contest in Pulaski County District Court and must pay $933.12 in fines to the General Fund to the State of Arkansas and $311.04 in restitution to the Arkansas Medicaid Program Trust Fund.

“Investigators and attorneys at the Attorney General’s office continue to investigate and prosecute these crimes,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Brett Ford scammed an important program, which is relied on by some of the most vulnerable Arkansans. I will continue to make it a top priority of my office to stop this type of fraud.”

Ford, 35, of Helena-West Helena pleaded no contest to one count of , a Class A misdemeanor for billing for services during the time that the Medicaid recipient was hospitalized in August 2015. ...


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CONNECTICUT

December 08, 2017

State-Federal Settlement Reached with Opioid Treatment Provider to Resolve Medicaid Overpayment Claim Allegations

Hartford – A Connecticut healthcare organization and its chief executive officer have reached an $883,859 settlement with the state of Connecticut and the federal government to resolve allegations that the company submitted improper claims for payment to Connecticut's Medicaid program, Attorney General George Jepsen and state Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby said today.

The APT Foundation, Inc. (APT), is a behavioral health and substance use disorder services provider with clinics in New Haven, North Haven, and Bridgeport. APT provides methadone maintenance and detoxification services. Ms. Lynn Madden is APT’s chief executive officer. APT
is enrolled as a provider in the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program (CMAP), which includes the Connecticut Medicaid Program. The DSS administers the CMAP. The CMAP reimburses methadone clinics, including APT, utilizing a weekly rate payment for each CMAP patient who is provided methadone treatment. In October 2013, the DSS implemented a regulation stating that the...


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**FLORIDA**

December 21, 2017

**CNA Arrested for Neglecting an Elderly Person**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office today arrested Nekeysha Cromwell, 32, a certified nursing assistant at San Jose Health and Rehabilitation Center, for neglecting an elderly resident of the facility. According to the MFCU investigation, after Cromwell ignored nurse instructions and facility protocols the victim fractured both femurs. Cromwell is charged with one count of Neglect of an Elderly Person, a third-degree felony. If convicted, Cromwell faces up to five years in prison and $5,000 in fines. The State Attorney’s Office for the Fourth Judicial Circuit is prosecuting this case.


December 19, 2017

**Hillsborough County Woman Arrested for Medicaid Provider Fraud**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit today announced the arrest of a Hillsborough County woman for defrauding the Medicaid program out of at least $5,000. While working for My Harvest, a Medicaid provider of companion services, Geraldine Rivera, 32, allegedly caused her employer to bill for services never provided. According to the MFCU investigation, Rivera, continued to report providing companion services to a disabled Medicaid recipient long after Rivera stopped servicing the recipient. My Harvest no longer employs Rivera.

Rivera faces one count of Medicaid provider fraud and one count of scheme to defraud, both third-degree felonies. If convicted, Rivera faces up to 10 years in prison and more than $15,000 in fines and restitution. Attorney General Bondi’s Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the case.

December 08, 2017

**Caregiver Arrested for Defrauding Medicaid Out of More Than $85,000**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Martin County Sheriff’s Office announced the arrest of a home and community based caregiver for defrauding the Medicaid program out of more than $85,000. According to the MFCU investigation, Luther Jerome Robinson, 50, fraudulently submitted billing records and progress notes for services never provided to several Medicaid recipients.

Robison allegedly claimed hundreds of hours for services not provided. According to the claims, Robinson provided services to more than one Medicaid recipient at the same time and reported to provide services during a time period when he was out of the state. Additionally, in at least two instances, Robinson submitted claims for services purportedly provided on dates and times when he was involved in vehicular crashes.

Robinson faces one count of theft, a first-degree felony, one count of grand theft, a second-degree felony, and one count of organized fraud, also a...

- Original Press Release:
  
  [https://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/5DA89C51D82CD0A6852581F00058CBDA](https://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/5DA89C51D82CD0A6852581F00058CBDA)

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**ILLINOIS**

December 29, 2017

**MADIGAN: CHICAGO WOMAN CHARGED FOR DEFRAUDING STATE OUT OF APPROXIMATELY $100,000 IN MEDICAID FUNDING**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced that a Chicago doctor was charged with for defrauding the state out of approximately $100,000 in Medicaid funding.

Dr. Manuela Farhi, 60, of Chicago, was charged Friday with Class 1 vendor fraud, two counts of Class 1 theft and Class 3 forgery in Cook County Circuit Court for her scheme to bill the state for services she did not actually provide. If convicted, Farhi faces up to 15 years in prison.

In the indictment, Madigan alleged Farhi billed Medicaid through her practice as an OB/GYN at 7010 West North Avenue in Chicago serving women enrolled in the state’s Medicaid program. Between 2008 and 2015, she billed the state for approximately $100,000 in services that were not provided to patients, services she claimed to have provided when patients really missed their appointments, and services she claimed to have provided while she was actually out...

- Original Press Release:
  
KANSAS

December 28, 2017

KCK woman ordered to repay nearly $25,000 for Medicaid program fraud

OLATHE – (December 28, 2017) – A Kansas City, Kansas, woman was ordered yesterday to repay nearly $25,000 to the Kansas Medicaid program after pleading guilty to charges, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Macie Annette Dodds, 49, pleaded guilty in October to charges of making a false claim to the Medicaid program, computer crimes and welfare fraud. All three charges were felonies.

Johnson County District Court Judge Sara Welch yesterday ordered Dodds to pay restitution in the amount of $24,854.60 to the Kansas Medicaid program. Dodds was also sentenced to 24 months of probation. If Dodds violates probation, she faces 12 months in the custody of the Department of Corrections. Convictions such as this one may also result in a period during which the defendant is prohibited from being paid wages through a government health care program.

Dodds had signed up to provide home-based services to a Medicaid beneficiary...


KENTUCKY

December 18, 2017

Beshear: Three Indicted for Bilking $27,000 from State Medicaid Program

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 18, 2017) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of and Abuse today announced the indictments of three individuals for defrauding the state Medicaid program.

In Fayette Circuit Court on Wednesday Dec. 13, three women were charged in two separate indictments on 44 felony counts following alleged theft from the Kentucky Medical Assistance Program, and an individual who was receiving Social Security benefits.

“We take our role as a fraud watchdog very seriously,” said Beshear. “We are dedicated to protecting the integrity of the programs that provide vital aid and services to so many of our Kentucky families in need.”

Illya Adams-Jones, 50 and Jonnie Adams-Jones, 44, both of Lexington were charged in a single indictment, and are alleged to have taken approximately $15,000 from Kentucky’s Medicaid program. Illya was also accused of abusing her position as a representative payee for a Social Security beneficiary, by using...

MARYLAND

December 19, 2017

Severna Park Assisted Living Facility Agrees to Be Excluded from Maryland Medicaid Program

BALTIMORE, MD (December 19, 2017) –Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that Kris-Leigh Catered Living of Severna Park, LLC (Kris-Leigh) has agreed to be excluded from participation in the Maryland Medicaid program and to pay $110,000 as part of a settlement agreement. The agreement resolves allegations that Kris-Leigh violated the Maryland False Health Claims Act by submitting or causing claims to be submitted to the Medicaid Program for services that were not provided or which were so grossly substandard that the care was effectively without value.

