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

ALABAMA

February 06, 2018

ALABAMA ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL ANNOUNCES LAWSUIT AGAINST MAJOR OPIOID MANUFACTURER PURDUE PHARMA FOR VIOLATION OF ALABAMA DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES ACT

(MONTGOMERY) - Attorney General Steve Marshall announced today that the State of Alabama has filed suit against Purdue Pharma, L.P., Purdue Frederick Company Inc., and Rhodes Pharmaceuticals, L.P. (collectively “Purdue”), the manufacturers and sellers of prescription opioid pain medications, including the brand name drugs OxyContin, MS Contin, Dilaudid/Dilaudid HP, Butrans, Hysingla ER, and Targiniq ER, as well as generic opioids. Alabama’s complaint asserts that Purdue violated Alabama’s Deceptive Trade Practices Act in the marketing and sale of opioid drugs and, in so doing, jeopardized the public health, welfare, and safety of Alabama residents. The State is seeking both monetary damages and injunctive relief.

“The opioid epidemic has devastated Alabama families, leaving a trail of addiction and death winding though every community of this state,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Alabama ranks first in the nation for the number of painkiller prescriptions per capita. As a result, it is estimated that almost 30,000 of...


ARIZONA

February 14, 2018

Former Registered Investment Advisor Sentenced To 5 Years Prison For Fraud Scheme

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Richard Mark Schmerman, a former investment adviser representative, was sentenced to 5 years in prison and 7 years of probation for stealing more than $3 million dollars in client funds. Schmerman must also pay more than $3 million dollars in restitution to his victims.

Schmerman is a former registered securities salesman and investment adviser representative operating under Diversified Financial in Arizona. Schmerman used client investment funds to pay for personal expenses including a single payment of more than $400,000 to a civil judgment issued against him.

Schmerman also impersonated some of his clients to gain access to their investment accounts. The Arizona Corporation Commission’s Securities Division investigated this case. Assistant Attorneys General Adam J Schwartz and Joseph Waters are prosecuting this case.

February 14, 2018

$1.85 Million Verdict Against Car Rental Company for Defrauding AZ Consumers

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich is proud to announce a $1.85 million verdict in a consumer fraud lawsuit filed against Dennis N. Saban and his companies, Phoenix Car Rental and Saban’s Rent-A-Car. After a 5-week trial, a judge found Saban and his car rental companies must pay $1.85 million for violating the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act. Of the $1.85 million, nearly $1 million will go to consumers who were charged unlawful fees during car rental transactions from 2009 to 2016. This is one of the largest consumer fraud trial verdicts the Arizona Attorney General’s Office has ever obtained.

"Our priority was to get consumers their money back and the defendant continued to fight us. We refused to back down and ended up with a great victory for consumers," said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. "After an intensive 5-week trial, the judge's ruling sends a message that consumer fraud won't be tolerated…


February 12, 2018

Real Estate Agent Convicted of Short Sale Fraud Scheme

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a jury found James Thornton, a real estate agent, guilty of Fraudulent Schemes and Theft after defrauding two banks in a short sale home scam.

In 2012, Thornton was the listing real estate agent for the owner of a home who was in default on both mortgages in Mesa, AZ. Thornton sold the property via short sale to his parents' LLC for $580,000. There had been other offers to purchase the home for hundreds of thousands of dollars more, including offers for $870,000, $707,000, and $650,000. Both banks approved the short sale price to Thornton’s parents not knowing about any of the other offers to purchase the property for significantly more.

Four days after Thornton’s parents purchased the home, Thornton became their listing agent and tried to sell the home “off the market” for $1,100,000. Thornton eventually sold the home to a third party for...


February 06, 2018

Fake Insurance Agent Sentenced to 3.5 Years in Prison

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Brian McFarland was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison and 7 years of probation after selling fake insurance policies to commercial environmental businesses. McFarland must also pay full restitution, which is more than $450,000, to the defrauded businesses.

The Arizona Department of Insurance DOI Fraud Unit, in a joint effort with the New Jersey Department of Insurance, arrested McFarland for fraud schemes, identity theft, and theft in

6
2016. McFarland forged his name onto an Arizona insurance producer’s license of another agent with the same last name. He used the stolen identity and producer’s license to sell insurance under the name Legends Environmental Insurance Services, LLC (“Legends”). In 2013, Legends merged with Insurance Office of America, Inc. During a background check, Insurance Office of America discovered McFarland’s forgery and immediately reported it to the DOI Fraud Unit.

The DOI Fraud Unit found McFarland set up fraudulent...


ARKANSAS
February 28, 2018
Rutledge Files Lawsuit Against Indulgences by Body Bronze
LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today filed a consumer-protection lawsuit in Pulaski County Circuit Court against Indulgences by Body Bronze and its owners, Molly Verbrugge and Lila Riggs.

Indulgences by Body Bronze continued to sell VIP membership plans, spa service packages and gift certificates during the busy 2017 holiday season, but abruptly closed its doors on January 8 without warning to consumers or employees.

“After receiving about 200 calls from consumers mere days after the business’s closing, I am taking swift and aggressive action against Indulgences by Body Bronze,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Arkansans suffered financial losses because of the deceptive practices of this company – harming consumers who purchased future services and leaving its employees out in the cold without a job. Such despicable business practices will not be tolerated.”

Indulgences by Body Bronze was a day spa in West Little Rock and advertised services including pedicures, massages, facial...


February 08, 2018
Rutledge to Investigate Reimbursement Rates from CVS Caremark
LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced that she has demanded information from CVS Caremark, a Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM), after reviewing complaints of plummeting medication reimbursement rates paid to local pharmacies.

“The change in reimbursement rates by the Pharmacy Benefit Managers has hurt Arkansans in every community across the state,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Local pharmacists are critical members of Arkansas’s communities. Due to these changes, pharmacists are facing...
tough decisions because the reimbursements do not cover the actual cost of the medications. When public health is threatened, all Arkansans suffer.”

PBMs, like CVS Caremark, are the go-between for health insurance companies and pharmacies and dictate reimbursement amounts on each prescription. Earlier this year, the Attorney General began reviewing reports that CVS Caremark reduced its reimbursement rate for pharmacies in the Arkansas Health Insurance Marketplace. In roughly 20 percent of prescription fills, prescription reimbursement rates reportedly dropped lower...


CALIFORNIA
February 13, 2018
Attorney General Becerra Announces Arrest and Indictments for $2 Million Mortgage Fraud Scheme in Southern California
SAN DIEGO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced the indictment of four individuals on 194 criminal felony counts for allegedly operating a mortgage fraud scheme throughout Southern California. The scheme resulted in a loss of approximately $2 million for 40 victims who were seeking loans to help pay off their mortgages. Many of the victims lost their homes and life savings.
Andrew Valles, Jemal Lilly, Mark Bellinger and Arnold Millman were indicted by a grand jury in the San Diego Superior Court for grand theft, filing false or forged documents in a public office, conspiracy to commit those offenses, and identity theft, as well as special allegations for aggravated white collar crime. Two of defendants, Jemal Lilly and Mark Bellinger were arrested on January 30, 2018; they pled not guilty at their arraignments on February 2 and February 13, 2018. Defendants Andrew Valles and Arnold Millman have not been arrested...


CONNECTICUT
February 16, 2018
Attorney General Reaches False Claims Act Settlement with Mass. Laboratory over Medically Unnecessary Drug Tests
A Massachusetts-based clinical laboratory will forfeit $656,912 and be excluded from participation in Connecticut’s Medicaid program for 10 years as part of a settlement agreement with the state, Attorney General George Jepsen and state Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby said today.
Precision Testing Laboratories, Inc. (PTL), based in Southbridge, Mass., was enrolled as a
licensed clinical laboratory in the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program (CMAP), which includes Connecticut’s Medicaid program. PTL promoted itself as a laboratory that was committed to providing urine drug testing services to those in recovery from substance abuse. David Fromm (Fromm) of Hull, Mass., is PTL's president and owner. The state alleged that PTL aggressively marketed an expensive and unnecessarily complex drug testing package to residential drug treatment facilities and sober homes, despite the fact that PTL knew that: (1) the facilities and homes did not provide a physician-managed drug treatment program; and (2)...


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**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

February 16, 2018

**Attorney General Racine Continues Actions to Hold Sanford Capital Accountable**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Attorney General Karl A. Racine announced today that his office has filed two new actions against landlords who allegedly violated the District’s consumer protection laws by neglecting their properties while collecting rent from tenants who were living in unsafe and unsanitary apartments. Attorney General Racine also announced additional claims in a pending similar suit. The two new lawsuits were filed against the former owners and managers of the Franklin Street Apartments in Ward 5 and the G Street Apartments in Ward 7. Attorney General Racine also added consumer protection claims to an existing Tenant Receivership Act lawsuit related to conditions at an apartment complex in Congress Heights. Each property was owned and managed by Sanford Capital, LLC and related companies. Attorney General Racine has sued Sanford under the District’s housing laws in a series of cases. Last year, in the Congress Heights case, the Court ordered that the property...


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**FLORIDA**

February 22, 2018

**Arrests Made in Complex Scheme Targeting Florida’s Teachers’**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Office of Statewide Prosecution and the Florida Department of Law enforcement today announced the arrest of Ralph Alonso Everett Jr. and Isaiah Lewis, both from Miami, for allegedly organizing a scheme to steal teachers’ identities to collect unemployment checks. The defendants are responsible for losses to the
State of Florida of more than $50,000.
With the assistance of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and the U.S.
Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, law enforcement officers identified patterns
of suspicious reemployment assistance claims being deposited into numerous bank accounts
connected to the subjects. The investigation identified more than 100 employees associated
with 65 different school districts as targets for reemployment assistance claims for nearly 11
months in 2016. The defendants also attempted to defraud DEO out of more than $200,000 in
fraudulent claims. DEO distributed the funds into the bank accounts of Everett and Lewis...

IDaho
February 01, 2018
Former Bannock County Insurance Agent Sentenced for Misappropriating Client Premiums
(Boise) – Attorney General Lawrence Wasden has announced an eastern Idaho man was
sentenced Monday, January 29, for one count of Diversion or Misappropriation of Fiduciary
Funds.
Sixth District Judge Stephen Dunn sentenced 38-year-old Alan C. Rzeszutko, of Pocatello, after
he pleaded guilty in October.
Judge Dunn granted Rzeszutko a withheld judgment and placed him on probation for four
years. The judge ordered Rzeszutko to pay $6,201 in restitution to Farmers Insurance, and
$1,043 to the Idaho Department of Insurance. He must also pay a fine of $750 and court costs
of $245. The court also ordered 120 days of discretionary jail time to be utilized by a probation
officer.
An investigation revealed that while working as an insurance agent for Farmers Insurance in
Pocatello, Rzeszutko began diverting customers’ premium payments to his personal accounts.
While doing so, he also took steps to make sure clients were not receiving late notices on
their...

ILLINOIS
February 27, 2018
MADIGAN SUES CHICAGO TAX PREPARER FOR FRAUD
Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced she has filed a lawsuit to shut
down a Chicago tax preparer for defrauding consumers out of thousands of dollars in illegal fees. As the first step in the lawsuit, Madigan has obtained a court order preventing the company from charging hidden fees.

Madigan filed the lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court to shut down Su Familia Income Tax and its operators Michelle Lopez, Melissa Gasca and Vanessa Campos. The lawsuit alleges Su Familia, at 2638 W. 51st St. in Chicago, purports to offer low-cost tax preparation services for a fee of about $150. In reality, Madigan alleges, Su Familia signs consumers up for unnecessary and expensive tax-related financial products and deducts significant additional fees from consumers’ tax refunds without their knowledge. These undisclosed fees are typically $500 per person but can be over $1,000 and in some cases account for over 50...

» Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_02/20180227.html

IOWA

February 13, 2018

Attorney General Files Consumer Fraud Lawsuit against Seller of Government Benefits Advice

(DES MOINES, Iowa) Attorney General Tom Miller Monday filed a consumer fraud lawsuit against a Chickasaw County business and its owner, alleging they deceptively claimed authority to provide paid veterans’ benefits assistance.

The lawsuit, filed in Polk County District Court, alleges Sonya Ackerson, of Nashua, and her business, Advocate 4 the Aging LLC, charged fees for veterans’ benefits assistance without being federally accredited.

Under federal law, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs accredits those authorized to act as an agent, attorney, or representative of a VA-recognized veterans’ service organization to assist in preparing, presenting, or processing VA benefits claims. According to VA records, neither Ackerson nor her business is an accredited representative.

Alleged Unlicensed Estate Planning Advice

The lawsuit also alleges Ackerson and her business failed to disclose to consumers that they are not licensed or registered to provide estate planning advice. ...


KANSAS

February 26, 2018

Three auto dealerships fined for violating consumer protection law

TOPEKA – (February 26, 2018) – Three Kansas auto dealerships have been fined for violating the
Kansas Consumer Protection Act by using prize-notification mailings that did not comply with state law, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today. Lewis Auto Plaza, Inc., of Topeka; Lewis Automotive Group, Inc., of Hays; and Womack Sunshine Ford, Inc., of Concordia, were each fined for violating the prize notification statute. The three consent judgments were approved by judges in their respective district courts this month. The defendants were also permanently enjoined from future violations of the law and ordered to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs. Schmidt accused the three defendants of mailing to consumers “prize notification” flyers that did not comply with Kansas law. The prize notifications failed to disclose to consumers the value of the prize and the odds of winning in immediate proximity to the prize listing in the manner required by law.

More tips...


