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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ALABAMA

March 06, 2018

AG MARSHALL ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF CONTRACTOR FOR FORGERY FILED WITH ALABAMA LICENSURE BOARD FOR GENERAL CONTRACTORS

(MONTGOMERY) -- Attorney General Steve Marshall announced the conviction of a contractor for forgery of paperwork related to the renewal of his license with the Alabama Licensure Board for General Contractors. Morris Mitchell, 52, of Grayson, Georgia, pleaded guilty yesterday in Montgomery County Circuit Court to second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument. Mitchell operated Dreamway Construction, LLC, in Hardaway, Alabama, in Macon County. He admitted to submitting a forged certificate of liability insurance to the Board. Documentation of liability insurance is required by the Board for a contractor to obtain or renew a license. “State licensing boards protect the public by ensuring that applicants meet minimum standards,” said Attorney General Marshall. “When a building contractor submits false documents in order to obtain a license, the public is put at risk. This is one of many cases where my Special Prosecutions Division has enforced the law to maintain the integrity of State…

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#6847

ARIZONA

March 28, 2018

AG Brnovich Obtains $100,000 for Consumers from Bullhead City Jet Ski Rental Company

BULLHEAD CITY - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Malows Jet Ski Rentals will pay $100,000 in consumer restitution to settle misleading and false advertising claims. Malows advertised jet ski rentals for “$65 ALL DAY,” when in reality they charged consumers up to $299 for jet ski rentals on Fridays, weekends, and holidays. “Malows misled Arizona consumers and we’re holding them accountable,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “Consumers should always conduct online research and read independent customer reviews before giving a business their hard-earned money.” The consent decree reached with Malows Jet Ski Rentals, LLC and its manager, Mahriar Akbari, resolves a consumer fraud lawsuit filed by the Arizona Attorney General’s Office in 2017. The State alleged in its complaint that defendants also overcharged consumers for gasoline, improperly retained consumers’ refundable deposits, and charged consumers for damage consumers did not cause. The settlement requires the defendants to pay $100,000 in restitution for consumers…


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March 26, 2018

**Tucson Hair Stylist Sentenced to 6.5 Years in Prison for Stealing $300,000 from 94 Year Old**

TUCSON - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a judge sentenced Supranom “Addy” Klos to 6.5 years in prison for stealing from a 94-year-old vulnerable adult with dementia. Klos gambled away more than $300,000 in 4 months which was most of the victim’s life savings. The judge ordered Klos repay the more than $300,000 taken from the victim. Klos will also be placed on 3 years probation after she is released from prison.

“We must do everything we can to protect our seniors from these heartless and devastating crimes,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “Klos preyed on the trust and vulnerability of the victim and she will be held accountable for her actions.”

Klos was the victim’s hair stylist and cultivated a friendship with the victim and her husband more than 20 years ago. The victim’s husband died in 2011 and eventually Klos was given power of attorney.

In 2014, Klos began unlawfully...


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March 23, 2018

**Owner of Real Estate Company Sentenced to 7.5 Years in Prison for Defrauding Arizona Families**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Francisco Aguirre, the owner of Montecristo Properties, will spend 7.5 years behind bars for defrauding 40 families in Arizona. A judge ordered Aguirre be placed on 6 years of probation after he is released from prison.

Aguirre must also pay $2 million dollars in full restitution to the victims of his real estate scam.

“Aguirre’s actions were absolutely despicable,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “He prayed on Hispanic families by using his multimedia broadcast show to put himself in a position of trust in the community. These families believed Aguirre would help them turn their dream of home ownership into a reality, instead they were scammed out of their life savings.”

In January 2018, Aguirre pleaded guilty to one count of Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, one count of Theft, and two counts of Forgery. From 2013 to 2015, Aguirre defrauded mostly Spanish-speaking families who...


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March 19, 2018

**Grand Jury Indicts Phoenix Man for Using Fake Deeds to Take Out Loans on Homeowners’ Properties**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted Daniel...
Barraza Nevarez on multiple felony counts of Fraudulent Schemes & Artifices, Money Laundering, Forgery, and Criminal Impersonation in connection with an alleged scam designed to defraud homeowners and lenders.

Nevarez allegedly filed a series of forged quitclaim deeds transferring ownership of at least 18 different homes to himself. The homeowners did not know Nevarez and were unaware the deeds to their homes had been transferred to him. The homes were located in different parts of Maricopa County including Scottsdale and Paradise Valley. One of the property deeds transferred is valued at approximately $3.5 million. Nevarez is then accused of contacting home equity lenders to try to take out cash loans on those same properties. To date, we believe Nevarez was unsuccessful in taking out a loan on those properties.

Nevarez was arrested during an undercover operation conducted by the...


March 09, 2018

**Chiropractor Sentenced to 3 Years in Prison for Conspiring with Fake Dentist**

TUCSON - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Dr. Jesus Bernal, a chiropractor, was sentenced to 3 years in prison for allowing an unlicensed dentist to practice out of his chiropractic clinic in Southern Arizona. The Federal Bureau of Investigation Phoenix Division, Tucson Office investigated this case along with the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

"The FBI and the Arizona Attorney General’s Office continue to work jointly to protect the community from white-collar crime," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Michael DeLeon. "This includes fraud and money laundering. The motivation behind these types of crimes is purely financial. In this case, patients were put at risk. The safety and welfare of Arizona citizens and communities remains the highest priority for both the FBI and Arizona Attorney General’s Office."

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


March 08, 2018

**$1,000,000 Consent Judgment Against Company For “Do Not Call” Violations**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Adobe Carpet Cleaning, LLC is banned from making telemarketing calls for six years after repeatedly calling consumers on the “Do Not Call” Registry. In a consent judgment reached with the Attorney General's Office, Adobe Carpet Cleaning also agreed to pay the state $1,000,000 in civil penalties after making illegal telemarketing calls.
"People have a right to privacy in their own homes without being hounded by illegal telemarketers," said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. "When I became Attorney General, I made a personal commitment to do everything I could to stop unwanted and illegal telemarketing calls."

