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

January 29, 2018
AG Brnovich Obtains $2.8 Million Judgment Against Precious Metals Dealer
PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced his office obtained a $2.8 million judgment against Keith Bresee, the owner of Liberty Precious Metals, LLC and Bresee Group, LLC. Bresee is accused of operating a precious metals scam out of Maricopa and Yavapai counties. The court ordered Bresee to pay $2.25 million in consumer restitution and $560,000 in civil penalties.

In 2016, the Attorney General’s Office filed a consumer fraud lawsuit against Bresee and his companies. According to the lawsuit, Bresee accepted millions of dollars in prepayments from clients who wanted to invest in metals. Bresee allegedly took the prepayments but did not buy the precious metals as promised.

Consumers discovered their orders would not be fulfilled after Bresee closed his businesses and filed for bankruptcy in 2015. According to the recently obtained judgment, Bresee falsely told some consumers that their precious metals, mostly gold, had been purchased and were safely stored at...


January 26, 2018
Chiropractor Found Guilty of Conspiring with Unlicensed Dentist
TUCSON - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Dr. Jesus Bernal, a chiropractor, was convicted by a Pima County jury for allowing an unlicensed dentist to practice out of his chiropractic clinic.

Maria Hernandez, who is not a licensed dentist, would travel up from Mexico to provide unlicensed dental treatments to Tucson residents, working in a makeshift dental office in the Bernal Chiropractic Clinic.

A jury convicted Bernal of Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, Money Laundering, Practicing Dentistry without a License, Conspiracy, and Illegal Control of an Enterprise.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation Phoenix Division, Tucson Office investigated this case along with assistance from the Arizona Attorney General’s Office.

During the two week trial, jurors heard from Bernal’s former employees. They testified Bernal would monitor when Hernandez came to the office to see patients to ensure that he got paid. Jurors heard evidence that when a search warrant was executed on the makeshift dental office, agents...

January 23, 2018

Unlicensed Contractor Sentenced to Prison after Scamming Arizona Families

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced James Servellon, an unlicensed contractor, was sentenced to 3.75 years in prison and 4 years of probation. Servellon was previously on the run and listed as one of Arizona Registrar of Contractors’ “Most Wanted.” From April 2009 to July 2015, Servellon scammed families by offering to perform home remodeling services for an upfront payment. After families paid, Servellon never completed the work and abandoned the jobs. Servellon had previously been convicted of felony charges stemming from a similar unlicensed contracting scheme. In addition to the remodeling jobs, Servellon solicited a $4,500 business investment from an elderly woman who had also contracted with him for home remodeling. In total, Servellon stole $13,000 from the elderly victim.

The judge ordered Servellon to pay more than $23,000 in restitution to the victims. The Arizona Registrar of Contractors’ Unlicensed Activity Division investigated this case. Assistant Attorney General Jordyn Raimondo prosecuted this...


January 11, 2018

Owner of Real Estate Company Pleads Guilty to Defrauding Arizona Families

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Francisco Aguirre, the owner of Montecristo Properties, pleaded guilty to defrauding 40 families in a real estate scam. Aguirre pleaded guilty to one count of Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, one count of Theft, and two counts of Forgery. Under the plea agreement, Aguirre will spend 7.5 years in prison. He must also pay $2 million in full restitution to the victims.

From 2013 to 2015, Aguirre defrauded families who wanted to buy homes. The families believed they were purchasing homes from Aguirre and gave him a down payment. The victims also made monthly payments as mortgage payments only to find out they never owned or had a title to the home. Many of the families were forced to vacate the homes after they had already paid Aguirre thousands of dollars in what they believed were down payments and monthly mortgage payments. In some cases,...


January 05, 2018

AG Brnovich Files Lawsuit Against Alleged “Toner Pirate”

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich filed an Arizona Consumer Fraud Lawsuit against INT Sourcing LLC, Premiere Office Supplies LLC, and their owner James R. Deremiah. The Defendants are accused of sending fake toner cartridge invoices to churches, schools, and businesses to trick businesses into paying the fake invoice as a routine business matter. Those
involved in scams such as the one alleged are known in the copier and printer industry as “toner pirates.”

The Consumer Fraud Lawsuit alleges that Defendants first contacted their victims by telephone, posing as a legitimate business to gain information about the victim’s personnel and equipment. Then, Defendants allegedly sent the business an invoice for toner cartridges that it did not order, utilizing the information obtained over the phone.

According to the lawsuit, Defendants intentionally included the word “Invoice” in large, bold font on the invoices, along with several other deceptive features, including the words “PLEASE...


January 04, 2018

Precious Metals Broker Indicted Accused of Theft

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted Keith Bresee for one count of Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices and 20 counts of Theft. Bresee is accused of stealing more than $1,000,000 from clients who invested in precious metals.

Bresee was a precious metals broker operating Bresee Group, LLC and Liberty Precious Metals. It is alleged between August 2011 and March 2015, Bresee solicited clients at precious metals investment seminars held at hotels and restaurants in Arizona. A total of 19 victims invested with Bresee. Many of the victims, who are in their 50's, took money from their retirement savings to invest.

According to investigators, Bresee did not purchase precious metals with his clients’ money. Instead, he is accused of using his clients’ money to fulfill other investment obligations to previous customers and to pay his business and payroll expenses. Many of the victims lost all of the money...


January 03, 2018

Sonoran Outfitters to Refund Consumers after Failing to Provide Guided Hunts

FLAGSTAFF - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced that his office obtained a $30,000 consent judgment against Sonoran Outfitters Adventures, LLC, and its owner, Todd Basil Rice. Sonoran Outfitters Adventure, based in Flagstaff, advertised and sold hunting, guiding, and trophy delivery services in Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Mexico. Sonoran Outfitters failed to deliver the hunting, guiding, and/or trophy delivery services to at least 10 consumers who prepaid for the services. The consumers live out of state and had planned to travel to Arizona and Mexico for guided hunts for western deer and/ or bighorn sheep.

According to the consent judgment, Sonoran Outfitters will pay $30,000 in restitution to 10 consumers who filed complaints with the Arizona Attorney General’s Office. Defendants also agreed to pay an additional $30,000 in restitution for any new consumers who file valid
consumer fraud claims with the Attorney General’s Office against Sonoran Outfitters Adventures within the next...


CALIFORNIA

January 17, 2018
Attorney General Becerra: Retailer Sentenced to Prison for $5.6 Million Fraud Scheme

LOS ANGELES – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced today that Jeong Kim, the owner and operator of Fashion Q and Q retail clothing stores throughout Southern California, was sentenced to two years in prison for sales tax evasion, false income tax returns, failure to pay taxes and workers’ compensation fraud. Attorney General Becerra filed a felony complaint against Kim in the Los Angeles Superior Court on June 19, 2017.

“Like the rest of us, businesses must pay their taxes. Tax evasion is a crime,” said Attorney General Becerra. “Failing to pay payroll taxes, sales taxes, and workers compensation insurance hurts employees, our local communities, and businesses that are playing by the rules. The California Department of Justice will continue to hold criminals accountable and protect the pockets of Californians who pay their fair share.”

Jeong Kim owned and operated more than fifty retail clothing stores in Los Angeles, Orange, San...


January 11, 2018
Attorney General Becerra: BP Energy Company Pays $102 Million in Settlement for Overcharging Californians for Natural Gas

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced a $102 million settlement with BP Energy Company and affiliates (BP) over allegations that it intentionally overcharged the State of California for natural gas that the State purchased under three successive contracts from March 2003 to August 2012. The contracts allowed the California Department of General Services, which buys natural gas for numerous state agencies and political subdivisions, to cap the price it would pay BP for specific volumes of gas. BP regularly quoted and charged the State of California prices that violated this cap and concealed its overpricing by providing false and misleading information. These acts constitute violations of the California False Claims Act.

“BP thought it could get away with providing false and misleading information in order to line its own pockets. Today, we send a clear message: cheating the People of California will cost you
COLORADO
January 24, 2018
Attorney General Coffman Announces $120M Multi-State Settlement with General Motors Company Over Defective Ignition Switch
DENVER — Today Attorney General Cynthia Coffman announced a $120M settlement with General Motors Company (“GM”) over allegations GM concealed safety issues related to ignition-switch-related defects in GM vehicles. Colorado’s share of the multi-state settlement is $1,905,816.65.
The settlement, reached between the attorneys general of 49 states and the District of Columbia and General Motors Company (“GM”), concludes a multistate investigation into the auto manufacturer’s failure to timely disclose known safety defects associated with unintended key-rotation-related and/or ignition-switch-related issues in several models and model years of GM vehicles.
“Public safety is our top priority. GM’s failure to disclose a known dangerous defect put consumers’ lives at risk.” Attorney General Coffman said. “We will hold accountable any company that fails to make public safety their top priority.”
In 2014, GM issued seven vehicle recalls in response to unintended key-rotation-related and/or ignition-switch-related issues, which have affected over 9 million vehicles in the U.S.

January 22, 2018
AG Coffman Announces Over $2M Judgment Against Two Lenders Who Charged Predatory Interest Rates to Colorado Consumers
DENVER— Today Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman announced that her office has settled a lawsuit against two lenders who charged predatory interest rates to Colorado consumers. The settlement will bring over $2M in funds back to Colorado consumers. The lenders, Oasis Legal Finance, LLC and Plaintiff Funding Holding, Inc. d/b/a LawCash, provided money to consumers who had pending personal injury claims arising from events such as automobile accidents. The consumers were then obligated to pay back an increased amount in the event that they recovered money in their lawsuits.
“Consumer loans come in many forms. My office works to stop unscrupulous lenders who try and evade Colorado’s consumer protections by disguising their loans as other transactions,” said Attorney General Coffman. “This settlement helps ensure that Colorado’s consumer lending laws will continue to provide protection to those in need.”
The consumer lenders initially filed suit against the Attorney General claiming that their transactions...


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DELAWARE
January 19, 2018
Delaware Files Lawsuit Against Opioid Industry
On behalf of Delawareans, Attorney General Matt Denn filed suit Friday against some of the nation’s largest manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of prescription opioid drugs, alleging that their failures to meet their legal obligations have fueled an opioid addiction epidemic that is devastating individuals, families, and communities across Delaware. The lawsuit seeks to hold them financially responsible for the harm they have caused to the State and its citizens and to require them to change their conduct to help end the epidemic.

“Opioid manufacturers misrepresented the addictive nature of their products. They, along with national opioid distributors and national pharmacies, knew that they were shipping quantities of opioids around the country so enormous that they could not possibly all be for legitimate medical purposes, but they failed to take basic steps to ensure that those drugs were going only to legitimate patients,” Attorney General Denn said. “These companies ignored red flags that...


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FLORIDA
January 26, 2018
Tampa Man Arrested for Illegal Practice of Dentistry
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Office of Statewide Prosecution and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement announced the arrest of Abdel Rahman Hussein Rabah, 42, of Tampa, for unlicensed practice of a health care profession and practice of dentistry or dental hygiene without a license. Authorities arrested Rabah at the illegal dental practice established at 6441 Eureka Springs Road, Tampa.

In December 2017, the Department of Health contacted FDLE agents regarding complaints of Rabah practicing dentistry without a license. According to the investigation, Rabah posted photos on social media accounts of his dentistry work, but did not hold an active license to practice dentistry. Additionally, Rabah allegedly sometimes referred to himself as Dr. Abdel Rahman. Investigators also learned that Rabah discarded trash at his residence containing used syringes, extracted teeth, bloodied paper towels and bloodied dental gauzes.

Attorney General Bondi’s Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute this case. Homeland
Security Investigations, the...


GEORGIA

January 09, 2018
Carr: $8.8 Million Settlement Reached with Debt Collector Williamson and McKevie, LLC
ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr today announced an $8.8 million settlement with debt collector Williamson and McKevie, LLC and its owner Greg Williamson, resolving charges that the company committed multiple violations of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and the Georgia Fair Business Practices Act.

“It is plain and simple, any debt collector that employs abusive, deceptive and illegal tactics in Georgia will be held accountable,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “I appreciate our Consumer Protection Unit’s work on this matter. We will continue working to ensure that no Georgia consumer falls victim to this type of behavior in the future.”

The Attorney General has alleged that Williamson and McKevie, LLC repeatedly harassed and deceived consumers by:

* threatening consumers with arrest or imprisonment if they did not pay an alleged debt;
* falsely representing that consumers had committed criminal acts and that a lawsuit was about to be filed unless...


ILLINOIS

January 11, 2018
COURT APPROVES DISTRIBUTION OF OVER $190 MILLION TO ILLINOIS CONSUMERS IN SETTLEMENT OVER FIXED PRICES FOR LCD SCREENS
Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that consumers will soon begin receiving payments from an approximately $190 million settlement with manufacturers of liquid crystal display (LCD) manufacturers.

The payments are part of settlements Madigan’s office has reached over the last several years with manufacturers of LCD monitors installed in electronic devices including TVs, notebook computers, cell phones and MP3 players. Madigan’s lawsuit alleged the companies illegally fixed prices for LCD screens used in electronic devices, causing consumers who purchased devices between 1998 and 2006 to pay significantly more than if the prices had been set
through normal competition. According to Madigan, the Circuit Court of Cook County has approved the distribution of more than $190 million in settlement payments to Illinois residents who filed claims on or before Oct. 6, 2016. Illinois residents, businesses and government entities such as counties, municipalities and schools submitted approximately 18,500 valid claims for a...


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IOWA

January 31, 2018

South Carolina Businesses Agree to Halt Deceptive Iowa Mailings Designed to Generate Insurance Sales Leads

(DES MOINES, Iowa) Two Myrtle Beach, South Carolina businesses and their principals will change mailings they may use to generate insurance leads in Iowa, through an agreement with Attorney General Tom Miller.

The agreement settles a dispute over “2018 Medicare update” mailings, which Miller alleged are misleading and violate Iowa’s Consumer Fraud Act.

The agreement, called an assurance of voluntary compliance, prohibits Choice Health Insurance LLC and National Direct Marketing LLC, and their principal owners, Dennis Watts and Michael Watts, from sending Iowans mailings that appear to come from a government agency or mislead recipients about the mailing’s true purpose. The agreement also prohibits mailings from giving the false impression that benefit programs are free, obscuring the true reason for seeking the consumer’s phone number, and using inconspicuous small print to disclose important information.

“We alleged that the mailings created the impression that they were government mailings advising Medicare recipients of additional benefits...


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KANSAS

January 26, 2018

AG Derek Schmidt: Missouri roofer temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas

TOPEKA – (January 26, 2018) – A Missouri contractor has been temporarily prohibited from doing roofing business in Kansas while a state lawsuit alleging violations of consumer protection laws is pending, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

Shawn Obermann and his business, Armour Roofing, LLC, of Kansas City, Mo., is temporarily
banned from doing business in Kansas. Shawnee County District Judge Larry Hendricks entered a temporary restraining order on Wednesday prohibiting Obermann and his company from acting as a roofing contractor in the state. The order was served on the defendant yesterday. The lawsuit alleges that the defendant has continued to operate as a roofing contractor in the state without being registered with the attorney general’s office as required by the Kansas Roofing Registration Act (KRRA), despite being notified in 2015 of his obligation to register. The lawsuit alleges the defendant has performed roofing services in Douglas, Johnson and Wyandotte counties...


January 23, 2018

**Iowa-based door-to-door meat sales company permanently banned from doing business in Kansas**

TOPEKA – (January 23, 2018) – An Iowa-based door-to-door meat sales company, along with its employees and agents, has been permanently banned from doing business in Kansas, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

Christopher Maselka, an individual, and Iowa Steak Company, LLC, a/k/a Iowa Steak Company, a/k/a Iowa Steak was permanently banned from operating in the State of Kansas. The company is an Iowa limited liability corporation owned by Maselka whose sales representatives sell meat products door-to-door. District Court judge Larry D. Hendricks approved the consent judgment yesterday in Shawnee County District Court. Maselka was also ordered to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs and civil penalties.

Schmidt accused Maselka of making door-to-door sales of meat products while failing to notify consumers of their three-day right to cancel the transaction, cashing the consumers’ checks prior to midnight of the fifth business day and willfully misrepresenting material facts about the products and prices....