February 08, 2018

**Florida student loan debt relief company banned from doing business in Kansas, ordered to repay more than $39,000 to consumer**

TOPEKA – (February 8, 2018) – A student loan debt relief company has been permanently banned from doing business in Kansas and ordered to repay more than $39,000 to a consumer after being found in violation of Kansas consumer protection laws, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said. Brelvis Consulting, d/b/a The Student Loan Help Center, LLC, of Florida, has been permanently ordered to refrain from conducting business in the state of Kansas. The defendants were also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $39,012.91 to a consumer, as well as pay a civil penalty and reimburse the attorney general’s office for the cost of its investigation. District Judge Larry Hendricks entered the default judgment this week in Shawnee County District Court after the defendants failed to respond to a lawsuit filed by the attorney general’s office in October.

Schmidt had accused Brelvis of soliciting and providing for-cost, “loan consolidation preparation services”...


February 07, 2018

**Lawrence roofer banned from doing business in Kansas, ordered to repay consumers**

TOPEKA – (February 7, 2018) – A Lawrence contractor has been banned from performing roofing services in Kansas and ordered to repay more than $6,000 to a Jefferson County
New Era Roofing & Restoration, LLC, formerly d/b/a New Era Roofing, LLC, Lawrence, had been temporarily banned from doing roofing business in Kansas since January, pending the outcome of a lawsuit Schmidt filed accusing the company of violating the Kansas Consumer Protection Act (KCPA) and Kansas Roofing Registration Act (KRRA). Jefferson County District Judge Gary L. Nafziger last week made the ban permanent after the company failed to respond to the lawsuit. Nafziger also ordered the company to pay $6,852.31 in restitution to a Jefferson County consumer, as well as a civil penalty and the costs of the attorney general’s investigation. Schmidt had alleged the defendant contracted and received payment from the consumer for roofing...


February 01, 2018
AG Derek Schmidt: Oklahoma pavers temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (February 1, 2018) – A group of Oklahoma pavers has been temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas pending the outcome of a lawsuit filed last week alleging violations of consumer protection laws, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Defendants Cherry Cooper, Harry Cooper, Harry Cooper Jr., and Robert Cooper, doing business as A.L. Paving Contractors, Paving Contractors, Asphalt Paving and JJ Paving, all of Spiro, Okla., are accused of violating the Kansas Consumer Protection Act (KCPA) by soliciting paving services door-to-door, failing to notify consumers of their three-day right to cancel the transaction and cashing their checks prior to the five-day waiting period. The defendants are accused of violating these provisions in transactions with at least 12 consumers in Butler, McPherson, Ottawa and Saline counties. Schmidt is seeking restitution to the consumers as well as civil penalties for violating the KCPA.

Last week, Shawnee County District Judge Franklin Theis...


February 01, 2018
Former Topeka auto dealer banned from doing business in Kansas, ordered to repay $25,000 to consumers
TOPEKA – (February 1, 2018) – A former Topeka automobile dealer has been permanently banned from doing business in Kansas and ordered to repay more than $25,000 to consumers after being found in violation of Kansas consumer protection laws, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Justin Bogina, of Tecumseh, and his business, Auto Acceptance Center Corp., of Topeka, have
been permanently ordered to refrain from conducting any business related to the sale of property or services within the state of Kansas. Bogina was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $25,775.89 to four consumers, as well as pay a civil penalty and reimburse the attorney general’s office for the cost of its investigation. District Judge Franklin Theis entered the default judgment last week in Shawnee County District Court after Bogina failed to respond to a lawsuit filed by the attorney general’s office in November. Schmidt had accused Bogina and his...


LOUISIANA

February 20, 2018

Governor, Attorney General Announce Coordinated Effort Against Opioid Manufacturers

BATON ROUGE, LA – Today, Governor John Bel Edwards and Attorney General Jeff Landry have agreed to coordinate efforts in the State of Louisiana’s litigation against opioid manufacturers. Under this agreement, the Attorney General’s office will take over primary responsibility for the suit filed by the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) in the 19th Judicial District Court. Furthermore, the Attorney General’s office will lead the efforts with other state agencies and departments to pursue all claims Louisiana has as a result of the opioid crisis.

“The opioid crisis is sweeping the nation; and this is due, in large part, to the drug companies that mislead physicians and the public,” Governor Edwards said. “A coordinated effort from the State will produce the best results for the families who have lost loved ones to this epidemic. Justice for them is our number one priority.”

“I am confident that the Attorney General’s office...


MAINE

February 06, 2018

Attorney General Mills and FTC take joint enforcement action against advertiser and telemarketer of supplements

AUGUSTA – Maine Attorney General Janet T. Mills today announced that the Federal Trade Commission and the Maine Attorney General’s Office have agreed to settle their case against Minnesota-based Marketing Architects, Inc., (“MAI”) for its role in promoting weight loss supplements “AF Plus” and “Final Trim.” Attorney General Mills and the FTC previously sued and obtained a judgment against Direct Alternatives, of Portland, Maine, for marketing these
products. Marketing Architects created radio ads for these products and provided automated telemarketing services to Direct Alternatives to take orders from consumers responding to the ads.

Attorney General Mills and the FTC allege in a federal court complaint that the ads and Marketing Architects’ telemarketing system made false, misleading, or deceptive claims and that the company failed to fully disclose critical terms to consumers. The proposed settlement bars the company from making weight-loss claims about dietary supplements that are false. The company has also...


MARYLAND

February 02, 2018

Attorney General Frosh, Securities Commissioner Order Towson Company to Halt Investment Advisory Operations

Baltimore, MD (February 2, 2018) —Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that his Securities Division has issued a Summary Order to Cease and Desist and Order to Show Cause against Perry Santillo, Jr. and his companies High Point Wealth Management and High Point Insurance Solutions (High Point). Operating out of the former offices of Everest Wealth Management, Inc. (EWM), and Everest Investment Advisors, Inc, the Division alleges that Santillo and High Point, after acquiring EWM, are soliciting former Everest clients. The Division further alleges that Santillo and High Point are violating Maryland securities laws by offering unregistered securities, acting as an unregistered investment adviser, broker-dealer, and issuer agent, and engaging in fraud in connection with their securities and investment advisory practices.

“We acted swiftly to protect Maryland investors against further losses from recommendations made by an unlicensed investment adviser,” said Attorney General Frosh. “The Securities Division of my...


MASSACHUSETTS

February 27, 2018

Care.com Settles with AG’s Office for Misleading Families about Background Checks for Caregivers

Boston — Care.com has agreed to pay more than $480,000 and change its practices to resolve allegations that the company misled Massachusetts families about the comprehensiveness of its background check products, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.
The Assurance of Discontinuance with Care.com, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, resolves claims by the AG’s Office that the company violated the Massachusetts Consumer Protection Act when selling consumers Massachusetts-specific background checks on Care.com. “When families pay for a background check service, they should get what they paid for,” AG Healey said. “This settlement will provide restitution for families who were misled, and requires Care.com to ensure that parents know what they are getting when they purchase a background check.” Care.com told consumers that its “Preferred” and “Preferred+” background check products would include a review of criminal records for the “states and/or counties” in which the caregiver resided during the prior seven years. The AG’s Office...

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February 20, 2018

**Former Real Estate Agent Pleads Guilty, Sentenced in Connection with Multiple Schemes to Steal Money for Personal Use**

Boston — A former Boston-based real estate agent has pleaded guilty and been sentenced in connection with stealing more than $166,000 from 19 individuals, including his co-workers and acquaintances, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today. Dale Murawski, age 43, formerly of Boston and most recently residing in New Jersey, pleaded guilty today in Suffolk Superior Court to the charges of Larceny Over $250 (18 counts). Following the plea, Judge Janet Sanders sentenced Murawski to two years in the House of Correction, followed by three years of probation. Murawski was also ordered to pay restitution to the victims.

The AG’s Office began an investigation in 2016 following a complaint received by the office. Murawski was arraigned in May 2017. Authorities found that Murawski employed a variety of schemes that generally involved telling a co-worker or acquaintance that he needed money in connection with his divorce or for a real estate purchase. Murawski told these...

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**MISSOURI**

February 22, 2018

**AG Hawley and FTC Seek to Shut Down International Direct Mail Operation that Targeted Elderly Consumers, Collected Millions**

Jefferson City, Mo. — Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley today announced that his office, in partnership with the Federal Trade Commission, has brought an action against Kevin Brandes, William Graham, and ten of their companies including Opportunities Unlimited, Inc.
and Next-Gen, Inc. Brandes and Graham ran a fraudulent direct mail operation based in Kansas City, Missouri. This operation took in about $30 million per year, from mostly elderly victims. The scheme targeted people in Missouri, nationwide, and other countries. The Defendants sent mailers that falsely represented consumers had won, or were likely to win, a substantial cash prize in exchange for paying a series of fees. No one ever won a significant prize. The mailers communicated urgency, such as warning that consumers they must “respond quickly to avoid forfeiture of this Prize Opportunity.” The mailers also provided a false veneer of authenticity by means such as appearing to be a stock...


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**MONTANA**

February 21, 2018

**AG Fox asks Court to Stop Purdue’s Opioid Marketing Campaign**

HELENA – The deceptive promotion and widespread use of prescription opioids continues to exact a heavy toll on the State of Montana and its residents. Recognizing this, Attorney General Tim Fox filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in Montana District Court Tuesday, requesting the court halt Purdue Pharmaceuticals’ deceptive and unlawful product marketing campaign in the state.

The attorney general’s motion Tuesday is the latest step taken by his office in a consumer protection lawsuit originally filed against Purdue in December. Purdue is the manufacturer of the prescription opioid, OxyContin.

“As too many Montana families who have lost loved ones to prescription opioids or heroin know, this cannot be business, or litigation, as usual. We have to take urgent action. We have asked the Court to put in place common-sense measures to rein in Purdue’s ongoing marketing, to protect public health and safety while the State’s complaint moves through the courts,”...

- **Original Press Release**: [https://dojmt.gov/47495-2/](https://dojmt.gov/47495-2/)

February 12, 2018

**Federal Judge Upholds Montana’s Robocall Prohibition**

HELENA – On Friday, a Federal District Court Judge upheld the constitutionality of Montana’s prohibition on automated political phone calls (robocalls). In the case of Victory Processing LLC. vs. Montana, Judge Charles Lovell of Helena ruled “…Montana’s robocall statute is a constitutionally permissible content-based regulation of speech.”

Attorney General Tim Fox, whose office defended the Montana law, applauded the ruling. “Through their representatives in the legislature, the people of Montana have made clear they
"don’t want robocalls in our state,” Fox said. “This ruling upholds the will of the people, and I’m proud of my team for successfully defending the law.”

In his ruling, Judge Lovell stated, “The governmental interest advanced by the statute is the compelling interest in protecting residential privacy and tranquility. The Montana statute is narrowly tailored to that government interest by preserving control and choice for the householder and leaving ample alternative (including all of the more traditional)...”

NEVADA

February 22, 2018

Attorney General Laxalt Joins National Elder Fraud Sweep Announcement

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt’s office participated in a national announcement by the U.S. Department of Justice and National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) in the largest coordinated sweep of elder fraud cases in history. The sweep involves cases from the U.S. Department of Justice, state attorneys general, U.S. attorneys and law enforcement agencies around the country. Cases involve more than 250 defendants who victimized more than a million Americans, most of whom were elderly. The cases include criminal, civil and forfeiture actions across more than 50 federal districts. Of the defendants, 200 were charged criminally. In total, the charged elder frauds caused losses of more than half a billion dollars. The actions charged a variety of frauds victimizing the elderly, including telemarketing and investment frauds, mass mailing and individual instances of theft by guardians and identity theft.

“Elder exploitation and abuse is a growing problem,...

February 13, 2018

Attorney General Laxalt Announces Guilty Plea for Multi-State Timeshare Resale Scam

Las Vegas, NV – Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Louis Joseph Curto III, 31, pleaded guilty for his role in a multi-state timeshare resale scam. Curto pleaded guilty to one count of securities fraud, a category “B” felony. The fraudulent acts were committed between January 2013 and December 2015.

Curto operated a business in Las Vegas by the name of Bluwyn Management, LLC through which he would solicit owners of unwanted timeshare properties to pay him upfront fees, falsely promising them that he had buyers that would purchase the unwanted timeshares.
Despite paying thousands of dollars in upfront fees, the timeshares were not sold and the money was never refunded.

“This guilty plea sends a message that those who engage in timeshare resale fraud will be brought to justice,” said Laxalt.
Securities fraud is punishable by 12-240 months of imprisonment and a court fine of up to $500,000.

➢ Original Press Release:

NEW JERSEY

February 09, 2018

Man Sentenced to State Prison for Stealing $76,000 in Scheme Involving Phony Credit Cards Manufactured With Stolen Account Information

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal announced that a Hudson County man was sentenced to prison today in connection with a fraud scheme in which he used phony credit and debit cards – manufactured with stolen account information – to buy gift cards worth over $76,000.

Clifford Dominique, 25, of Jersey City, N.J., was sentenced today to five years in state prison by Superior Court Judge Paul M. DePascale in Hudson County. He pleaded guilty on Nov. 13, 2017 to second-degree theft by deception. He was ordered to pay restitution of $58,000 to Ahold USA, Inc., which operates Stop & Shop supermarkets and was the primary victim of the fraud scheme. A co-defendant, Ialicia C. Epps, 29, of Jersey City, N.J., was sentenced today by Judge DePascale to two years of probation. She was ordered to pay $4,500 in restitution. She pleaded guilty to theft by deception on Feb. 15, 2017.
Deputy...


February 09, 2018

New Jersey Bureau of Securities Orders “Bitstrade” to Stop Offering Unregistered Securities in the State

NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division of Consumer Affairs announced that the Bureau of Securities (“the Bureau”) issued an emergency order today to stop Bitstrade, an online cryptocurrency-related investment entity, from fraudulently offering unregistered securities in New Jersey.

In a Summary Cease and Desist Order effective immediately, the Bureau found that Bitstrade is violating the State’s Uniform Securities Law by offering investors an unregistered security in the
form of an investment pool that purportedly guarantees up to 10 percent returns which accrue
daily on investor funds. Bitstrade is not registered to sell securities in New Jersey.
Bitstrade is further violating the law by failing to disclose key material facts to prospective
investors, including the names of its executive officers, the address of its principal office,
information about Bitstrade’s financial condition, the risks of the Bitstrade Investment, and how
Bitstrade invests investors’ money, the Bureau found.
“The Bureau’s action today...