The State’s allegations relate to claims submitted by Kris-Leigh since January 2013 for care provided to residents that was grossly substandard in multiple material ways:

- Hazardous living conditions such as broken air conditioners during the summer, pervasive mold, and a massive bed bug infestation.
- Security failures such as unlockable exterior doors and no effective automated device/system to alert staff to individuals entering or leaving...


MASSACHUSETTS

December 05, 2017

AG Secures More Than $14 Million From Home Health Agency

Boston — As part of an effort in Massachusetts to address fraud, waste and abuse in the home health industry, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today that a national home health agency has agreed to pay more than $14 million to settle allegations that it improperly submitted and received overpayments for services from the state’s Medicaid program, known as MassHealth.

Centrus Premier Home Care Inc. d/b/a/ Maxim Healthcare Services, Inc. (Maxim) is a nationwide provider of home health and other healthcare services with six locations in Massachusetts—Needham, Plymouth, Springfield, Taunton, Wilmington and Worcester. MassHealth referred this matter to the AG’s Division in January 2017 after a voluntary provider overpayment disclosure by Maxim to MassHealth in October 2016. The disclosure indicated that claims were improperly submitted to and paid by MassHealth for home health aide services provided through Maxim when nursing or skilled therapy services were not necessary.

“This company billed MassHealth...

MISSISSIPPI

December 19, 2017

Former Hattiesburg Clinical Assistant Sentenced for Felony Abuse of a Patient

A 24-year-old man will spend two years behind bars for abusing a patient while working as a clinical assistant in Hattiesburg, announced Attorney General Jim Hood.

James Haydel, 24, entered an open plea to one count of felony abuse of a vulnerable person on November 8. Forrest County Circuit Court Judge Bob Helfrich sentenced Haydel Monday to 12 years in the custody of the Mississippi Department of Corrections with two years to serve and 10 years suspended. Haydel must also serve five years on probation. Additionally, Haydel was ordered to pay a $2,500 fine, $200 in restitution to the Mississippi Crime Victim Compensation Fund, $200 in restitution to the Forrest County Public Defender’s Fund, and all court costs. Haydel was arrested on October 11, 2016, by the attorney general’s Control Unit for engaging in sexual penetration with a patient in a Hattiesburg healthcare facility where Haydel was employed as a...


MISSOURI

December 12, 2017

AG Hawley Announces Former Nursing Home Employee Sentenced to 17 Years for Financial Abuse of Medicaid Recipient and Receiving Stolen Property

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced that Kristi Metcalf, 41, of Carthage, Missouri, has been sentenced to 10 years for receiving stolen property and seven years for financial abuse of a Medicaid patient, to be served concurrently for ten years. She must also pay $44,561 in restitution to her victims and $15,370.63 for the State’s prosecution costs. In October, Metcalf pled guilty to the class B felony of receiving stolen property and the class C felony of abuse of a health care recipient in the Circuit Court of Jasper County.

Metcalf was employed in the business office of a Carthage, Missouri nursing home from 2010 through 2012. She was responsible for accounts which held resident funds in trust. She pled guilty to systematically retaining $44,561 in resident funds for her own purposes without the residents or their families’ consent. Some of the residents were Medicaid recipients....

NEW JERSEY

December 15, 2017

New Jersey Dentist Sentenced to Eight Year Prison Term, Ordered to Pay $7 Million in Scheme to Defraud Medicaid

TRENTON – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor announced that the owner of a now-defunct Central Jersey mobile dental practice today was sentenced to eight years in prison and ordered to pay $7 million in restitution and civil penalties in connection with a scheme to defraud more than $5.5 million from Medicaid. Stephen Beukas, 52, who owned New Jersey Mobile Dental, P.A. (“NJ Mobile”), was sentenced by Superior Court Judge Joseph W. Oxley in Monmouth County in accordance with a plea agreement reached when he pleaded guilty to second-degree misconduct by a corporate official in September.

In 2013, Beukas and six NJ Mobile employees – including four dentists - were charged by indictment with conspiring to defraud Medicaid by overbilling or submitting false claims for services purportedly provided to elderly patients in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult day care facilities, and private homes throughout...


NEW YORK

December 20, 2017

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Arrests In Alleged Cover Up Of White Plains Nursing Home Neglect

WHITE PLAINS – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced the arrest today of Certified Nurse Aides (CNAs) Janet Rose, 62, of Mt. Vernon, and Verlanda Paulma, 25, of White Plains, for Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and additional related charges. Both Rose and Paulma, who were employed as CNAs at the White Plains Center for Nursing Care (White Plains Center), allegedly failed on May 26, 2017 to perform monitoring checks of an at-risk resident with dementia who eloped and wandered from the facility.

Video surveillance recovered from White Plains Center captured the resident leaving the home through an unlocked rear door at approximately 7:54 p.m. It is alleged that after the resident left the facility, Rose and Paulma failed to perform required fifteen-minute checks that would have alerted the home that the resident was missing, and that Rose falsely recorded that the...

Operation Ghost Ride: A.G. Schneiderman Announces Sentencing Of Owner Of Albany Transportation Companies For Stealing Thousands In Medicaid Transit Scam

ALBANY, N.Y. – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the sentencing of Percy Sanville, Jr., 42, owner of A&N Transportation, and Co-Owner of Ammediate Transport upon his conviction of the crime of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony. Sanville was sentenced by Acting Supreme Court Justice Hon. Roger D. McDonough to two to six years in prison.

Sanville previously admitted that he submitted false claims to Medicaid for transportation for himself to physical therapy appointments between September 7, 2016 and November 30, 2016 that never occurred. Sanville’s business partner, Rafael Gonzalez also previously pled guilty to falsely billing Medicaid for transportation that never occurred. Gonzalez is scheduled to be sentenced on January 5, 2018.

“The defendant and his business partner carried out an elaborate hoax to defraud Medicaid and exploit New Yorkers by billing Medicaid for transportation that never occurred,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Ghost rides result...


NORTH CAROLINA

December 13, 2017

Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Sentencing in Fayetteville/Raeford Case

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein announced today that Dr. Jannetta Jordan pled guilty to four felonies in Wake County Superior Court for . Dr. Jordan was convicted of Felony Fraud by a Medical Assistance Provider, Felony Accessing a Government Computer to Defraud and two counts of Felony Obstruction of Justice. Dr. Jordan, who has already served two years in jail, was sentenced to 34 to 80 months in prison, suspended for 36 months of supervised probation. The court ordered Dr. Jordan to pay restitution of $897,942.33 as a civil judgment and was ordered to complete 250 hours of community service.

“Billing Medicaid for services not rendered pushes up the cost of the program and wastes taxpayer money,” said Attorney General Stein. “My office will continue to identify, investigate and prosecute these cases that not only steal taxpayer money but also leave some of North Carolina’s most vulnerable citizens...

OKLAHOMA

December 18, 2017

Oklahoma City Business Owners Charged with 115-Counts of Medicaid Fraud

OKLAHOMA CITY – A federal grand jury has charged the owners of a diabetic supply company with 115-counts of Medicaid Fraud, after the couple filed false claims to the Oklahoma Health Care Authority.

According to the indictment, Eunja Vasquez, 55, and Lawrence Vasquez, 61, owners of Mercy Diabetic Supply, Inc., not affiliated with Mercy health system, falsified Medicaid claims for insulin pump supplies for patients who didn’t use insulin pumps for treating their diabetes. Additionally, some of the claims were filed for patients who didn’t have diabetes.