January 18, 2018

**Topeka healthcare company fined for failing to protect patient and employee personal information**

TOPEKA – (January 18, 2018) – A Topeka healthcare company and its owners have been fined for failing to protect patient and employee records, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said. Pearlie Mae’s Compassion and Care LLC, and Ann Marie Kaiser and Jenell Jones, the owners of the company that provides care for disabled consumers, agreed to pay an $8,750 civil penalty for violations of the Wayne Owen Act, which is part of the Kansas Consumer Protection Act. The consent judgment, which was approved last week by District Judge Franklin R. Theis in Shawnee County District Court, also requires the defendants to make changes to their business practices
in accordance with state laws and to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs.
In June 2017, during the course of assisting the Topeka Police Department in executing a search warrant, special agents of the Kansas Attorney General’s office observed patient and employee records containing personal information...


January 17, 2018

Jefferson County man permanently banned from door-door-sales in Kansas
TOPEKA – (January 17, 2018) – A Jefferson County man has been permanently banned from door-door sales in Kansas, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.
Jason Todack, of Meriden, d/b/a American Made Matters Corp., d/b/a KCONE Corporation, was permanently banned from operating as a door-to-door salesman in the State of Kansas. District Judge Teresa L. Watson approved the consent judgment last week in Shawnee County District Court. Todack was also ordered to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs and a civil penalty.
Schmidt accused Todack of making door-to-door sales of Kirby vacuum cleaners in a manner not in compliance with Kansas door-to-door sales laws. The defendant violated the Kansas Consumer Protection Act by failing to notify consumers of their three-day right to cancel the transaction and cashing consumers’ checks prior to midnight of the fifth business day.
More tips on staying safe from illegal door-to-door sales are available on the attorney general’s consumer...


January 12, 2018

Former Douglas County man pleads guilty to financial crime
LAWRENCE – (January 12, 2018) – A former Douglas County man today pleaded guilty to one felony count of securities fraud, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.
James R. Romanek, 66, pleaded guilty to the charge, which stemmed from incidents that occurred in Douglas County between August 1999 and January 2000. The loss to investors was more than $15,000. Douglas County District Court Judge Paula B. Martin accepted the plea.
Sentencing has been scheduled for February 23 at 2p.m.
The case was investigated by the Office of the Kansas Securities Commissioner which filed criminal charges in 2004. The defendant’s whereabouts were unknown until February 2017 when the prosecution resumed. The Securities Commissioner transferred prosecution of the case to the attorney general’s office after a new law took effect last year consolidating the state’s financial crimes prosecution authority within the attorney general’s office. Deputy Attorney General Steven Karrer and Assistant Attorney General Stacy Edwards...
January 10, 2018

AG Derek Schmidt: Lawrence contractor temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (January 10, 2018) – A Lawrence contractor has been temporarily prohibited from doing roofing business in Kansas while a state lawsuit alleging violations of consumer protection laws is pending, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

New Era Roofing & Restoration, LLC, formerly d/b/a New Era Roofing, LLC, Lawrence, is temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas. Jefferson County District Judge Gary L. Nafziger entered a temporary restraining order on Friday prohibiting New Era Roofing from acting as a roofing contractor in the state. The order was served on the defendant yesterday. The lawsuit alleges the defendant contracted and received payment from a Kansas consumer for roofing services that were never performed. The defendant also failed to maintain its registration as a roofing contractor as required by the Kansas Roofing Registration Act. The case is in Jefferson County District Court, No. 2018-CV-000002. A copy of the attorney general’s lawsuit and...

January 08, 2018

New York door-to-door salesman permanently banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (January 8, 2018) – A New York man operating as a door-to-door salesman has been permanently banned from doing business in Kansas, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

Jawad Yahya, a/k/a Mohammad Yahya, a/k/a Yahya Jaward and Yaja Collection, Inc., a foreign corporation, d/b/a Yahya Liquidation Sales, d/b/a Liquidation Station, d/b/a Nationwide Liquidation, was permanently banned from operating as a door-to-door salesman in the State of Kansas. District Judge Larry D. Hendricks approved the default judgment last week in Shawnee County District Court after Yahya failed to respond to a lawsuit filed against him. Yahya was also ordered to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs and a civil penalty. Schmidt accused Yahya of making door-to-door sales of counterfeit merchandise, such as athletic apparel, perfume, jewelry and electronics. He promoted sales events from state-to-state primarily selling counterfeit goods. Although the 2015 sale in Topeka was at a rented location and not...
Beshear Sues Pharmaceutical Distributor for ‘Flooding’ Kentucky with Opioids
FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 22, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today filed suit against a national opioid distributor for allegedly violating state law and directly contributing to the state’s drug epidemic by flooding Kentucky with massive amounts of opioids, including generic oxycodone and hydrocodone.

Beshear is suing San Francisco-based McKesson Corporation over unfair, misleading and deceptive business practices for excessively distributing opioids, particularly in rural counties in Eastern Kentucky, and for failing to report the large volume of these drugs to state and federal authorities.

Federal and state law requires pharmaceutical distributors to monitor and report to law enforcement when it ships large or suspicious supplies of opioids to a state or region. McKesson has a distribution center in Washington Courthouse, Ohio, just three hours away from Kentucky’s border.

“Kentuckians can finally put a name to a major reason for the pill mills, drug epidemic and overdose deaths in our state,” Beshear...


Beshear: Con Artists Promise Access to Affordable Health Insurance for a Fee
FRANKFORT, KY. (Jan. 19, 2018) – Scammers are targeting Kentucky families looking for access to affordable health insurance, said Attorney General Andy Beshear.

Beshear issued a Scam Alert today after receiving multiple reports of health insurance related scams. A Lexington resident recorded a portion of a scam call from the “National Health Enrollment Center.”

The automated caller asks if you are looking for affordable insurance coverage and quickly says you qualify for great plans as low as $199 a month for individuals and $399 a month for a family plan. The call is then transferred to a “qualified insurance specialist,” who pretends they are helping you get access to affordable coverage. The “specialist” then attempts to steal your personal and financial information by asking for your credit card information to pay a fee for service or to make your first monthly insurance payment.

“Health insurance is a vital lifeline for every Kentucky family...

January 12, 2018

**Beshear Reaches $150,000 Settlement with Paducah-based Propane Business**

FRANKFORT, KY. (Jan. 12, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear announced today that more than 500 Kentucky customers of Paducah-based United Propane Gas Inc. are benefiting from an average refund of $291 through a recent $150,000 settlement by his office with the company. The settlement resolves alleged violations of the Kentucky Consumer Protection Act by Paducah-based United Propane Gas Inc. and its affiliates. As part of the agreement, United Propane Gas, headquartered at 4201 Cairo Road in Paducah, with offices throughout the state, agreed to strengthen customer protections.

Beshear said the agreement was reached following a lawsuit filed in 2014 and an investigation into the company's business practices after complaints were made to the Office of the Attorney General and the Better Business Bureau of Kentucky.

“While these allegations are serious, a resolution was reached for the benefit of the customers,” Beshear said. “My office will continue to work with United Propane Gas...

[Original Press Release](http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=471)

January 02, 2018

**Beshear: Owner of Louisville Tent and Awning Pleads Guilty to Theft, Ordered to Pay $3,100 in Restitution**

LOUISVILLE, KY. (Jan. 2, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today announced the owner of Louisville Tent and Awning recently pleaded guilty to two counts of theft by deception for never completing work at a Louisville residence or at the Portland Museum in Louisville.


As part of the plea, Turner agreed to a sentence of two years, probated for a period of five years. Additionally, Turner must pay restitution of $3,101.50 to the victims he defrauded.

The plea resulted from an investigation lead by the Office of the Attorney General that revealed that between Nov. 18, 2014, and Jan. 5, 2015, in Jefferson County, Turner and the business he was operating, Louisville Tent and Awning, failed to complete work for which he was paid. In November 2014, Turner received more than $1,000 from a...

[Original Press Release](http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=457)
MARYLAND

January 08, 2018

Attorney General Frosh Announces Settlement with Structured Settlement Factoring Company

Baltimore, MD (January 8, 2018) –Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that his Consumer Protection Division has entered into a settlement resolving an investigation into Annuity Sold, LLC, its affiliated companies (Uber Funding, LLC, Bendormer Capital Solutions, LLC, Axis Funding, LLC, Stonebridge Capital, LLC, Greenspring Funding, LLC, LSG, LLC, Preak Street, LLC, ILILIL2010, LLC, Palantir Packaging, LLC, and JRR Funding, LLC), and its owners (collectively “Respondents”). The settlement resolves allegations that Respondents violated the Maryland Consumer Protection Act by misleading injured Marylanders, some of whom are victims of lead paint poisoning, to convert future structured settlement payments into immediate cash. Under the settlement agreement, Respondents are required to pay full restitution to all Marylanders, which is estimated to be between $450,000 and $500,000, as well as civil fines and costs between $175,000 and $425,000.

“Structured settlements are intended to provide long term care and support for individuals, such as...


MASSACHUSETTS

January 30, 2018

AG Healey Secures Millions in Relief for Massachusetts Residents Faced With Unfair Foreclosure and Loan Servicing Practices

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey has secured millions of dollars in relief for hundreds of Massachusetts residents in a settlement with a national mortgage servicer over its failure to help homeowners avoid foreclosure.

Pursuant to an assurance of discontinuance, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, Nationstar Mortgage LLC (d/b/a Mr. Cooper) will provide direct payments and loan modifications to hundreds of homeowners in Massachusetts. The company will also update its practices and be subject to compliance oversight from the AG’s Office.

“In Massachusetts, mortgage servicers are required by law to help prevent unnecessary foreclosures and keep families in their homes,” said AG Healey. “Nationstar failed to stop foreclosures and this settlement gives homeowners in the hardest hit areas in Massachusetts a chance to stay in their homes. It also sends a clear message that we will hold accountable companies that are not following the law.”
The AG’s Office alleges that the company violated...


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**MISSISSIPPI**

January 30, 2018

**Central Mississippi Insurance Agent Going to Prison for Embezzlement**

Charles Myrick Winstead—an insurance agent from Terry—will serve 10 years in prison for embezzling $117,863.74 from a customer and converting the money for his own use, announced Attorney General Jim Hood.

Winstead, 54, pleaded guilty Monday to one count of embezzlement. Madison County Circuit Court Judge William E. Chapman III sentenced him to 20 years in the custody of the Mississippi Department of Corrections, with 10 years to serve and 10 suspended. Upon his release, he will be placed on supervised probation for five years. Winstead must also pay $121,811.56 in restitution to Nationwide Insurance Company as well as court costs.

While employed as an insurance agent, Winstead advised one of his customers to cash in an insurance policy with a face value of $117,863.74 and then purchase a different policy. The customer took his advice by cashing the policy and turning the funds over to him. Winstead deposited the money into...

- **Original Press Release**: http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/central-mississippi-insurance-agent-going-to-prison-for-embezzlement/

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**MISSOURI**

January 09, 2018

**AG Hawley Announces Jefferson County Contractor Sentenced to 10 Years for Home-Repair Fraud**

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced that Donald J. Harralston, 34, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for financial exploitation of the elderly in the Jefferson County Circuit Court. Harralston promised seven Jefferson County homeowners he would perform repairs and roofing but instead took their down payments and then failed to do the work or provide any materials.

The Court sentenced Harralston to 10 years in prison and will require Harralston to pay restitution of $18,156 to the victims once he is released from prison.

“Verdicts like this make clear that those who prey upon the elderly will not get away with it in Missouri,” Hawley said. “My Office will continue to protect consumers from scammers, and scammers will continue to be punished for their crimes.”

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Attorney General Hawley recommends the following tips to avoid being scammed:
Always have a written contract before any work is done...


NEW JERSEY

January 12, 2018
New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Reaches Settlement with “Pep Boys” Over Allegations of Pricing Violations
NEWARK – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that “Pep Boys,” the auto parts and service retail chain, has agreed to revise its business practices and pay $80,000 in order to resolve a lawsuit alleging the chain engaged in merchandise pricing violations and other unfair or deceptive business practices at several retail stores across the state.
According to a civil Complaint filed by the State, Pep Boys – Manny, Moe & Jack of Delaware, Inc., which does business as “Pep Boys” in more than 40 retail locations throughout the state, sold a variety of merchandise that scanned at the cash register for higher prices than were posted where the merchandise was displayed for sale; or failed to plainly mark the total selling price for merchandise either on the merchandise or where it is offered for sale.
“Retail shopping shouldn’t be a guessing game with consumers...


January 10, 2018
Lawyer Convicted at Trial of Stealing $1.5 Million from Clients
TRENTON – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino announced that a lawyer from Ocean County who formerly practiced in Jersey City was convicted at trial today on charges that he stole approximately $1.5 million from five clients over a period of more than a decade.
Joseph J. Talafous Jr., 55, of Toms River, N.J., was found guilty today by a Hudson County jury of three counts of theft by unlawful taking (2nd degree), three counts of theft by failure to make required disposition of property received (2nd degree), five counts of misapplication of entrusted property (four 2nd degree and one 3rd degree), two counts of theft by deception (2nd degree and 3rd degree), and four counts of filing fraudulent state income tax returns (3rd degree). The verdict followed a six-week trial before Superior Court Judge Mirtha Ospina in Jersey City. The second-degree charges carry a sentence of five to 10 years in state...

January 02, 2018

Former Brick Township Employee Sentenced to Five Years in Prison for Stealing More than $940,000 in Claims from Township Health Insurance Program

TRENTON – Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (OIFP) announced that a former Brick Township employee today was sentenced to five years in state prison for stealing more than $940,000 from the township’s health insurance program.

Kim E. Bogan, 52, of Brick, was sentenced in accordance with a plea agreement reached when she pleaded guilty to second-degree theft by deception on October 24, 2017. She must also pay $941,354.77 in restitution to Brick Township under the terms of the plea agreement and sentence imposed by Superior Court Judge Linda G. Baxter in Ocean County.

During her plea hearing, Bogan, who worked in the township’s Building Department, admitted that between January 2011 and April 2017 she assisted an out-of-state health care practitioner in submitting false claims to her employee health insurance program, which is self-funded by Brick Township. The claims were for treatments purportedly rendered to individuals...


NEW MEXICO

January 23, 2018

Attorney General Balderas Files Lawsuits against Non-Compliant Charities

Albuquerque, NM - Attorney General Hector Balderas announced today that the Office of the Attorney General filed the first of his lawsuits against charities across the state who have failed to come into compliance in their registration and reporting as required by the Charitable Solicitations Act. Today’s six lawsuits are the next step in the Charities Compliance Sweep which began in December of 2017.

"New Mexicans who open their hearts and wallets deserve to know how their hard-earned money is being spent by a charity," said Attorney General Balderas. "Despite having offered charities the opportunity to voluntarily come into compliance with state law, some have failed to do so, depriving New Mexicans of the ability to make informed choices about where to donate."

The registration and reporting requirements imposed by the Charitable Solicitations Act and enforced by the Attorney General serve the charitable community and the public by providing easily accessible information...

NEW YORK

January 31, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Syracuse Home Improvement Contractor Who Violated Prior Court Order**

SYRACUSE—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that a Consent Order and Judgment has been entered in his contempt case against Jason M. Briere, a home improvement contractor who was recently doing business as “Under Construction.” In October 2017, the Attorney General brought this contempt case against Briere after receiving consumer complaints that revealed Briere was operating a home improvement contracting business in violation of a prior court order. The original order was obtained in 2014, after the Attorney General sued Briere for engaging in repeated illegal and deceptive acts and practices. As a result of that lawsuit, Briere was prohibited from operating a contracting business unless he posted a $25,000 performance bond with the Attorney General’s office. However, the recent complaints revealed that Briere was continuing to engage in the very same deceptive acts and practices that were the basis for the Attorney General’s 2014 lawsuit. In both instances,...


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January 25, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Jail Time For Brooklyn Real Estate Developer Daniel Melamed**

BROOKLYN – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced that Brooklyn real estate developer Daniel Melamed, who pleaded guilty in November 2017 to a 13-count indictment admitting that he committed multiple fraudulent real estate schemes, was jailed today by State Supreme Court Justice Danny Chun. Melamed was ordered to serve 20 days in jail, pending sentencing on this case and a June 2017 conviction for three counts of Unlawful Eviction. Sentencing has been scheduled for February 14, 2018.

“Daniel Melamed swindled taxpayers and harassed tenants in order to line his own pockets. Now he’s in jail,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “My office will use every tool we have to bring bad landlords to justice.”

In November, Melamed pleaded guilty to a 13-count indictment, including Residential Mortgage Fraud in the Second Degree and two counts of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, class C felonies; as well as four counts of Forgery in the...