February 01, 2018
New Jersey Bureau of Securities Announces $100,000 Civil Penalty and the Revocation of
Agent Registration Against Livingston Resident Who Defrauded Elderly Couple
NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the New Jersey Bureau of Securities within
the Division of Consumer Affairs announced the revocation of the agent registration of a
Livingston broker, and imposition of $100,000 in civil monetary penalties against the agent and
his company NJLI Advisors L.L.C., who defrauded an elderly couple of at least $280,000.
Michael Alan Siegel befriended the elderly couple, who were in their 80s, ingratiating himself to
them while they were dealing with a significant health issue within the family. Siegel spent
hours each week with the elderly husband discussing the stock market. Shortly after the family
member passed away, Siegel convinced the elderly couple to transfer their brokerage accounts
to a broker-dealer with whom Siegel was associated. In the Summary Penalty and Revocation
Order issued by the Bureau on February 1, 2018, the Bureau Chief found that Siegel convinced
the couple to write him checks...


NEW MEXICO
February 21, 2018
Attorney General Balderas Issues Cease & Desist Notice to Company for Illegal Mortgage
Practices
Albuquerque, NM -Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that the Office of the
Attorney General’s Consumer and Environmental Protection Division issued a Notice to Cease
and Desist to Capital Home Advocacy Center and National Advocacy Group. Based on a
complaint received from a New Mexico consumer, Capital Home Advocacy, formerly known as
National Advocacy Group, charges advance fees for home mortgage modification services. New
Mexico has banned advance fees for mortgage modification services through the Mortgage
Foreclosure Consultant Fraud Prevention Act, passed in 2010. The Mortgage Foreclosure
Consultant Fraud Prevention Act prohibits demand or payment of fees until the services have
been completed.
“Preying on New Mexico families struggling to keep their homes is disgusting and it’s against the law,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “Companies who harm our families will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law by the Office of the Attorney General.” Homeowners should not pay...


NEW YORK

February 23, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Arrest Of Guilderland Town Judge Richard Sherwood And Financial Advisor Thomas Lagan For Stealing Over $4 Million From Trusts They Were Responsible For Overseeing
ALBANY – Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced the arrest of lawyer and Town of Guilderland Judge Richard Sherwood and financial advisor and lawyer Thomas Lagan, for a scheme in which they allegedly plundered over $4 million from family trusts they were responsible for overseeing.
“As we allege, the defendants orchestrated a complex scheme to steal millions from trusts they were responsible for protecting,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “We have zero tolerance for those who try to game the system and violate the public trust in order to line their own pockets.”
As the complaint details, Sherwood and Lagan have provided estate planning and related legal and financial services to Capital Region philanthropists Warren and Pauline Bruggeman and Pauline Bruggeman’s sister, Anne Urban, since at least 2006. The Bruggemans each created a revocable trust, which contained sub-trusts designed to provide for Anne Urban and Pauline’s other sister, Julia Rentz....


February 16, 2018
Statement By Attorney General Schneiderman On Court Win In Lawsuit Against Charter-Spectrum
NEW YORK - New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement upon a decision by the New York Supreme Court fully rejecting Charter-Spectrum’s motion to dismiss the Attorney General’s lawsuit:
“Today’s decision by the New York Supreme Court marks a major victory for New York consumers — rejecting every single argument made by Charter-Spectrum in its attempts to block our lawsuit. This decision ensures that our office can continue to hold Charter-Spectrum to account for its failure to deliver the reliable internet speeds it promised consumers. The allegations in our lawsuit confirm what millions of New Yorkers have long suspected — Charter-Spectrum has been ripping you off, promising internet speeds it simply could not deliver. The law requires internet service providers to tell consumers the truth. Our suit seeks much-needed relief for the millions of New Yorkers we allege have been cheated by Charter-Spectrum for far too long. Now, we look forward...


February 15, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Conviction Of Capital Region Pair In Wide-Ranging Scheme To Defraud Investors And Banks
ALBANY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced the convictions after a two-week jury trial of David A. Mazzeo, 59, of Guilderland, New York, and Michael C. Caruso, 62, of Schenectady, New York, for their participation in a wide-ranging scheme to defraud investors and lending institutions. The evidence at trial showed that between July 2012 and September 2013, the two defendants engaged in a complex, quid pro quo scheme, whereby Caruso opened a personal bank account in his own name and let Mazzeo use the account to steal nearly $150,000 from multiple individuals, all while Mazzeo was under investigation for other investment fraud schemes. The pair used the money to pay themselves, to pay attorney’s fees and court-ordered restitution for Mazzeo’s prior crimes, and to pay off additional victims threatening criminal charges against Mazzeo. In exchange for Caruso’s assistance, Mazzeo assisted Caruso in drafting and obtaining numerous fake loan commitment...


February 15, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Company Over Misleading Solicitations For Insurance Products
ALBANY — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Iowa-based Trustage Insurance Agency, which mailed solicitations for Accidental Death and Dismemberment policies that appeared to come from New Yorkers’ credit unions. Trustage is a
wholly owned subsidiary of CMFG Life Insurance Company, which markets a variety of insurance products to credit union members, including Accidental Death and Dismemberment policies. The settlement requires Trustage to make a number of changes to its solicitations based on concerns raised by the Attorney General’s office, and pay $75,000 in restitution, penalties, costs, and fees. The Attorney General’s investigation revealed that Trustage’s Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy solicitations mailed to consumers prominently featured the logo of consumers’ credit unions and did not make clear that the solicitations were from Trustage. The solicitations contained other features that, coupled with the credit union logos, may have caused consumers to sign, complete, and return the policy. The settlement requires Trustage to make a number of changes to its solicitations based on concerns raised by the Attorney General’s office, and pay $75,000 in restitution, penalties, costs, and fees. The Attorney General’s investigation revealed that Trustage’s Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy solicitations mailed to consumers prominently featured the logo of consumers’ credit unions and did not make clear that the solicitations were from Trustage. The solicitations contained other features that, coupled with the credit union logos, may have caused consumers to sign, complete, and return the policy.


February 06, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces State Prison Sentence For Ringleader Of Multi-County Check Fraud Scheme
UTICA – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that Kevin Singleton-Lee will serve 6 to 18 years in state prison on four felony convictions in Onondaga and Oneida Counties for his role in a multi-county check kiting scheme. Today, in Oneida County Court, the Honorable Robert L. Bauer sentenced Singleton-Lee to 1 1/3 to 4 years, which will run consecutive to his previous sentence of 4 2/3 to 14 years in Onondaga County. Additionally, Singleton-Lee was ordered to pay over $125,000 to victims.

These convictions are the result of a joint investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s office and the New York State Police. The investigation uncovered that Singleton-Lee and his co-conspirator Jerome Simpson, with the aid of Daniel Green, issued over $175,000 in fraudulent checks. To further their scheme, the defendants used social media to recruit financially vulnerable individuals to cash fake checks using their personal accounts, before emptying...


February 06, 2018
Statement From A.G. Schneiderman On Approval Of Trump University Class Action Lawsuit By Federal Appeals Court
New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement:
“Today’s approval of the Trump University class action settlement by the Ninth Circuit means that victims of Donald Trump’s fraudulent university will soon receive the $25 million in relief they deserve. We are pleased that the final settlement we negotiated with our co-plaintiffs ensures that members of the class will receive an even higher settlement than anyone originally
anticipated.
For years, President Trump refused to compensate the victims of his sham university. His
reversal in 2016—and the large-scale settlement that resulted—opened the door for student
victims to finally obtain the restitution they deserve.
My office will continue to hold those who commit fraud accountable, no matter how rich or
powerful they may be.”

trump-university-class-action-lawsuit-federal

February 06, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Lawsuit Against Schenectady Photography Studio For Failing
To Deliver Youth League Photos To Hundreds Of Consumers
ALBANY — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced today a lawsuit filed in Albany
County Supreme Court today against GND Studios, LLC, a photography studio operating as Big
League Pics, and its owner, Robert Dungan, for allegedly failing to deliver photographs to
hundreds of parents of youth baseball and softball players who had purchased photography
packages. The lawsuit alleges that Dungan photographed the leagues’ teams and individual
players in May 2017 pursuant to a contract with the Niskayuna Baseball League and the
Niskayuna Softball League and collected thousands of dollars from parents for a variety of
photography packages ranging in price from approximately $18 to $49. Dungan then failed to
deliver the photographs or make refunds to consumers.
“New Yorkers spent their hard-earned money to have a keepsake of their children’s baseball
and softball experiences. Parents were right to cry foul when Big League Pics allegedly didn’t
deliver – and my...

against-schenectady-photography-studio-failing

February 01, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Sues Fentanyl Maker Insys Therapeutics, Inc. For Dangerous And
Deceptive Promotion Of Prescription Opioid Subsys
NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office has filed a
lawsuit against Insys Therapeutics, Inc., a company that sells a highly addictive fentanyl drug
called Subsys. Although Subsys was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to
treat excruciating cancer-related breakthrough pain, the complaint alleges that Insys recklessly
marketed the drug for much wider use, covering a much broader set of patients. Additionally,
the company allegedly engaged in a pattern of deceptive and illegal conduct by downplaying
the drug’s risks of addiction, bribing doctors to prescribe the drug, and lying to healthcare
providers to skirt their authorization process. As a result, the Attorney General’s office is
seeking penalties and disgorgement of all revenues accumulated during the period of
misconduct—up to $75 million.
“At a time when the opioid epidemic was ravaging New York, Insys Therapeutics allegedly marketed a drug illegally by blatantly disregarding the...


NORTH CAROLINA
February 15, 2018
Stein to Atrium/UNC Health Care: We Need Details
(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today sent civil investigative demands (CID) to Atrium, formerly known as Carolinas Healthcare System, and UNC Health Care. Attorney General Stein is requesting information about the proposed combination of these entities and its impacts on health care prices, choices for patients and insurers, and other information that will allow him to determine whether or not this deal will harm North Carolinians.

“My priority is to look out for North Carolina’s health care patients,” said Attorney General Stein. “When large health systems merge, patients and businesses often end up paying more. I intend to make sure that doesn’t happen here.”

CEOs Eugene Woods and William Roper met with Attorney General Stein on Aug. 23, 2017 to discuss their organizations’ proposed deal. At that time, Attorney General Stein announced that he would review the transaction to ensure that North Carolina patients are protected. However, since that meeting,...


OHIO
February 26, 2018
Attorney General DeWine Files Lawsuit Against Opioid Distributors for Practices Fueling Opioid Diversion
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today filed a lawsuit against four major prescription opioid distributors in Madison County Court of Common Pleas. The lawsuit alleges that the drug companies engaged in unsafe distribution practices that ignored their responsibility under law to provide effective controls against opioid diversion.
"We believe the evidence will show that these companies ignored their duties as drug distributors to ensure that opioids were not being diverted for improper use. They knew the amount of opioids allowed to flow into Ohio far exceeded what could be consumed for medically-necessary purposes, but they did nothing to stop it," said Ohio Attorney General Mike
DeWine. “And much like the drug manufacturers who continue to fail to do the right thing, these distributors are doing precious little to take responsibility for their actions and help pay for the damage they have caused.” ...


February 15, 2018
Columbus Man Accused of Failing to Deliver Home Improvement Services
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a Columbus man accused of taking money for home improvement services he never provided. The lawsuit accuses Jimmy Jo Hatfield Jr., of Columbus, of violating state consumer protection laws.
According to the lawsuit, Hatfield operated under several different business names, including James Hatfield Plumbing, Hometown Remodeling LLC, Hometown Improvements Inc., and Energy Enterprises. He offered various home improvement services such as bathroom remodeling, fence installation, and siding work, but he allegedly failed to do the work after taking money from consumers.
Five consumers filed complaints about Hatfield’s services with estimated damages totaling more than $10,000.
In the lawsuit, filed in the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, the Attorney General seeks reimbursement for affected consumers and an end to any violations of Ohio’s Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act.
To help consumers avoid home improvement problems, Attorney General DeWine offered the...


February 12, 2018
Attorney General DeWine Takes Action Against Columbus-Area Tree Trimmer for Repeat Violations
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a Columbus man accused of repeatedly failing to deliver promised tree and lawn services to consumers.
Thomas Huber Jr. is accused of violating state consumer protection laws.
According to the lawsuit, Huber operates under the business name Emerson and Melanie Landscaping, though he previously used other business names including Huber’s Tree Care, Capital Tree Service, and Tree Doctor.

Investigators found that Huber contacted consumers at their homes and accepted payment for
tree or landscaping services but then provided incomplete or shoddy work.

The Ohio Attorney General’s Office has received six consumer complaints about Huber’s services since 2016. The average reported loss is about $400. In the lawsuit, filed in the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, the Attorney General seeks reimbursement for affected consumers and an end to any violations of the law. Attorney General DeWine offered consumers the following tips...


February 08, 2018
Massillon Man Accused of Misusing Funds from Youth Baseball Leagues
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a man accused of misusing tens of thousands of dollars in charitable funds from the Massillon Little League and the Massillon Youth Baseball Association.
The lawsuit accuses Luther E. Copeland Sr. of violating Ohio’s charitable laws. According to the lawsuit, Copeland ran Massillon Little League until 2016, when it stopped operating, and he incorporated Massillon Youth Baseball Association in April 2017. Investigators found that Copeland, who had control over the organizations’ bank accounts, diverted funds from the charities’ bank accounts into his own personal prepaid card account, then used the funds for personal expenses, including payments to an auto insurance company, a jewelry store, and casinos.
He is accused of misappropriating more than $25,000 since 2014. “The defendant is accused of taking money from a youth baseball league and spending it at casinos,” Attorney General DeWine said. “The kids deserve...