Adobe Carpet Cleaning advertises and sells carpet, upholstery, and tile cleaning services in Arizona. In 2017, the Attorney General’s Office filed a consumer fraud lawsuit against Adobe Carpet Cleaning and its owner Anthony N. Tafoya for repeatedly making telemarketing calls to consumers that were registered on the Federal Trade Commission’s…


March 07, 2018

AG Brnovich Obtains $6.28 Million for Arizonans Who Purchased Recalled GM Vehicles

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced today Arizona consumers will receive up to $6.28 million in payments as part of an ignition switch-related settlement with General Motors LLC.

In 2014, GM announced a series of recalls, including recalls related to faulty ignition switches that could switch to “off” or “accessory” while consumers were driving. The Attorney General’s Office filed an Arizona Consumer Fraud Lawsuit that alleged GM concealed defects, engaged in false advertising, and created a corporate culture that devalued vehicle safety. However, there were no claims for consumer payments in the state’s original 2014 lawsuit.

In 2015, Attorney General Brnovich took office and vowed to make consumer restitution a top priority. Brnovich amended the lawsuit against GM to include a claim for payments for consumers.

"Consumers should always come first in consumer fraud and class action lawsuits," said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. "When I took office, I couldn’t believe consumer payments...


ARKANSAS

March 22, 2018

Rutledge Reaches Settlement with Miracle Motors

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge has reached a settlement with Jacksonville-based Miracle Motors, Corp. and its owners for advertising the sale of used vehicles and failing to provide the vehicle title on the vehicle to Arkansas purchasers.

“Miracle Motors and its owners will be paying for the harms they caused by knowingly deceiving Arkansans,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Illegal business practices that take
advantage of our citizens will not be tolerated.” Rutledge filed a lawsuit against Miracle Motors in January 2016 and stated that on numerous occasions the dealership advertised vehicles it did not own for sale, sold the vehicles to Arkansas consumers, accepted payment and failed to deliver the vehicle title in a timely fashion. The owners of Miracle Motors deceived consumers by misrepresenting the ability to convey titles to purchasers at the point of sale. These actions violated the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act and the Used...


March 13, 2018
**Rutledge: U.S. Business Services Deceived Arkansas Businesses**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced that Circuit Judge Chris Piazza has ordered Florida-based U.S. Business Services LLC to pay restitution to Arkansans and court costs and civil penalties to the State of Arkansas for violations of the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

“U.S. Business Services intentionally deceived and harmed Arkansas businesses with its deceptive practices,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “By using documents that only appeared to be official government tax notices or notifications, this company tricked unsuspecting Arkansas business owners then offered to help those businesses – for a fee. The Court’s order not only requires the company to provide restitution to those businesses that fell victim to the deceit but also suspends the company’s business license in the State of Arkansas and will prevent further harm from these bad actors.”

U.S. Business Services solicited Arkansas businesses via direct mailings and offered to prepare and provide, for...


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**CALIFORNIA**

March 30, 2018
**Attorney General Becerra Sues Sutter Health for Anti-competitive Practices that Increase Prices for California Families**

SACRAMENTO — California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced the filing of a lawsuit against Sutter Health, the largest hospital system in Northern California, for anticompetitive practices that result in higher healthcare costs for Northern Californians. The action aims to stop Sutter Health from unlawful conduct under state antitrust laws and restore competition in the California healthcare market.
“Sutter Health is throwing its weight around in the healthcare market, engaging in illegal, anticompetitive pricing that hurts California families,” said Attorney General Becerra. “These tactics are risking Californians’ lives by driving up the cost of healthcare for everyone. Big business should not be able to throttle competition at the expense of patients. The California Department of Justice is dedicated to ensuring that all families in our state can access quality, affordable healthcare no matter where they live.”

The complaint alleges that Sutter Health engaged in anticompetitive behavior. These illegal practices resulted in higher...


March 23, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Announces Criminal Charges against Edgardo Guerrero for Defrauding Individuals Seeking Immigration Relief

LOS ANGELES — California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced the arrest and filing of criminal charges against Edgardo Guerrero of “Oficina Guerrero” in Inglewood. Guerrero, who is not an attorney, defrauded undocumented immigrants and their families seeking lawful permanent residence in the United States. He charged thousands of dollars for legal services that he was not legally qualified to give and failed to maintain a required bond. None of the victims obtained legal status as a result of Guerrero’s fraudulent actions.

“No one, regardless of status, should have to deal with fraudulent behavior while seeking legal advice,” said Attorney General Becerra. “At a time when the Trump Administration stokes fear and desperation in communities across the State, the California Department of Justice is committed to protecting families from unscrupulous practitioners who would exploit them for personal gain.”

Guerrero was arrested on March 22, 2018, booked into the Los Angeles County...


March 12, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Secures Judgment Against "National Cancer Coalition" for False Financial Reporting Scheme

SACRAMENTO – Attorney General Xavier Becerra secured a stipulated judgment against the National Cancer Coalition (NCC), for filing false and misleading financial reports and for deceptive solicitations concerning its charitable programs. NCC’s stated mission is to prevent cancer and fund cancer treatment and research. A judge in the Los Angeles County Superior Court issued the stipulated judgment to enjoin NCC’s deceptive practices and shut down the charity.
NCC’s misleading financial reporting scheme relied upon vastly overvalued Gifts-in-Kind donations by pharmaceuticals. Gifts-in-Kind donations are non-cash donations made to charities, such as clothing, prescription drugs, food, and medical supplies. NCC improperly used U.S. market prices to value pharmaceuticals that were shipped overseas and were restricted for international use only. The result was highly inflated revenue and program expense figures in its public financial reporting, which violated California law. In its solicitations to donors, NCC claimed to receive more than $130 million worth of...


March 08, 2018
**Attorney General Becerra: Home Depot Agrees to $27.84 Million Settlement for Violations of California’s Hazardous Waste Laws and Customer Privacy Requirements**

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced a $27,840,000 settlement with Home Depot U.S.A. (Home Depot) to resolve allegations that its California stores and facilities unlawfully disposed of hazardous waste – including waste batteries, aerosol cans, paints, and electronic devices. These acts constitute violations of California’s Hazardous Waste Control Law, and of California’s Unfair Competition Law, as such conduct gives Home Depot a competitive advantage over other regulated entities that are complying with the law. Home Depot also is alleged to have discarded customer records without rendering personal information unreadable. This settlement was the result of a partnership between the Attorney General’s Office, local prosecutors, local regulatory agencies, and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

“At the California Department of Justice, we take seriously our obligation to protect the health and well-being of our communities. That is why we are holding Home Depot accountable,” said Attorney General Becerra....