January 23, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Aetna Over Privacy Breach Of New York Members’ HIV Status

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Aetna Inc. (“Aetna”), following claims that Aetna revealed the HIV status of approximately 2,460 New York members through a mailing in July 2017 in which the envelopes’ oversize transparent address window revealed text confirming the members’ HIV status. As part of the settlement, Aetna will pay a $1.15 million civil penalty; develop and maintain enhanced operating procedures with regard to privacy protections of personal health information and personally identifiable information in mailings; and hire an independent consultant to monitor and report on the settlement’s injunctive provisions.

“Through its own carelessness, Aetna blatantly violated its promise to safeguard members’ private health information,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Health insurance companies handle personal health information on a daily basis and have a fundamental responsibility to be vigilant in protecting their members. We won’t hesitate to act to ensure that insurance companies...
January 22, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Court Decision Shutting Down Company For Scamming Thousands Of Homeowners Seeking Property Tax Rebate; Secures Full Restitution For Victims**

MINEOLA — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a court decision against STAR Exemption Advisor, YCA Corp. and its business owner Arie Gal for scamming thousands of new homeowners out of at least $1.562 million by charging them excessive fees to enroll in the Basic STAR Exemption Program, which is otherwise free. The court ordered that full restitution be paid to all those affected, and that all consumer contracts entered into with the respondents for Basic STAR rebate services be rescinded, all profits disgorged, and an accounting done to identify all consumers who are entitled to refunds. The court also ordered that civil penalties be paid for each instance of a violation of the General Business Law, and issued a permanent injunction stopping the respondents from marketing any Basic Star rebate or property tax reduction services within the State of New York. The Attorney General’s office also secured a...


January 17, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Court Order Against Hudson Valley Heating Oil Company That Defrauded Consumers**

DUTCHESS COUNTY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a ruling issued by Supreme Court Justice Charles D. Wood in the Attorney General’s lawsuit against Champion Fuel and Service Corp. (“Champion”) and its owner David DeSilva Sr. The judge ordered the company and DeSilva Sr. to provide full restitution to consumers who were defrauded, to pay triple the amount of unpaid damages he owes from 30 Small Claims judgments, and to pay tax warrants filed by the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. The court also permanently enjoined Champion and DeSilva Sr. from engaging in the retail sale of home heating oil and the repair and service of oil burners. In total, the court ordered DeSilva Sr. to pay over $176,000 in damages and restitution to victims.

"When New Yorkers hire a home heating oil company, they need to know they’ll get the services they’ve paid for....


January 12, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Second Indictment Of Unlicensed Plastic Surgeon For Insurance Fraud And Public Benefits Fraud**

NASSAU COUNTY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the arrest on a 21-count indictment of unlicensed plastic surgeon Brad Jacobs, 56, of Westbury, NY, for engaging in a massive disability insurance fraud and welfare fraud scheme. In November 2017, Jacobs, together with licensed physician Nicholas Sewell, were indicted in New York County on charges
that they engaged in a four-year scheme to illegally perform plastic surgeries on over 60 patients, including causing permanent disfigurement to one patient. The Attorney General’s second indictment, filed today in Nassau County, charges Jacobs with concealing his ongoing illegal practice of medicine and his associated income from his disability insurance carrier and the Nassau County Department of Social Services in order to fraudulently obtain almost $375,000 in benefits.

“Jeopardizing New Yorkers’ lives by practicing without a medical license is shameful enough. It’s even more heinous to use that illegal medical practice to commit fraud...


January 09, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Investigation Into Possible Misconduct By Propane Suppliers Across New York

New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced an investigation into possible misconduct by propane suppliers across New York. The investigation follows dozens of complaints received by his office during the recent record cold front regarding major delays in delivery, possible price gouging, and other issues.

“No New Yorker should have to sit in a freezing home or office this winter. But in recent days, my office has been flooded with calls from New Yorkers across the state who’ve experienced extreme delivery delays and possible price gouging by their local propane supplier,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “New Yorkers depend on timely, affordable deliveries of gas or oil to heat their home. After my office stepped in, we were able to help a number of New Yorkers get their heat back on – but it’s clear that there were systemic failures that left far too many New Yorkers sitting in the...


January 05, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Allure Group To Revitalize Harlem Nursing Home, Fill Healthcare Gaps In Brooklyn And Lower East Side

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a comprehensive settlement with the Allure Group to revitalize the Greater Harlem Nursing Home and replace healthcare gaps in Brooklyn and the Lower East Side. The agreement results from the Attorney General’s investigations into the closings of two nursing homes, Rivington House - The Nicholas A. Rango Health Care Facility on the Lower East Side, and the CABS Nursing Home in Brooklyn. As part of the settlement, the Attorney General required new measures to fully reform the processes that led to the closure of Rivington House and CABS Nursing Home. Allure will also pay $750,000 in penalties and costs to the State, in addition to $1.25 million to Lower East Side healthcare non-profits.
“The processes that led to the closure of Rivington House and CABS never should have happened – this settlement ensures they won’t happen again, while addressing critical healthcare...


January 03, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Buffalo Fence Installation Company For Failure To Provide Services**

BUFFALO—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office has reached a settlement with Classic Fence and Lumber, Inc. (Classic Fence) and its owner Fred DeNormand, who bilked New Yorkers out of over $50,000. An investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s office uncovered that DeNormand repeatedly accepted advance payments from consumers, but failed to deliver the products and services for which they paid. The agreement announced today requires the company to cease operating and pay over $50,000 in restitution to consumers, in addition to paying $5,000 in penalties and costs. The settlement also prohibits DeNormand from engaging in any home improvement business in the future.

“Consumers who pay for a good or service should receive it,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “This settlement will ensure that New Yorkers get their hard earned money back, while barring this scammer from the home improvement business. I urge New Yorkers who believe they may...


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

January 16, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Stein: North Carolinians Should Not Pay for Duke Energy’s Mistakes**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today urged the North Carolina Utilities Commission to prioritize ratepayers’ wallets over Duke Energy’s.

Below is Attorney General Josh Stein’s statement on the rate case:

“Duke Energy has known that coal ash was going to be an issue since at least the 1990’s, but the company didn’t deal with it. Now that it's more expensive for Duke to clean up its coal ash mess, it wants North Carolinians to pay the price. That's wrong, and that's why I oppose Duke's request to dramatically hike up our power bills."

NORTH DAKOTA

January 31, 2018

PENNSYLVANIA DISCOUNT TRAVEL COMPANY BANNED IN ND

BISMARCK, ND – A Pennsylvania man who operates a questionable discount travel service under several fictitious names has been banned from doing business in North Dakota for violating the state’s consumer fraud, transient merchant, and business licensing laws. Thomas Joseph, who lists addresses in two Pennsylvania cities, uses various names for his discount travel club solicitations, including Save on Resorts, Best Value Getaways, Southwest Getaways and Southwest Travel Services. In late 2017, Joseph and his representatives held one seminar in Bismarck and had planned other seminars across North Dakota to solicit memberships for a discount travel club, claiming that prospective club members would receive free airline tickets and other travel incentives. Neither Joseph nor any of his representatives cooperated with investigators from the Consumer Protection Division. Joseph and his business manager refused to answer questions about their operations or provide evidence of any actual discount travel services. In response, Mr. Joseph asked...


OHIO

January 29, 2018

Attorney General DeWine, FTC Announce Orders to Shut Down Tech Support Scam

(CLEVELAND)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and the Federal Trade Commission today announced that the operators of a nationwide computer repair scam have been banned from the tech support business as part of settlements with the FTC and Ohio Attorney General. The settlements resolve a 2017 lawsuit accusing Repair All PC and several related companies and individuals of tricking consumers into believing their computers were infected with malware, then charging them hundreds of dollars for unnecessary repairs. “This scheme affected people in Ohio and across the country, and we were pleased to work with the Federal Trade Commission to shut it down,” Attorney General DeWine said. “Scams regularly cross state and national borders, so this kind of collaboration is an important part of protecting consumers.” As part of the scheme, the defendants allegedly caused pop-up security warnings to appear on consumers’ computers, falsely claiming the computers had been infected with a virus, hacked,
Pennsylvania Man Sentenced to Prison for Stealing from Elderly Ohio Man in Internet Scam

(Chillicothe, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Ross County Prosecutor Matthew S. Schmidt today announced that a Pennsylvania man has been sentenced to 30 months in prison for stealing $17,000 from an elderly Ross County man in an internet scam. Ryan O. Smith, 49, was sentenced today in the Ross County Common Pleas Court after being convicted on counts of telecommunications fraud, theft from an elderly person, and money laundering. (His sentence will run concurrently to a sentence he received in Texas for other theft charges.) He also was ordered to pay $17,000 in restitution.

“We are committed to protecting older Ohioans and cracking down on scams,” Attorney General DeWine said. “Thanks to the continued cooperation of Ross County and other agencies across the state, we are holding con artists accountable for their actions.”

“Ross County appreciates our partnership with the Attorney General’s Office, and their willingness to lend resources, personnel and expertise...”

Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Lawsuit Against Cleveland-Area Fence Installer

(Cleveland)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against the operators of Budget 1 Fence for unfair and deceptive sales practices. Matthew McMillen and his wife, Stephanie Reed, doing business as Budget 1 Fence, are accused of taking consumers’ money but failing to provide promised services, failing to provide refunds, failing to notify consumers about their cancellation rights, and failing to obtain needed permits.

The Ohio Attorney General’s Office has received 15 complaints against Budget 1 Fence. McMillen also owes more than $40,000 in judgments from other court cases in northeast Ohio, according to the lawsuit, and has operated under other names, including Fence Solutions, Fence Company, Affordable Fence, Empire Fence, Landmark Fence, Budget Fence Company, King Fence, and Lake Erie Fence.

“Our goal is to protect Ohio consumers,” Attorney General DeWine said. “In this case, we found a pattern of problems. We’re seeking reimbursement for affected consumers and..."
Attorney General Shapiro Praises Court Ruling Guaranteeing Medicare Advantage Coverage for Estimated 140,000 UPMC Patients in Western PA

HARRISBURG — In a court ruling prompted by a case filed by Attorney General Josh Shapiro, a Commonwealth Court judge today ordered UPMC to continue providing in-network care to an estimated 140,000 Medicare Advantage patients in Western Pennsylvania through the end of 2019.

The ruling by Senior Judge Dan Pellegrini approved a petition filed by the Office of Attorney General, which stated that Medicare Advantage patients insured through Highmark Health should be able to receive in-network care at nine UPMC hospitals through December 30, 2019. UPMC had taken the position that it could stop treating these patients at in-network rates on June 30, 2019, the expiration date for the 2014 consent decree agreements between the two parties spelling out the terms for how UPMC and Highmark will end their relationship. Judge Pellegrini’s 14-page decision ensures Highmark-insured patients on Medicare Advantage will still be able to see their UPMC doctors at in-network rates...

Original Press Release:
https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4330

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Announces $8 Million in Restitution for Pennsylvania Consumers and Agencies

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania consumers are receiving $3 million and Commonwealth agencies will receive an additional $5 million in restitution following the settlement of two, Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro announced today.

“One of my most important responsibilities is fighting to protect Pennsylvania consumers,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “The Office of Attorney General is focused every day on enforcing the law and ensuring consumers who’ve been victimized get the restitution and money they deserve.”

In the largest settlement, 1,996 Pennsylvania consumers are receiving a share of a $3,013,533 settlement with the drug maker Cephalon over the company’s wakefulness drug Provigil. In addition to the restitution to consumers, the company is paying $3,937,987 to Pennsylvania agencies, including the Department of Human Services’ Medicaid Program and the Department of Aging’s PACE Program. The Office of Attorney General is receiving $1 million for its litigation
costs. Consumers will be notified by a...

➢ **Original Press Release:**
  https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4328

January 22, 2018

**Uniontown Funeral Home Director Charged with Stealing $284K from Clients Who Pre-Paid for their Funerals**

UNIONTOWN — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced charges against a Fayette County funeral home director for stealing $284,393 from his clients -- senior citizens who had pre-paid for their own funerals. Shapiro announced the charges at a news conference at the Fayette County Courthouse in Uniontown with District Attorney Rich Bower, whose office investigated the case with the Office of Attorney General.

From October 2010 until March 2017, Stephen E. Kezmarsky III, 50, of South Pennsylvania Avenue, Uniontown, collected advance payments from 51 clients to cover their eventual funeral expenses at the Kezmarsky Funeral Home. Instead of placing the money in escrow accounts as required under Pennsylvania law, Kezmarsky co-mingled the funds with his business and personal accounts and misappropriated his clients’ money.

“This defendant betrayed dozens of seniors who placed their trust in him,” Attorney General Shapiro said at the news conference, where he was joined by District Attorney Bower...

➢ **Original Press Release:**
  https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4323

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**SOUTH DAKOTA**

January 12, 2018

**Brown County Woman Sentenced in Elder Abuse Theft Case**

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley announced today that Amy Schmidt, 37, Aberdeen, was sentenced yesterday in Fifth Circuit Court to one count of grand theft. Schmidt was sentenced to 5 years in the state penitentiary and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $7,049.36, along with court costs.

“Schmidt used her employment at a home health agency as an opportunity to financially exploit three elderly victims,” said Jackley. “We are going to continue to do everything we can in South Dakota to protect our seniors from elder abuse.”

This case was investigated by the Aberdeen Police Department and the Brown County Sheriff’s Office and prosecuted by the Elder Abuse and Financial Exploitation Subdivision of the Attorney
Texas

January 12, 2018

AG Paxton: Permanent Injunction Ends Illegal Sale of Synthetic Drugs by San Antonio Convenience Store

AUSTIN – Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced that his office obtained an Agreed Final Judgment and Permanent Injunction against Stop by Mart in San Antonio and its owner, Sung Kyu Choe, to halt the illegal sale of synthetic drugs. The owner was ordered to pay $50,000 in civil penalties and fees. A permanent injunction was entered against Stop by Mart for violating the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act (DTPA). Choe sold synthetic marijuana at Stop by Mart and knowingly deceived consumers by labeling the highly dangerous drug as legal and safe.

“My office will not tolerate synthetic drugs being marketed as safe and legal substances when they present such devastating health risks to users,” Attorney General Paxton said. “My office will do everything within its power to protect Texans from this growing threat.”

In 2015 San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) detectives issued citations to Stop by Mart after a routine Tobacco...

Vermont

January 26, 2018

Vermont Attorney General Announces Consumer Protection Settlement with MD Cosmetics and Owner Erin Jewell

Vermont Attorney General TJ Donovan announced a settlement of consumer protection claims against MD Cosmetics Medical Spa and its owner, Erin Jewell. The settlement resolves the Attorney General’s claim that MD Cosmetics engaged in unfair and deceptive conduct by closing in September 2017 without warning and failing to refund its customers’ outstanding gift certificates and unfulfilled pre-paid services. In the settlement, MD Cosmetics and Ms. Jewell acknowledge that $118,145 in restitution is owed to Vermont consumers, and the Attorney General assessed a $58,000 penalty for their conduct. Due to Ms. Jewell’s bankruptcy, she will only be required to make payments towards these amounts if her financial situation improves in the next five years. Ms. Jewell will also be banned from owning, operating, or managing a similar business in Vermont for five years.
Given Ms. Jewell’s inability to pay, this settlement will not result in any immediate payment to Vermont consumers. In...


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**VIRGINIA**

January 10, 2018

**ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING SECURES JUDGMENT AGAINST VIRGINIA BEACH-BASED SEA-THRU WINDOWS FOR DEFRAUDING HOMEOWNERS**

VIRGINIA BEACH (January 10, 2017) - Attorney General Mark R. Herring has secured a permanent injunction and restitution order against Sea-Thru Windows, Inc., a Virginia Beach-based window seller and installer, and its President and sole owner, Jeffery C. Pesich, for taking tens of thousands of dollars of customers' money in violation of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act. The court order bars further violations of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act, orders nearly $150,000 in restitution to sixty-four identified customers, and imposes fines and attorney's fees totaling $110,000. In July, Attorney General Herring’s Consumer Protection Section filed suit against Sea-Thru Windows and Pesich seeking restitution for homeowners whose money was taken without work being completed, as well as for homeowners whose supposed "lifetime warranty" was not honored by Sea-Thru.

"Dozens of Virginians paid Sea-Thru and Mr. Pesich hundreds or thousands of dollars for home improvement work, only to see their money disappear without getting...