February 02, 2018
Operator of Amish-Education Nonprofit Accused of Misusing Charitable Funds
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a lawsuit against a man accused of misusing over $168,000 in charitable funds from a nonprofit created to provide education about Amish culture in America.
The Attorney General’s lawsuit says Kenneth Lawton used his nonprofit, the Florian K. Lawton Foundation, as a pass-through entity to hide personal income and assets. He is accused of using over $168,000 from the foundation’s bank account to pay for personal expenses between 2010 and 2014. The Florian K. Lawton Foundation’s stated purpose was to provide “continued education through an array of programs with university and museums about the Amish culture here in
America,” but investigators with the Attorney General’s Charitable Law Section found that the foundation failed to provide such programming. Instead, the lawsuit says, Lawton used the foundation to evade personal liability for his own private contracts.
“Our investigation found that the defendant was using the charity’s...

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**PENNSYLVANIA**

February 05, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Announces a Win in Case against Investment Firm involving “Rent-a-Tribe” Payday Lending Scheme**

HARRISBURG — In an important ruling involving a lender and investment firm accused of “renting” Native American tribes for a payday loan scheme in Pennsylvania, Attorney General Josh Shapiro announced today a federal judge has allowed the core of a lawsuit filed by the Attorney General to move forward.

The Attorney General’s lawsuit alleges that Victory Park Capital Advisors LLC, invested and participated in a scheme with Think Finance Inc. to shield itself from state and federal laws by operating under the guise of a Native American tribe and also a federally-chartered bank. U.S. District Judge J. Curtis Joyner has denied most of a defense motion to dismiss the lawsuit, ensuring the case will proceed.

“These defendants used a Native American tribe as a front to evade state consumer protection laws and charge higher payday loan interest rates than allowed under Pennsylvania law,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “We...

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**SOUTH DAKOTA**

February 20, 2018

**Colorado Couple Indicted in Elder Financial Abuse Case**

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley announced today that Sandra Lee Pazen, 62, Fort Collins, CO, and Paul Damon Pazen, 63, Fort Collins, CO, have been indicted by a Butte County grand jury on charges of financial elder abuse.

“This case demonstrates the importance and need for the Attorney General’s Elder Abuse Unit and its work in protecting our seniors and nursing home residents from financial exploitation,” said Jackley.

Sandra Pazen faces one count of theft by exploitation with a value between $5,000.00 and $100,000.00, class 4 felony, punishable by up to 10 years in the state penitentiary and/or
Paul Pazen faces one count of receiving stolen property with a value of between $5,000.00 and $100,000, class 4 felony, punishable by up to 10 years in the state penitentiary and/or $20,000 fine, and one count of Grand Theft, Class 5 Felony, punishable by up to 5 years in the…


VIRGINIA

February 23, 2018
ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING OBTAINS FULL RESTITUTION FOR CUSTOMERS OF ONLINE LENDER

RICHMOND (February 23, 2018) - Attorney General Mark Herring announced today that his office has reached a settlement with eight affiliated online lenders and debt collectors to resolve allegations that the companies offered unlawful open-ended credit plan loans and engaged in unlawful debt collection practices including contacting borrowers' employers and implementing wage garnishments. As a result of the settlement, borrowers will receive nearly $150,000 in restitution and forgiven debt.

"Virginia's open-end credit statute is being exploited by more and more lenders, especially online lenders, to provide extremely expensive loans to Virginians. Open-end credit plan loans are particularly troublesome because they can trap consumers in a cycle of debt that can take years and thousands of dollars to break," said Attorney General Herring. "Consumers should be wary of these loans, particularly when the terms allow for aggressive debt collection tactics like wage garnishments. My Predatory Lending Unit will continue to aggressively…


February 07, 2018
VIRGINIA CONSUMERS TO RECEIVE $2.7 MILLION IN RELIEF FROM SETTLEMENT WITH INTERNET LENDER

RICHMOND (February 07, 2018) - Attorney General Mark R. Herring announced today that more than $2.7 million in relief will be provided to Virginia consumers who took out loans with Internet lender MoneyLion of Virginia LLC-an affiliate of New York based Internet lender MoneyLion, Inc. Attorney General Herring’s settlement with MoneyLion will provide refunds and debt forgiveness to 3,800 consumers as a result of the company's alleged violations of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act. Since creating a Predatory Lending Unit in his Consumer Protection Section, Attorney General Herring's Office has recovered more than $25 million in restitution and debt forgiveness for Virginia consumers from online lenders.
"As more Virginians turn to online lenders for small loans, they need to understand that these loans can be just as risky and predatory as a payday loan or auto title loan they might get at a brick-and-mortar store," said Attorney General Herring.


WASHINGTON

February 27, 2018

AG’s sweep uncovers illegal housing discrimination against veterans

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced today the completion of a sweep to crack down on illegal housing discrimination against veterans with disabilities, resulting in enforcement action against eight companies across the state.

As part of the enforcement action, the eight companies will stop discriminating.

"Veterans are protected from discrimination by Washington law," Ferguson said. "No veteran should be denied a roof over their head based on how they plan to pay their rent."

The Wing Luke Civil Rights Unit investigation, which began in 2016, uncovered property management companies around the state that were improperly rejecting Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. Eight of those companies entered into agreements with the Attorney General’s Office to end their discrimination and consider VASH vouchers as payment.

VASH is a joint program between the U.S. departments of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). The program offers housing vouchers combined with VA support services...


February 08, 2018

Ticket sales company to pay $60k for use of ticket bots

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced that two Massachusetts-based ticket-buying companies will pay Washington state $60,000 for using “ticket bot” software, a violation of Washington’s Ticket Sellers Act — a law Ferguson wrote and championed through the state Legislature in 2015.

Find My Seats LLC and Box Office Pros LLC, both owned by Taylor Kurth, used ticket bots to complete hundreds of transactions in Washington, according to the complaint. These transactions included tickets to events at major venues in King County, such as the Paramount Theater, CenturyLink Field, Safeco Field and Key Arena. Among the affected events were Beyoncé’s Formation World Tour, Justin Bieber’s Purpose World Tour, an Adele concert and
Mariners games.

After using bots to purchase a large number of tickets, Kurth resold tickets for $30 to $200 more per ticket than the original sale price.

“When bots scoop up the good seats in a matter of minutes, they...


WEST VIRGINIA

February 28, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey: Fraud Investigation Nets Prison Sentence

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced an Eastern Panhandle contractor is headed to prison thanks to an investigation conducted by his office and its partners.

Frederick Tarmon Sr., owner of Tarmon and Sons as well as Complete Handyman Service, received a 1- to 10-year prison sentence Friday, Feb. 23. The court ordered restitution at more than $36,000 and immediately took Tarmon into custody.

“Business owners must be held accountable for their actions,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Our office will always protect and defend consumers against dishonest business practices.”

Tarmon pleaded guilty in December 2017 to seven counts of obtaining money by false pretenses. The charges against Tarmon stemmed from consumers hiring Tarmon, based in part upon advertisements he was licensed and insured, and paying thousands of dollars for projects and services that were never completed or poorly completed.

In December, presiding Jefferson Circuit Judge Debra McLaughlin awarded...


February 20, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey: Contractor Investigation Leads to Criminal Indictment

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey’s office led an investigation that resulted in the indictment of a contractor operating in the Mountain State.

“Our office leaves no stone unturned when investigating fraudulent and deceptive business practices,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Our diligence ensures taxpayers will be protected and schemers will be brought to justice.”

The grand jury indictment charged Jonathan Blake Comer with obtaining money by false pretenses. Comer was a contractor in Nicholas County at the time doing business as Jon Comer
Construction LLC.

The Greenbrier County Solid Waste Authority hired Comer’s company to upgrade its recycling drop-off and storage building for a county-wide program. The Solid Waste Authority paid $73,500 in advance for the construction, but the project was never started.

The project received public funds through a $150,000 grant from the state’s Department of Environmental Protection. Seeing as construction never took place, the Solid Waste...

Multistate Cases

Settlement with Takata Over Defective Airbag Systems

Date: February 22, 2018

Details: The settlement, reached between attorneys general of 44 states and the District of Columbia and TK Holdings, concludes a multistate investigation into the company’s failure to timely disclose known safety defects associated with certain airbag inflators using phase-stabilized ammonium nitrate as a propellant.

The multistate lawsuit alleged that the company knew that the airbag inflator posed a safety defect because of testing failures and, indeed, TK Holdings’ parent company pleaded guilty to manipulating testing data and submitting false and misleading reports to auto manufacturers. The company knew about several ruptures which occurred as early as 2004, but appropriate action to recall these unsafe inflators did not occur until November 2014. However, despite this knowledge, the company failed to properly notify regulators and the public of the serious danger posed by this defect.

States include:

1. Alabama
2. Alaska
3. Arizona
5. California
6. Connecticut
7. Delaware
8. District of Columbia
9. Florida
15. Kansas
16. Kentucky
Energy Efficiency Standards Must Go into Effect

Date: February 15, 2018

Details: Attorneys General Becerra and Schneiderman led a coalition of 13 Attorneys General, the California Energy Commission, and the City of New York in filing the lawsuit that secured a federal court ruling requiring national energy efficiency standards to go into effect.
The energy efficiency standards were approved by the Acting Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency at DOE in December 2016. As is required, the standards then underwent two procedural steps. First, they were subjected to a 45-day period for submission of correction requests. Once this period closed, the DOE was required to make any necessary corrections and submit these rules for publication in the Federal Register, making the rules legally enforceable. The DOE failed to complete this final step.

States include:

2. Connecticut
4. Maine
5. Maryland
7. Minnesota
9. Oregon
11. Vermont
12. Washington

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Administration Must Respect CFPB’s Independence

Date: February 7, 2018

Details: A coalition of 17 Attorneys General filed an amicus brief, underscoring that, under law, the president may only appoint a new Director for the CFPB by going through the normal Senate confirmation process. That process would help ensure that the president appoints a director who is committed to protecting consumers from fraud, abuse, and unfair business practices, true to the CFPB’s mission. The CFPB has returned over $12 billion to American consumers since being created in the wake of the financial crisis. It was carefully crafted by Congress to be an independent agency.
States include:

3. Connecticut
4. Delaware
5. Hawai‘i
7. Iowa
8. Maine
9. Maryland
10. Massachusetts
11. Minnesota
12. New Mexico
13. New York
14. Oregon
16. Vermont
17. Washington

National Sweep to Stop Elder Fraud

Date: February 26, 2018

Details: Attorney Generals, the U.S. Department of Justice and National Association of Attorneys General announced the largest coordinated sweep of elder fraud abuse in history. These schemes targeted one million American citizens resulting in more than $600 million in victim losses and led to charges being brought against 250 defendants.

Since June 2017, NAAG’s presidential initiative has been Protecting America's Seniors: Attorneys General United Against Elder Abuse. It is a concentrated effort working with attorneys general around the country to help all states gather expertise and build capacity to fight elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Agreement with Japanese Pharmaceutical Company

Date: 1 February, 2018

Details: Twenty three states reached an agreement with the Japanese pharmaceutical company that produced Lidoderm patches to bar anticompetitive conduct for 20 years.

The states accused Teikoku of illegal conduct due to its participation in an agreement to protect a monopoly on Lidoderm. Lidoderm is the brand-name for lidocaine patches, a transdermal patch widely prescribed for relief of pain associated with post-herpetic neuralgia, a common complication of shingles. The 20-year injunction prohibits Teikoku from paying or incentivizing a generic drug maker to delay entry into the drug market or from researching, developing, manufacturing, marketing, or selling any drug product.

States include:

1. Alabama
2. Arkansas
3. California
4. Delaware
5. District of Columbia
6. Florida
9. Illinois
10. Indiana
11. Iowa
12. Kentucky
13. Louisiana
14. Maryland
15. Minnesota
16. Mississippi
17. North Dakota
18. Oklahoma
Lawsuit Filed to Stop Illegal Rollback of Net Neutrality

Date: February 22, 2018

Details: Twenty three attorneys general re-filed their petition for judicial review in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit against the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the federal government to block the FCC’s rollback of net neutrality rules after the FCC officially published its *Restoring Internet Freedom Order*. The FCC had moved to dismiss a protective petition previously filed by the states on Jan. 16.

The attorneys general argue that the repeal of net neutrality would have dire consequences for consumers and businesses across the country that rely on a free and open internet - allowing internet service providers to block and slow the quality of certain content and charge consumers to access certain sites.

States include:

1. California
2. Connecticut
3. Delaware
4. District of Columbia
5. Hawaii
7. Iowa
8. Kentucky
9. Maine
10. Maryland
11. Massachusetts
12. Minnesota

17. North Carolina
18. Oregon
19. Pennsylvania
20. Rhode Island
21. Vermont
22. Virginia
23. Washington

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**Multistate Provigil/modafinil Drug Settlement**

**Date:** February 9, 2018

**Details:** Settlement checks were issued following a multistate action against pharmaceutical companies over pricing of Provigil, a name brand drug, and generic versions.

**States include:**


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**Federal Settlement to Restore Funds for Woodstove Upgrades**

**Date:** February 1, 2018

**Details:** A coalition of 11 attorneys general opposed the elimination of $3 million in funding for woodstove upgrades from a proposed settlement between the federal government and Harley-Davidson. The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (WA) joined the attorneys general in the brief.

**States include:**

2. Illinois
3. Iowa
4. Maine
5. Maryland
6. Massachusetts
7. New York
8. Oregon
9. Rhode Island
10. Washington
11. District of Columbia
Medicaid Fraud

Kool Smiles Settlement

Date: February 2, 2018

Details: The United States, the District of Columbia, and 20 states joined to reach a settlement with Benevis LLC and 133 Kool Smiles Clinics, resolving allegations that the company submitted false claims to the Medicaid program by performing unnecessary procedures. This included providing stainless steel crowns, performing tooth extractions and baby pulpotomies on pediatric patients and failing to offer less costly treatment options when available.