An insulin pump is a medical device used to administer insulin in treating diabetes. It is also alleged that the couple falsified medical forms and forged physician signatures as part of their operation.

Attorney General Hunter’s Control Unit investigated the case and brought the charges to the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma.

Attorney General Hunter said his office is dedicated to working with...


December 07, 2017

Attorney General Hunter Files Charges on Oklahoma City Healthcare Provider

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter’s Control Unit has filed charges on an Oklahoma City health care provider who allegedly ran a Medicaid scam from a Oklahoma City counseling business.

Augustine Uche, 57, of Oklahoma City, was charged with two counts of unlawful use of a computer to commit a criminal offense for submitting false Medicaid claims for services that were never performed and excessive fees to the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) totaling more than $34,000.

According to court documents, an investigation by the attorney general’s Control Unit was conducted between February 2015 and December 2016.

During the investigation, authorities found on several occasions Uche would submit bills to the OHCA on dates and times that conflicted with surveillance that showed him at his residence, not providing treatment at the addresses where he claimed to be administering services. ...

SOUTH DAKOTA
December 28, 2017

Sioux Falls Man Sentenced in Case
PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley announced today that Steven P. Haddorff, 64, Sioux Falls, was sentenced for an offense.
Second Circuit Magistrate Court Judge Patrick Schroeder ordered Haddorff to serve 30 days in jail, suspended all 30 days, and placed Haddorff on one year of probation. The Court noted that Haddorff paid a total of $130,000 in restitution and costs.
“Medicaid is a partnership between the state and federal government to take care of those in need. Our office will continue to ensure these taxpayer dollars are going to those in need through enforcement measures,” said Jackley.
Haddorff pleaded guilty on March 31, 2017, in Minnehaha County to one count of Failure to Keep Records, a class 1 misdemeanor, pursuant to a plea agreement reached with the State. Haddorff's company, Wheelchair Express, Sioux Falls, submitted claims to SD Medicaid for transportation services. Haddorff admitted that he failed to maintain...


Consumer Advocacy

Amicus Brief Calling for CFPB’s Independence
Date:     December 8, 2017

Details: A coalition of 18 attorneys general have submitted an amicus brief in support of the independence of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The AG’s argue that while there is a legal mechanism for President Trump to nominate a new director for the CFPB – an appointment subject to the advice and consent of the Senate – President Trump has not taken that path here. Undermining the statutory structure of the agency harms the States’ ability to enforce myriad consumer financial laws that protect their residents.

States include:

1. California
2. Connecticut
3. Delaware
4. District of Columbia (second Press Release)
5. Hawaii
6. Illinois
7. Iowa
8. Maine
9. Maryland
10. Massachusetts
11. Minnesota
12. New Mexico
13. New York
14. Oregon
15. Pennsylvania
16. Rhode Island
17. Vermont
18. Washington
Letter Expressing Support of CFPB

Date: December 12, 2017

Details: A coalition of 17 state attorneys general wrote to President Trump to express unwavering support for the mission of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The attorneys general made clear they would continue to enforce consumer protection laws regardless of changes to the CFPB’s leadership or agenda.

States include:
1. Hawaii
2. Illinois
3. Iowa
4. Maryland
5. Massachusetts
6. New York
7. Virginia

Amicus Brief Stating CFPB not Authorized to Choose its own Director

Date: December 20, 2017

Details: Despite the unique and unaccountable governance structure of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), only the president has the legal authority to select the CFPB’s acting director.

In a brief filed this week in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the attorneys general of 13 states argue that under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act, only the president has the authority to appoint the CFPB’s acting director and that statute supplants any competing framework set out in the Dodd-Frank Act.

The attorneys general argue that the CFPB director—and by extension, the acting director—wields vast powers commensurate with a principal officer of the United States and that under U.S. Supreme Court precedent those powers can be wielded only by an official nominated and appointed by the president. The 13 attorneys general contend that the attempt by Leandra English, a holdover staff member of the CFPB, to secure and hold the position of acting director without permission of the president is illegal.

States include:
1. Alabama
2. Arizona
3. Arkansas
4. Florida
5. Georgia
6. Kansas
7. Louisiana
8. Michigan
9. Nebraska
10. Oklahoma
11. South Carolina
12. Texas
13. West Virginia
AGs Urge FCC to Investigate Fake Comments and Delay Roll Back of Net Neutrality

**Date:** December 13, 2017

**Details:** A multi-state letter was sent to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to express their concern about falsified comments made to the FCC, and asking the Commission to delay its rulemaking deadline.

According to the letter that was sent to the FCC today by the attorneys general, “[a] careful review of the publicly available information revealed a pattern of fake submissions using the names of real people. In fact, there may be over one million fake submissions from across the country. This is akin to identity theft on a massive scale – and theft of someone’s voice in a democracy is particularly concerning.”

**States include:**

1. Hawaii
2. Iowa
3. Maine
4. Maryland
5. Oregon
6. Pennsylvania (second Press Release)
7. Virginia

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States to Appeal FCC Vote to Eliminate Net Neutrality

**Date:** December 14, 2017

**Details:** Several state attorneys general, will appeal the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) action to eliminate existing net neutrality rules that prohibit internet service providers (ISPs) from discriminating among consumers and content providers.

The FCC’s Restoring Internet Freedom Order, which was approved today in a 3-2 vote over the objections of attorneys general from around the country, eliminates existing prohibitions that allow people to have sole discretion over their internet usage. As a result of today’s vote, internet service providers will be allowed to interfere with customers’ use of the internet by blocking or slowing down access to content. Providers will now be able to favor their own content over third-party sites by slowing down access, or charging content providers for priority treatment or access to an internet ‘fast lane.’

**States include:**

1. Illinois
2. Massachusetts
3. Maine
4. New Mexico
5. New York
AG’s Urge DOT to Require Disclosure of Baggage Fees

Date: December 20, 2017

Details: A coalition of attorneys general asked the Trump Administration to not withdraw a proposed rule requiring airlines and third-party booking companies to disclose baggage fees and other charges up front. The Transparency of Airline Ancillary Service Fees Rule proposed in January 2017 would have made it easier for consumers to understand the full cost of their plane travel. However, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced earlier this month that it would no longer be moving forward with the rule. U.S. airlines are expected to earn $57 billion from baggage and other service fees this year – $7 billion from baggage fees alone.

States include:

1. California
2. Hawaii
3. Maine
4. Maryland
5. Mississippi
6. New Mexico
7. New York
8. North Carolina
9. Pennsylvania

ALABAMA

December 04, 2017

AG Steve Marshall Offers Holiday Season Consumer Tips for Alabamians

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall offers information and tips to help Alabama consumers have safe and happy holidays by taking precautions against scams and other potential dangers. “This is a time for celebrating precious traditions with family and friends, sharing goodwill with our neighbors and honoring a spirit of kindness and love,” said Attorney General Marshall. “That is my heartfelt wish for the people of Alabama. But we must be vigilant and guard against those who would take advantage of this special time by stealing and defrauding others. I hope these words of advice will help to protect consumers and that we all may have a joyous holiday.”