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**WASHINGTON**

January 05, 2018

**Ferguson: New details unsealed in lawsuit against one of the nation’s largest opioid manufacturers**

SEATTLE — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today filed an unredacted complaint against Oxycontin maker Purdue Pharma, which reveals previously sealed details from the company’s internal documents.

The newly released details describe the company’s interactions with several Washington state medical providers sanctioned for inappropriate prescribing of opioids. It also reveals an internal Purdue study that called into question information that the company used to deceive doctors into believing that opioids are effective for treating long-term chronic pain.
Ferguson filed his lawsuit against Purdue in September of 2017, accusing one of the nation’s largest opioid manufacturers of fueling the opioid epidemic in Washington state, embarking on a massive deceptive marketing campaign, and convincing doctors and the public that their drugs are effective for treating chronic pain and have a low risk of addiction, contrary to overwhelming evidence.

Portions of Ferguson’s original lawsuit were sealed because Purdue contended the information about marketing and opioid safety was...


January 03, 2018
AG sues Motel 6 for violating privacy of, discriminating against thousands of Washingtonians

SEATTLE — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced a lawsuit against national hotel chain Motel 6 for voluntarily providing guest lists to agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on a routine basis for at least two years. Each time Motel 6 released a guest list, it included the name and private information of every guest at the hotel.

The Attorney General’s Office began to investigate Motel 6 locations in Washington after two Motel 6 locations in Arizona made national news for voluntarily providing guests’ personal information to ICE. Motel 6 admits that at least six of its Washington state locations shared personal information of its guests with ICE. This lead to significant consequences including the detention of at least six individuals.

Specifically, four of those locations released the personal information of at least 9,151 guests to ICE, even though its privacy policy assured consumers it would protect this information. Motel...

Multistates Cases

Multi-State Settlement with PHH Mortgage Corporation

Date: January 3, 2018

Details: State attorneys general of 49 states, the District of Columbia and more than 45 state mortgage regulators have reached a $45 million settlement with New Jersey-based mortgage lender and servicer PHH Mortgage Corporation. The settlement resolves allegations that PHH, the nation’s ninth largest non-bank residential mortgage servicer, improperly serviced mortgage loans from January 1, 2009, through December 31, 2012.

States include:

5. California
6. Colorado
7. Connecticut
14. Indiana
16. Kansas
18. Louisiana
23. Minnesota
26. Montana
28. Nevada -
30. New Mexico
33. North Dakota
35. Oklahoma
36. Oregon
37. Pennsylvania -
   https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4287
38. Rhode Island - http://www.ri.gov/press/view/32212
39. South Carolina
40. South Dakota
41. Tennessee
43. Utah
46. Washington
48. Wisconsin
49. Wyoming
Coalition of Bipartisan AGs Demand Customers Receive Tax Savings, Not Utilities

Date: January 11, 2018

Details: A bipartisan coalition of state attorneys general, state agencies, and consumer advocates today called on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to take immediate steps to ensure that public utility companies do not receive a major windfall at the expense of their customers.

States include:

1. California
2. Connecticut
3. Florida
6. Maine
8. Maryland
10. New Hampshire
15. Vermont
FCC Sued Over Net Neutrality

Date: January 16, 2018

Details: A petition for review was filed by 22 attorneys general in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit over the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) recent ruling to roll back net neutrality regulations. Net neutrality allows consumers to access online content without any interference by an internet service provider (ISP). Without these rules, ISPs may force websites to pay fees for faster internet speeds, while limiting consumers’ ability to access the internet content of their choice. The FCC’s action also purports to limit the rights of the states to impose their own net neutrality requirements. The attorneys general seek a determination by the court that the FCC’s order to end net neutrality is “arbitrary, capricious, and an abuse of discretion” in violation of various federal laws and regulations.

States include:

11. Minnesota
12. Mississippi
16. Oregon
K-mart Settlement for Overbilling Medicaid

Date: January 3, 2018

Details: Several states and the federal government announced today that Kmart Corporation, owned by Sears Holdings Management Corporation (Kmart), agreed to settle allegations that Kmart charged the Medicaid program more than its usual and customary charge for certain drugs. Under the Settlement Agreement, Kmart agreed to pay a $59 settlement to resolve the overbilling allegations. The settlement proceeds will be shared between the Federal and state government.

States and Territories include:


Settlement Reached for False Claims Submitted for Unnecessary Pediatric Dental Services

Date: 22 January, 2018

Details: The United States, the District of Columbia, and 20 states have joined in a settlement agreement relating to allegations against Benevis, LLC (formerly known as NCDR, LLC) and 133 Kool Smiles clinics that received non-clinical practice support from Benevis, LLC.
The settlement will resolve allegations that Benevis/Kool Smiles knowingly submitted or caused to be submitted false claims to the Medicaid program related to dental services provided to pediatric patients. Under the settlement, Benevis/Kool Smiles agreed to pay $23.9 million collectively to the federal and state governments. The participating states will share $9.65 million of the total settlement.

Specifically, this settlement resolves allegations that from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011, Benevis/Kool Smiles submitted false claims to Medicaid for stainless steel crowns, tooth extractions and baby pulpotomies performed on pediatric patients that were either not medically necessary or could have been treated with less costly options. The settlement also resolves allegations that Benevis/Kool Smiles failed to implement appropriate internal controls to prevent overutilization and encouraged overutilization through productivity bonuses and terminations of dentists who did not meet productivity goals.

States include:


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**Increased Investigations and Lawsuits over Opioid Crisis**

**Date:** January 24, 2018

**Details:** Multiple states are increasing their investigation into certain pharmaceutical companies that have contributed to the opioid crisis. The investigations are an important step to stopping the rampant abuse and misuse of prescription medications.

States include:

Pensacola Resident Convicted of Exploitation of the Elderly

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced the conviction of a Pensacola man for exploiting and fraudulently using the personal identification information of a legally blind elderly victim. After deliberating for nine hours, the jury found John Louis Wages, 45, guilty as charged on both counts.

After receiving a copy of an anonymous report from the Florida Department of Children and Families Elder Abuse hotline, the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit initiated an investigation into the accusations. According to the report, Wages used an elderly victim’s money and credit card without consent of the victim while under Wages care.

The elderly victim, deemed legally blind and suffering from hearing loss, moved into Wages’ home for assistance with daily activities and finances. The MFCU investigation uncovered more than $20,000 of funds that had been misappropriated from a joint checking account that the defendant opened with the victim shortly after moving the victim...

Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/9C5C1D73BB2F6BDB8525821E00774435

Dentist and Office Manager Arrested for More Than $50,000 in

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Pembroke Pines Police Department today arrested a dentist and office manager for defrauding the Medicaid program out of more than $50,000. According to the MFCU investigation, Maritza Lazcano, owner of Lazcano Family Dental, and Luis Garcia Fragoso, the office manager, fraudulently billed the Medicaid program for numerous dental procedures never performed. These procedures included cleanings, crowns, root canals, x-rays, etc.

Lazcano, 51, and Fragoso, 45, each face one count of , a first-degree felony and one count of grand theft, a second-degree felony. If convicted, both defendants face up to 45 years in prison. Attorney General Bondi’s Office of Statewide Prosecution is prosecuting this case.

The Florida Attorney General’s Control Unit investigates and prosecutes providers that intentionally defraud the state’s Medicaid program through fraudulent billing practices. essentially steals from Florida’s taxpayers. From Jan. 2011 to the...

Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/9FEC680F1B4CBD1585258213006C22CB
January 11, 2018

Attorney General Bondi Rewards Two Citizens for Help in Case
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit rewarded two citizens with $20,000 each for reporting committed by Tranquility Healthcare Solutions. As a Florida Medicaid provider operating out of the Raleigh, NC, Tranquility targeted homeless adults, offering free hotel rooms and cell phones, in exchange for billing the homeless adults’ Medicaid numbers for psychosocial rehabilitation services. Both citizens provided information vital to the investigation and instrumental in the arrests of numerous Tranquility employees.

On May 13, 2014, Tania Medina-Carmenate called the Fraud Hotline and complained that Tranquility billed her for more than $11,000 in services not received.

On June 16, 2014, Brandi Bailey, a former Tranquility employee from North Carolina, called the Orlando MFCU unit to report possible fraud by Tranquility. Bailey’s report specifically alleged that Tranquility engaged in a pattern of billing recipients for services allegedly provided prior to the recipients establishing a relationship with Tranquility. Baily provided...

➢ Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/ADDF38D16C0FC6CF852582120074B14C

January 04, 2018

Fort Lauderdale Dentist Arrested for Violation of Probation
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Broward County Sheriff’s Office arrested a Fort Lauderdale dentist for violation of probation. Dr. Marino Vigna is currently serving probation following an MFCU investigation and arrest in 2016 for allegedly billing Medicaid for services not rendered. Dr. Vigna pleaded Nolo Contendere to a charge of grand theft, a third-degree felony.

As part of the plea, Dr. Vigna agreed to not treat Florida Medicaid patients in any manner while terminated from the Medicaid Program as a provider. The agreement further stated Dr. Marino Vigna may not treat Medicaid recipients unless he is lawfully reinstated as a Medicaid Provider for Florida.

During an integrity check on patients treated at Sunrise Dental Clinic by Dr. Beth Reinstein, Dr. Marino Vigna’s wife and a Medicaid provider, MFCU discovered nine Florida Medicaid recipients billed for services by Dr. Reinstein. According to the investigation, all recipients gave...

➢ Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/1B80FD2A6C6002758525820B00758E6B
GEORGIA

January 16, 2018

Carr: All-In Effort Leads to Dismantling of Systematic Elder Abuse Scheme

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr, in conjunction with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), the Prosecuting Attorneys Council of Georgia (PACGA), the Dougherty County District Attorney (DA), and various local law enforcement and first responding entities in the cities of Albany, Forsyth, Macon and Suwanee, today announced that their collaborative efforts led to the dismantling of a systematic elder abuse scheme coordinated by three individuals.

“Abuse, neglect or exploitation of older or at-risk adults will not be tolerated,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “We will investigate and prosecute anyone engaging in these criminal activities in our state, and we will hold the abusers accountable. I am very proud of our Control Unit and all of the statewide partners who played a part in dismantling this horrific elder abuse scheme—especially the witnesses who cared enough to report this suspicious behavior to their local law enforcement officials.”

See a breakdown...


KANSAS

January 25, 2018

Bourbon County woman ordered to repay more than $5,000 for

FORT SCOTT – (January 25, 2018) – A Bourbon County woman was ordered today to repay more than $5,000 to the Kansas Medicaid Program after pleading guilty to -related charges, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Trisha Diane Studyvin, 37, pleaded guilty in November in Bourbon County District Court to one felony count of making a false claim to the Medicaid program. Today, Judge Mark A. Ward ordered Studyvin to repay $5,002.80 to the Kansas Medicaid Program. Judge Ward also sentenced Studyvin to 12 months probation with an underlying jail sentence of 7 months and 12 months post-release supervision. 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.

An investigation revealed that Studyvin billed Medicaid for services provided as a personal care attendant to her disabled brother while he was out of the...

LYONS – (January 18, 2018) – A Hutchinson man was ordered to repay more than $11,000 to the Kansas Medicaid Program after pleading guilty to-related charges, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Roger Alan Bowling, 60, pleaded guilty in November in Rice County District Court to one felony count of making a false claim to the Medicaid program. Judge Mike Keeley yesterday ordered Bowling to repay $11,126.73 to the Kansas Medicaid Program. Judge Keeley also sentenced Bowling to 36 months probation with an underlying jail sentence of five months. 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.

Bowling served as a power of attorney to a dependent adult in a nursing home in Sterling. An investigation revealed that Bowling intentionally executed a scheme to defraud Medicaid by concealing the dependent adult’s...


KENTUCKY

January 25, 2018
Beshear: Charges Filed After Caregiver Physically Assaulted Patient in Lee County
FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 25, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of and Abuse today announced the indictment of a Lee County man for physically assaulting a patient in his care.

Jason Brennan, 34, of Berea, was indicted in Lee County Circuit Court Jan. 19 on one count of knowingly abusing or neglecting an adult, a Class C felony. Brennan could face a possible prison sentence of 5 to 10 years if convicted.

Brennan worked as a caregiver at a group home for children and adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. It is alleged that on May 13, 2017, while providing care and supervision of residents, Brennan entered the adult resident’s room, held the resident against a wall by his neck and then slapped the resident across the face.

Arraignment is scheduled for Feb. 16, in Lee Circuit Court. A charge is merely an accusation. A defendant is presumed...


January 09, 2018
Beshear: Louisville Chiropractor to Pay Kentucky $114,000 to Resolve
FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 9, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today announced a Louisville
Dr. Mark Walden, 53, reached a civil settlement negotiated by Beshear’s Office of and Abuse that resolves allegations that he submitted false claims to Kentucky Medicaid for services not rendered and for medical equipment, like back braces, cushions or foot supports, that were billed to Medicaid but never delivered to Medicaid patients.

Walden, whose principal place of business was located off Bardstown Road, was credentialed by the state and University Health Care or Passport to provide chiropractic services to Medicaid recipients.

Beshear’s office launched an investigation after information was given to the AG’s office by Passport regarding Walden’s billing practices from Jan. 1, 2011, through Aug. 31, 2014. The investigation found Walden billed Medicaid for 58 combined office visits for six patients who stated that they...


MARYLAND

January 02, 2018

Living Sans Frontieres, Inc. to Pay $500,000 for Services Not Rendered and Improperly Billing Medicaid

BALTIMORE, MD (January 2, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that Living Sans Frontieres, Inc., a developmental disability administration provider based in Woodlawn, will pay $500,000 to the State of Maryland to resolve allegations that the non-profit organization billed the state Medicaid program for non-rendered services. Living Sans Frontieres, Inc. is responsible for providing community-based housing and other supports to persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The investigation found that Living Sans Frontieres, Inc. failed to provide sufficient staffing to meet the needs of a person under its care. Living Sans Frontieres, Inc. billed the Medicaid program and received payment for services that were not actually delivered.

“This company cheated the State by billing for services they did not provide,” said Attorney General Frosh. “More importantly, they cheated some of our most vulnerable citizens who depend upon those services. This conduct violates our law and our duty to developmentally disabled...

Continuing her commitment to rooting out fraud in state programs and recovering taxpayer dollars, Attorney General Maura Healey today announced that her Division recovered more than $45 million for the state’s Medicaid program in 2017. The AG’s Division is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of fraud against the state’s Medicaid program, known as MassHealth. The Division recovered nearly $11 for every dollar appropriated in the 2017 fiscal year budget for its work.

“MassHealth provides critical health care services to many of our most vulnerable residents,” AG Healey said. “Our office works hard every day to stop fraud against the program, recover taxpayer dollars, and make sure those funds are used properly to benefit our residents.”

In 2017, AG Healey’s Division pursued a variety of cases for Massachusetts that achieved substantial settlements from various entities including pharmacies, doctors, home health companies, and dental practices.

In addition...


Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey has sued South Bay Mental Health Center, Inc. (SBMHC) for fraudulently billing the state’s Medicaid Program, known as MassHealth, for mental health care services provided to patients by unlicensed, unqualified, and unsupervised staff members at clinics across the state.

“This company provided substandard care to many vulnerable patients and fraudulently billed the state for its inadequate services,” said AG Healey. “MassHealth members deserve competent treatment from qualified individuals, and our office will continue to take action in order to remove these significant barriers to accessing critical mental health care in our state.”

SBMHC operates mental health facilities across the state including in Attleboro, Brockton, Cape Cod, Chelsea, Dorchester, Fall River, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Salem, Springfield, Weymouth, and Worcester.

The AG’s investigation into these allegations began after a whistleblower lawsuit was filed by a former SBMHC employee in August 2015 in the U.S. District...
MISSISSIPPI

January 29, 2018

AG Announces $33 Million Judgement Amid Legislative Attempt to Strip Prosecutorial Rights

Attorney General Jim Hood announced today that his office recovered over $33 million from pharmaceutical manufacturer Watson, Inc., after a decision announced earlier this month by the Mississippi Supreme Court found that the company defrauded the state by manipulating the prices it charged for its drugs to the state Medicaid program. The trial court concluded that, in defrauding Mississippi, Watson cost the taxpayers over $7 million when it reported Average Wholesale Prices (“AWPs”) that grossly exceeded the actual prices Watson charged its customers. These manipulated prices caused the state to overpay for prescription drugs for Medicaid recipients. Inflated prices varied from drug to drug, in some cases as much as 1,000 percent. As a result of this fraud, the trial court awarded the state statutory and punitive damages for a total of $33,408,546.72. The Watson case was one of dozens brought against other drug companies that also inflated drug prices causing...