Benevis and Kool Smiles will pay the federal government $23.9 million.

The settlement also resolves allegations that Benevis and Kool Smiles failed to implement appropriate audit processes and engaged in conduct resulting in overutilization of procedures. Such allegations were productivity bonuses based on revenue generated by performed procedures, scheduling practices that maximized patient visits per day and pressure to meet production goals, including termination of dentists failing to meet productivity goals from January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2011.

States include:

2. Massachusetts
3. New York
4. South Carolina
5. Texas
6. Virginia

ARKANSAS

February 02, 2018

Rutledge Announces Pulaski County Woman Sentenced for Medicaid Fraud

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the conviction of a Jacksonville woman for Medicaid fraud. Kethmany Anderson pleaded guilty in Pulaski County District Court and must pay $600 in fines to the General Fund of the State of Arkansas. She has already paid $447.12 in restitution to the Arkansas Medicaid Program Trust Fund.

“Kethmany Anderson scammed a vital program for vulnerable Arkansans,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Attorneys and investigators at the Attorney General’s office continue to
investigate these crimes and stopping this type of fraud continues to be a top priority.”

Anderson, 44, of Jacksonville pleaded guilty to one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class A misdemeanor for billing for services during the time that the Medicaid recipient was hospitalized in October 2015.
This case was referred to the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit by the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General and was prosecuted in cooperation with the Office...


FLORIDA

February 07, 2018
Florida State Hospital Employee Arrested for Abusing a Disabled Person
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the Baker County Sheriff’s Office today arrested a former Northeast Florida State Hospital employee for abusing a disabled adult. Antrisa Fontae Butler, 27, a human services worker allegedly struck a schizophrenic resident multiple times in the head and neck.
During the course of the investigation, MFCU discovered Butler used non-approved training techniques against the disabled patient. Butler allegedly struck the victim in the chin and tackled the victim, causing the victim’s head to hit the floor and a door. The defendant continued the abusive behavior by pinning the victim down and punching the victim several times with a closed fist.
Evidentiary documents show Butler to be current on all required training related to restraint and physical interaction with patients. Butler faces one count of abuse of a disabled adult, a third-degree felony. If convicted, Butler faces up to five years in prison...

Original Press Release:

February 01, 2018
Pensacola Resident Arrested for Exploiting the Elderly to Fund Vacations
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Escambia County Sheriff’s Office today arrested a Pensacola man for exploiting an elderly victim and using funds for vacations to Baton Rouge, La. and Las Vegas, Nev. Steven McAroy, 44, acted in a position of trust for the victim and signed all financial documents while the victim resided in a long-term care facility.
Throughout the investigation, MFCU’s Digital Evidence Recovery Unit recovered records of McAroy’s transfer and removal of funds in both cities along with multiple transactions during a five-month period in 2015. McAroy allegedly transferred and removed more than $13,000 from
the victim.
McAroy faces one count of exploitation of the elderly more than $10,000 but less than $50,000, a second-degree felony. If convicted, the defendant faces up to 15 years in prison and up to $10,000 in fines. The Attorney General’s Office, through an agreement with the State Attorney’s...

- Original Press Release:

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LOUISIANA

February 21, 2018

**Two Louisiana Women Arrested for Medicaid Welfare Fraud**

BATON ROUGE, LA – Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry today announced two more arrests made by his national award-winning Control Unit.

“In order to bring welfare fraudsters to justice, our MFCU often relies on the public’s help in exposing the crimes,” said General Landry. “So we once again encourage anyone who may know of people using the Medicaid program to illegally take money, services, or drugs to report it to our office.”

Margo Malone, 44 of Bossier City, was arrested on five counts of for allegedly claiming to provide $19,089.58 of services to clients to whom she did not render services.

Cecilia Cheatteam, 36 of Harvey, was arrested on four counts of for allegedly submitting timesheets and service logs for overlapping services on two clients – amounting to $10,425.06 paid by the Medicaid program for services not rendered.

Following investigations by General Landry’s Control...


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February 15, 2018

**Three Arrested for Medicaid Welfare Fraud**

BATON ROUGE, LA – Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry today announced the arrests of three people on multiple counts of, and he encouraged the public to report welfare fraud to his office.

“While my office works diligently to root out Medicaid welfare fraud, waste, and abuse – we encourage the public to assist us in these critical efforts,” encouraged General Landry. “If you know of people using the Medicaid program to take money, services, or drugs to which they are not entitled – please report it to our office.”

Kevin Washington, 45 of Shreveport, was arrested on one count of Filing/Maintaining False Public Records and one count of. He allegedly provided false and fraudulent claims for services
and allegedly fabricated and altered the insurance claim date of damage before submitting it to be filed in public records.
Charetta Ellis, 49 of Baton Rouge, was arrested on one count of...

➢ **Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/6533?catID=5**

February 05, 2018
**Two Louisiana Women Arrested for**

BATON ROUGE, LA – Attorney General Jeff Landry today announced that two women have been arrested by his award-winning Control Unit.
"Medicaid welfare fraud takes resources from those who need it and steals from taxpayers," said General Landry. "Whether it is those who acquire unneeded prescription drugs, falsely bill, or lie to gain eligibility; all Medicaid welfare fraud is wrong; and my office will do all we legally can to stop it."

Ella Smythe, 66 of Cotton Valley, was arrested on five counts of . She allegedly submitted time sheets for times she was also working as the Assistant Municipal Clerk for the Town of Cotton Valley.

Iantha Faciane, 48 of New Orleans, was arrested on two counts of . She allegedly submitted time sheets for times she was also working at the Dollar Tree.

Both were booked into the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison.

**Medicaid...**

➢ **Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/6527?catID=5**

MARYLAND
February 21, 2018
**Court of Appeals Upholds Attorney General’s Authority to Prevent Patient Dumping**

BALTIMORE, MD (February 21, 2018) – The Court of Appeals of Maryland issued a decision upholding the Attorney General’s authority to prevent nursing homes from illegally dumping frail, vulnerable patients. In its decision, the Court recognized that the Patient’s Bill of Rights, the Maryland law that protects nursing home residents, “demonstrate[s] clear legislative intent to limit involuntary discharges and transfers, and ensure that when they do occur, they are subject to procedural controls ensuring a resident’s health and safety.” The Court held that, under the law, “the Attorney General may bring suit on behalf of multiple unnamed residents who have been subject to, or await, imminent, unlawful involuntary discharges, provided that at least one individual’s statutory rights have been violated,” and that the Attorney General may obtain “complete injunctive relief” for violations of the law. The Patient’s Bill of Rights was
amended in 1995 at the urging of then-Attorney General....


MASSACHUSETTS

February 16, 2018

AG Healey Secures $400,000 in Settlement with Clinical Lab Over Medically Unnecessary Drug Tests

Boston — A Southbridge clinical laboratory will pay more than $400,000 to resolve claims that it billed the state’s Medicaid program, known as MassHealth, for medically unnecessary urine drug screens, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Precision Testing Laboratories, Inc. (PTL), based in Southbridge, and owner David Fromm, of Hull, agreed to make the payment pursuant to a settlement agreement with the AG’s Office. The company and Fromm are also suspended from participation in MassHealth for 10 years. Neither is currently doing business as a health care provider in Massachusetts.

“schemes cheat taxpayers and take critical health care resources away from the people that need them most,” said AG Healey. “We will go after cases of fraud and return the funds to the state.”

The AG’s Office began an investigation after the matter was referred by MassHealth. The investigation by the AG’s Division concluded that PTL billed MassHealth...


MASSACHUSETTS

February 08, 2018

Mental Health Center to Pay $4 Million under AG Settlement for Illegally Billing MassHealth for Unlicensed Patient Care

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey announced today that South Bay Mental Health Center, Inc. (SBMHC) has agreed to pay $4 million based on allegations that it fraudulently billed 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.

“Thousands of MassHealth patients were left with inadequate care at these mental health facilities, while we allege this company fraudulently billed the state,” said AG Healey. “This settlement will bring critical funds back to our MassHealth program and ensure that members receive treatment from qualified individuals. Companies that receive payments from taxpayer-funded programs must be held accountable when they abuse this system.”
The settlement agreement also requires SBMHC to implement an internal program to ensure compliance with all licensure, supervision, billing, and quality of care requirements for mental health center staff, and to contract with an...


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MICHIGAN

February 02, 2018

**Schuette: Roseville Dermatologist Charged with**

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced that his Health Care Fraud Division has charged Dr. Usha Sood, 72, owner and operator of Harper Dermatology in Roseville, with five counts of – False Claim for billing Medicaid for services that were not performed.

“I hope this case serves as a reminder to others in the medical community that violating the law comes with consequences,” said Schuette. “My Health Care Fraud Division works hard every day to enforce the law and eliminate false claims from unscrupulous healthcare providers.”

Sood was arraigned on Thursday February 1, 2018 before Judge Andrea Larkin in the 54B District Court in Ingham County. A personal recognizance bond of $250,000 was set and Sood must also surrender her passport. Sood’s next court appearance is scheduled for February 9, 2018.

Case Background

An investigation began after a tip was received to the Health Care Fraud Hotline. It is...


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MISSOURI

February 15, 2018

**AG Hawley Announces Six Charged with Defrauding Missouri’s Personal Care and Consumer Directed Services Programs of more than $49,000**

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced that his office, along with St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Robert McCulloch, Pemiscot County Prosecuting Attorney Jereme Lytle, and Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney Jean Peters Baker, recently obtained indictments and charged personal care attendants Julius Terry (St. Louis), Reida Thornton (St. Louis), Felicia Ricks (Caruthersville), and Angel Zahnter (Kansas City) with defrauding Missouri’s Medicaid program. In addition, Medicaid recipient Joyce Terry (St. Louis) was indicted for defrauding Missouri’s Medicaid program and Medicaid recipient Michael
Robinson (Caruthersville) was charged with conspiring to defraud Missouri’s Medicaid program. Each of the six cases involves Missouri Medicaid’s Personal Care or Consumer Directed Services programs. These programs provide in-home personal care services to Medicaid recipients who have qualified for nursing home level of care. In both programs, personal care attendants are to assist patients in the patient’s home with activities of daily living such as...


NEVADA
February 27, 2018
Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing of Medicaid Provider
Las Vegas, NV – Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that John Harris, 34, of Las Vegas, was sentenced today in a case involving the failure to maintain proper documentation for services provided to Medicaid recipients.
Harris was sentenced for a gross misdemeanor offense of Intentional Failure to Maintain Adequate Records by District Court Judge Eric Johnson. Judge Johnson sentenced Harris to 364 days incarceration, suspended, a $1,000.00 fine or he can do community service in lieu of the fine, and payment of $1,594.84 in restitution. Harris was placed on 3 years probation. The fraud occurred between September 2016 and November 2016.
“These convictions ensure that Medicaid recipients who receive much needed mental health services are actually getting those services as billed to Nevada Medicaid,” said Laxalt.
The investigation began after the Control Unit (MFCU) received information that Harris was not providing services to Medicaid recipients. The investigation...


NEW JERSEY
February 15, 2018
Pennsylvania Woman Charged with Stealing Nearly $78,000 from Elderly Relative with Dementia Living in Long-Term Care Facility
TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Office of Insurance Fraud Prosecutor today announced that a Pennsylvania woman has been charged with stealing nearly $78,000 from an elderly relative who suffers from dementia and resides in a long-term care facility in Warren County, New Jersey.
Deanna Attinello, 23, of Easton, Pennsylvania, was charged with second-degree misapplication of entrusted property and theft by failure to make a required disposition of property in connection with funds allegedly stolen from an 86-year-old great aunt under her legal guardianship. The charges were contained in an indictment handed up by a state Grand Jury in Trenton last week.

In January 2017, Attinello was appointed by a court to be her great aunt’s legal guardian and given unfettered access to the woman’s financial assets to pay for her care and expenses at a long-term care facility in Warren Township.

Prosecutors allege that just days following her appointment...


February 06, 2018

**Certified Nurse Aide, Three Others Charged with Stealing More than $80,000 from Two Elderly, Disabled Individuals**

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Office of Insurance Fraud Prosecutor (OIFP) today announced that four individuals have been charged with financially exploiting elderly, disabled individuals – including a Certified Nurse Aide accused of cashing more than $30,000 in forged checks taken from a patient he was caring for at a Jersey City rehabilitation center.

Tamerlane F. Amon, 38, formerly employed by Alaris Health at Hamilton Park, and his mother-in-law Marilyn F. Duran, 63, were charged with third-degree conspiracy, forgery, and theft by deception in connection with $34,100 allegedly stolen from a 75-year-old male assigned to Amon’s care at the facility. The charges were contained in an indictment handed up by a state Grand Jury in Trenton on Friday.

In a separate indictment handed up on Friday, a Willingboro couple was charged with stealing $49,500 from the bank account of an elderly relative living in a Burlington County nursing...

- **Original Press Release**: [http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180206a.html](http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180206a.html)

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NEW YORK

February 16, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Trial Conviction Of Long Island Man For Stealing From Bronx Medicaid-Funded Charity**

BRONX – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that a Bronx County jury found John Cornachio, 63, of Oyster Bay, NY, guilty of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, for holding “no-show” job in order to steal from Narco Freedom Inc., a former Bronx-based, Medicaid-funded, not-for-profit corporation that was founded to provide substance abuse services throughout New York City. Cornachio faces up to 15 years in state
prison when he is sentenced on March 2, 2018. Cornachio was remanded to jail pending sentencing.

“The defendant crafted an elaborate scheme in order to hide a no-show job and steal from New York taxpayers – exploiting a Medicaid-funded program that was intended to help those suffering from substance abuse,” said Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman. “We will continue to aggressively pursue those who perpetuate these fraudulent schemes and bring scammers to justice.”