**COLORADO**

March 13, 2018
**AG Coffman Announces Indictment of Man Accused of Defrauding Investors out of over $6M**

DENVER—Today Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman announced that the Statewide Grand Jury has indicted Shannon P. Murphy on five counts of securities fraud. Murphy is accused of soliciting and accepting investment opportunities into companies Epic Mineral Resources, Inc. (EPIC), Murphy Mining International, LLC (MMI), and Murphy Mining and Exploration, LLC (MME). Murphy represented to investors that their investment funds would be used for mining
operations and would pay substantial returns.

Attorney General Cynthia Coffman stated the following after indictment was handed down: “Securities fraud perpetuated against Colorado consumers is an enforcement priority of my Office. We appreciate the hard work of our partners in law enforcement who assisted on this investigation.”

The indictment alleges that between July of 2009 and December 2014, Murphy solicited approximately fifty-five individual investors in Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield Douglas, Elbert, El Paso, Larimer, Teller and Weld Counties. The indictment alleges that Murphy represented to investors that mining...


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**Delaware**

March 28, 2018

**Customers of Improper Credit Services Company Receive Refunds After Settlement**

Attorney General Matt Denn announced that 35 Delawareans victimized by a national debt services provider recently received refunds for fees and costs paid for unlawful debt management services rendered by Cornerstone Credit Services, a Wisconsin company. In December 2017, the Wilmington law firm of Cross & Simon and the Consumer Protection Unit (CPU) of the DOJ’s Fraud and Consumer Protection Division reached a settlement with Cornerstone, under which Cornerstone ceased doing business in Delaware and refunded fees and costs totaling more than $115,000 to Delaware consumers.

Delaware law requires that debt management services providers doing business in the state register with the Attorney General, obtain a license, and fulfill a number of other requirements. The relevant statute exempts law firms providing legal services, and evidence produced during the litigation showed that Cornerstone had hired a law firm as its purported local representative in Delaware in an attempt to evade the statutory...


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**ILLINOIS**

March 15, 2018

**MADIGAN CHARGES SIX IN GAS STATION IDENTITY THEFT RING**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced charges against six Florida residents for skimming information off credit and debit cards used at gas stations across the Chicago area.

Madigan alleged the defendants stole credit and debit card information using skimming devices at gas stations around Chicago and across the country. Madigan alleged the defendants stole
information from gas station customers in Cook, DuPage and Lake counties to make more than $210,000 of fraudulent purchases in the Chicago area. Madigan’s office worked with the Secret Service to charge each of the following defendants in Cook County Circuit Court with identity theft, financial institution fraud, theft by deception, conspiracy to commit a financial crime, computer fraud and mail fraud...

➢ Original Press Release:
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_03/20180315.html

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IOWA

March 27, 2018

New York Laboratory Agrees to Measures to Ensure Valid Scientific Testing

(DES MOINES, Iowa) A product testing laboratory in New York agreed to comply with generally accepted scientific testing standards and adopt other safeguards after the Consumer Protection Division raised questions about how testing had been conducted. The Iowa Attorney General’s office became concerned with the work of International Research Services, Inc. (“IRSI”) of Port Chester after it had supported claims by the maker of so-called “harmonized water” products, such as “drinkable sunscreen.” IRSI, its owner and CEO Stephen R. Schwartz, and its principal investigator, Robert J. Frumento, entered into a written agreement called an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance to resolve the Iowa Attorney General’s concerns with IRSI’s testing practices. Osmosis, LLC, of Evergreen, Colo., pointed to an IRSI study as support for its claims that spraying UV Neutralizer water into the mouth provided hours of sun protection. Osmosis also cited an IRSI study in support of claims that another Osmosis product with water...


March 23, 2018

Charities Claiming to Help Disabled Officers Barred from Soliciting in Iowa

Today Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller announced a settlement barring the National Association of Chiefs of Police (NACOP), of Titusville, Florida, and two principals, Barry Shepherd and Brent Shepherd, from continuing to mail donation appeals to Iowans that are alleged to violate the state’s Consumer Fraud Act. The settlement, called an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance, contains a 5-year ban on any Iowa fundraising by NACOP or by the Shepherds in the name of any other law enforcement-related charity, and a permanent ban on any misleading donation requests. “We allege that NACOP’s mailings gave the false impression that the charity had a big local presence in each Iowa county, providing vital support to disabled officers who had nowhere
else to turn,” Miller said. “That makes for an effective fundraising appeal, but wasn’t supported by the facts.”

According to Miller, the Consumer Protection Division (CPD) began investigating when an Iowan sent in a copy...


March 21, 2018

Charities Claiming to Help Veterans Barred from Iowa for Deceptive Sweepstakes Solicitations

(DES MOINES, Iowa) Two charities mailing sweepstakes-based solicitations to Iowans have been barred from any further soliciting in the state, under agreements with Attorney General Tom Miller. Veterans Relief Network, based in Schererville, Indiana, and Healing Heroes Network, out of Palm Harbor, Florida, were both investigated by Miller’s Consumer Protection Division for consumer fraud after the Division learned that Iowans were receiving the mailings.

Miller said that although the two companies otherwise appear to be unrelated, they both used prize-oriented solicitation tactics that violate Iowa laws protecting consumers from unfair and deceptive fundraising practices.

“These solicitation mailings were carefully crafted to mislead Iowa donors in several ways,” Miller said. “They repeatedly implied that the recipient was on the verge of getting a big cash prize, and that all that remained to complete the prize-award process was to send back a form – with a requested donation, of course.”

Miller added that the...


KANSAS

March 26, 2018

Maryland man pleads to financial crimes

TOPEKA – (March 26, 2018) – A Maryland man last week pleaded no contest to two felony counts of securities crimes, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Ronald D. Morley, 63, pleaded no contest on Friday to one count of securities fraud and one count of acting as an unregistered issuer agent. The charges stemmed from incidents that occurred in Shawnee County between 2011 and 2013. The loss to four Kansas investors was more than $800,000. Shawnee County District Court Judge Mark S. Braun accepted the pleas. Sentencing has been scheduled for July 3.