MISSOURI

January 26, 2018

Licensed Professional Counselor Pleads Guilty to $175,000 Scheme

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced that Corrine A. Dale, of St. Louis, entered an open plea in St. Louis County Circuit Court to 15 felony counts in a case jointly prosecuted by the Attorney General and St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulloch. Dale, a licensed professional counselor, stole $175,609.50 from Missouri’s Medicaid program by falsely billing and receiving payment for counseling services she never provided. Dale pled guilty before the Hon. Joseph L. Walsh, III, to 12 Class C Felonies of , 1 Class B Felony of Receiving Stolen Property, and 2 Class A Felonies of Identity Theft. Judge Walsh sentenced Dale to 7 years in the Missouri Department of Corrections for each count, 7 years for the Receiving Stolen Property count, and 15 years for each Identity Theft count. The court suspended execution of the sentences, placed Dale on 5 years supervised...

NEW JERSEY

January 25, 2018

Owner of Hudson County Medical Equipment Supply Store Sentenced to Prison for Stealing $100,000 through Scam

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (OIFP) announced that the owner of a Hudson County medical equipment supply store was sentenced today to prison for fraudulently billing the Medicaid program more than $100,000 for medical supplies never provided to patients.

Alfredo Valdes, Jr., 43, of Clifton, N.J., who owns T-N-T medical supplies in West New York, was sentenced today to four years in state prison by Superior Court Judge Nesle A. Rodriguez in Hudson County. Valdes pleaded guilty in August to second-degree charges of health care claims fraud and theft by deception. Valdes was ordered to pay $101,000 in restitution to Horizon New Jersey Health, and he signed a consent order agreeing to lifetime disbarment from participation as a provider in the New Jersey Medicaid program.

“Valdes systematically stole from Medicaid, billing the program more than $100,000 for medical supplies for patients who were...


NEW YORK

January 31, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces $6.4 Million Settlement With Brooklyn Home Health Care Provider Over False Medicaid Billing And Cover Up

BROOKLYN – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that Home Family Care, Inc. (“Home Family”) of Brooklyn, NY and its President, Alexander Kiselev, will pay $6.415 million to resolve allegations that they violated the federal and New York False Claims Acts by falsely billing the New York State Medicaid program for home health care services that were not provided or that were provided by unqualified staff.

The settlement resolves allegations in a complaint filed by the State of New York and the United States that Home Family routinely permitted its aides to circumvent verification procedures purportedly put in place by Home Family to ensure that its aides were providing scheduled services to Medicaid recipients who depended upon them. As alleged in the complaint, even after Home Family put in place an electronic attendance verification system which purportedly required aides to call a central number to “clock in” and “clock out”...

January 16, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Indictment And Arrests Of Medical Testing Company Owners In Multi-Million Dollar

BROOKLYN — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the indictment and arrest of Tea Kaganovich, 45, and Ramazi Mitiashvili, 57, both of Brooklyn, NY for Grand Larceny in the First Degree and other related charges for illegally billing Medicaid for fraudulent diagnostic testing services and laundering the criminal proceeds from their scheme. The Attorney General also filed a civil lawsuit seeking $24 million in damages from the defendants under the State’s False Claims Act and other laws. The indictment alleges that Kaganovich and Mitiashvili, operators of Sophisticated Imaging, Inc., East Coast Diagnostics, Inc., and East West Management, Inc., engaged in a systematic scheme to subject Medicaid patients to a battery of diagnostic tests that were not medically necessary and not ordered by real physicians. Kaganovich, Mitiashvili, and the indicted corporations then caused the Medicaid program, including Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (“MCOs”), to be billed for medical testing, some of...


January 12, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Whitney M. Young Health Center For Improperly Billing Medicaid For Substandard Substance Abuse Services

ALBANY – New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a $1.25 million settlement with the Whitney M. Young Health Center for improper billing by its Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program, which failed to properly document patient treatment plans necessary for the patients’ care.

“As the opioid epidemic continues across the state, New Yorkers seeking help with addiction deserve to know they’re getting high-quality treatment. We will not tolerate Medicaid providers delivering substandard treatment, while New Yorkers foot the bill,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “My office will continue to hold Medicaid providers accountable and protect the integrity of the system.”

The Whitney M. Young Health Center’s Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program provides methadone and counseling for Medicaid recipients recovering from substance abuse addiction. The purpose of a treatment plan, as required by Medicaid, is to provide a tailored clinical plan for each patient devised by a multi-disciplinary team. The treatment plan must include...

NORTH CAROLINA

January 17, 2018

Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Settlement with Raleigh Dentist over Medicaid Claims

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today announced a settlement with Javeria Nasir, a dentist in Raleigh. Dr. Nasir allegedly submitted fraudulent claims to the North Carolina Medicaid program. Allegedly, Dr. Nasir submitted claims between Jan. 1, 2015 and July 31, 2017, for “extended care facility calls” and “full mouth debridements” that were not medically necessary, had no supporting clinical documentation, and were performed in violation of Medicaid policy.

“When medical providers charge Medicaid for procedures that aren’t necessary or appropriate, they are cheating taxpayers,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “I will not allow it. My office will continue our efforts to restore money to the Medicaid program and protect taxpayers in our state.”

Dr. Nasir has agreed to pay $100,000 back to the North Carolina Medicaid Program and has taken steps in her practice to avoid this type of conduct in the future.

The investigation and settlement stemmed from Medicaid Investigations Division’s continuing...


PENNSYLVANIA

January 31, 2018

Bucks County Dentist Charged with $1.5 Million in Fraudulent Bills to Pennsylvania Medicaid Program

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced felony charges against a Bucks County dentist after he and his company submitted $1.5 million in fraudulent claims to the Medical Assistance Program for dental work that was never performed.

Dr. Ilya Babiner, 63, of Bridge View Road, Langhorne, was charged with theft by deception, tampering with public records and related offenses arising from claims submitted from his dental practice in Feasterville and Philadelphia. Babiner owns and operates General Dentistry Number One, which is also a defendant in the case and faces similar charges.

“is a serious crime that harms taxpayers,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “When people commit , they’re stealing tax dollars from people who are in real need of these services. These charges are part of a renewed focus by my office on this kind of criminal activity. Our Control
WISCONSIN

January 16, 2018
AG Schimel Launches Public Awareness Campaign for Reporting Elder Abuse

MADISON, Wis. – Today, Attorney General Brad Schimel announced the start of a radio ad campaign that will raise awareness about elder abuse and encourage citizens to report abuse against seniors at Medicaid-funded or other senior care facilities.

“One in nine seniors have reported being abused, neglected or exploited in the last twelve months, but we also know that elder abuse is drastically underreported[1],” said Attorney General Schimel. “As our Task Force on Elder Abuse continues to work on improving outcomes for the state’s growing population of elderly, we need more people to come forward and report when they see or experience elder abuse. This new campaign is the first step in raising public awareness about elder abuse and encouraging citizens to report instances of abuse to authorities.”

The new public awareness campaign encourages citizens to report suspected elder abuse in a Medicaid-funded or other senior facility to the Attorney...


January 05, 2018
AG Schimel Hosts Task Force on Elder Abuse Meeting; Announces Public Awareness Campaign for Reporting Elder Abuse

MADISON, Wis. – Today, Attorney General Brad Schimel held the second meeting of the Attorney General’s Task Force on Elder Abuse and is announcing a new public awareness campaign that will allow people to report abuse against seniors at Medicaid-funded or other senior care facilities.

“One in nine seniors have reported being abused, neglected or exploited in the last twelve months, but we also know that elder abuse is drastically underreported[1],” said Attorney General Schimel. “With respect to financial crimes perpetuated against the elderly alone, it is estimated that just one in 44 cases is ever reported.[2] As this task force continues to work on improving outcomes for the state’s growing population of elderly, we need more people to come forward and report when they see or experience elder abuse.”

The new public awareness campaign the Wisconsin Department of Justice is launching will
inform the public about what elder abuse...


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**WYOMING**

January 08, 2018

**POWELL, WYOMING PSYCHOLOGIST SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS IN PRISON FOR HEALTH CARE FRAUD**

Gibson Buckley Condie, 57, of Powell, Wyoming, was sentenced on January 8, 2018, to serve three years in prison for felony health care fraud involving mental health services falsely billed to Wyoming Medicaid, announced United States Attorney Mark A. Klaassen. Condie was also ordered to pay approximately $2.28 million in restitution to the Wyoming Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and forfeit certain assets traceable to the proceeds of his fraud.

Condie, who was a licensed psychologist, had been indicted by a federal grand jury in May 2017 for a scheme to defraud Wyoming Medicaid. Condie pled guilty to one count of health care fraud as part of a plea agreement with the United States government. Condie admitted to operating a scheme involving a number of misrepresentations and false statements intended to cause Medicaid to pay for mental health services for which he knew...

- Original Press Release: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1h4HwH4Hd7fzbWvogZTj9mo8bFwyCMTSk/view

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**Consumer Advocacy**

**ARIZONA**

January 30, 2018


PHOENIX - With data breaches at an all-time high across the country, Attorney General Mark Brnovich is partnering with State Representative T.J. Shope, R-Coolidge, to introduce legislation that would help protect Arizonans from becoming victims of identity theft after a data breach. HB 2154 would amend the state’s outdated data breach notification law by strengthening notification requirements and increasing consumer protection after a breach. If enacted, the proposed law would make the state’s data breach notification law one of the most comprehensive and pro-consumer in the country.

“Over the past several years, millions of Arizona residents have had their personal information compromised by cybercriminals,” said Attorney General Brnovich. “A stronger data breach...
notification law would not only protect consumers, it would provide clarity to businesses and government agencies about their obligations after a data breach. I’m proud to be working with Rep. Shope and the Legislature to improve our data breach notification...


January 16, 2018

**AG Brnovich Urges California Court To Reject Imbalanced Class Action Softball Bats Settlement**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich filed a letter brief urging a federal court in California to reject an imbalanced class action settlement relating to Wilson & DeMarini softball bats that would give the class action lawyers in the case the majority of the settlement and leave consumers taking home only coupons of questionable value.

Hiroyuki Oda, et al. v. Wilson Sporting Goods Co. alleged that Wilson Sporting Goods Co. sold certain 2013 and 2014 model softball bats called the “White Steel” that were (1) defectively designed (bats fail prematurely due to defects) and (2) refused to honor warranties. The judge in the case questioned the class action settlement fee arrangement, noting that the lawyers would take home almost half a million dollars in fees while leaving the 10,240 class members with $75 or $35 coupons. Attorney General Brnovich’s letter urges the Court to step in, protect consumers, and reject the...


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**ARKANSAS**

January 12, 2018

**Winter Webcast Series to be Hosted by Attorney General’s Office**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge opened registration for a Winter Webcast Series of trainings on common senior scams, dating violence prevention, internet safety, identity theft, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and prescription drug abuse and misuse prevention.

“This series of webcasts is an important tool for Arkansans to learn about the diverse resources provided by the Attorney General’s office,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Technology gives us a unique opportunity to connect with Arkansans across the state. Once again these trainings will be available to help individuals navigate the internet safely, recognize warning signs of dating violence, avoid common scams and identity theft and access public information through the Freedom of Information Act. To educate more people on the pain pill epidemic, I have added a program about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and misuse.”
From noon-1 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 17, participants can learn about scams that...
January 12, 2018

**Attorney General Becerra, Cal OES Director Ghilarducci Urge Vigilance Against Price Gouging in New Public Service Announcement**

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and Director of the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services Mark Ghilarducci today released a public service announcement, “Price Gouging is Not Only Wrong, It’s Illegal”, encouraging members of the public to be vigilant against any illegal price gouging in the wake of natural disasters that have affected thousands of Californians. They remind all Californians that price gouging during a state of emergency is illegal under Penal Code Section 396 and encourage them to report potential price gouging to the Attorney General’s website or call (800) 952-5225, or to contact their local police department or sheriff’s office.

“Price gouging during a state of emergency isn’t just wrong, it’s against the law,” said Attorney General Becerra. “We need all Californians to look out for their friends and neighbors as they get back on their feet. One important way we can do this is by addressing...”

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**DELAWARE**

January 08, 2018

**Investors Should Approach Cryptocurrency with Caution, Delaware’s Investor Protection Unit Says**

With cryptocurrencies attracting recent headlines, the Investor Protection Unit of the Delaware Department of Justice is urging Delaware investors to be cautious about investments involving cryptocurrencies.

“Investors should make certain they understand the risks associated with investments in cryptocurrencies and financial products involving cryptocurrency before they invest,” said Director of Investor Protection Greg Strong.

Cryptocurrencies are a medium of exchange that are created and stored electronically in the blockchain, a distributed public database that keeps a permanent record of digital transactions. Current common cryptocurrencies include Bitcoin, Ethereum and Litecoin. Unlike traditional currency, these alternatives have no physical form and typically are not backed by tangible assets. They are not insured or controlled by a central bank or other governmental authority, cannot always be exchanged for other commodities, and are subject to little or no regulation. A survey of state and provincial securities regulators by the North American Securities...
DISTRICL OF COLUMBIA

January 30, 2018

OAG Testimony on Net Neutrality Resolution

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Statement of Benjamin Wiseman
Assistant Attorney General, Office of Consumer Protection
Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

Before the
The Committee on Government Operations
The Honorable Brandon Todd, Chairman

Public Oversight Roundtable
on
Net Neutrality
and
PR22-0691 - Sense of the Council Opposing the Repeal of Net Neutrality Rules Resolution of 2017

Wednesday, January 24, 2018

11:00 a.m.

Room 412, John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004


January 18, 2018

Attorney General Racine Launches New Online Resources to Help Tenants in the District

WASHINGTON, D. C. – As part of an effort to use legal tools to address the District’s affordable housing crisis, Attorney General Karl A. Racine today announced the release of an online toolkit containing detailed information for tenants about their rights to safe and habitable housing and how to get help if those rights are violated. The materials include tenant resources, information about how to address nuisance properties, and information about how the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) can use its legal authority to take action against persistent housing code violators. They are available here in both English and Spanish.

“We created these new resources because we want to educate and empower tenants to take action if they are being forced to live in unsafe conditions—and we want them to know how the
District government can help,” said Attorney General Racine. “Over the past year, my office has brought enforcement...


January 31, 2018

Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi is urging Floridians to take action to prevent identity theft in recognition of Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week. To raise awareness about ID theft and related scams, the attorney general is initiating a week-long twitter campaign to highlight important tips to avoid becoming a victim.
Follow Attorney General Bondi on Twitter @AGPamBondi for this week’s Tax Identity Theft Awareness tips and much more.
Consumers should know that tax identity thieves can easily access personal information by:
· Going through trash cans and dumpsters to search for bills and documents with sensitive information;
· Calling or emailing individuals to trick them into revealing personal information; and
· Posing as a legitimate tax preparer for the purpose of accessing information.
The following tips should be taken to avoid identity theft and tax fraud:
· File tax returns early in the tax season;
· Use a secure internet connection when filing electronically. Do not use unsecure,...

Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/303DD0B2048F64608525822400719B61

January 25, 2018

Consumer Alert: Legendary Journeys, Inc. Claims Due May 14
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today issued a Consumer Alert about Legendary Journeys, Inc., a Sarasota-based travel agency that has closed its doors and filed an assignment for the benefit of creditors proceeding in state court. Customers who booked travel through Legendary Journeys, and had travel plans cancelled due to the closing of the company, may be eligible for a refund of deposits paid and/or a refund of travel insurance premiums paid.
There are two separate processes consumers must follow to seek refunds:
Refunds for Travel Deposits:
Customers must file a proof of claim in the court proceeding by May 14, 2018 and submit the claim to the assignee, Larry S. Hyman, or the claim will be barred. ...

Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/8381FB16ADB1BDD98525822000777DE7
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi is urging consumers who rented a car from Avis, Budget or Payless between Jan. 1, 2010 to July 10, 2017 and were charged for e-Toll services to file a claim before the January 7, 2018 deadline. The deadline to submit a claim is this Sunday. Refund checks will be mailed in March 2018 to eligible claimants wrongfully charged for e-Toll services.

For more information about the claims process and to access the claim form, click here.

In July this year, Attorney General Bondi’s Office reached a settlement with Avis Budget Car Rental System, LLC, which owns Avis, Budget and Payless. The settlement resolves allegations related to the rental car companies' practices involving add-on fees for cashless tolls in Florida and other related add-on charges. As part of the settlement, the three companies are required to provide refunds to any consumers charged for e-Toll without sufficient disclosures, who...