Fake Charity Scams The holiday season is a popular time for fake charity scammers, who often use phishing emails, spoofed telephone numbers or make door-to-door visits. They may act as if they are working for an established charity or may even...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#5810
ARIZONA

December 21, 2017

SCAM ALERT: Be Cautious When Purchasing Last Minute Gift Cards
PHOENIX - As the countdown to Christmas begins, Attorney General Mark Brnovich is asking Arizonans to be extra cautious when making last-minute gift card purchases.
“Gift cards are one of the most requested items on holiday wish lists. Unfortunately, thieves like gift cards too,” said Attorney General Brnovich. “Con-artists are now able to scan gift card numbers inside the store and drain away balances before you can even use the card.”
Gift card fraud is on the rise as thieves target in-store gift card racks. They use handheld scanners to read the card’s magnetic information and any number on the front, after which they place the card back on display and wait for it to be activated.
Once the unknowing recipient activates the card, the thief can use the stolen card number to make online purchases and drain the balance on the card. ...


December 14, 2017

76,000 Arizonans to Receive $4.6 Million in Theranos Refund Checks
PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced $4.6 million in refund checks will be mailed to every Arizonan who purchased a Theranos blood test. The average refund per person is $60.92. More than 76,000 checks will be mailed on Friday, December 15, 2017.
“We were not going to settle with Theranos until we got a full refund for every Arizonan who paid for a blood test,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “Our office is proactive and aggressive in protecting Arizona consumers, and these refund checks are proof that we are going to go after companies that violate Arizona consumer protection laws."
Arizona consumers will receive a full refund including one consumer who paid more than $3,400 for testing. In April 2017, Theranos, Inc. agreed to pay $4.6 million dollars in consumer restitution as part of a consent judgment reached with the Attorney General’s Office.
Between 2013 and 2016, Theranos sold thousands of blood...


CALIFORNIA

December 20, 2017

Attorney General Becerra Issues Statement on Department of Education’s Illegal Decision to Provide Only Partial Loan Debt Relief to Corinthian Students
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued the following statement on the news that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has decided to provide only partial relief on
federal student loans to defrauded Corinthian students:
“Under federal law, Secretary DeVos is required to provide full – not partial – relief to Corinthian students. The California Department of Justice will continue to hold her accountable through our ongoing lawsuit. Corinthian students had their American Dream stolen by a so-called higher education institution. This Department of Education needs to carry out its legal duty and help them rebuild their lives.”

Background
In 2013, the California Attorney General’s Office led the charge against for-profit Corinthian Colleges and its subsidiaries, seeking to put an end to abusive practices that left students under a mountain of debt and far too often without the jobs Corinthian had falsely promised its degrees would provide. Corinthian specifically targeted low-income, vulnerable students through...


December 14, 2017
**Attorney General Becerra Decrees FCC Repeal of Net Neutrality Rules**
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued the following statement in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) decision to repeal net neutrality rules instituted in 2015. These rules protect consumers’ access to online content without interference or manipulation by an internet service provider:
“Today, the FCC failed to do what is right,” declared Attorney General Becerra. "The FCC decided that consumers do not deserve free, open, and equal access to the internet. It decided to ignore the millions of Americans who voiced their strong support for our existing net neutrality rules.
“Here in California – a state that is home to countless start-ups and technology giants alike – we know that a handful of powerful companies should not dictate the sources for the information we seek or the speed at which our websites load," added General Becerra. "We remain committed to ensuring that our internet can continue to represent...


December 06, 2017
**Attorney General Becerra Issues Consumer Alert on Price Gouging Following State of Emergency in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties**
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, joined by Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey and Ventura County District Attorney Gregory D. Totten, today issued a consumer alert following the Governor’s declaration of a state of emergency in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties due to widespread fires. They remind all Californians that price gouging during a state of emergency is illegal under Penal Code Section 396.
“Fires have quickly spread in Southern California, fueled by strong winds,” said California Attorney General Becerra. “As our brave firefighters are working to contain the blazes and as many Californians are being evacuated, it should not be open season on innocent victims. Our State’s price gouging law protects people impacted by an emergency from illegal price gouging on housing, gas, food, and other essential supplies. As the top law enforcement officer in California, I encourage anyone who has been the victim of price...


COLORADO

December 22, 2017

AG Coffman Statement on Net Neutrality
DENVER, CO- Below is a statement from Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman on net neutrality:
“The current communications laws in place are decades old, and many were designed to govern monopolistic telephone companies when rotary phones were in use. They were not designed to navigate the regulation of 21st century technology. The best solution to the net neutrality debate would be for Congress to enact legislation to deal with the unique challenges of Internet provider regulation, rather than using an outdated statute to address modern regulatory issues.”


DELWARE

December 22, 2017

DOJ Consumer Protection Unit Reminds Delawareans About Jury Duty Phone Scammers
Attorney General Matt Denn and the Department of Justice Consumer Protection Unit warn Delawareans about scam calls regarding jury duty being made to residents. DOJ and other agencies have alerted the public to these scams previously, but have received continued reports of them occurring, including recently in Sussex County.
In the scam, the consumer is told over the phone that they failed to report to jury duty and that a sheriff will arrest them or that a capias will be issued for the consumer. The consumer is then told they can pay a fine and that the caller will not send the sheriff to apprehend them.
There are some clear indicators that these calls are a scam. Delawareans eligible for jury duty are always notified about their obligation to serve jury duty by mail; never by telephone, and the sheriffs in Delaware do not have arrest powers. ...

December 13, 2017

Delaware Department of Justice Announces Top Investor Threats

The Delaware Department of Justice released its annual list of top investor threats and reminded Delawareans to use caution when approached with any unsolicited investment opportunities.

“All investments involve a degree of risk,” said Attorney General Matt Denn. “Investors can help protect themselves by taking time to research both the investment product and the person selling it. It’s best to learn before you get burned.”

The top threats were determined by surveying members of the North American Securities Administrators Association, of which the Delaware Department of Justice is a member, to identify the most frequently identified source of current investor complaints or investigations. The following were cited most often:

PROMISSORY NOTES: A promissory note is a written promise to pay (or repay) a specified sum of money at a stated time in the future or upon demand. Companies may sell promissory notes to raise capital, and usually offer them only to sophisticated or institutional…


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

December 05, 2017

AG Racine Sends Warning Letters to 9 District Funeral Homes, Provides Funeral Planning Resources to Help Consumers

WASHINGTON, D. C. – Following an investigation into the District’s funeral industry that included a price survey and a “secret shop,” Attorney General Karl A. Racine has sent warning letters to nine District funeral homes whose practices raised concerns that they may be in violation of local and federal consumer protection laws. In addition, today the Attorney General released new resources to guide District consumers as they plan funerals and introduced new legislation designed to ensure greater price transparency in the District’s funeral industry and make consumers aware of their rights as they plan funerals.

“Planning a funeral can be very emotional and expensive, and grieving families shouldn’t have to worry about whether they are being taken advantage of,” said Attorney General Racine. “We want to make sure consumers have access to accurate and complete information about funeral prices and services, which is why we conducted this investigation, created our educational…

FLORIDA
December 14, 2017
Attorney General Bondi Warns Parents About Internet-Connected Toys this Holiday Season
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—As parents shop for children’s gifts this holiday season, Attorney General Pam Bondi urges caution when purchasing Internet-connected toys. Before purchasing smart toys, such as dolls that speak with children and smart watches that contain GPS tracking technology, consumers should ensure toys employ adequate security and privacy protections for children.