The case was originally filed and investigated by the Office of the Kansas Securities Commissioner. Deputy Attorney General Steven Karrer and Assistant Attorney General Stacy
Edwards of Schmidt’s office are prosecuting the case.


March 14, 2018

**Bourbon County roofer banned from operating in Kansas**

TOPEKA – (March 14, 2018) – A Bourbon County roofer has been banned from performing roofing services in Kansas, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

Shane Bailey, of Fort Scott, doing business as Bailey Construction, was permanently enjoined from operating as a roofing contractor in the State of Kansas. District Judge Mark A. Ward approved the default judgment last week in Bourbon County District Court after Bailey failed to respond to a lawsuit filed against him. Bailey was also ordered to pay the attorney general’s investigation costs and a civil penalty.

Schmidt accused Bailey of operating as a roofing contractor without properly registering as required by the Kansas Roofing Registration Act (KRRA). He also alleged that Bailey violated the Kansas Consumer Protection Act by engaging in a door-to-door sale without giving the required notice of the consumer’s three-day right to cancel and cashing the consumer’s check before the required five-day waiting period.

Schmidt...


March 06, 2018

**Residential water-systems salesman from Iowa banned from door-to-door sales, ordered to repay five consumers**

TOPEKA – (March 6, 2018) – A residential water systems salesman from Iowa has been permanently banned from door-to-door sales in Kansas and ordered to pay restitution to five consumers, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.

Terrance Allen Kopet, Jr., a/k/a T.J. Kopet, was permanently enjoined from doing business as a water softener installation and service company or conducting door-to-door sales in the State of Kansas. Kopet operated under the business names of Custom Water Consultants, LLC; Custom Water; and Professional Water Solutions. District Judge Franklin R. Theis approved the consent judgment last week in Shawnee County District Court. Kopet was also ordered to pay $7,690.50 in restitution to five Kansas consumers and pay the attorney general’s investigation costs and civil penalties.

Schmidt accused the defendant of deceptive solicitation and sale of residential water systems to Kansas consumers, including falsely representing himself as being a RainSoft dealer. On
multiple occasions, Kopet also...


MARYLAND

March 09, 2018

Attorney General Frosh, Securities Division Issue Cease and Desist Against Jung Tae Kim

BALTIMORE, MD (March 9, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that his Securities Division has issued a Summary Order to Cease and Desist against Jung Tae Kim, also known as Chung Tae Lee or Edward X. Kim. The Division alleges that Kim, operating in Montgomery County, engaged in fraud against Marylanders, including financially exploiting senior citizens, and acted as an unregistered investment adviser, investment adviser representative, broker-dealer, and agent. The Securities Division discovered Kim’s conduct by a report filed under a new law requiring securities firms and professionals, including broker-dealers and investment advisers, to notify the Securities Commissioner of possible financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.

“Taking advantage of our senior citizens, defrauding them of their assets, is illegal,” said Attorney General Frosh. “As a result of recent changes to the Maryland Securities Act, our Securities Division is able to pursue cases that otherwise may have gone undetected.”...


March 09, 2018

Attorney General Frosh, Secretary of State Wobensmith Announce Settlement in Look-A-Like Cancer Charity Scheme

BALTIMORE, MD (March 9, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith today announced a settlement agreement reached with a look-a-like cancer charity based in Maryland that unlawfully used a name similar to the American Cancer Society to collect donations from unsuspecting donors.

“Look-A-Like charities cheat consumers and the legitimate charities that they mimic,” said Attorney General Frosh. “We’ve stopped yet another charity scheme and protected charitable assets that support vital cancer research and cancer victims.”

An investigation by the Attorney General and Secretary of State into Cancer Society of America, Inc., dba USA Cancer Foundation, Inc., revealed that not only did the organization masquerade as the American Cancer Society online and on social media websites, but the organization lacked proper accounting controls and had no third-party oversight of financial activities.
As a result of this investigation, on June 15, 2017, the Secretary of State issued...


MASSACHUSETTS

March 30, 2018

Methuen Attorney Indicted in Connection With Stealing Tens of Thousands of Dollars From Estate

Boston — A now-disbarred attorney from Methuen has been indicted in connection with allegedly stealing tens of thousands of dollars from an estate she represented, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Deborah Anthony, 67, was indicted this week by an Essex County Grand Jury on the charges of Fiduciary Embezzlement (two counts) and Criminal Contempt (one count). She will be arraigned at a later date.

Anthony was appointed as the administrator of an estate and received more than $190,000 in estate funds. As the administrator, she was charged with safeguarding the funds, paying appropriate expenses, and disbursing remaining funds to the beneficiaries.

Authorities allege that Anthony never disbursed any funds to the beneficiaries, and instead used the estate funds to pay for her own personal expenses and office administrative expenses. Anthony allegedly used more than $20,000 of these estate funds to cover mismanaged funds entrusted to her by two previous clients.

Investigators allege that...


March 28, 2018

Competitive Electricity Supplier to Pay $5 Million Over Claims of Deceptive Sales Tactics, Overcharging Residents

Boston — Viridian Energy, LLC, a competitive electricity supplier in Massachusetts, has agreed to pay $5 million to settle allegations of deceptive marketing and sales tactics that lured residents into costly contracts with high electricity rates, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

In an assurance of discontinuance, filed in Suffolk Superior Court on Friday, the AG’s Office alleges that Viridian Energy, through door-to-door sales, direct mail, and family-and-friend-based “network marketing” engaged in various deceptive and unfair sales tactics. The AG’s Office also alleges that consumers who switched to Viridian ultimately paid more for electricity than if they had stayed with their utility.

“This company sent salespeople to go door-to-door and trick residents into paying much more
for their electricity,” AG Healey said. “Our settlement requires Viridian to pay back millions of dollars they owe customers for their deceptive tactics and false promises. We will continue to go after competitive electricity suppliers who...