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GEORGIA

January 30, 2018

Carr: Deadline for Free Equifax Credit Monitoring is Wednesday, January 31

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is reminding all Georgians that Wednesday, January 31, 2018 is the last day to sign up for Equifax’s free credit monitoring service.

“The Equifax data breach that was announced in September 2017 compromised the names, Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses and, in some cases, the driver’s license numbers, of 145 million Americans, including approximately 5 million Georgians,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “In response to the breach, Equifax has been offering one year of its TrustedID credit monitoring services for free to anyone with a Social Security number. Our office is strongly encouraging consumers to take advantage of this service to help protect against identity theft.”

To sign up, go to equifaxsecurity2017.com by or before January 31, 2018. The service covers all three major credit reporting agencies — Equifax, TransUnion and Experian. If any suspicious activity appears on your credit report, you’ll get an...

January 29, 2018

CONSUMER ALERT: Attorney General Carr, DOR and BBB Recognize Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week

ATLANTA, GA – In recognition of Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week, Attorney General Chris Carr, Commissioner of the Department of Revenue Lynne Riley and the Better Business Bureau want consumers to be on alert for tax-related scams as the season approaches.

“This week, we are joining the Georgia Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to ensure that all Georgians have the information they need as we head into tax season,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “The best way to avoid tax identity theft is to file your taxes as early as possible before a scammer has the chance to use your Social Security number to file a fraudulent return. We hope all Georgians will heed this advice and better protect themselves from falling victim to tax identity theft this season.”

"Combatting tax identity theft and the resulting tax fraud is especially important considering the amount of personal information...


January 10, 2018

Carr: Supports Measure To Strengthen Cybersecurity Laws in Georgia

ATLANTA, GA - Attorney General Chris Carr today made the following statement on legislation to crack down on unauthorized computer access. Senate Bill 315 was introduced by Senator Bruce Thompson on the first day of the 2018 Legislative Session and will strengthen Georgia’s ability to more effectively fight cybercrime.

“Senate Bill 315 is an important security measure that will further protect Georgians from cybercriminals,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “As it stands, we are one of only three states in the nation where it is not illegal to access a computer so long as nothing is disrupted or stolen. This doesn’t make any sense. Unlawfully accessing any computer in Georgia should be a crime, and we must fix this loophole. By adding greater protections and penalties against unauthorized computer access, we believe this bill will help us more effectively fight cybercrime in our state.”

Co-sponsors for Senate Bill 315 include Senator John...


GUAM

January 11, 2018

Exercise Caution When Investing

January 11, 2018, Tamuning, Guam - The Office of the Attorney General of Guam is looking into
concerns being raised with regard to business practices of a company by the name of USI-Tech, based out of Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

“Consumers who are looking to invest their money should exercise caution, do your research, and consult with experts in the field before making a decision to invest your hard-earned money or retirement in the virtual currency marketplace.” said Attorney General Elizabeth Barrett-Anderson.

Virtual currencies like Bitcoin are commonly used by companies like USI-Tech for investment purposes. According to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), it is important to remember before buying virtual currencies that:
• If someone tries to sell you an investment in options or futures on virtual currencies, like Bitcoin, verify they are registered with the CFTC. Visit SmartCheck.gov to check registrations or learn more about common investment frauds.

IDADO

January 18, 2018

Scammers Falsely Claiming Affiliation with Attorney General Lawrence Wasden
(Boise) – Attorney General Lawrence Wasden is warning Idahoans of a consumer scam involving the use of his name and office.

The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division was alerted by a Latah County resident that she was contacted via telephone Wednesday, January 17, by a man purporting to be from Publishers Clearing House. When the woman questioned the caller’s legitimacy, the caller said he would have the Idaho Attorney General contact her to verify the call. Soon after, the woman received a call from a man claiming to be “Mr. Wasden,” who told her the first call was from Publishers Clearing House.

Both calls were fake and part of an apparent scam.

“While I’d love to be the bearer of good news, I want to make sure all Idahoans know that my office has no connection whatsoever with Publishers Clearing House,” Wasden says. “Anyone receiving a call like this should just hang up...

Original Press Release:
ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: TAX CUT ENTitles UTILITY CUSTOMERS TO LOWER RATES NOW

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced her office will push for every Illinois utility company to begin reducing customers’ bills immediately to pass on the companies’ savings under the new federal tax law that significantly lowers corporate tax rates. Madigan began this effort by filing motions with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to reduce pending rate requests by two utility companies in order to reflect the companies’ lower tax expense.

The federal corporate income tax rate was lowered from 35 percent to 21 percent, effective Jan. 1, 2018. Madigan said that because regulated utility rates must reflect actual costs companies incur, electricity, natural gas and water bills should be reduced to reflect the tax reductions. The Attorney General filed motions with the ICC on Monday in two cases that request rate increases for Nicor Gas, serving northern Illinois, and for Aqua Illinois, which serves communities around the state. ...

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_01/20180123.html

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ISSUES CONSUMER GUIDE TO ILLINOISANS PURCHASING USED VEHICLES

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that a new law in Illinois will better protect consumers buying used cars. Madigan issued a free Consumer Guide to Buying a Used Vehicle and Consumer Checklist to inform consumers about these new protections in Illinois and provide tips and advice on purchasing a used car. The guide is now available on her website.

The law, which took effect July 1, requires used car dealers to provide a limited powertrain warranty to used car buyers for the first 15 days or 500 miles, whichever comes first. Before the law took effect, used car dealers could sell any used vehicle “as-is” without a warranty.

Under the new law, the coverage does not apply to vehicles sold with more than 150,000 miles on the odometer or with a flood title or rebuilt title. The coverage also does not apply to vehicles that are utilized off-road or...

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_01/20180103.html
January 19, 2018

**Deadline Approaches for Iowans to Seek Money Owed through Federal Western Union Settlement**

(DES MOINES, Iowa) Attorney General Tom Miller reminds Iowans who wired money to scam artists via Western Union from 2004 through mid-January of last year that the deadline is approaching for those victims to get their money back through a federal settlement. Victims have until February 12 to submit a refund claim if they wired money to a scammer through Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017.

Consumers who previously reported losses to government agencies or Western Union should have received a settlement claim mailing from a settlement administrator. Victims do not need to have previously reported the fraudulent transaction to be eligible for a refund through this settlement.

Iowans are likely owed millions of dollars through the settlement, according to Miller. “For Iowans who received a notice from the federal settlement administrator, this is a reminder that time is running out to apply for a refund,” Miller said. “But I’m...


January 04, 2018

**Miller Proposes Legislation to Eliminate Credit Freeze Fees**

(DES MOINES, Iowa) Attorney General Tom Miller is proposing legislation to eliminate fees most Iowa consumers now pay to freeze unauthorized access to their credit reports, as well as fees credit reporting agencies can charge Iowans to undo the freeze, which are currently the highest in the nation.

Miller’s pre-filed bill in advance of this year’s legislative session follows the massive Equifax data breach disclosed in September, affecting 1.1 million Iowans and 143 million consumers nationwide.

While Equifax agreed to temporarily waive its credit freeze-related fees following heavy criticism by the public, state attorneys general—including Miller—and federal lawmakers, most Iowa consumers still must pay to freeze and lift credit report freezes from each of the two other major credit reporting agencies (CRAs)—Experian and TransUnion.

Credit Freeze

A credit freeze restricts access to a consumer’s credit report. The freeze makes it more difficult for identity thieves to open new accounts under a consumer’s name, because...

KANSAS

January 16, 2018

**Consumer Alert: Deadline approaching for filing claim to Western Union**

TOPEKA – (January 16, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt today reminded Kansas consumers that the deadline for submitting a claim to Western Union’s victim compensation fund is quickly approaching.

Consumers who sent payments to scammers using Western Union’s wire transfer services have until February 12 to file a claim to receive payment from a victim’s compensation fund established through agreements Western Union has entered into with Kansas and 49 other states and the District of Columbia, as well as the U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission. Kansas consumers who were a victim of a fraud-induced transfer using Western Union between January 1, 2004, and January 19, 2017, are eligible to file a claim.

The company admitted to processing hundreds of thousands of fraudulent wire transfer transactions as part of scams including the “grandparent scam,” where a scammer poses as a family member in need of immediate financial help,...


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KENTUCKY

January 30, 2018

**Beshear, AARP Launch ‘Mission Veterans Protected’ to Combat Con Artists Targeting Veterans**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 30, 2018) – Today, Attorney General Andy Beshear joined with AARP Kentucky and partners to launch “Mission Veterans Protected” to help reverse the high rate of veterans, active-duty service members, reservists and military families from being targeted and falling victim to scams.

“Mission Veterans Protected,” part of Beshear’s Scam Alerts initiative, provides preventative resources to help Kentucky’s veteran community combat the findings in a recent AARP study that determined more veterans are targeted by con artists and fall victim to fraud when compared to nonveterans.

Nearly eight in 10 veterans in the study reported receiving a scam attempt in the last five years that tried to take advantage of their military service, and nearly 16 percent of veterans report losing money to scams, compared to 8 percent of nonveterans.

“We value our veterans and launched ‘Mission Veterans Protected’ to fight back against...
Beshear: Settlement Passes LG&E, KU’s $176 Million Benefit from Reduced Federal Tax Rate to Kentuckians

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 29, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear is calling on the Public Service Commission (PSC) to quickly approve a settlement between his office and two utilities companies that directly returns millions of dollars to Kentuckians.

The settlement filed today with the PSC by Kentucky Utilities Company (KU) and Louisville Gas and Electric Company (LG&E) would allow the companies to return $176.8 million in savings from recent federal tax reform to its customers over a 13-month period. The actual amount of savings would be for a 16-month period – Jan. 1, 2018, until April 30, 2019.

“My office has worked on this agreement with the utilities to ensure that their savings from a lower corporate tax rate is immediately returned to each ratepayer,” Beshear said. “If the PSC acts quickly to protect Kentuckians, each family will see a line of credit for their energy consumption on April’s KU or LG&E...”

Beshear Asks PSC to Reduce Duke Customers’ Current Rates by $16 Million

FRANKFORT, KY. (Jan. 8, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear announced today that his Office of Rate Intervention is recommending that the Public Service Commission (PSC) reduce the current rates Duke Energy charges its Kentucky customers by $16 million.

Currently, Duke Energy, which services many Northern Kentucky counties, is requesting a $48.6 million increase in its rates.

Beshear said he believes not only should the increase be denied, but also that current rates should be reduced by the additional $16 million.

“As Kentuckians have experienced some of the coldest temperatures recently, it’s even more evident that our families simply cannot pay any more,” Beshear said. “Duke Energy is a sophisticated company that can maintain its infrastructure while still charging a lower rate.” Beshear’s office recently filed expert testimony in support of the reduction.

This amount is $64.66 million less than the $48.6 million increase the company is proposing.

Beshear’s Office of Rate Intervention serves as a...
January 05, 2018

**Beshear: As Powerball, Mega Millions Jackpots Grow so do Lottery Scams**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 5, 2018) – Kentuckians hoping to cash in on soaring Powerball and Mega Millions jackpots should also be on alert for increases in scam calls, emails and letters claiming they have won millions.

Attorney General Andy Beshear issued a Scam Alert today to help Kentuckians identify and avoid common lottery and sweepstakes scams.

Beshear's office receives regular lottery and sweepstakes scam complaints and works with victims to help recover losses. A total of last year's reports suggests Kentuckians lost more than $320,000 to such scams, including a Mercer County resident who lost more than $36,000.

"Every day, criminals use fake lotteries and sweepstakes to steal from Kentucky families," said Beshear. "As lottery jackpots grow, so do the number of lottery scams. Kentuckians can avoid falling victim by knowing these calls or mailings are scams."

Lottery and sweepstakes scams can usually be identified when someone makes contact over the phone, email or...


January 05, 2018

**Beshear Ready to Fight Final Order Entered this Week by FCC to Repeal Net Neutrality**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 5, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear said his office is reviewing the 540-page final order issued this week by the Federal Communications Commission or FCC to repeal Net Neutrality, and stands ready for a legal fight to protect Kentucky families from the federal agency’s harmful actions.

The FCC voted to rollback Net Neutrality regulations Dec. 14, and made the final rule public Thursday, Jan. 4. The rule would take effect upon approval by the federal Office of Management and Budget and 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

Beshear announced in December that he strongly opposed the FCC’s changes to Net Neutrality, and in fact, had asked the FCC to delay any rollbacks given his concerns over fraud in the public comments process on how any changes would affect the everyday lives of Kentuckians.

Since that time, Beshear has heard from dozens of Kentuckians who have detailed how...


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**LOUISIANA**

January 22, 2018

**Consumers Should Be on Lookout for Recently Recalled Child Products**

BATON ROUGE, LA – Attorney General Jeff Landry is alerting Louisiana parents and guardians of
several child products that have recently been recalled.

“As your Attorney General, I am committed to making Louisiana a safer place for our families,” said General Landry. “Taking a moment to learn about these recalled child products can help ensure your child’s safety and the well-being of all our State’s children.”

General Landry listed the following recalled products ...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/6516?TypeId=1&CatId=3

January 12, 2018

Takata Airbag Recall Expanded

BATON ROUGE, LA – Japanese airbag maker Takata recalled an additional 3.3 million faulty air bag inflators this week, and Attorney General Jeff Landry is encouraging Louisiana consumers to verify whether their vehicles are affected by the recall.

“The largest automotive recall in American history has just been expanded,” explained General Landry. “And my office wants to ensure the people of our State know about it, as consumer awareness is an important step in preventing injury or fatalities as a result of this defect.”


“So some vehicle owners may not be aware that they may have defects in their airbags,” added General Landry. “So I urge Louisiana consumers to check if their vehicles need service; and, if...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/6511?TypeId=1&CatId=3

MARYLAND

January 12, 2018

Attorney General Frosh Urges PSC to Ensure Savings from Tax Cuts are Passed on to Utility Customers

BALTIMORE, MD (January 12, 2018)–In a letter to the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC), Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh urged members of the PSC to ensure utility customers benefit from cost savings to utility companies resulting from recent tax cuts.

In his letter, Attorney General Frosh stated, “As the Commission is aware, legislation reduced the federal corporate income tax rate from 35% to 21% effective January 1, 2018. I write to urge the Public Service Commission to take immediate action to ensure that the cost savings associated with these major tax cuts are passed on to utility customers, where they belong.”

Attorney General Frosh noted that without the benefit of a downward rate adjustment, utility companies stood to make a windfall at the expense of utility customers. While customers are entitled to “just and reasonable rates,” they are now paying rates that do not take into account the drop in expenses...

AG Healey Partners with Mass Bar Association, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce to Announce Student Loan Bankruptcy Assistance Project

Boston — Taking a new approach to the problem of unrepresented student loan borrowers facing personal bankruptcy, Attorney General Maura Healey announced the launch of a statewide Student Loan Bankruptcy Assistance Project with the Massachusetts Bar Association (MBA) and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. The new initiative – a product of the Student Debt Working Group launched in 2016 by AG Healey and Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce CEO Jim Rooney – will match a panel of pro bono attorneys and law firms with distressed students who may be eligible to have student loans discharged in bankruptcy. The MBA will recruit and train volunteer attorneys to work with borrowers in need.

“The student debt crisis is a significant challenge that we face as a state and as a country, making it difficult for students and families to invest in their future,” AG Healey said. “This project will benefit some of our...”


Following Push from AG Healey, Eversource Agrees to Use Savings from Federal Tax Bill to Lower Rates for Customers

Boston — Two weeks after AG Healey called on state utilities to pass their new tax savings onto customers, Eversource has agreed to use the corporate savings it will receive under the new federal tax law to lower rates for its 1.4 million Massachusetts customers. In a Dec. 20 filing, AG Healey’s Office urged the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to recalculate Eversource’s recently approved rate hike to reflect the reduction of the federal corporate tax rate from 35 to 21 percent. AG Healey is the first attorney general in the country to publicly call for across-the-board cuts in electric, gas, and water rates, following the passage of the new law.

“This tax bill is being paid for by the people of Massachusetts, so the money should go back in their pockets,” said AG Healey. “Our office filed this action to ensure that these savings go to customers. We are glad that...”