During the jury trial before Hon. Jeanette...


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NEW YORK

February 15, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman And Comptroller DiNapoli Announce Criminal Charges And Civil Lawsuit Against Pharmacy Owner For Allegedly Defrauding Medicaid

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli today announced the arrest and indictment of, as well as a civil asset forfeiture action against, Arkady Goldin, 39, of Brooklyn, and Value Pharmacy, Inc. (“Value”), located at 257 Broadway in Lynbrook, New York, for allegedly defrauding the New York State Medicaid program out of millions of dollars. Goldin, an owner of Value, is charged with Grand Larceny in the First Degree and other crimes for having allegedly paid kickbacks to a hospital employee for the referral of prescriptions for costly cancer medications. Additionally, prosecutors allege that Value billed Medicaid for over a million dollars of prescription medication it did not have in stock to dispense.

The Attorney General’s Control Unit (“MFCU”), working with the Comptroller’s Office, also filed an asset forfeiture and civil recovery action against Goldin, Value, and Goldin’s co-owners seeking over $8.7 million...


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February 15, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Guilty Pleas Of “Three-Quarter” Housing Operators Yury Baumblit And Rimma Baumblit

BROOKLYN – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the guilty pleas and expected prison sentences of Yury and Rimma Baumblit, the operators of “three-quarter” homes in New York City for a scheme to defraud Medicaid through kickbacks. Kings Country Acting Supreme Court Justice Daniel Chun accepted the guilty pleas of both defendants on two
counts each of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree. Three-quarter homes in New York City are
private entities that provide housing to indigent, formerly homeless individuals and those
transitioning out of periods of incarceration.
Both defendants were indicted in 2016 by the Attorney General’s Control Unit for having
defrauded the State Medicaid program through a systematic scheme whereby, in exchange for
money, Yury Baumblit and Rimma Baumblit mandated that the residents of their three-quarter
homes attend substance abuse treatment at designated treatment programs regardless of
medical need. At a later date, Yury Baumblit will...


February 14, 2018
Operation Ghost Ride: A.G. Schneiderman Announces Sentencing Of Owner Of Albany
Transportation Company For Stealing Thousands In Medicaid Transit Scam
ALBANY — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the sentencing of Rafael
Gonzalez, 38, Co-Owner of Ammediate Transport, upon his conviction of the crime of Grand
Larceny in the Third Fourth, a class E felony. Gonzalez was sentenced by Acting Supreme Court
Justice Hon. Roger D. McDonough to two to four years in prison.
Gonzalez previously admitted to setting up so-called “ghost rides” — billing Medicaid for a
patient’s transportation to physical therapy appointments between October 3, 2016 and
January 11, 2017 when, in fact, the transportation never actually occurred. Gonzalez’s business
partner, Percy Sanville also previously pled guilty to falsely billing Medicaid for transportation
for himself that never occurred. Sanville was sentenced on December 8, 2017 to two to six
years in prison.
“The defendant and his business partner carried out an elaborate hoax to defraud Medicaid
and exploit New Yorkers by billing Medicaid for transportation that never occurred,” said...


PENNSYLVANIA
February 22, 2018
CASE UPDATE: Behavioral Health Worker Charged with over $210K in Will Face Trial
HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced that a Philadelphia-based
Behavioral Specialist and Mobile Therapist charged with of more than $210,000 waived her
preliminary hearing and will face trial on the charges. LaGracia Burnett, 59, of Philadelphia, worked for three different behavioral health providers and billed for fabricated, overlapping services between January 2013 and May 2016. During this
time, she was also employed as a per-diem substitute teacher for the Philadelphia School District and S4Teachers. Burnett faces charges of theft by deception and tampering with public records for falsely submitting time sheets for over $211,942 in services that she did not provide to children, many of whom have been diagnosed with autism. “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...


Consumer Advocacy

Unfair Class Action Settlement against WTSO.com

Date: February 26, 2018

Details: Attorney General Mark Brnovich filed his 9th legal brief urging a court to reject another unfair class action settlement. Leading a bipartisan coalition of 19 state attorneys general, Brnovich filed the latest brief urging a federal district court in New Jersey to reject a proposed class action settlement against WTSO.com (Wines ‘Til Sold Out). Under the proposed settlement being challenged, $1.7 million will go to attorneys while consumers are left with a highly restrictive coupon.

The class action alleges the pricing on the WTSO.com was misleading, showing larger discounts on the wines sold than the actual price. WTSO.com and the class action lawyers who brought the case have proposed settling the claims of more than 200,000 consumers by paying $1.7 million in a cash payout to the lawyers while giving class members a highly restrictive coupon worth $2 off per bottle of certain eligible wines on WTSO.com.

States include:

1. Alabama
3. Arkansas
4. Idaho
5. Indiana
6. Louisiana
7. Michigan
8. Mississippi
9. Missouri
10. Nevada
11. North Dakota
12. Ohio
13. Oklahoma
14. Rhode Island
15. South Carolina
16. South Dakota
17. Texas
18. Washington
19. Wyoming
Unfair Class Action Settlement against Google Referrer Header Privacy Litigation

Date: February 8, 2018

Details: Attorney General Mark Brnovich, leading a bipartisan coalition of 16 state Attorneys General from across the country, filed a brief urging the United States Supreme Court to protect consumers from abuse in the Google Referrer Header Privacy Litigation class action settlement. Google settled a far-reaching consumer privacy case for $8.5 million, but class members will receive none of that money. More than $2 million will go toward lawyers and costs and more than $5 million will go to five organizations that had nothing to do with the lawsuit.

In the Amicus Brief, Attorney General Brnovich asked the Supreme Court to step in and for the first time ever set limits on class action settlements that divert all the settlement proceeds to class action lawyers, universities, and think tanks instead of directing that money to consumers. So-called “cy pres” arrangements are a growing part of the class action landscape, and often result in consumers taking home nothing, even in cases that settle for millions of dollars. Indeed, in the case at issue, Google settled a far-reaching consumer privacy case for over $8 million, yet consumers in the class got none of that money.

States include:

1. Alaska
2. Alabama
4. Arkansas
5. Colorado
6. Idaho
7. Indiana
8. Louisiana
9. Mississippi
10. Nevada
11. North Dakota
12. Oklahoma
13. Rhode Island
14. South Carolina
15. Texas
16. Wyoming

AGs urge Education Secretary to Reject Accrediting Agency that Approved Failing For-Profit Schools

Date: February 20, 2018

Details: 21 attorneys general are calling for the Department of Education to reject the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS) application to regain its status as a nationally-recognized accreditor, noting that the Department terminated ACICS’s recognition over a year ago for pervasive oversight failures and for enabling fraud and abuse by predatory for-profit schools.
States include:

2. Connecticut
3. Delaware
4. District of Columbia
7. Iowa
8. Kentucky
9. Maine
12. Minnesota
16. Oregon
20. Washington

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**AGs Call on FCC to maintain regulations to support competitive broadcast television Market**

**Date:** February 20, 2018

**Details:** A multistate group of attorneys general in filing comments with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that call on the agency to abandon its proposal to weaken existing television ownership rules that prevent excessive consolidation. The coalition argued increased consolidation will result in a decrease in both consumer choices and less diversity of voices in the media.
Pointing to the proposed merger between Sinclair Broadcast Group and Tribune Media Company, and the attorneys general urged the FCC to maintain the national audience reach cap, which currently prohibits broadcast television companies from owning stations that can reach over 39 percent of households nationwide.

The Sinclair-Tribune merger would create the largest television broadcast company in the country. The merged company would own or operate over 200 stations nationwide with the ability to reach 72 percent of U.S. television households, far above the statutory 39 percent limit.

States include:

2. Iowa
3. Maine
4. Massachusetts
5. Pennsylvania
6. Rhode Island

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Extension of Western Union Settlement Claims Deadline

**Date:** February 2, 2018

**Details:** The U.S. Department of Justice announced it has extended the deadline for qualified victims who wired money to scammers via Western Union to apply for refunds through a $586 million national settlement reached early last year.

All eligible victims, regardless of whether they received a settlement claim notification or reported it, can apply by the May 31 deadline through a link available at ftc.gov/wu or westernunionremission.com. Victims can also call 844-319-2124 for more information.

States include:

1. Iowa - https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/newsroom/feds-extend-western-union-settlement-claims-deadline/
ALABAMA
February 22, 2018
ALABAMA ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL AND ALABAMA INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT
OF EDUCATION DR. ED RICHARDSON ANNOUNCE CYBER SAFETY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR
SCHOOL FACULTY AND PARENTS
(MONTGOMERY) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall and Alabama Interim
Superintendent of Education Dr. Ed Richardson announced today a partnership between the
Attorney General’s Office and the State Superintendent’s Office to provide cyber training to
assist parents and school faculty in safe online practices for students. The training will also
instruct school faculty and parents in reporting to law enforcement any suspicious activity
aimed at students and schools.
“I would like to thank Dr. Ed Richardson and the State Department of Education for their
partnership in empowering parents and teachers with the ability to shield our children from
online threats,” said Attorney General Marshall. “We have been working together for several
months to develop cyber training that helps parents and teachers determine if children are
being targeted and how to report it to law enforcement. Our training is focused on protecting
our children and our schools.
“Last week, my office announced the creation...


February 14, 2018
ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL, JOINED BY FEDERAL AND STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICIALS, ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF CYBERCRIME LAB AND PARTNERSHIP TO
COMBAT CYBERCRIMES
(MONTGOMERY) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall was joined by U.S. Attorney Louis
Franklin and officials with the U.S. Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S.
Department of Homeland Security Investigations, the Alabama Fusion Center and the Alabama
Office of Prosecution Services in announcing the establishment of a Cybercrime Lab in the
Attorney General’s Office to assist all levels of law enforcement in the state with cyber-related
investigations.
“Today, the Alabama Attorney General’s Office, with the help of our federal, state and local
partners, officially launch the Cybercrime Lab,” said Attorney General Marshall. “One of my
priorities as Attorney General is to expand the capability of this office to combat the growing
threat of cybercrime. For law enforcement, investigating cybercrime and accessing digital
evidence present real challenges. But these hurdles can be overcome when agencies work
together to combine expertise and training. The Cybercrime Lab provides cutting edge tools to
enable...

➢ Original Press Release: http://ago.alabama.gov/News#6838
February 14, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL APPLAUDS INTRODUCTION OF DATA BREACH NOTIFICATION BILLS IN ALABAMA LEGISLATURE

(MONTGOMERY) –Attorney General Steve Marshall praised Senator Arthur Orr and Representative Phil Williams for introducing the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act in the Alabama Legislature Tuesday. The bills are SB318 in the Alabama Senate and HB410 in the Alabama House. The Data Breach Notification Act requires that business and governmental entities notify consumers when their sensitive personal information has been or is believed to have been acquired through a data breach. Alabama is one of only two states in the country that does not have a data breach notification law, though legislation has been filed in several previous legislative sessions.

“I would like to thank Senator Arthur Orr and Representative Phil Williams for sponsoring this much-needed legislation on behalf of Alabama’s consumers,” said Attorney General Marshall. “My Consumer Protection Division has worked diligently with oursponsors to help craft a strong law that will better ensure that Alabama’s consumers are the first to know when...


February 06, 2018

AG STEVE MARSHALL ANNOUNCES DEADLINE EXTENDED TO MAY 31 FOR CONSUMERS TO MAKE CLAIMS IN WESTERN UNION CASE

(MONTGOMERY)—Attorney General Steve Marshall announced that the claims period has been extended for eligible consumers, who were deceived into sending payments to scammers using Western Union’s wire transfer service, to apply for compensation as the result of a multi-state settlement with the company in 2017. The deadline to participate in the $586 million nationwide settlement now is May 31, 2018. At the time of the settlement, more than 7,624 complaints from Alabama consumers had been filed. A total amount of $7,865,024 or more in refunds is expected to be returned to Alabama consumers. The individual amounts will depend upon the circumstances of each case.

Consumers may be eligible if they were a victim of a fraud-induced transfer using Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017. Affected consumers who previously reported the fraudulent transactions should have received claim forms in the mail around late November or early December of 2017....

February 13, 2018

**Rutledge Praises White House’s Recommendation on PBMs**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge commends the White House’s Reforming Biopharmaceutical Pricing at Home and Abroad report, which calls for decreasing the concentration of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs). Three PBMs make up 85 percent of the current market, meaning they have significant market power against manufacturers, health plans and covered consumers.

“I am pleased to see the White House taking an interest in a practice that negatively impacts Arkansans,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “PBMs have decreased their reimbursement rate for pharmacies in the Arkansas Health Insurance Marketplace, placing a new strain on these integral local businesses. I have started my investigation into CVS Caremark, but intend to demand information from any PBM harming Arkansans.”

Local pharmacists are being forced to cover the additional costs of the rate changes, which impacts their bottom line and could lead to these businesses closing their doors.

The Attorney General will continue to aggressively...


February 02, 2018

**Rutledge Praises Ruling Allowing Mulvaney’s CFPB Appointment**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today sent a letter to President Donald J. Trump in support of Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney’s appointment to lead the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). U.S. District Court Judge Timothy J. Kelly denied the temporary restraining order seeking to prevent Mulvaney from serving as the head of the CFPB.

“The ruling by Judge Kelly is the right decision and will move the CFPB forward,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “The CFPB has a history of federal overreach and a blatant disregard for the rule of law, but I am confident that Director Mulvaney’s leadership will ensure that the bureau focuses on genuinely protecting consumers within the confines of the law.”

“We believe the bureau, consumers, and the industry leaders can and will unite behind the new director to help achieve the common goals of encouraging innovation in the industry, penalizing those...