March 27, 2018

Auto Finance Company to Provide $765,000 in Relief to Consumers Who Were Sold Defective Cars

Boston — A Norwell subprime automobile finance company has agreed to provide $765,000 in restitution and loan relief to consumers who purchased cars from two used Massachusetts auto dealers that routinely sold defective and inoperable cars, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

“This company left hundreds of drivers with significant debt for cars they could not use,” said AG Healey. “We will go after schemes by auto dealers and finance companies that mislead consumers and will work to get people their money back.”

The AG’s Office entered into an Assurance of Discontinuance, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, with Source One Financial Corporation today. The settlement resolves the AG’s claims that the company’s business practices violated the Massachusetts Consumer Protection Act.

The AG’s Office alleges that Source One facilitated the sale of defective and inoperable cars sold by two dealers, Auto Drive One and Buy-A-Ride, that Source One knew engaged in a practice of...


March 22, 2018

Online Business School Resolves Claims of Failing to Provide Program Disclosures, High Pressure Enrollment Tactics

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey today announced a settlement with a for-profit online college based in Boston over allegations of failing to make proper disclosures of its programs for prospective students and engaging in excessive recruitment calls.

The assurance of discontinuance, filed Wednesday in Suffolk Superior Court against the New England College of Business and Finance (NECB), alleges that it violated the state’s for-profit and occupational school regulations designed to curb deceptive and unfair practices and increase protections for prospective students.

Our regulations ensure that vocational schools, including online programs, make proper disclosures to students so they can make informed decisions about their education,” AG Healey said. “This settlement requires the New England College of Business to put these much-needed
consumer protections in place.”
NECB offers online programs primarily in business, digital marketing, and international business. According to the AG’s settlement, the school failed to make certain disclosures to consumers and prospective students...


March 20, 2018
Walgreens to Pay $5.5 Million Over Alleged Overcharges for Prescription Drugs

Boston — Walgreens Co. has agreed to pay $5.5 million after allegedly overcharging for prescription drugs covered by the state workers’ compensation insurance system, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

“Our office found that over many years, Walgreens overcharged workers for various legitimate prescriptions,” said AG Healey. “This settlement ensures that Walgreens does not profit from those transactions and will help our state’s ongoing efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.”

The settlement, filed in Suffolk Superior Court today, resolves allegations that between 2008 and 2017, Walgreens violated state consumer protection laws by overcharging for worker injury-related prescriptions under the Massachusetts Workers’ Compensation system at various Walgreens pharmacies in Boston, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester, among others.

Pursuant to the settlement, Walgreens will pay a total value of $5.5 million, which will include payments to the state.

The Massachusetts workers’ compensation insurance system covers certain medical costs incurred by workers injured on the job,...


March 07, 2018
AG Healey Secures $7 Million Settlement with National Grid for Overcharging Customers

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey’s Office has reached a $7 million settlement agreement with National Grid that will provide credits or refunds to 53,000 customers improperly charged $50 service fees, along with financial assistance to help consumers lower their gas bills.

“Customers already struggling to heat their homes were hit with illegal charges by their gas company,” AG Healey said. “This agreement with National Grid returns millions of dollars to more than 50,000 customers.”

In 2010, following a ruling by the Department of Public Utilities in a National Grid gas distribution rate case, the company agreed to eliminate a $50 reconnection fee for residential customers whose gas service was shut off for non-payment. Through its investigation, the AG’s
Office learned that from 2010 to 2016, National Grid improperly charged 53,000 residential customers with the $50 fee, and many customers including more than 3,000 low-income customers paid the $50 fee multiple...


MICHIGAN

March 23, 2018
Schuette: Jackson Financial Planner Charged with Conducting a Criminal Enterprise and Embezzlement for Allegedly Stealing Over $700k from Client

LANSING – Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced the arrest and arraignment of Robert Morley, Jr., 69, of Jackson, on one felony count of conducting a Continuing Criminal Enterprise and 29 felony counts of Embezzlement Over $1,000. The charges stem from Morley’s alleged conversion of over $700,000 from clients whose investments he was managing.

“Stealing from someone who has entrusted you with their life savings for any reason is beyond the pale,” said Schuette. “I want to thank my Corporate Oversight Team and the Department of Insurance and Financial Services for diligently working to protect Michigan citizens from these kinds of criminals.”

Morley left the state after an arrest warrant was filed. The Leelanau County Sheriff’s Department, Michigan State Police Fugitive Team and TSA assisted special agents of the Attorney General’s Office in locating Morley and he was arrested on March 23, 2018 at Detroit Metro Airport.

Morley was arraigned before Jackson County...


March 20, 2018
Texas-Based Fundraiser to Pay $75,000 and Will Correct Michigan Humane Society Clothing Donation Bins

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced a settlement with Texas-based clothing donation bin operator ATRS. The settlement resolves the Attorney General’s lawsuit alleging that ATRS’s 251 clothing bins operated for the Michigan Humane Society were deceptively labeled.

“Professional fundraisers and charitable organizations must be truthful in their charitable solicitations,” said Schuette. “I’m grateful for ATRS’s cooperation in reaching this settlement, which gets ATRS into compliance with Michigan law and allows them to keep raising funds for
the Michigan Humane Society.”
Under the settlement, ATRS will pay a civil fine of $75,000, part of which will cover the Department’s investigative costs. The company will also fix its clothing donation bins disclosures so that the bins will state the per pound amount that each clothing donation generates for the Michigan Humane Society. The Department will voluntarily dismiss the civil complaint it filed against ATRS in Circuit Court...

March 16, 2018
Schuette: Consumers to Get Refunds Under Settlement with Five Star Landscaping and Snow Removal
LANSING — Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced that his Corporate Oversight Division has secured $20,000 in reimbursements for Oakland County residents who did not get the snow-plowing services they paid for this winter.
The payments are part of a settlement agreement with Five Star Landscaping and Snow Removal and its owner, Karl Bolin of Waterford Township. The agreement resolves issues raised by the Attorney General in a cease-and-desist letter to Five Star Landscaping last month in which Schuette’s Office said it intended to file a lawsuit.
The Corporate Oversight Division anticipates it will be sending out claim forms to the more than sixty consumers that filed complaints with the Attorney General about Five Star. These claim forms will help the Attorney General’s staff determine the appropriate amount of all settlement disbursements...