“When shopping for children’s presents, safety should be the top priority. I urge parents to be cautious of any toy that could collect and share a child’s sensitive information,” said Attorney General Bondi.

Smart toys may collect children’s personal information that can include address, age, location, name, pictures and voices data. Toys that lack adequate security protections may expose a child’s sensitive information, creating a risk of child identity fraud or exploitation. Additionally, without adequate privacy protections, children’s personal information may be sold to third parties for targeted advertising.

As an example, the My Friend Cayla doll uses an unsecured blue-tooth connection...

➢ Original Press Release:
  http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/25FF647E079EE84D852581F60052C93

GEORGIA
December 21, 2017
Carr: Beware of Blessing Loom and Social Media Pyramid Schemes this Holiday Season
ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is warning consumers to be on the lookout for a social media pyramid scam called the “Blessing Loom” this holiday season. The scam entices potential participants by telling them they can turn $20.00 into $160.00 over a short period of time. After joining and sending in their money, members are encouraged to recruit others to join the structure. Consumers should be very wary of offers on social media sites which falsely advertise that one can turn a small amount of money into a larger one through “gifting circles.”

“This is a classic pyramid scheme,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “Not only is it illegal, there is a high probability you will lose the money you have invested. The bottom line, we are asking you to stay far away from these get-rich-quick schemes and help us spread the warning when visiting family and friends...


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MADIGAN DEMANDS FEDERAL INVESTIGATION INTO FRAUDULENT NET NEUTRALITY COMMENTS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today called for a federal investigation in light of widespread reports that millions of comments received by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in its net neutrality rule-making process were submitted under fraudulent or stolen identities. Madigan also called for the FCC to delay its vote on its plan to end existing net neutrality rules.

In response to numerous complaints from Illinois consumers, Madigan asked the FBI to investigate the sources of the fraudulent comments to uncover both how the fraudulent comments were submitted and to require the FCC act to protect the reliability of its public comment system. In a letter to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, Madigan urged the FCC to delay the planned Dec. 14 vote and cooperate with investigations and ensure the integrity of the rulemaking process.

“My office has received complaints from Illinoisans whose names and addresses were used to submit comments to…

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2017_12/20171213.html

ILLINOIS CONSUMERS MUST FILE CLAIMS BY JULY 12, 2018 IN $36 MILLION SETTLEMENT OVER FIXED PRICES FOR CRT SCREENS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that Illinois consumers have until July 12, 2018, to claim money they may have overpaid on purchases of TVs and monitors that contain cathode ray tubes (CRTs) as part of $36 million in settlements with manufacturers. The settlements stem from Madigan’s lawsuit against major technology companies alleging the companies illegally conspired to fix the prices for CRTs used in TVs and monitors. Madigan’s lawsuit alleged that the price-fixing conspiracy caused the prices for the products containing CRTs to rise significantly higher than the amounts Illinois consumers would have paid if prices had been set through normal competition. The settlements were entered with Hitachi, LG, Philips and Samsung.

“These companies illegally conspired to fix prices for CRTs,” Madigan said. “I encourage any Illinois consumers or business who bought a television or monitor containing these CRTs to file claims to recover the money they are owed.” ...

Original Press Release:
KENTUCKY

December 15, 2017

Beshear's Statement on FCC’s Changes to Net Neutrality
FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 15, 2017) – “I’m strongly opposed to the FCC’s changes to Net Neutrality. Earlier this week, I asked the FCC to delay any rollbacks given my concerns over fraud in the public comments process on how any changes would affect the everyday lives of Kentuckians. My office has already received multiple complaints by Kentuckians, as well as from consumers who previously lived in Kentucky, saying their identity or a loved one’s identity was falsely used. If the FCC continues with its plan, I will have no choice but to join legal action to protect Kentucky families from this sweeping and harmful policy change.” – Attorney General Andy Beshear.


LOUISIANA

December 28, 2017

New Year’s Eve Safety Tips Offered by Attorney General Jeff Landry
BATON ROUGE, LA – Next week, we will celebrate the start of a new year; and Attorney General Jeff Landry is reminding Louisiana citizens to follow the law and make safety a priority as they revel in the occasion.

“As Louisiana embraces the excitement of a new year, I encourage all to put safety first during celebrations,” said General Landry. “Whether you are attending a gathering or setting off fireworks at home, please do your part to ensure 2018 starts off on a positive note.” General Landry offers the following tips to help avoid injury and celebrate safely:
If you see something, say something. Report drunk drivers immediately by calling 911 or *LSP.
If you plan on consuming alcohol, designate a sober driver ahead of time.
Never let a friend or family member drive drunk. Take his or her car keys.
If intoxicated, do not drive for any reason. Call...


December 26, 2017

Seven Tips to Tackle Your Holiday Gift Returns
BATON ROUGE, LA – Despite the best of intentions, some Christmas presents may need to be returned or exchanged. While some retailers are making it easier than ever to exchange or return items after the holidays by modifying their standard policies, others may require a little heavy lifting. So Attorney General Jeff Landry is offering some tips to tackle your returns. “Return policies vary greatly from store to store,” said General Landry. “So taking a little time to
understand each one will go a long way in ensuring your holiday stays merry and bright.”
General Landry suggests the following for hassle-free returns and exchanges:
Keep your receipts.
Keep original packaging.
Bring identification.
Monitor the return clock as many retailers base their return time frame on purchase date.
Understand return policies for sale merchandise since policies for sale or clearance
merchandise may be different than merchandise sold at full price. ...
Maryland

December 01, 2017

Consumer Alert: Hang Up! Scammers Impersonate BGE

BALTIMORE, MD (December 1, 2017) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today warned consumers to be wary of telephone calls that appear to be from Baltimore Gas & Electric (BGE). The callers threaten to shut off power for non-payment unless the consumer sends money. “Scammers use threats and fear tactics to get you to hand over money and personal information,” said Attorney General Frosh. “The best defense is to not answer the call, or just hang up!”

BGE reports that scams and utility imposters are on the rise. Consumers are urged to verify the identity of BGE employees, and to take the following precautions:

Hang up immediately
Do not provide any personal information, credit card or bank account numbers, BGE account numbers or social security numbers
Call BGE at 800-685-0123 to report a possible scam
BGE representatives will never call you to ask for cash payment or personal information. If you have concerns about the status...


Massachusetts

December 21, 2017

AG Healey Calls for Corporate Tax Windfall to Go to Customers, Not Eversource

Boston — With the passage of the federal tax bill, Attorney General Maura Healey is calling on the Department of Public Utilities to reverse Eversource’s recent rate hike and instead, lower customers’ rates by more than $74 million dollars. AG Healey’s Office, in a filing on Wednesday, urged the DPU to recalculate Eversource’s rates to reflect the coming reduction of the federal corporate tax from 35 to 21 percent. By doing so, the Department can ensure that Eversource and other utilities do not receive a major windfall at the expense of customers and their corporate savings instead go to Massachusetts’ residents.

“Under this tax bill, Eversource and other utility companies are getting a major tax break, paid for by the American people,” said AG Healey. “We’re taking this action to ensure that the companies use these corporate savings to lower rates for Massachusetts customers instead of lining their own pockets.” ...