MICHIGAN

January 26, 2018

Schuette: Deadline Is Approaching for Enrollment in Equifax Free Credit Monitoring Program Created After the Equifax Security Breach

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette is today reminding Michigan residents that the deadline is approaching to enroll in Equifax’s free one-year TrustedID Premiere program that offers credit file monitoring and identity theft protection. The program was created in response to the 2017 Equifax security breach. The deadline for residents who want to enroll in the program is January 31, 2018. This program is free and available to anyone with a valid U.S. social security number, even those not impacted by the Equifax security breach.

“The aftermath of this security breach is still affecting Michigan residents, which is why my Consumer Protection Division has been working to educate the public on protective prevention measures,” Schuette said. “No one should have to wonder what they can do to help protect themselves from identity theft, which is why I remind Michigan residents that time is limited to sign up for this free...


January 05, 2018

After a Jump in Consumer Complaints in 2017, Schuette Reminds Michigan Consumers to Shop Smart When Purchasing Gym Memberships

LANSING — After a rise in consumer complaints against health clubs and fitness centers in 2017, Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette is reminding Michigan consumers looking to join a gym this New Year to shop smart. The Department of Attorney General has a consumer alert to help residents make educated choices about fitness center and health club memberships.

In 2017, the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division received 595 complaints from Michigan consumers against health clubs and fitness centers. This is significant increase over the 84 complaints received in 2016.

More than half the complaints were made against Family Fitness, a West Michigan based chain. The remaining complaints involved discrepancies between what consumers say they were told by sales personnel and what the signed contract actually guaranteed. In particular, consumers reported the written cancellation procedure frequently differed from what they were told by the salesperson. Consumers also complained about high-pressure sales tactics and...

MISSOURI

January 25, 2018
AG Hawley Reminds Consumers of Deadline to File Claim if Scammed via Western Union Payment
Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley joined the Federal Trade Commission in alerting consumers who lost money to scammers who told them to pay via Western Union’s money transfer system between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017, that they can now file a claim to get their money back by going to FTC.gov/WU before February 12, 2018.
The refund program follows a settlement with the Western Union Company, which in January 2017 agreed to pay $586 million to resolve charges brought by the FTC and the U.S. Department of Justice. The FTC alleged that fraudsters were able to use Western Union’s money transfer system to get payments from their victims, even though the company was aware of the problem and received hundreds of thousands of complaints about fraud-induced money transfers made for fraudulent lottery and prizes, family emergencies, advance-fee loans, online dating, and other scams. The company...


NEVADA

January 25, 2018
Attorney General Laxalt Releases Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Guide as Part his First-of-its-Kind Statewide Training Program
Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt released a statewide resource guide to help law enforcement officers recognize elder abuse and explore their next step options. The guide provides information about crimes to consider when investigating elder abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, and deliver information to officers out in the field on local resources and information on how to access civil legal remedies.
In June 2016, the Office of the Nevada Attorney General applied for a competitive federal grant for enhanced training and services to combat abuse in later life. In October 2016, the Office was selected as the recipient for the Office on Violence Against Women first-of-its-kind pilot statewide program related to elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Since then, the Office has been working with statewide stakeholders to improve knowledge, capacity and ability to serve Nevada’s elder victims of intimate partner and caregiver violence, sexual violence,
January 18, 2018

**Attorney General Laxalt Issues Statement Commending Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s Action to Save Money for Nevada Consumers**

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt applauded a decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to request that developers of multiple pending interstate natural gas pipeline projects adjust their proposed incremental rates resulting from the January 1 reduced tax rate. FERC sent letters on January 12th and 16th to developers on the heels of a January 9th letter issued by a bipartisan coalition of 18 states, including Nevada. The coalition urged FERC to take action to ensure public utility companies pass along these tax savings to consumers:

“I joined an 18 state bipartisan coalition of attorneys general and consumer advocates to protect Nevadans and ensure the benefits of the federal tax reform plan are passed on to utility consumers,” said Attorney General Adam Laxalt. “I am delighted to see that the bipartisan efforts helped prompt quick action by FERC. We encourage federal regulators to continue...

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**NEW JERSEY**

January 19, 2018

**New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs’ High School “Consumer Bowl” Competition Begins**

NEWARK – The New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs will bring its Consumer Bowl competition to high schools across the state starting this week. The annual program fosters consumer education to students.

“The annual Consumer Bowl that kicks off with local competitions this week, helps young consumers learn about our laws and their legal rights in the marketplace while partaking in some friendly competition,” said Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal. “Every student who prepares for the Consumer Bowl becomes a more knowledgeable consumer.”

The competition starts at the county level, as local schools face off in an intra-county competition. The winners from the county competitions meet next in three regional Consumer Bowls, with the North, Central and South regional winners then facing off to determine the State Champion.

Consumer Bowl topics included internet-based scams, Ponzi schemes, financial fraud, charitable...
Attorney General Porrino and the New Jersey Bureau of Securities, Division of Consumer Affairs, Remind Investors to Approach Cryptocurrency with Caution

NEWARK – With cryptocurrencies continuing to attract headlines, Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino and the Bureau of Securities, which is within the Division of Consumer Affairs, today reminded New Jersey investors to be cautious about investments involving cryptocurrencies.

“Cryptocurrencies may be the new rage when it comes to investments, but there are significant risks associated with transactions involving these predominantly unregulated currencies,” said Attorney General Porrino. “Investors should fully understand the types of currency and transactions being pitched to them before agreeing to invest.”

Cryptocurrencies are a medium of exchange that are created and stored electronically in the blockchain, a distributed public database that keeps a permanent record of digital transactions. Current common cryptocurrencies include Bitcoin, Ethereum and Litecoin. Unlike traditional currency, these alternatives have no physical form and typically are not backed by tangible assets. They are not insured or controlled by a central bank or other governmental authority, cannot always...

AG Balderas Announces Trump Loses Fight in Attempt to Dismantle the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Albuquerque, NM - Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that the DC Circuit Court issued an opinion in PHH Corp. v. CFPB, holding that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s independent director may only be fired by the President for cause, and does not serve at will. This ruling adopts the position advocated by Attorney General Balderas in an amicus brief filed with the Court. As the Attorney General argued in this brief, Congress’s decision to establish the CFPB as an independent agency with a director who can only be removed for cause was a constitutional exercise of Congress’s power. Creating a strong and independent agency to protect consumers was an important part of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act’s efforts to prevent the financial abuses and instability that led to the Great Recession of 2007-09.
“I am very pleased with today’s ruling. I will continue to fight against…

➢ Original Press Release:

January 30, 2018
**Attorney General Balderas Issues Consumer Alert Regarding Recent Equifax Data Breach**
Albuquerque, NM – This morning, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a Consumer Alert targeting New Mexico consumers who were affected by the recent Equifax data breach. The Attorney General is asking New Mexicans to contact the Office of the Attorney General if they have been a victim of the Equifax breach, and additionally, if they have received any correspondence from Equifax since the breach.

“We are working on gathering more information about how Equifax is responding to New Mexicans who were victims of the data breach,” Attorney General Balderas said. “The more documentation we have, the better we can protect our citizens by ensuring that they are being given consistent, legal, and helpful responses by Equifax.”

If you have a new complaint regarding the Equifax breach please contact the Consumer and Family Advocacy Services Division at (505) 717-3500 extension 5 in Albuquerque; (505) 490-4060, extension 5 in Santa Fe; (575) 339-1120 extension...

➢ Original Press Release:

January 08, 2018
**SCAM ALERT: Want to Lose Some Pounds in the New Year? Don’t Lose Your Hard-Earned Cash While Scammers Fatten Up Their Bank Accounts**
Albuquerque, NM - As 2018 begins, Attorney General Hector Balderas is warning consumers against weight loss scams targeting New Mexicans for their New Year’s resolutions. Scammers often take advantage of the fact that many New Mexicans make New Year’s resolutions to lose weight by advertising pills, regimes, diets, and exercise machines that promise miraculous and unrealistic results. Almost without exception, these promises are at best misleading, and at worst completely false.

“Beware of any garment, gizmo, pill or potion that promises weight loss with little or no effort because if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is,” said Attorney General Balderas. “Don’t let these scammers thin your bank account while they promise absurd results to fatten up their cash reserves.”
Know these signs of a weight-loss scam ...

➢ **Original Press Release:**
https://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/SCAM_ALERT_Want_to_Lose_Some_Pounds_in_the_New_Year_Don%E2%80%99t_Lose_Your_Hard_Earned_Cash_While_Scammers_Fatten_Up_Their_Bank_Accounts.pdf

January 05, 2018

**Attorney General Balderas Releases the Distributed Generation Disclosure Statement**

Albuquerque, NM – In collaboration with the solar, energy and housing industries, consumer protection groups and regulators, Attorney General Hector Balderas released today the Distributed Generation Disclosure Statement. This form is designed in an easily understood and visually distinct manner to help consumers understand the important terms of a solar power system purchase, lease or power purchase agreement.

The Attorney General is releasing the first version of the Distributed Generation Disclosure Statement today as part of his continuing effort aiding consumers to educate themselves in the often complex terms associated with putting distributed solar generation on their homes. The form may be used to comply with the requirements of the Distributed Generation Disclosure Act by companies who offer distributed solar systems.

The form is created to ensure that consumers have the information they need to understand the transaction around their decision to install solar on their home. The Attorney General...

➢ **Original Press Release:**

January 04, 2018

**Attorney General Announcement Regarding Western Mortgage Settlement**

Clovis, NM – The New Mexico Office of Attorney General and Western Mortgage, a Clovis New Mexico business, have agreed to resolve a dispute regarding Western Mortgage’s past mortgage origination. Western Mortgage, which is not a licensed mortgage lender, has stopped originating mortgages and has agreed to refrain from doing so in an Assurance of Discontinuance with the Office of the Attorney General. The Office of the Attorney General considered the unlicensed lending to have violated the New Mexico Unfair Practices Act, Home Loan Protection Act, Mortgage Loan Originators Licensing Act, and the Mortgage Loan Company Act. Western Mortgage has denied any wrongdoing. Nonetheless, Western Mortgage has agreed to release the 55 notes and mortgages that are in dispute to reach an amicable resolution with the Office of the Attorney General and demonstrate its long-standing desire to contribute to the well-being of the residents of Clovis. Furthermore, Western Mortgage has...

➢ **Original Press Release:**
NEW YORK

January 24, 2018

Statement From A.G. Schneiderman On US GAO Investigation Of Fake Net Neutrality Comments

Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement after the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) agreed to investigate potential fraud and the misuse of American identities during the federal rulemaking process:

“For months, my office has been investigating the millions of fake comments that corrupted the FCC public process, including two million that stole the identities of real people. I’m pleased that the U.S. Government Accountability Office agreed to also investigate these comments, and I thank Representatives Greg Meeks, Elijah Cummings, Frank Pallone, and the other members of Congress who successfully pushed for this investigation.

My office will continue our investigation into this potential impersonation — which is a crime under New York law. The FCC’s decision to move ahead with its vote last month — despite widespread evidence of corruption — made a mockery of our public comment process and rewarded those who perpetrated fraud in order to...


January 11, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Over 4,700 Collection Bins Across New York Now Disclose Whether Donated Items Are Used For Charitable Purposes

NEW YORK — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that over 4,700 donation collection bins throughout New York now disclose whether clothing or other items deposited in those bins are used for charitable or for-profit purposes. This follows the Attorney General’s enforcement effort to ensure bin owners’ compliance with a new state law that imposes strict regulations on the placement, maintenance, and transparency of collection bins across the state.

“New Yorkers who drop-off personal items into collection bins deserve to know whether they are making a charitable donation or enriching a for-profit corporation,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “We are committed to ensuring that New Yorkers will know how their donations will be used.”

General Business Law § 399-bbb, which took effect in June 2016, was enacted to address the proliferation of collection bins across the state, and the lack of transparency regarding how collected items are used. The law sets forth...

January 06, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Issues Consumer Alert Following Complaints Of Propane Delivery Delays And Potential Price Gouging

NEW YORK - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued a consumer alert, encouraging New Yorkers to contact his office if they experience excessive delivery delays or potential price gouging related to propane delivery. New Yorkers can contact the Attorney General's hotline at 518-776-2000 or file a complaint online.

"No New Yorkers should have to freeze in this weather, and my office is looking into cases of unacceptable delivery delays and potential price gouging," said Attorney General Schneiderman. "Any New Yorker being overcharged or left in the cold without propane should contact my office immediately."

The Attorney General is also urging consumers to investigate the options they have for heating their homes during the cold winter months. Fuel oil and propane prices can vary significantly from supplier to supplier. Prices can also fluctuate dramatically throughout the heating season. Consumers considering entering into fuel oil and propane contracts for the season should...


January 04, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Warns Against Price Gouging During Winter Storm In New York State

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued a consumer alert warning both consumers and businesses about price gouging ahead of this week’s winter storm that is impacting parts of New York State. A state of emergency has been in effect since Thursday morning for New York City, Long Island, and Westchester.

General Business Law prohibits excessive increases in prices of essential goods and services like food, water, gas, generators, batteries, and flashlights, hotel lodging, and transportation, during natural disasters or other events that disrupt the market. During and after severe winter weather events, these goods and services might also include snow plowing, snow removal from roofs, shovels and other snow removal equipment, salt, and contract services for storm-related damage.

“Unfortunately, dishonest fraudsters will use severe winter weather as an excuse to illegally line their pockets,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “We will not tolerate those who seek to exploit weather...

Protect personal information on Data Privacy Day, everyday


“Most of us are met with opportunities to share personal information several times in day – whether we’re shopping online, banking on our phones, or connecting with people on social media,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “While technology makes our lives easier and helps to connect with others, it can also create risks. In fact, last year, there were more than 1,000 data breaches reported to my office. That’s why I’m working with Rep. Saine and the General Assembly on the Act to Strengthen Identity Theft Protections and why I’m reminding North Carolinians to protect their personal information.”

“As much as people hear about data breaches, they often times believe it will not happen.


Stay Safe and Avoid Scams

RALEIGH – The price gouging law that protects consumers from scammers is now in effect in all 100 North Carolina counties due to Gov. Roy Cooper’s declaration of a State of Emergency related to the coming winter storm. Attorney General Josh Stein notified businesses and consumers today to be on the lookout for any issues.

“My office is here to protect North Carolinians from scams and fraud,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “That is true all the time – but especially during severe weather. It is against the law to charge an excessive price during a state of emergency. If you see a business taking advantage of this storm, please let my office know so we can hold them accountable.”

North Carolina has a strong statute against price gouging – charging too much during a time of crisis – that is tied directly to a declaration of a state of...


Attorney General Josh Stein and Rep. Jason Saine Announce Legislation to Strengthen Protections against Identity Theft

RALEIGH – Attorney General Josh Stein and Rep. Jason Saine today unveiled legislation to strengthen North Carolina’s laws to prevent data breaches and to protect affected victims.

“Last year, more than 5.3 million North Carolinians were estimated to have been affected by a
“data breach,” said Attorney General Stein. “This number is staggering and unacceptable. North Carolina’s laws on this issue are strong – but they need to be even stronger. Rep. Jason Saine and I are partnering to do something about it.”

“As more and more of our daily activities involve digital interactions, ensuring the safety of North Carolina’s citizen’s data is of critical importance,” said Rep. Jason Saine. “When there is a breach, we need to ensure that consumers are notified in a timely fashion and that they have the tools they need to protect their personal identity from bad actors.”

For more information about the Act to...

January 03, 2018

**Don’t Be Scammed During Winter Weather**

RALEIGH – The price gouging law that protects consumers from scammers is now in effect in 54 North Carolina counties due to the winter storm state of emergency. Attorney General Josh Stein notified businesses and consumers today to be on the lookout for any issues.

“If you’re concerned about businesses taking advantage of people during this winter storm, please let my office know,” said AG Stein. “We’re here to protect consumers and we take that job seriously. It is against the law to charge an excessive price during a state of emergency, and if any businesses violate this law, I will hold them accountable.”

North Carolina has a strong statute against price gouging – charging too much during a time of crisis – that is tied directly to a declaration of a state of emergency. When Gov. Roy Cooper declared the state of emergency, that statute went into effect and...

**NORTH DAKOTA**

January 09, 2018

**ILLEGAL ROBOCALLS TOP CONSUMER COMPLAINT IN 2017**

BISMARCK, ND – One in four consumer complaints in 2017 was about an illegal robocall, announced Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

“Based on comments I hear daily from North Dakotans, and my own experience, it’s easy to see why these robocalls are the top complaint. The calls are annoying and most often are nothing but scams that have cost consumers money. Plus, they are illegal in North Dakota,” said Stenehjem. “I have no doubt that the number of complaints filed represents only a small fraction of citizens who find robocalls out of control. The Federal Trade Commission reported receiving 375,000 complaints a month in 2017,” he continued.