March 14, 2018
Schuette: Wayne County Man Sentenced in Mortgage Fraud Case
LANSING — Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced that Tyrone DeShazer Jr., 54 of Detroit, has been sentenced to four years of probation after pleading no contest to one felony count of Larceny by Conversion $1,000 or more but less than $20,000, regarding a promised short sale of the victim’s home.
DeShazer is also required to pay $6,900 in restitution and cannot work in real estate during the length of his probation.
“This man used his business to intentionally mislead an individual who lost her home as a direct result of his actions,” said Schuette. “Today’s sentence brings this case to a close and while it will not bring the house that was lost back, I hope the restitution will help provide a fresh start.”
DeShazer was originally charged in August 2017 with one felony count of Larceny by Conversion
$1,000 or more but less than $20,000 and one misdemeanor count of...


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NEVADA

March 29, 2018

**Attorney General Laxalt Announces Guilty Plea of Self-Professed Celebrity Talent Booking Representative in Las Vegas**

Las Vegas, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Marlene Fitzgerald, 44, of Las Vegas, pleaded guilty to one count of felony theft in the amount of $3,500 or more, a category “B” felony. The guilty plea results from her involvement in operating an embezzlement scam out of Las Vegas. To perpetuate the thefts, Fitzgerald operated under the names World Entertainment, LLC; Future Management; and Total Entertainment Artist Management. The acts were committed between December 2016 and July 2017. According to the criminal complaint, Fitzgerald held herself out as a talent booking representative with strong celebrity connections. In two instances, Fitzgerald solicited and accepted large deposits in exchange for promises to arrange performances by recording star Justin Bieber and two DJs known as The Chainsmokers. In three other instances, Fitzgerald’s victims paid her large deposits in exchange for marketing opportunities revolving around boxing superstar Floyd Mayweather, Jr., including...


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March 23, 2018

**Attorney General Laxalt Announces Arrest of Self-Professed Celebrity Talent Booking Representative in Las Vegas**

Las Vegas, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Marlene Fitzgerald, 44, of Las Vegas, was arrested on five felony counts for operating a scam out of Las Vegas. The charges against Fitzgerald include theft in the amount of $3,500 or more using technology in commission, a category “B” felony. To perpetuate the alleged thefts, Fitzgerald operated under the names World Entertainment, LLC; Future Management; and Total Entertainment Artist Management. The acts were allegedly committed between December 2016 and July 2017. According to the complaint, Fitzgerald held herself out as a talent booking representative with strong celebrity connections. In two instances, Fitzgerald solicited and accepted large deposits in exchange for promises to arrange performances by recording star Justin Bieber and two DJs
known as The Chainsmokers. In three other instances, Fitzgerald’s victims allegedly paid her large deposits in exchange for marketing opportunities revolving around boxing superstar Floyd Mayweather,...


NEW HAMPSHIRE

March 26, 2018

Attorney General Resolves Allegations of Unfair or Deceptive Business Practices by Quality Tree Service of Newton, NH for Taking a Deposit from a Consumer and then Failing to do the Work or Reimburse the Consumer

Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau has resolved allegations of violations of the Consumer Protection Act by Quality Tree Service, formerly of Plaistow, New Hampshire and currently operating at 76 D South Main Street, Newton, NH.

The State received a consumer complaint from a customer of Quality Tree Service who paid an initial deposit of $1,350 for tree work on her property. Quality Tree Service never performed the services, kept the deposit, and admitted using the deposit for other purposes. Additionally, the State’s investigation determined that the company continued to advertise that they were fully insured when their policy has lapsed due to nonpayment of premiums.

Quality Tree Service signed an Assurance of Discontinuance with the Attorney General to resolve the allegations. Under the terms of the Assurance, Quality Tree Service must fully reimburse the consumer by May 1, 2018. The company is also required...


March 26, 2018

Attorney General Resolves Allegation of Unfair or Deceptive Business Practices by Lakes Region General Healthcare and its Former Chief Nursing Officer, Patricia Strohla

Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that the Department of Justice has resolved allegations against LRGHealthcare (LRGH) and Patricia Strohla (Strohla) of Brownsville, VT, the former LRGH Chief Nursing Officer (CNO). LRGH is a non-profit health care charitable trust headquartered in Laconia, New Hampshire, comprised of Lakes Region General Hospital, Franklin Regional Hospital, and a number of affiliated medical practices.

The State alleges that LRGH recruited Ms. Strohla to become its CNO in August 2016, and prior to Ms. Strohla assuming her duties, LRGH learned that Ms. Strohla did not have a New
Hampshire nursing license. The position of CNO requires an active nursing license. LRGH then improperly modified Ms. Strohla’s job description to allow her a one-year grace period to obtain her license.

Ms. Strohla began working as the CNO on November 16, 2016. LRGH issued, and Ms. Strohla wore, an employee badge that identified Ms. Strohla as a registered nurse...


March 05, 2018

Attorney General’s Report Released on Transaction between Elliot Health System and Southern New Hampshire Health System

New Hampshire Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that the Charitable Trust Unit (CTU) and the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau (CPAB) have completed their respective reviews of the proposed transaction involving Elliot Health System and Southern New Hampshire Health System. The systems propose to integrate under a combined regional system called Solution Health while maintaining independent identities and functions as well. The CTU commenced its review on November 3, 2017 after the parties submitted a Notification of Transfer under New Hampshire’s charitable trust statute. This review considered whether the boards of directors complied with their fiduciary duties including whether the transaction is in the best interests of the organizations and their communities. While the proposed transaction met a number of statutory requirements, the Notice lacked detail concerning how the transaction would meet the best interest of the communities’ standard. Therefore, the CTU Director imposed a number of conditions to ensure...


March 02, 2018

Former Investment Advisor James Knee Arrested for Theft from his Elderly Client

Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that James Knee, formerly of Concord, was arrested and arraigned this morning on a charge of theft by misapplication. At the time of the theft, Mr. Knee was employed as a financial advisor to the victim. The complaint alleges that Mr. Knee obtained funds from the victim and was legally obligated to invest those funds for the benefit of the victim, but that Mr. Knee failed to make those investments and, instead, dealt with the property obtained or withheld as his own. Because the total amount of the theft exceeded $1,500, the charge is a Class A felony.