December 20, 2017

AG Healey Appeals Eversource Rate Case Decision

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey today appealed the Department of Public Utilities’ (DPU) ruling in the Eversource rate case, specifically the DPU’s approval of a costly 10 percent shareholder return, one of the highest rates allowed by an electric distribution company regulator in the last five years.

In its Petition to Appeal filed today, the AG’s Office alleges that the DPU violated the state Administrative Procedures Act and legal precedent by failing to adequately explain or support its order increasing Eversource’s allowed shareholder profits – or rate of return on equity (ROE).

“The DPU’s order would increase costs for Massachusetts electricity customers by tens of millions of dollars,” said AG Healey. “We are appealing because customers deserve to know why the DPU chose to enrich Eversource shareholders at the expense of electric ratepayers.”

The DPU sets a utility company’s ROE as one part of a company’s costs in a rate case. Last...


MISSISSIPPI

December 05, 2017

AG Hood Reminds Mississippians of Fake IRS Collectors

The Mississippi Attorney General’s Office has received new reports from Mississippi taxpayers of being contacted by impersonators claiming to work for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or federal Treasury Department and told they owed money to the IRS. Attorney General Jim Hood is reminding Mississippians to remain cautious of these and other tax-related phone scams as we approach tax season.

The scammers call claiming to be an agent for the IRS or the federal Treasury and tell the victim something similar to, “This is your official final notice—the IRS is filing a lawsuit against you.” The caller claims the consumer owes money to the IRS and insists that it be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, the scammer threatens the victim by stating that he or she will be arrested or that a lawsuit will be filed against them.

Another version of...

MISSOURI

December 29, 2017

AG Hawley Issues Warning for Consumers about "Force-Placed Insurance"

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley today issued a warning to consumers reminding them to check their bank and insurance statements for irregular activity. Recent disclosures indicate that Wells Fargo may have billed consumers for auto or home insurance that was not needed.

Home loan lenders, and some auto loan lenders, may require consumers to have insurance policies to cover the property that was financed by the loan. If the consumer does not obtain the coverage on their own, the lender might purchase a policy on its own and bill it back to the consumer through a practice known as “force-placed insurance.”

According to recent news reports, however, Wells Fargo may have been billing consumers for force-placed insurance, even though the consumer had purchased their own separate policy. In some cases, the amounts for this duplicative insurance may have been added to the consumer’s bill and automatically debited from...


NEW MEXICO

December 21, 2017

HOLIDAY ALERT: Attorney General Balderas Issues Warning to Consumers Regarding Lease-to-Own Schemes

Albuquerque, NM – Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a warning today to consumers who are planning to or have purchased a vehicle, major appliances, furniture, or other large items this holiday season.

“Some local car dealers and retailers are running ads that make it seem like they are selling their products at very low prices, but in reality these dealers and retailers are looking to sign customers up for very expensive lease or lease-to-own agreements instead,” Attorney General Balderas said. “We’ve seen some consumers paying three or four times what the product is actually worth, and they don’t even own the product at the end of the lease.”

Leases are different from a typical sale because the seller, not the consumer, continues to own the product during the lease term and the consumer usually must either return the product after the lease is up or pay a balloon payment to...

A.G. Schneiderman: This Holiday Season, Remember To Be Careful With Your Charitable Giving

NEW YORK – As New Yorkers make end-of-year charitable donations, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued a reminder to New York State residents to give their dollars wisely. “The holidays are a time for giving. New Yorkers always give generously to charity – and should know how their charitable dollars are being spent,” Attorney General Schneiderman said. “I encourage all New Yorkers who plan on giving to follow our tips to ensure their generosity is benefiting reputable organizations.”

Last month, the Attorney General released his annual “Pennies for Charity: Where Your Money Goes; Fundraising by Professional Fundraisers” report, which found that more than one-third of charitable donations ended up in the pockets of the professional fundraisers. The report and the searchable Pennies for Charity database containing the data underlying it is posted at www.CharitiesNYS.com.


A.G. Schneiderman: I Will Sue To Stop Illegal Rollback Of Net Neutrality

Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement upon the Federal Communications Commission’s vote, announcing that he will lead a multistate lawsuit to stop the rollback of net neutrality:

“The FCC’s vote to rip apart net neutrality is a blow to New York consumers, and to everyone who cares about a free and open internet. The FCC just gave Big Telecom an early Christmas present, by giving internet service providers yet another way to put corporate profits over consumers. Today’s rollback will give ISPs new ways to control what we see, what we do, and what we say online. That’s a threat to the free exchange of ideas that’s made the Internet a valuable asset in our democratic process.

Today’s new rule would enable ISPs to charge consumers more to access sites like Facebook and Twitter and give them the leverage to degrade high quality of video...


A.G. Schneiderman Releases New Details On Investigation Into Fake Net Neutrality Comments

NEW YORK – Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released new details of his office’s investigation into fake comments submitted during the net neutrality comment process, with a new analysis showing that two million of the comments stole real Americans’
identities.
“Millions of fake comments have corrupted the FCC public process – including two million that stole the identities of real people, a crime under New York law,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Yet the FCC is moving full steam ahead with a vote based on this corrupted process, while refusing to cooperate with an investigation. As we’ve told the FCC: moving forward with this vote would make a mockery of our public comment process and reward those who perpetrated this fraud to advance their own hidden agenda. The FCC must postpone this vote and work with us to get to the bottom of what happened.”
To date, over 5,000 people...


December 04, 2017
A.G. Schneiderman Announces FCC IG’s Office Reverses Course After Pressure, Signals Intent To Assist With AG’s Investigation Into Fake Comments Submitted During Net Neutrality Comment Process
New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel today called on the FCC to fully cooperate with Attorney General Schneiderman’s investigation, after the FCC Inspector General’s office reversed course and signaled its intent today to assist with Attorney General’s inquiry into one million fake comments submitted during the net neutrality comment process. Attorney General Schneiderman and Commissioner Rosenworcel also called for the FCC’s planned December 14th vote on net neutrality to be halted while these fake comments are investigated.
“Federal law guarantees every American a voice in shaping our policies. But my office’s investigation found that this process was deeply corrupted – with one million comments that may have been submitted using real people’s stolen identities,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “For months the FCC refused to help us get to the bottom of what happened. That’s why we asked New Yorkers to help — …


OHIO
December 28, 2017
Attorney General DeWine Offers Gym Membership Tips Ahead of the New Year
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today offered advice for consumers who plan to join a gym or fitness center in the New Year.
“This is a time when many people are thinking about joining a gym, and that can be a great way to get in shape. We just want consumers to understand what they’re signing up for,” Attorney
General DeWine said. “A little bit of prevention can go a long way.”
In 2017, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office received about 140 complaints involving fitness or health club memberships. Top problem areas included cancellation and billing issues.
To help consumers avoid problems, Attorney General DeWine offered the following recommendations:
Research the gym. Look for complaints on file with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office or Better Business Bureau, and check online reviews for feedback from current or past customers. Pay attention to how a business addresses customer complaints.
Read contracts carefully. Make…


December 13, 2017
Attorney General DeWine Warns of Grant Scams
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today warned Ohioans to beware of phony offers for federal grants. In recent weeks, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office has received dozens of reports of grant scams from people across Ohio.
“Scam artists will call and say you can get a $9,000 grant from the federal government if you pay a few hundred dollars first. It’s a lie,” Attorney General DeWine said. “The truth is the scam artists will take your money, but you won’t get anything in return.”
The scam often begins when someone receives a phone call or Facebook message about a grant opportunity. Con artists may claim the person has been selected for a grant for being a good citizen, paying taxes, or not having a criminal record, and they tell the person to pay a few hundred dollars to cover processing fees or taxes in order to receive the larger payout. In...