The consumer protection division received 1,125 consumer complaints in 2017. The top five
OHIO

January 12, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Announces Top Consumer Complaints of 2017

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced the top consumer complaints his office received in 2017, when more than 22,000 complaints were filed. “We’re committed to protecting Ohio consumers, and addressing their complaints is an important part of what we do,” Attorney General DeWine said. “In many cases, complaints are the result of a misunderstanding, and we try to bring both sides together to solve the problem. In other cases, complaints provide important information about the issues affecting people.” In 2017, ten of the most common types of complaints reported to the Ohio Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section were ...


January 05, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Warns of Sweepstakes and Lottery Scams as Jackpots Rise

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—As the Mega Millions and Powerball jackpots rise, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is warning consumers to beware of phony calls and letters saying they’ve won millions of dollars. The Ohio Attorney General’s Office has received several reports of the scams this week. “We just warn people to be careful,” Attorney General DeWine said. “In most cases, if you’re getting a call saying you’ve won millions of dollars, it’s a scam.” The scam generally begins with a call or letter claiming a person has won millions of dollars in a lottery or sweepstakes. The person is asked to wire a few hundred dollars or more to cover “processing fees” or taxes in order to receive the winnings. In reality, there is no prize and any money the person sends will go to a scam artist.

In 2017, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office received about 150 complaints about sweepstakes or prizes. Reported...

OKLAHOMA

January 25, 2018

Attorney General Hunter Sends Letter to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Seeking Corporate Tax Savings Passed to Utility Customers

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter has sent a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), urging the commission, through its authority as the nation’s energy regulator, take action at the wholesale level to ensure all possible corporate tax savings are captured to ultimately result in lower retail utility bills. This will facilitate the orderly transfer of the tax windfall to retail customers.

The letter recommends the FERC lower utility rates under its jurisdiction as quickly as possible, and to begin tracking all excess accumulated deferred income tax, as well as other savings. Most Oklahoma electric utilities rely on transmission service regulated by FERC. State utilities pass the costs on to customers through utility rates. Both electric and natural gas utilities pass along gas transportation costs to customers. A reduction in FERC-approved rates will ultimately reduce the rates paid by Oklahoma utility customers.

In part, the letter reads, “Without prompt action,…


January 19, 2018

ICYMI: Real Clear Policy: Attorney General Mike Hunter: Charting a New Course for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Last month, Richard Cordray stepped down from his post as the first Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The CFPB now has the opportunity to move in a new direction — one that respects constitutional limits, promotes a healthy and well-functioning financial system, and thereby benefits consumers.

The CFPB was established on two false premises: first that there were no consumer financial protections in place prior to the Dodd-Frank Act; second, that the CFPB was necessary to prevent a repeat of the 2008 financial crisis. Both assumptions deserve more careful examination.

The reality is that federal consumer protection statutes — such as the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, for example — have been on the books for decades. In fact, many of the CFPB’s rules are simply recycled from previously published rules under the aegis of different federal agencies. Dodd-Frank itself implicitly recognizes this by vesting the CFPB with powers…


78
January 09, 2018

**Attorney General Hunter Comments on Corporation Commission Decision to Track and Later Return Savings to Utility Customers**

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter today released the following statement after members of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) voted on the motions filed by his office, asking for a reduction in customer utility rates from the state’s leading utility companies, after the corporate income tax rate went from 35 percent to 21 percent. The OCC voted two-to-one, in favor of the attorney general’s alternative proposal, which requires utility companies to begin tracking savings each will receive from the federal income tax cut. The order also instructed companies to create an account for the savings received and refund those savings to customers after a review by the OCC at a later date. Commissioner Bob Anthony was the only member to dissent, or not participate in the vote, saying he would rather see the savings returned to customers immediately, as urged by the attorney general.

Companies must provide the OCC estimates of tax...


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**Pennsylvania**

January 30, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Alerts Consumers to Register for Free Credit Monitoring with Equifax before Jan. 31 Deadline**

HARRISBURG — In the wake of one of the largest data breaches in history impacting more than 145 million Americans and 5.5 million Pennsylvanians, Attorney General Josh Shapiro is alerting consumers to register for free credit monitoring and identity theft insurance with Equifax by their deadline of January 31.

“Equifax’s decision to end registration for free credit monitoring on Jan. 31 is yet another example of its disappointing decisions affecting consumers,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “While I encourage Equifax to extend this arbitrary deadline, consumers should register for free credit monitoring and identity theft insurance now -- before tomorrow’s deadline.”


Equifax disclosed the massive data breach on September 7, 2017. The next day, Attorney General Shapiro directed his Bureau of Consumer Protection to open an investigation into the Equifax breach. That investigation now includes...

- Original Press Release: [https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4331](https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4331)
January 26, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Warns of Super Bowl LII Scams**

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro and his Bureau of Consumer Protection today warned Pennsylvanians to be alert for scams when purchasing Super Bowl LII tickets or other products relating to the event. Consumers and sports fans can be scammed and end up buying fraudulent tickets or products without realizing it.

“Everyone enjoys the Super Bowl, and in Pennsylvania, we are all excited the Philadelphia Eagles are heading to the big game,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “However, big sporting events like the Super Bowl also attract scam artists, and my Bureau of Consumer Protection will protect consumers if something goes wrong with their ticket purchases.”

Attorney General Shapiro and the Office of Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection are asking Pennsylvania consumers to follow these tips when buying Super Bowl tickets or Super Bowl-related merchandise:

- Watch the websites you visit. As a consumer, you should not click on banner...

[Original Press Release](https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=4329)

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**SOUTH DAKOTA**

January 30, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley Reminds Consumers the Deadline for the Free Equifax Credit Freeze is Tomorrow**

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley is reminding consumers that the Equifax credit freeze deadline is here.

“Consumers have until January 31, 2018 to place a free credit freeze on their credit account,” said Jackley. “As part of the Equifax data breach, consumers were given the opportunity to freeze their credit without charge. After tomorrow the charge to place a credit freeze on a consumer account will be $10 with Equifax.”

Consumer can use the following link until tomorrow to place the security freeze:

https://www.freeze.equifax.com/Freeze/jsp/SFF_PersonalIDInfo.jsp

Consumer need to continue to be vigilant in monitoring their credit accounts and should consider the following ...


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January 29, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley Reminds Consumers of National Tax Identity Theft Week**

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley is asking consumers to mark their calendars for National Tax Identity Theft Awareness Week, which will run today through February 2, 2018.
Tax identity theft scams happen when someone uses a Social Security number to get a tax refund or tries to obtain personal identifying information while acting as an Agent of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

“Consumers are working to complete their tax filing requirements and these scam artists are trying desperately to catch them off guard. The IRS does not communicate with individuals via phone call or email with tax filing problems, so avoid clicking links on suspicious email messages or harassing phone calls,” said Jackley.

The scam targets consumers by both phone and email. The telephone calls suggest consumers owe money to the IRS and require immediate payment through a pre-loaded debit card or wire transfer. If the victims refuse to...


January 23, 2018

Attorney General Data Breach Bill Passes Senate Judiciary Committee

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley confirms the Attorney General sponsored bill that requires the reporting of data breaches of personal information to consumers and to the Attorney General has unanimously passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee this morning.

“Data breaches such as those that have occurred with Equifax and Target have affected thousands of South Dakotans’ financial security and personal information. Today, the Senate Judiciary has taken an important step to protect consumers and to assist law enforcement in its investigation of major data breaches,” said Jackley.

Under the proposed legislation, upon discovery of a breach of a system security, the information holder must disclose the breach to any resident of South Dakota whose personal or protected information was acquired by an unauthorized person within 60 days of that discovery. Furthermore, if that breach of the security system exceeds 250 South Dakota residents, the Attorney General must also...


January 18, 2018

Western Union Wire Transfer Settlement Claim Filing Deadline Approaching

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley is reminding consumers that the deadline to file a claim in the Western Union settlement is fast approaching.

“Consumers who have lost money via money transfer through Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017, may be eligible to get their money back, but must do so before February 12, 2018,” said Jackley. “Each claim will be verified through the Department of Justice and the amount will depend on the amount lost and the number of claims filed, but a claim must be filed.”

Western Union Claim Form

In November 2017, the Federal Trade Commission, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Postal Service settled with Western Union on a $586 million dollar settlement for aiding and
abetting wire fraud. The settlement money will be used to provide refunds to people who were tricked into using Western Union to pay scammers.

For additional questions...


January 03, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley’s 2018 Legislative Package**

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley announces that the Attorney General’s proposed legislative package for 2018 will include a request that our Legislature consider and enact the following:

1. Increase penitentiary sentences for distribution and manufacture of methamphetamine

   “America is living a methamphetamine epidemic that is affecting South Dakota and hurting our families and communities. Almost all the meth distributed into our communities is being manufactured outside the state. It is time to send a message to anyone distributing meth to our communities and children that they will face significant penalties that include enhanced sentences and mandatory penitentiary time.”

Most Sheriffs, Chiefs of Police and State’s Attorneys will confirm that a significant majority of crimes committed in our state involve addiction and drug abuse in some form. Increased meth arrests in our state demonstrate we are continuously fighting the effects of this national meth epidemic. Table I below outlines...


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**TENNESSEE**

January 17, 2018

**Consumer Update: Takata Airbags Recall Continues to Expand**

42 million vehicles are now part of a recall the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) calls “one of the largest and most complex in U.S. history.” Takata Corporation, an automotive parts company based in Japan, has recalled airbags installed in vehicles from 19 different automobile manufacturers. These airbags can explode when deployed, causing serious injury or even death.

According to NHTSA:

The propellant in the inflators breaks-down after long-term exposure to high temperature fluctuations and humidity. This breakdown can cause the propellant to burn too quickly, creating too much pressure for the inflator, and in extreme cases the inflator explodes, shooting shrapnel toward vehicle occupants.

NHTSA reports 13 confirmed fatalities and hundreds of confirmed injuries caused by defective Takata airbag inflators.

Vehicles impacted includes: Acura, Audi, BMW, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Daimler Trucks
January 04, 2018

**Consumer Alert: Deadline Approaching in Western Union Settlement**

Attorney General Herbert H. Slatery III and the Federal Trade Commission are reminding consumers to file claims related to $586 million settlement between Western Union Company, the FTC, and the U.S. Department of Justice. Consumers who lost money to scammers who told them to pay via Western Union’s money transfer system between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017, can now file a claim to get their money back by going to http://www.ftc.gov/WU before February 12, 2018.

In January 2017 Western Union Company agreed to pay $586 million to resolve charges brought by the FTC and the U.S. Department of Justice. The FTC alleged that fraudsters were able to use Western Union’s money transfer system to get payments from their victims, even though the company was aware of the problem and received hundreds of thousands of complaints about fraud-induced money transfers made for fraudulent lottery and prizes, family emergencies, advance-fee loans,...

**TEXAS**

January 12, 2018

**AG Paxton: D.C. Court Rejects Challenge to President Trump’s Authority to Appoint CFPB Acting Director**

Attorney General Ken Paxton applauded a decision by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia earlier this week denying a request for a preliminary injunction to remove President Trump’s appointment of a temporary director for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Several of the same constitutional issues raised by Attorney General Paxton in a 13-state friend-of-the-court brief were echoed by the District Court in its opinion, which was issued Wednesday.

Last November, the CFPB’s director resigned and attempted to appoint his own successor, Leandra English, who filed a lawsuit to block President Trump’s temporary appointee, Mick Mulvaney. In his brief, Attorney General Paxton emphasized that the president’s personnel move is supported both by the Constitution itself and by the Federal Vacancies Reform Act. “I am pleased that the district court recognized that longstanding legal precedent supports the president’s power to appoint personnel in this situation. The CFPB was operating in...
VERMONT

January 30, 2018

**Attorney General Releases Top 10 Scams**

Vermonters filed 5,233 scam reports with Attorney General T.J. Donovan’s office in 2017. Most scam reports are for the IRS scam, with 1,337 reports in 2017. The IRS scam involves scammers who claim to be government officials collecting back taxes. Over the past year, scammers also tried to get money or personal information from Vermonters by posing as online tech support, credit card services, lotteries such as the Publishers Clearing House, grant disbursers for the government and even grandchildren.

This week, the Attorney General’s Consumer Assistance Program (CAP) released the list of 2017’s top 10 most commonly reported scams. Scam reports total over one-third of all contacts to CAP, making them one of the most common consumer issues affecting Vermonters. In addition to the top 10 types of scams, there are a wide variety of different types of scams that Vermonters should guard against. To counter the overwhelming number of scams...


WASHINGTON

January 29, 2018

**Consumer Alert: Check your Comcast bill for unwanted fees**

OLYMPIA — Dozens of Comcast customers filed complaints with the Attorney General’s Office in the last six weeks, claiming that the company’s Service Protection Plan (SPP) appeared on their bill when they did not consent to paying for the service.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced in December new evidence obtained as part of his ongoing lawsuit against the cable and internet giant revealed that Comcast may have signed up more than half of all SPP subscribers without their consent. Since Ferguson filed an amended lawsuit, the Attorney General’s Office received more than 100 complaints from Comcast customers, including 74 about the SPP. Of those, more than 50 claim Comcast added the plan to their account without their consent.

Comcast claimed the SPP is a “comprehensive” plan covering the cost of all service calls, including those related to inside wiring. Ferguson’s lawsuit alleges Comcast failed to appropriately disclose that the plan does not...

WEST VIRGINIA

January 22, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Warns Consumers Of Sweepstakes Scam

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warns consumers to be on guard when notified of winning a sweepstakes, especially those associated with the name of a legitimate company or government agency.

Sweepstakes and lottery scams frequently target West Virginia consumers. Just this month, one resident lost $1,000 after being told to pay money to receive a prize, while the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau warned of a caller impersonating its agency, despite the CFPB’s lacking involvement with lottery and sweepstakes winnings.

“Most people would love the surprise of finding they suddenly have extra money to pocket, especially money in large sums” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Scammers will seize upon that excitement to steal your money or personal information. It’s important to verify the legitimacy of the sweepstakes and know the fine print before claiming the money in order to avoid any pitfalls.”

Targeted consumers are told they have...


January 11, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Urges College Applicants to Protect Personal Data in Financial Aid Search

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds college-bound students to safeguard their personal information as they apply for financial aid.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), necessary to qualify for financial aid, requires students to provide a vast quantity of personal information. Scammers recognize that reality and look for ways to take advantage of the situation.

“Scammers know college is a very expensive investment and that many students need assistance,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “That’s why it’s so important that students don’t get tricked into handing over their personal information to the wrong person.”

The FAFSA application period opened Oct. 1 as opposed to what was the traditional date of New Year’s Day. Students should file as soon as possible for states, colleges and scholarship programs that award aid on a first-come, first-serve basis.

To avoid compromising sensitive information, such as Social Security numbers and other...

January 08, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Alerts Consumers to Utility Scam Calls**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urged consumers to beware of impostor scams, particularly ones involving callers who claim to represent utility companies. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division recently received several calls about impostors claiming to represent Appalachian Power. Targeted businesses and residential customers have been told they owe immediate bill payment and threatened with service disconnection if they fail to cooperate or question the caller’s legitimacy.

One consumer in southern West Virginia reportedly lost $2,000 when he purchased prepaid cards to comply with the caller’s demands.

“The recent uptick in utility scam calls is particularly concerning because of the convincing nature of the impostors,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Look for red flags when you receive unexpected calls from anyone posing as a utility company employee. Stay calm, ask questions and think twice before giving any sensitive information.”

Consumers should be wary of any caller who demands...


January 01, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Warns Consumers To Carefully Evaluate Weight Loss Options**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warned consumers to be cautious when evaluating ways to lose those extra pounds.

Quick-fix solutions are easily available, but may not be the healthiest choice for consumers or the best option for long-term results.

“The beginning of a new year is a popular time for people to make weight loss resolutions,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Consumers must take time and research their options to make sure they lose weight in a healthy, legitimate and financially smart way.” Consumers should avoid weight loss advertisements for miracle pills or creams, others that guarantee permanent weight loss without lifestyle changes and those that promise results without diet or exercise.

Some weight-loss products, many of which are imported and sold online, have been found to be tainted with ingredients that have serious side effects, such as heart problems and strokes. “Natural” dietary supplements have also been...