Mr. Knee was arrested on Wednesday evening by U.S. Customs authorities at Logan Airport in Boston after he tried to enter the country from Mexico. Mr. Knee previously lived in the Ukraine. Mr. Knee waived rendition in Massachusetts and was transferred yesterday back to
March 01, 2018

**Karla Cloutier Indicted for Financial Exploitation of an Elderly Adult**

Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces the indictment of Karla Cloutier, age 49, of Winchendon, Massachusetts for the financial exploitation of G.S., age 79.

Cloutier was indicted in Cheshire County Superior Court on 5 counts of financial exploitation of an elderly, disabled or impaired adult. The indictments allege that Cloutier took the financial resources of G.S. (age 79), an elderly adult, in breach of a fiduciary obligation recognized in law, by making multiple withdrawals from G.S’s bank accounts, and for the benefit of someone other than G.S. The total amount of the alleged exploitation is approximately $63,000. The exploitation occurred between January 2016 and January 2017.

Cloutier was also indicted on 5 alternate counts of theft by unauthorized taking.

New Hampshire law, RSA 631:9, provides that any person who, in breach of a fiduciary obligation recognized in law, knowingly or recklessly, for his or her own profit or advantage, unless authorized by the...

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NEW JERSEY

March 29, 2018

**Lawyer Sentenced to 26 Years in Prison for Stealing $1.5 Million from Clients**

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal announced that a lawyer from Ocean County who formerly practiced in Jersey City was sentenced to 26 years in state prison today for stealing approximately $1.5 million from five clients over a period of more than a decade. He was convicted at trial in January.

Joseph J. Talafous Jr., 55, of Toms River, N.J., was sentenced to 26 years in state prison by Superior Court Judge Mirtha Ospina in Hudson County. He also was ordered to pay full restitution. Talafous was found guilty at trial on Jan. 10 by a Hudson County jury of three counts of theft by unlawful taking (2nd degree), three counts of theft by failure to make required disposition of property received (2nd degree), five counts of misapplication of entrusted property (four 2nd degree and one 3rd degree), two counts of theft by deception (2nd degree and 3rd degree), and...

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March 20, 2018

**Statement of Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal on Facebook Data Breach**

My office has begun its own investigation into how the personal information of millions of Facebook users came into the possession of Cambridge Analytica, a data analytics company based in the United Kingdom.

I am particularly troubled by reports that Facebook may have allowed Cambridge to harvest and monetize its users’ private data, despite Facebook’s promises to keep that information secure. At this point we have many questions and few answers, and New Jersey’s residents deserve to know what happened. That’s why we’ve launched an investigation.

➤ **Original Press Release**: http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180320d.html

March 07, 2018

**New Jersey Bureau of Securities Orders Online Cryptocurrency Promoter “Bitcoiin” to Stop Offering Unregistered Securities in the State**

NEWARK – Continuing New Jersey’s efforts to protect investors from fraud in the cryptocurrency market, Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that the Bureau of Securities (“the Bureau”) has issued an emergency order to stop Bitcoiin, an online cryptocurrency-related investment entity, from fraudulently offering unregistered securities in the state.

In a Summary Cease and Desist Order issued today and effective immediately, the Bureau found that Bitcoiin a/k/a Bitcoiin B2G (collectively, “Bitcoiin”) is violating the State’s Uniform Securities Law by offering investors unregistered securities in its Initial Coin Offering (“ICO”) of its own cryptocurrency - known as Bitcoiin 2nd Generation, Bitcoiin 2Gen, or B2G - and in its “Bitcoiin Staking Program.”

The Bureau also found that Bitcoiin violated the law by failing to disclose key material facts to prospective investors, including the identities of its principals, the physical address of its business, and the risks associated...

➤ **Original Press Release**: http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180307a.html

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**NEW MEXICO**

March 08, 2018

**AG Balderas Sues Massive Solar Company for Defrauding New Mexicans & Jeopardizing Their Home Ownership**

Albuquerque, NM – This morning, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced he filed a lawsuit against Vivint Solar, Inc. and related companies (“Vivint”). Attorney General Balderas’ lawsuit claims Vivint was engaging in unfair and unconscionable business practices including clouding titles to consumers’ homes, fraud and racketeering in connection with its residential
solar power purchase agreements and solar equipment. Through its investigation, the Office of the Attorney General has learned there are hundreds of clouded titles and thousands of Vivint customers in New Mexico. Attorney General Hector Balderas is committed to expanding access to clean, affordable solar energy across New Mexico, and will not tolerate bad actors who prey on the good intentions of New Mexico families and small businesses. “I will fight to protect the rights of all New Mexico consumers and hold giant, out-of-state corporations accountable who abuse, mislead and employ dishonest practices to defraud our hard working families,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas.

Original Press Release:

NEW YORK
March 29, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Indictment In Bid-Rigging Scheme, Charging Two Defendants With Colluding To Fix Construction Prices For Luxury Brooklyn Building
NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the arrest and indictment of Christopher Chierchio and Anthony Milohnic for their role in a bid-rigging scheme – a class E felony – in which they allegedly colluded to ensure a lack of competition for the plumbing, sprinkler, and HVAC bids for a new luxury residential building at 613 Baltic Street in Brooklyn. Chierchio is also charged with Criminal Tax Fraud – a class C felony – for his alleged evasion of $94,094 of personal income taxes owed since April 2016.
“We have zero tolerance for crooks who try to game the system to line their pockets,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “We’ll continue to work with our partners in law enforcement to crack down on bid-rigging, tax fraud, and all other forms of corruption.”
These arrests are the result of an investigation conducted by Attorney General Schneiderman’s Organized Crime Task Force (OCTF),...


March 26, 2018
Operation Bottomfeeder: A.G. Schneiderman Shuts Down Brooklyn Telemarketing Operation That Solicited Funds For Sham Veterans Charity
BROOKLYN – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office reached a settlement that shuts down Menacola Marketing, Inc., a telemarketing company that solicited on behalf of the National Vietnam Veterans Foundation (NVVF) – a sham charity previously shut down by the Attorney General – and other shell charities that exploited popular causes in order
to line fundraisers’ pockets. The Attorney General shut down NVVF in 2016 after an investigation by his Charities Bureau revealed that NVVF raised millions of dollars through deceptive solicitations while providing almost no help to veterans. Today’s settlement is part of the Attorney General’s Operation Bottomfeeder, which has previously shut down other shell charities, such as the Breast Cancer Survivors Foundation.