OKLAHOMA
December 29, 2017
Attorney General Hunter Urges Oklahomans to Prepare for Frigid Temperatures
OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter is imploring Oklahomans to take precaution and prepare for temperatures in the low teens and single digits over the weekend and into next week.
According to local weather reports, arctic air is expected to move into the state overnight and keep temperatures below freezing and approaching record – cold levels at times across the state. On Monday, with wind chills, temperatures could reach minus 10 degrees.
Attorney General Hunter said the Consumer Protection and Utility Regulation Units have developed tips and guidelines to help Oklahomans brace for the bone chilling cold weather and
keep them safe.
“I am urging Oklahomans to be proactive and prepare their homes and families for dangerously low temperatures that are expected across the state,” Attorney General Hunter said. “When temperatures are as low as they are expected to be, it can cause a litany of problems for friends, neighbors, homes and...


PENNSYLVANIA

December 29, 2017

Attorney General Josh Shapiro’s New Year’s Resolution to Consumers: Gym Membership Tips to Help Avoid Scams

HARRISBURG — Just in time for New Year’s, when Pennsylvanians resolve to get healthy through exercise and joining a health club, Attorney General Josh Shapiro is encouraging Pennsylvanians to carefully examine any contract they sign before joining a health club, and offering tips so they understand their legal rights.

“New Year’s is a time when many Pennsylvanians decide to join gyms or health clubs to get healthy,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “I want consumers to know my office monitors these health clubs to make sure they’re properly registered, and we’re here to help them avoid scams. We don’t want the ‘ball to drop’ on your New Year’s plans to get healthy because of a bad gym choice.”

The Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection received 93 complaints against health clubs and gyms in 2017, a 66 percent increase from 2016. Most complaints involved issues related to contract cancellations or consumers seeking refunds...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4283

December 14, 2017

Statement of Attorney General Josh Shapiro on FCC Vote to Rollback Net Neutrality

“The vote by the Federal Communications Commission to gut Net Neutrality could end the Internet as we know it. The FCC action undermines free speech and is bad for consumers and business—especially startups and small businesses.

With 17 of my colleague Attorneys General, I called on the FCC to delay today’s vote, to allow state and federal investigations to continue into the more than 1 million fake comments that were sent to the FCC about net neutrality. This huge number includes tens of thousands of fake comments issued under the names of real Pennsylvanians. The theft of someone’s voice in our democracy cannot stand, and we must first get to the bottom of this massive identity theft.
I plan to take legal action to protect Net Neutrality and believe the FCC’s decision will face serious legal challenges. Visit badcomments.attorneygeneral.gov to look and see if your name was used fraudulently to influence...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4222

SOUTH DAKOTA

December 21, 2017
Attorney General Jackley Warns of Email Scam Targeting Businesses
PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley is warning of a scam that has evolved and resurfaced targeting businesses. Previously this scam involved a phone call asking for the billing department with hopes that the person answering the phone would authorize the paying of a fictitious invoice. The newer hi-tech version begins when the scam artists do their research via business websites to identify names, email addresses and business specific information so wart off suspicion, a phone call may also be used to identify who they need to submit the bill to. The scam begins with an email to those in charge of paying invoices. The email is from purported individuals within their companies authorizing payment and being told to wire money for an outstanding bill. The spoofed email is fictitious and the bill is not from a legitimate business. “The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division has several complaints from South...


December 14, 2017
State of South Dakota Warns Consumers of Fictitious Auto Transport Company
PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley and Department of Revenue Secretary Andy Gerlach are warning consumers to be aware of a fictitious auto transport company by the name of Quay Shipping that claims to be physically located in Pierre, South Dakota. “Consumers whom are being targeted are those buying vehicles via private sale and looking for a shipping company for delivery. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Office has received several calls from victims outside of the state who have hired this company and some have lost thousands of dollars, said Jackley. “Quay Shipping has no physical presence in Pierre and the purported address does not exist” said Jackley.
The scam website initially posted was www.quayshipping.com. This webpage has been shut down, but a new website is now showing up at www.quayshippingltd.com. All indications show that these sites are originating out of country.
The South Dakota Department of Revenue’s motor vehicle division...

Grandparent Scam Continues to Target South Dakota Seniors
PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley is again warning South Dakota seniors that the grandparent scam has resurfaced targeting all parts of the state. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Office has received 8 reports in just 2 days from those being hit hard with this scam. It has been confirmed that three individuals have given cash ranging from $17,000 to $145,000.

“This is a plea from your Attorney General to talk with friends, neighbors and coworkers to make sure they are checking on the seniors they know and care about to discuss this scam,” said Jackley. “The scammers are making a relentless number of calls and use threats and fear to swindle cash quickly.”

The scam begins with a telephone call from someone claiming to be a grandchild or other family member and requests money for a critical situation such as legal proceedings, theft of their personal belongings or medical...


VERMONT

December 18, 2017
Attorney General Announces Recommendations for Data Broker Legislation

Attorney General T.J. Donovan, in partnership with the Department of Financial Regulation, issued a report to the Vermont General Assembly that recommends regulation of the Data Broker Industry, otherwise known as “Big Data.” If the Assembly adopts the recommendations, Vermont would become the first state to implement Data Broker regulation.

“I have traveled all over the state and heard from many Vermonters who are frustrated and concerned that businesses are collecting their personal information, and people have no say in the matter,” said Attorney General Donovan. “Privacy is a fundamental value here in Vermont, and I look forward to work with the Assembly to draft a bill that will restore some balance in this area.”

Data Brokers are businesses that collect personal data in order to resell it to third-parties. Recent incidents involving Data Brokers have raised concerns that businesses collecting information about Vermonters are not taking sufficient steps to protect that...


December 07, 2017
Attorney General Calls On FCC To Protect Net Neutrality; Raises Concerns About “Fake Comments” To FCC On Net Neutrality

Attorney General T.J. Donovan raised concerns over the FCC for allowing “fake comments” to...
be posted on its public comment pages related to proposed rules that would roll-back net neutrality rules. “Net neutrality should be protected and preserved. Fake comments undermine the integrity of the entire process.” said Attorney General Donovan. In July, Donovan submitted comments to the FCC supporting an open internet.

"I was shocked and dismayed that comments allegedly written by me and misrepresenting my views were submitted to the FCC without my knowledge or consent," said Irene Racz of Montpelier. “In an era of ‘fake news,’ any public agency relying on phony comments to make decisions affecting all Americans is nothing more than ‘fake government’,” she said. “Net neutrality is extremely important and I do not support any effort to roll back the protections that we currently enjoy,” said Racz. “I am especially appalled at the lack of...


WASHINGTON
December 29, 2017
AG Ferguson’s student loan report reinforces need for protections
OLYMPIA — The number of student loan borrowers in Washington state likely exceeds 800,000, an increase of more than 35 percent compared to a decade ago, according to a report released today by the Washington State Attorney General’s Office. Washingtonians collectively owed $24.4 billion in student loan debt at the end of 2016. As part of Attorney General Ferguson’s ongoing efforts to protect student loan borrowers, his office created this student loan report to help policymakers and the public better understand the challenges faced by Washington borrowers. The Attorney General’s Office has received hundreds of complaints from student loan borrowers. Ferguson’s report highlights several of these complaints.