ICYMI: Washington Post: California's Attorney General Wants to Enforce the Nation's Health-care Laws
He’s already a thorn in the side of the Trump administration. But California Attorney General Xavier Becerra is getting even more aggressive in challenging how the president and his appointees are tackling a range of health-related controversies.
The former chairman of the House Democratic Caucus — who has since forged a reputation as perhaps this administration’s most persistent legal hound — said in a meeting with a group of Washington Post reporters yesterday that he is launching a strike force aimed at enforcing federal health-care laws around access and delivery in California. It’s a necessary project, Becerra said, considering how massive and far-reaching the health-care industry has grown. “The health-care market’s roughly one-sixth of our economy and there’s a growing need to enforce laws in this area — the team we’re building will focus on tackling this,” Becerra said.
The new strike force, staffed so far by five attorneys and one supervisor, will...


URGENT: Attorney General Becerra Reminds Victims of Western Union Wire Fraud Scams to Apply for Refunds
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today reminded Californians who were the victims of wire fraud via Western Union to submit a claim in order to be considered for a refund payment. The original deadline to submit a claim was February 12, 2018 and has now been extended to May 31, 2018.
“For over 13 years, Western Union failed to prevent scammers from using its wire transferring services to take advantage of consumers. That is unacceptable,” said Attorney General Becerra. “Today, in light of the new, extended application deadline, we are reminding all Californians who were tricked into wiring money via Western Union to apply for a refund. Hardworking families who were defrauded by Western Union’s services deserve justice.”
Last year, Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced a multistate settlement with Western Union. The settlement resolved an investigation that focused on complaints by consumers who were tricked into using Western Union’s wire...

DELAWARE
February 12, 2018
DOJ Consumer Protection Unit Urges Delaware Consumers To Be On Guard Against IRS Scams And Other Financial Frauds
With IRS W-2 forms already issued by some employers, the 2018 tax season has arrived, and the Department of Justice Consumer Protection Unit is again warning Delaware consumers and employers to be on guard for fake IRS phone call scams and IRS Form W-2 email phishing scams that are targeting employers, including retail businesses, school districts, nonprofit organizations, and law firms.
IRS Phone Call Scam
In a typical IRS phone scam, a caller pretends to work for the Internal Revenue Service (or sometimes the U.S. Treasury Department), and tells the intended victim that the IRS will imminently be filing suit against the victim, or threatens the intended victim with arrest or some other kind of punishment, and the only way to avoid the lawsuit or arrest is to immediately pay a sum of money, usually via a pre-paid debit card or a money order, or even Amazon or iTunes gift cards.
“These scammers...


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
February 09, 2018
Consumers with Questions About Provigil Settlement Proceeds Should Contact Claims Administrator
WASHINGTON, D.C. – Consumers eligible to receive restitution under a settlement that Attorney General Karl A. Racine reached with the maker of the drug Provigil are currently receiving checks in the mail. Attorney General Racine recommends that consumers with questions about the settlement or their restitution checks direct them to the claims administrator via the settlement hotline at 1-877-236-1413 or by sending an email to info@stateagprovigilsettlement.com.
More than 100 District consumers are eligible for restitution under the $125 million, 48-state settlement, which Attorney General Racine and his counterparts in the other participating states reached in 2016. The settlement ended a multistate investigation into anticompetitive conduct by Provigil’s manufacturer, Cephalon, to protect the monopoly profits it earned from the wakefulness drug. That conduct delayed generic versions of Provigil from entering the market for several years.
a result of the settlement, the District received more than $200,000. District consumers who
purchased Provigil directly, without...  


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**FLORIDA**

February 01, 2018

**More than 300 Floridians to Receive Refund Checks for Tech Support Scam**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced that more than 300 Floridians affected by a tech support scam will receive refund checks. Checks, amounting to more than $53,000, will be mailed to the victims of the scam involving major tech companies tricking consumers into buying tech support services and products.

In May 2017, the Attorney General’s Office and the FTC announced settlements with the operators of the tech support scam: Big Dog Solutions LLC, also doing business as Help Desk National and Help Desk Global, and related defendants. As part of the settlements, along with monetary judgments, the defendants are banned from providing tech support products or services and are prohibited from deceptive telemarketing practices.

The FTC will be sending the checks, averaging $176, to the victims. The checks will expire after 60 days. The Attorney General’s Office urges Floridians to cash or deposit the checks before they expire. In addition, the...


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**GEORGIA**

February 27, 2018

**REMINDER: Compensation for Western Union Scam Is Now Available for Victims**

ATLANTA, GA - Attorney General Chris Carr joins 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 May 31, 2018.

“Criminal scam artists are adept at developing all kinds of schemes to convince consumers to wire them money,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “Our Consumer Protection Unit will continue to fight back against scammers on behalf of Georgia consumers, and we are glad to see that money from this settlement will now be rightfully returned to those affected.”

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.
February 14, 2018
SCAM ALERT: AG Carr and Department of Corrections Warn About Inmate Phone Scams
ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr and Commissioner of the Department of Corrections Greg Dozier are warning Georgians to be on the lookout for phone scams that may be a result of illicit use of contraband cell phones by inmates in Georgia prisons.
“We are warning all Georgians to be on the lookout for phone scams, and in particular, those facilitated by prison gangs and incarcerated con-men looking to cheat honest people out of their hard-earned money,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “Commissioner Dozier and the Department of Corrections work every day to crack down on the use of contraband cell phones, and we will continue to work together to protect our fellow Georgians and keep them informed and ahead of the inmate schemes.”
“In the fourth quarter of this fiscal year alone, we have seized more than 1,400 contraband cell phones from our facilities,” said Georgia Department of Corrections Commissioner...

February 13, 2018
CONSUMER ALERT: Carr Warns of Scammers Posing as Netflix or Romantic Interests
ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is warning the public about scams tricking consumers into revealing sensitive information that can lead to fraud. The scams target Netflix subscribers and users of online dating services, usually by email.
“Identity theft is rampant these days, with scammers always looking for opportunities to trick people into giving out their financial and personal information,” said Attorney General Carr. “As Valentine’s Day approaches, we are urging consumers to be on alert for these classic phishing scams.”
Netflix Scam
If you have a Netflix account, beware of an email circulating that purports to be from the streaming service. The email, which has been reported across the country and the United Kingdom, tells recipients that their account has been deactivated because the company could not validate billing information. According to reports, the recipient is encouraged to click on a link to a fake Netflix site where consumers are prompted...
IDAHO

February 23, 2018

Wasden Announces Deadline Extension for Idahoans Who Sent Scammers Money Via Western Union

(BOISE) - Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden has joined the Federal Trade Commission in alerting consumers who sent money to scammers via Western Union that the deadline to file claims to recoup losses has been extended. Victims now have until May 31, 2018 to file claims. The extension is part of a multistate settlement announced in January 2017. Those who sent money to scammers via Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017 are invited to file claims. Western Union agreed to pay $586 million to resolve charges brought by the FTC and the U.S. Department of Justice. Affected consumers can learn more and file the claims at www.FTC.gov/WU.

“Western Union helped make it easier for scammers to prey on Idahoans,” Wasden says. “The company has now stepped up to make amends. I strongly encourage any Idaho consumers who sent money to fraudsters by using Western Union to file a...
February 21, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN APPLAUDS COMMITTEE PASSAGE OF BILL TO MAKE CREDIT FREEZES FREE TO CONSUMERS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded the Senate’s Financial Institutions Committee for passing legislation to prohibit credit reporting agencies from charging fees for credit freezes.

Following the massive data breach at credit reporting agency Equifax, the Attorney General initiated House Bill 4095, sponsored by Sen. Bill Cunningham, to eliminate credit freeze fees in Illinois. Senators unanimously passed the legislation out of the committee earlier today. The full Senate will now consider the bill. Many states already ban or restrict these fees by the credit reporting agencies Equifax, Experian and TransUnion.

“The Equifax data breach impacted approximately half of all Americans, and the most effective way for people to prevent identity theft is to place a freeze on their credit reports,” Madigan said. “But people should not have to pay for credit freezes, particularly when they cannot choose whether to do business with the credit reporting agencies.”

“It is unacceptable that a...
CONSUMER ALERT: Double Check Before You Write a Check!

INDIANAPOLIS - Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill this week is warning Hoosiers to “DOUBLE CHECK BEFORE YOU WRITE A CHECK!” This warning comes on the heels of devastating flooding in several parts of the state. In the aftermath of flooding and other natural disasters, property owners are vulnerable -- making perfect targets for scammers pretending to offer help cleaning up wreckage and making necessary repairs. Many people will attempt to reach out and offer a helping hand. With this comes the likelihood that restoration or home repair companies -- some legitimate, some not -- will also try to contact those affected the most.

“When severe weather rips through Indiana, the damage can be significant," Hill said. "In the worst cases, the devastation can be heartbreaking. Many Hoosiers face the stress of out-of-pocket costs to make repairs to personal property. No Hoosier should face the additional nightmare of becoming a victim of...


February 05, 2018

Attorney General Curtis Hill warns of tax fraud

Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill is warning Hoosiers to beware of scams in which their identities are stolen and used to file fraudulent tax returns. For many families, the New Year brings hope of long awaited tax refunds. People may make plans to pay off debts or make significant purchases. Unfortunately, tax identity thieves may also be making plans to use those hard-earned dollars. Tax identity thieves use other people’s Social Security Numbers (SSN) to file taxes and/or even obtain jobs. Most victims initially will not even be aware that this has happened. Some will be notified upon e-filing that a tax return has already been filed using their SSN. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Treasury Inspector General to bring awareness and tools to help people protect themselves from tax identity theft. On their website, the FTC has provided free webinars and other information in order to learn what to do...

Original Press Release: https://calendar.in.gov/site/oag/event/attorney-general-curtis-hill-warns-of-tax-fraud/
IOWA

February 23, 2018

Home Improvement Problems, Imposter Scams Top 2017 Consumer Complaint List

(DES MOINES, Iowa) Home improvement troubles topped the list of complaints consumers filed with the Consumer Protection Division in 2017, and imposter scams jumped to number two. Out of approximately 2,961 written complaints filed in 2017, 224 related to home improvements.

While imposter scams are second on the list for written complaints at 161, thousands more consumers contacted the Consumer Protection Division to report the scams but did not file complaints.

Imposter scams, which generally occur through phone calls or emails, involve someone who pretends to be someone they’re not, and the scammer seeks immediate payment. Imposters make wide-ranging fake claims, including IRS agents collecting overdue tax payments, relatives who need money for an emergency, people who seek processing fees for prize winnings, or long-distance companions who need cash.

“Imposter scams are by far what Iowans report the most—these calls come in every day,” Attorney General Tom Miller said. “Don’t wire money or provide...


KANSAS

February 27, 2018

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

TOPEKA – (February 27, 2018) – The Attorney General’s Office will mark National Consumer Protection Week, March 4-10, with free document destruction events throughout the state, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

“Our office works hard year-round to protect consumers,” Schmidt said. “Next week, we will place a particular focus on helping Kansans protect themselves from identity theft and stay safe from scams.”

The office will sponsor free document destruction at 10 locations throughout the state. Securely shredding personal documents is an important step toward preventing identity theft. The schedule of events for the week is as follows ...

February 22, 2018

**AG Derek Schmidt announces elder-fraud enforcement sweep with U.S. Justice Department**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – (February 22, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt joined U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and other law enforcement partners today to announce the largest coordinated sweep of elder fraud cases in U.S. history.

At a news conference at the U.S. Department of Justice, the officials announced recent enforcement actions against numerous fraud schemes that have targeted senior citizens. The schemes ranged from wide-ranging mass mailing, telemarketing and investment frauds to individual incidents of identity theft and theft by guardians. The schemes charged in these cases caused losses to more than one million victims.

Schmidt highlighted numerous cases filed by state attorneys general within the past year and emphasized efforts at the state level to combat fraud and elder abuse and protect seniors from fraud and exploitation.

“In a bipartisan effort, state attorneys general are focused on protecting senior citizens from scams and rip-offs and are participating in...


February 13, 2018

**AG Derek Schmidt: More than 20 years of consumer-protection judgments now available online**

TOPEKA – (February 13, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt today announced that his office has for the first time published online more than 20 years of judgments from his office’s Consumer Protection Division.

State law requires that the office maintain a “public file” of final judgments obtained by the attorney general’s office and rendered by a court under the Kansas Consumer Protection Act. Until now, that file was available only by making a request to the attorney general’s office under the Kansas Open Records Act. Schmidt’s office now has published all judgments back to 1995 on the attorney general’s website in a searchable form. Partial records are available back to 1986. The office continues to work on adding older cases to the site.

“We are pleased to make these records of public interest available in an easy-to-search format,” Schmidt said. “Kansas consumers can now find out by searching this site...

LOUISIANA
February 08, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Landry Offers Mardi Gras Safety Tips
Baton Rouge, LA—As thousands of revelers converge across Louisiana to celebrate Carnival, Attorney General Jeff Landry is urging citizens to be vigilant because large crowds can bring safety concerns.

“Mardi Gras parades, parties, and balls are in full swing, but it is always important to remember to be safe and use good judgment while passing a good time,” said General Landry. Attorney General Jeff Landry outlines the following tips to help keep people safe:

- Do not carry large sums of cash and keep your purses and/or wallets on you at all times.
- Never attend parades alone, always be with a group.
- Make sure the place you are watching a parade is well-lit for night parades.
- Lock your vehicle and do not leave valuables in plain sight.
- Remind children of basic safety rules such as checking with guardians before going anywhere, traveling with someone else, and yelling “no” if a stranger tries to...


MASSACHUSETTS
February 01, 2018

AG Healey Launches Online Data Breach Reporting Portal
Boston — Making it easier and more efficient to report data breaches that affect Massachusetts residents, Attorney General Maura Healey today launched a new Data Breach Reporting Online Portal, which businesses and organizations can use to provide notice to the AG’s Office as required by the Massachusetts Data Breach Notification Law.

The portal, available through the AG’s website, gives organizations the option of reporting data breaches online to the AG’s Office in lieu of delivering a hard copy notice.