One borrower wrote to the Attorney General’s Office, “Over the years, I have attempted to repay student loan debt only to find myself with more fines, more interest, and rising monthly payments beyond my ability to meet.”

“There are too many student loan borrowers in Washington who...


December 14, 2017
AG Ferguson announces lawsuit to come on net neutrality
SEATTLE — Attorney General Bob Ferguson released the following statement on today’s Federal Communications Commission vote to repeal net neutrality.

"Yesterday I sent a letter to the FCC asking them to delay their vote gutting net neutrality. Unfortunately, they did not.
"Today, I am announcing my intention to file a legal challenge to the FCC’s decision to roll back net neutrality, along with attorneys general across the country. "We are 5-0 against the Trump Administration because they often fail to follow the law when taking executive action. There is a strong legal argument that with this action, the federal government violated the Administrative Procedure Act — again. "We will be filing a petition for review in the coming days. "Allowing internet service providers to discriminate based on content undermines a free and open internet. Today’s action will seriously harm consumers, innovation and small businesses. "I was proud to stand with Gov. Inslee yesterday when he announced...


December 13, 2017

SCAM ALERT: Watch out for scammers posing as the Washington State Supreme Court Clerk

OLYMPIA — Scammers are posing as the Washington State Supreme Court Clerk to call Washingtonians to demand money and threaten arrest. The fraudulent calls have so far targeted individuals with Hispanic last names.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst urge consumers not to fall for the scammers’ ploy. The Supreme Court will never threaten people with arrest or demand payment.

“These imposters prey on consumers’ fears to gain access to their bank accounts,” Ferguson said. "Washington court clerks have never and will never behave that way. I am committed to protecting consumers from this kind of deception.”

The State Supreme Court has received dozens of reports from Washingtonians of scammers using fake caller ID information to make a call appear to come from the Supreme Court clerk’s office. The caller typically states they are from the courts or law enforcement and threatens arrest if recipients do not send money. ...


WEST VIRGINIA

December 26, 2017

Attorney General Morrisey Urges Consumers to Know Holiday Return Policies

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey encourages consumers to know store policies when making post-holiday returns.

“It’s not uncommon for returns to be made for various reasons after gifts have been exchanged and opened,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Checking return policies before you take items back to the store can save a lot of time and potential headaches.”
A purchase or gift receipt will quicken the process and ensure consumers receive the full purchased value of their return. Some stores may only offer store credit or a gift card without a receipt.

Additionally, many retailers offer both an online outlet and a brick-and-mortar store. Consumers may sometimes only be able to return an online purchase to the online store, which means they would be responsible for shipping fees.

Consumers should also beware of “all sales final” policies. Merchants must exchange or refund money for defective items or those...


December 21, 2017

Attorney General Morrisey: Exercise Caution with Last-Minute Gift Card Purchases

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warns consumers to be selective and cautious when making last-minute gift card purchases as the clock ticks toward Christmas.

“Gift cards make for an easy present while still giving the recipient the option of picking out something themselves,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “However, it’s important to make sure you or the recipient of the gift card doesn’t get ripped off.”

Thieves have been known to pilfer gift card racks. They will use handheld scanners to read the card’s magnetic information and any number on the front, after which they place the card back on display and wait for it to be activated.

Once the unknowing recipient activates the card, the thief can create a counterfeit and/or make online purchases without having the actual card in hand.

Attorney General Morrisey suggests following these tips to avoid falling prey to gift card scammers ...


December 08, 2017

Attorney General Morrisey Reminds Consumers to Give Wisely To Charities During Holidays

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds consumers to exercise caution when giving to charities this holiday season.

“This time of year is a popular time for charities to seek donations,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Before you give, make sure it is going to the desired charity.”

Anyone with questions about the legitimacy of a charity or organization can review the Secretary of State’s website to see if the charity is registered to solicit donations in West Virginia. Consumers may also research the charity on websites such as charitynavigator.org or guidestar.org.

Those making an online contribution should make sure the website starts with https:// when
visiting the donation portal. This verifies a secure connection, making it less likely for personal information to be stolen.

Additional tips to keep in mind during the season of giving are:

Never feel pressured to donate immediately.

Be wary of charities that...


December 08, 2017

Attorney General Morrisey Urges Consumers to Be Wary of Fake Delivery Notifications During Holidays

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges consumers to be wary of fake delivery notifications during the holidays, which may be nothing more than a ploy to steal personal information.

Many consumers opt for the convenient option of shopping online which means shipping will be required.

“Lots of deliveries will be made over the holiday season so it’s not uncommon for consumers to be expecting notification that their package has arrived,” Attorney General Morrisey said.

“Make sure what you reply to or click on is legitimate so your personal information doesn’t end up in the wrong hands.”

Consumers should always require a signature to verify receipt and have purchases delivered to work rather than sitting unattended at home. Both ideas will prevent a loved one’s gift from being stolen.

Shoppers also should be careful not to fall for the “parcel-waiting trick” in which consumers receive a card alleging a...


December 06, 2017

Attorney General Morrisey Urges Shoppers To Avoid Unscrupulous Pet Purchases

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges consumers to be careful not to fall for an unscrupulous offer when looking for a pet that best fits their family or situation.

Pets appeal to people of all ages and there is no shortage in the number of pets that need a home.

“Pets bring an immense amount of joy to people,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It’s important to make sure the newest member of a family comes from a reputable shelter or breeder.”

Unfortunately, representations of animals bought via the Internet or in stores can mislead consumers as to the true nature of the pet’s health. Pictures can be falsified and animals that appear healthy can become ill shortly after purchase.
Consumers can follow these tips to ensure an issue-free purchase:
Consider a gift certificate to a local animal shelter or a promise to adopt. Doing so will ease the...


December 06, 2017
Attorney General Morrisey Warns Consumers To Be Wary of Holiday Employment Scams
CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warns consumers to exercise caution when looking for ways to earn extra money for holiday gift purchases or added travel expenses. “Money can be tight around the holidays,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “With so many people buying gifts and traveling, it’s important for those seeking an extra job to only reply to legitimate job offers.”
Consumers should be particularly cautious of work-at-home positions. Such opportunities may promise flexibility and extra income, but result in nothing more than lost time and money.
Additional tips include:
Use extra caution when looking at job ads with generic titles, such as administrative assistant or customer service representative.
Although personal information is shared as part of a job application, be very cautious of providing financial account information or handing over money.
Be wary of any job offer or interview that requires upfront payment.
Check the business’ website to make...


December 04, 2017
Attorney General Morrisey Reminds Consumers to Be Wise When Making Online Purchases
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges consumers to make wise decisions when looking online for that perfect holiday gift for family and loved ones.
“Shopping online is an easy and convenient way to purchase gifts without having to fight the crowds,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It’s also an easy way for personal information to unknowingly make its way into the wrong hands so consumers need to be extra careful.”
Consumers shopping online can do a few things to safeguard their personal information:
Make sure websites start with https://, which verifies a secure connection.
Look out for fake websites that mimic a company’s legitimate web address. Carefully check the web address as scammers can slightly shorten and manipulate it in ways that are not easily noticeable. ...