“Data breaches are damaging, costly and put Massachusetts residents at risk of identity theft and financial fraud – so it’s vital that businesses come forward quickly after a breach to inform consumers and law enforcement,” said AG Healey. “This new feature allows businesses to more efficiently report data breaches so we can take action and share information with the public.”

Since November 2007, the AG’s Office has received notice of more than 21,000 breaches,...

NEW JERSEY

February 27, 2018

Division of Consumer Affairs Will Not Pursue Appeal of Ruling on Marijuana Classification, Will Review Drug’s Highly Restricted “Schedule I” Status

NEWARK – The Division of Consumer Affairs (“the Division”) today announced that it will not further pursue its appeal from a decision of the Appellate Division of the Superior Court, which ruled that the Division has authority to reevaluate how marijuana is classified under state law. In withdrawing its appeal to the state Supreme Court, consistent with the Appellate Division’s decision, the Division will embark on a process to revisit whether the currently accepted uses for medical marijuana warrant any change in its classification. While the Appellate Division in no way dictated that marijuana should be rescheduled, it did conclude that the time was “certainly ripe” to evaluate its current status under the law.

The Division is the agency authorized to classify or “schedule” drugs for regulation under the New Jersey Controlled Dangerous Substances Law. The Division schedules controlled dangerous substances on a scale from I to V, and how a drug...


NEW MEXICO

February 08, 2018

TAX ALERT: AG Balderas Wants New Mexicans to Receive & Keep their IRS Refunds

Albuquerque, NM – This morning, Attorney General Hector Balderas is urging New Mexicans to be vigilant this tax season as they begin to prepare and file their federal and state taxes. Since many consumers will use the services of accounting and tax professionals this tax season, the Attorney General reminds consumers to do their homework when choosing and retaining a tax professional or tax preparer. In particular, Attorney General Balderas emphasized that all CPAs offering professional tax services in New Mexico must be licensed by the New Mexico Public Accountancy Board. CPA licenses can be verified by visiting the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department website at www.rld.state.nm.us.

“This tax season I am urging New Mexicans to do their homework so they don’t end up losing large portions of their IRS tax refunds,” Attorney General Hector Balderas said. “If you hire someone to prepare your taxes, ask questions because reputable tax preparers will...

February 06, 2018

**SCAM ALERT: AG Balderas Warns New Mexicans of IRS Tax Scams**

Albuquerque, NM–Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a Scam Alert to warn New Mexicans about IRS tax scams. Last week, a new tax season started with the IRS accepting 2017 tax returns. Already, consumer advocates at the offices of Attorney General Hector Balderas have noted an uptick in the number of complaints about phony IRS agents who threaten consumers with jail time for phony tax debts.

“The IRS does not call you and does not email you about tax debts,” Attorney General Balderas warned. “The IRS gives formal written notice through postal mail to persons it identifies as having tax consequences. Anyone who calls or emails you pretending to represent the IRS is likely a crook and a thief. This is so even if they offer you their ‘IRS badge number’, even if their caller I.D. has an ‘IRS’ in the identification block, and even if they send emails that look...


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

February 01, 2018

**Stein to Utilities Commission: People deserve benefits of tax cut, not utilities**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today submitted comments to the North Carolina Utilities Commission regarding utility rates and the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Please view those comments here and see Attorney General Josh Stein’s statement below:

“The federal government recently slashed corporate income tax rates – a change that will lead to significant cost savings for utilities like Duke Energy, as well as natural gas and water utilities in our state.

“The rates we pay utilities have been set assuming higher taxes. It would be wrong for us to pay the utilities for an expense they are not incurring. So, today, I urged the Utilities Commission to order utilities to pass those savings on to the people of North Carolina.

“I commend Duke Energy for agreeing with this request and hope to see other utilities do the same.”


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OHIO

February 26, 2018

Following Flooding, Attorney General DeWine Offers Consumer Protection Tips

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today offered consumer protection tips following the flooding and other severe weather that affected Ohio this weekend. “As people across Ohio assess the damage and start the clean-up process, we’re reminding consumers to beware of scams,” Attorney General DeWine said. “Some con artists travel to affected communities to take advantage of people. They offer to help, but once they get your money, they’re gone. After the flooding, we also could start to see flood-damaged vehicles entering the market. We just warn people to be careful.”

Home Repair Scams

Following severe weather, storm-chasing contractors may travel to affected communities to offer their services. In many cases, they visit consumers at their homes and claim they can complete the work immediately. They may ask for a large down payment or tell consumers to sign over their insurance checks, but ultimately they perform shoddy work or no work at...


February 12, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Warns of Romance Scams

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today warned consumers to beware of online romance scams, which have been reported by several Ohioans in recent weeks. “Sometimes online dating works out very well, but unfortunately, there are some con artists who pretend to be someone they’re not,” Attorney General DeWine said. “They string people along, and at some point, they start asking for money.”

In the scam, con artists often meet their victims on social media or dating websites. They create phony profiles and communicate with their victims via text or phone, sometimes for months or years. They may send forged photos or documents in order to “prove” their identity. Eventually they ask for money, using a real-sounding excuse. For example, a con artist may claim to be...


February 06, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Warns of Tax Scams

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is warning Ohioans to avoid scams this tax season. Since January, the Attorney General’s Office has received about 190 reports of
tax-related scams.
“Con artists are very good at what they do,” Attorney General DeWine said. “They rely on scare tactics and surprise. When people get scared, they do irrational things. That’s why we want people to know the warning signs. Awareness can make all the difference.”
Common tax scams include:
IRS impostor scams – This is the most common tax scam reported to the Ohio Attorney General’s Office. It generally begins with a phone call claiming you owe back taxes or that a warrant has been issued for your arrest. You’re told to call a certain number immediately, and eventually, you’re asked to send money or to provide personal information to resolve the supposed problem. ...


OREGON

February 13, 2018
AG Rosenblum Testifies in Support of Net Neutrality State Procurement Rules
Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum today testified before the Oregon House Rules Committee in support of HB 4155, legislation that would require the State of Oregon to no longer do business with Internet Service Providers (ISP) who refuse to adhere to net neutrality principals. In 2017, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted to remove internet neutrality provisions, and now ISPs can discriminate based on content. Without net neutrality provisions in place, ISPs, such as Comcast, Frontier, Century Link and others can choose which websites, content and applications to promote.
“The real losers with the loss of net neutrality rules won’t be the Netfliaxes or Amazons of the world – it will be our small businesses. Our start-ups—our entrepreneurs,” testified Attorney General Rosenblum. “It’s easy enough to imagine how the end of net neutrality will trigger ISPs creating new “fast-lane” packages – pay us a little (or a lot) extra, or your...


February 09, 2018
AG Rosenblum Urges Legislature to Support Better Oregon Data Privacy Protections
Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum today testified before the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee in support of Senate Bill 1551, which, if passed, would strengthen Oregon’s data breach laws even further, especially in light of the recent Equifax data breach that affected 1.7 million Oregonians.
Under the proposed bill, companies would be required to report data breaches within at least
45 days, and credit agencies would be limited in charging to freeze or unfreeze credit information. Additionally, a breached company cannot offer ‘free credit monitoring’ and then steer a customer into a pay-per-month credit monitoring plan. There will also be protections from consumers being auto enrolled in ‘free’ credit monitoring plans.

“This breach taught us an important lesson—data breaches can happen anywhere, and with any company—large or small. The Equifax breach was not reported for quite some time, even though the company knew of it. This means precious time was ticking away,” said Attorney...


PENNYSYLVANIA

February 14, 2018
Attorney General Josh Shapiro Warns Pennsylvanians of Online Romance Scams

HARRISBURG — On Valentine’s Day, Attorney General Josh Shapiro is warning Pennsylvanians of romance scammers who entice people into online relationships, then ask for money and scam them. Online romance scams, commonly known as “catfishing,” are increasingly taking place in Pennsylvania and across the United States.

“Scam artists are always trying new ways to cheat people out of their hard-earned money,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “These criminals use every online ruse imaginable to get people to let their guard down and steal their money or personal information — including tricking them into believing they are in love. We’ve seen Pennsylvanians seeking relationships online lose more than $100,000 to these catfishing scams. Don’t let scammers steal your money or your heart this Valentine’s Day.”

Two Pennsylvanians who were harmed in online romance scams and who filed complaints with the Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection are telling their stories to help other state...


February 13, 2018
Attorney General Shapiro Warns Consumers of Fake IRS Calls and Scams as Tax Season Gets Underway

HARRISBURG — As tax season gets underway, Attorney General Josh Shapiro is warning consumers about fraudulent calls and scams from criminals impersonating IRS agents – and telling recipients they need to send money right away or risk arrest by the IRS.

“Scam artists are always looking for ways to steal from consumers – and during tax season, impersonating the IRS and trying to scare you into paying them thousands of dollars becomes a
“One recent victim of the IRS scam is Michelle Albitz, of Barto, Berks County. Albitz said someone called, said he was from the IRS, that she owed thousands of dollars in back taxes – and that agents were waiting outside her home to arrest her if she did not pay her “tax...”

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

February 01, 2018

**Attorney General Alan Wilson warns about computer malware**

Online operators have found a new way to target South Carolina citizens by infecting visitors to so-called pirate websites. A recent study entitled “Digital Bait” established that visiting content theft sites – websites devoted to illegally distributing movies, music, books, and other copyrighted content – was a major source for infecting computers with dangerous malware that can lead to identity theft and other serious financial and privacy harms. The study showed that one in every three content theft sites exposed visitors to malware exploitable by criminals, and that almost half of the malware was “drive-by”: delivered without the user even having to click on the link. There are many reasons to stay away from content thefts sites, and to encourage others in your household to do so, but protecting yourself from a significant threat of being exposed to malware is an important one.


**SOUTH DAKOTA**

February 27, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley’s Data Breach Bill Passes Full House**

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley confirms the SB 62, a bill that requires the reporting of data breaches of personal information to consumers and to the Attorney General has unanimously passed the full House on a vote of 64-0.

“Thank you to our legislators for passing this very important piece of legislation protecting South Dakota consumers and businesses. The internet and social media play a vital role in our daily connectivity to one another, but with this comes an increased risk of theft and fraud. We will continue to see an increase in cybercrime and we need the tools to combat these breaches and thefts of our personal information,” 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...


February 21, 2018

Attorney General Data Breach Bill Passes House 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 House 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 House 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...


February 15, 2018

Attorney General Jackley Warns Public of Increased Number of Sweepstakes and Wire Transfer Scams

PIERRE, S.D. – Attorney General Marty Jackley is asking consumers statewide to reach out to their friends or neighbors to warn them of the dangers of sweepstake scams. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division has had multiple victims come forward to file formal complaints against these types of scam artists. One consumer has wired approximately $400,000.00 to an unknown source over a course of 4 years. Consumers who have fallen victim to this scam find themselves so consumed that the scammer convinces them to cash out investment accounts, retirement accounts, anything of value that will result in the scammer receiving legitimate funds.

“Take the time to talk with friends, neighbors and coworkers to make sure they understand the danger in responding to sweepstake offers. Keep in mind that the minute someone asks for an upfront fee to receive a sweepstakes winning, it is a scam,” said Jackley. ...

**WASHINGTON**

February 28, 2018

**AG proposal for improved consumer protections for Washington service members passes Legislature**

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s bipartisan Attorney General request legislation to better support military consumers passed the Legislature today after a unanimous vote in the Senate. It will now head to the Governor for his signature.


“The men and women of our armed forces face unique challenges,” Ferguson said. “As someone who comes from a military family, it is important to do everything we can to support those who serve or have served our country. This legislation closes a gap in the law, ensuring military consumers don’t get stuck with contracts they can’t use because they are deployed or ordered to relocate.”

Military service members, including those serving in the National Guard or reserves, can experience significant upheaval when called to active...


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**WEST VIRGINIA**

February 17, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Warns Against Price Gouging During State of Emergency**

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warned against price gouging during a state of emergency given reports of heavy rain across West Virginia.

Laws prohibiting such activity took effect early Saturday with the governor’s declaration of a state of emergency in all 55 counties.

The state’s price gouging laws specifically prohibit any person, business or contractor from inflating the price of select consumer items by more than 10 percent of what it sold for 10 days prior to the declaration.

“This week's heavy rainfall has many on guard as they watch creeks, streams and rivers rise across the Mountain State,” Attorney General Morrisey said. "I urge West Virginians to pull together and help those impacted. I also remind everyone to report any evidence of price gouging to our office as such conduct will not be tolerated in a time such as this."

The law takes effect during any state of...

February 08, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Reminds Consumers to Exercise Caution When Using Online Dating Services**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges consumers to exercise caution when utilizing dating services via websites or social media, especially with Valentine’s Day approaching.

Scammers will feign interest in or profess strong feelings toward an unsuspecting individual with the ulterior motive of eventually receiving money from them. Scammers may say they need money to cover expenses accrued while trying to meet their supposed interest, to get into the U.S. or to help them out of a bind.

In reality, they end up simply pocketing the money. The Attorney General’s office has been made aware of consumers losing several thousand dollars to such a scam.

“There are many new ways to meet people due to advanced technology,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It’s important to make sure the person you’re attempting to meet is legitimate and not trying to scam you.”

Consumers can do a few things to ensure...


February 05, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Reminds Consumers to Protect Information When Filing Taxes**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds consumers to be cautious and to protect personal information when preparing and filing the necessary tax documents this year.

Sensitive information like Social Security numbers, finances, birthdays and addresses are some of the many things scammers could easily use to their advantage.

“Scammers know tax season comes at the same time every year,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “They could be waiting in the wings to take advantage of the available information. That’s why it’s extremely important to be mindful of how you handle the information and who handles it on your behalf.”

Consumers can greatly reduce the risk of fraud by filing their return well before the deadline. This gives thieves less time to file a false return since IRS records would show a return in the consumer’s name has already been filed. They also should use a secure Internet connection...