Under this settlement, Menacola will dissolve and its principals, Joseph and Katherine DeGregorio, are permanently barred from fundraising for charity. The DeGregorios will also pay $100,000, which will be distributed to reputable charities...


March 23, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Record $42 Million Settlement With Bank Of America Merrill Lynch Over Fraudulent “Masking” Scheme In Electronic Trading Division**

NEW YORK — Attorney General Eric Schneiderman announced today that Bank of America Merrill Lynch (“BofAML”) will pay a record $42 million penalty to the State of New York to settle an investigation into fraudulent practices in connection with BofAML’s electronic trading services. As part of the settlement, BofAML admits that, pursuant to undisclosed agreements with so-called electronic liquidity providers (“ELPs”) such as Citadel Securities, Knight Capital, D.E. Shaw, Two Sigma Securities, and Madoff Securities, BofAML systematically concealed from its clients over a five-year period that it was secretly routing its clients’ orders for equity securities to such firms for execution. Attorney General Schneiderman’s investigation uncovered that BofAML made other misleading statements to its clients regarding several aspects of its electronic trading services—statements that made BofAML’s electronic trading services appear safer and more sophisticated than they really were. In addition to paying a penalty to New York State, BofAML admitted...


March 22, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Guilty Plea Of Fake Grant Writer Who Stole More Than $200,000 From Buffalo Churches, Nonprofits, And Local Businesses**

BUFFALO—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the guilty plea of Christina Sanford Gordon, who stole more than $200,000 from Buffalo churches, community organizations, and local businesses by misrepresenting herself as a grant writing expert and successful fundraiser. As Attorney General Schneiderman detailed when he announced criminal charges and a civil lawsuit last week, Gordon — through a sophisticated scheme — convinced over 30 organizations that she had applied for and obtained state-awarded grants. However, an investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s office found that Gordon never actually
applied for or obtained any grants. Instead, she allegedly spent the money the community
groups paid her for supposed grant writing services on lavish personal expenses, including
beauty treatments, cruises, jewelry, and apparel.
This morning, Gordon pleaded guilty before Erie County Court Judge Sheila DiTullio to Grand
Larceny in the Second Degree, Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, and Criminal Possession of...

plea-fake-grant-writer-who-stole-more-200000-buffalo

March 22, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces $375,000 Settlement With Specialty Pharmacy Over Failure To
Provide Basic Services
NEW YORK — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with
specialty pharmacy Accredo Health Group, Inc. (“Accredo”), following an investigation that
revealed, among other issues, that Accredo failed to timely deliver life-sustaining medications;
timely respond to after-hour calls; and provide adequate language access for non-English
speaking consumers. The investigation also showed that Accredo was not adequately tracking
consumer complaints that were directed to the company — so it could not determine whether
the complaints were handled adequately - and that counselors for New York consumers lacked
proper New York licensure.
“Specialty pharmacies like Accredo are responsible for managing lifesaving drugs for
chronically ill patients. They must be held to account when basic services fall short, especially
the timely delivery of life-sustaining medication and access to representatives in the
consumer’s language,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “My office will continue to fight to
ensure New Yorkers are getting the care...

settlement-specialty-pharmacy-over-failure-provide

March 21, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces $230 Million Settlement With UBS Over Misconduct Leading
Up To Financial Crisis
NEW YORK — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a $230 million
settlement with UBS in connection with the packaging, marketing, sale, and issuance of
residential mortgage-backed securities (RMBS) to investors leading up to the financial crisis.
The settlement includes $189 million worth of consumer relief for New York homeowners and
communities and $41 million in cash to New York State.
UBS is the seventh large financial institution to settle with Attorney General Schneiderman’s
office since he was appointed co-chair of the RMBS Working Group by President Obama in
2012. Attorney General Schneiderman has now secured $3.93 billion in cash and consumer
relief for New Yorkers in the aftermath of the residential mortgage crisis — more than any other state. When combined with the National Mortgage Settlement, the total rises to $6.06 billion ...


March 20, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Adore Me Lingerie Company For Deceptive Advertising
NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with lingerie retailer Adore Me, Inc. (“Adore Me“), following an investigation into the company’s business and advertising practices for its VIP Membership Program. The settlement resolves allegations that Adore Me deceptively marketed its VIP Membership Program to consumers for a $39.95 monthly fee—often by failing to adequately disclose the recurring monthly charges to consumers and leading them to believe that they could still use their accumulated store credit when they cancelled the program. In a separate settlement with the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC“), Adore Me agreed to pay $1.4 million in consumer restitution, of which New Yorkers will receive approximately $125,000. The Attorney General’s settlement requires the retailer to pay $300,000 in penalties, fees, and costs, as well as up to $63,000 in restitution to consumers.
“Adore Me misled customers – and we’re holding them to account” said Attorney...


March 15, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Criminal Charges And Civil Lawsuit Against Fake Grant Writer For Allegedly Stealing More Than $200,000 From Buffalo Churches And Nonprofits
BUFFALO—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced criminal charges and a civil lawsuit against Christina Sanford Gordon, who allegedly stole more than $200,000 from Buffalo churches and community organizations by misrepresenting herself as a grant writing expert and successful fundraiser. Through a sophisticated scheme, Gordon allegedly convinced over 30 organizations that she had applied for and obtained state-awarded grants. However, an investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s office found that Gordon never actually applied for or obtained any grants. Instead, she allegedly spent the money the community groups paid her for supposed grant writing services on lavish personal expenses, including beauty treatments, cruises, jewelry, and apparel.
The lawsuit seeks full restitution for the victimized entities, and to bar Gordon from ever representing herself as a fundraiser. Additionally, Gordon is charged with a total of seven felony
counts, including one count of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, one count of Scheme...


March 06, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces $500 Million Settlement With Royal Bank Of Scotland Over Misconduct Leading Up To Financial Crisis**

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a $500 million settlement with Royal Bank of Scotland over the bank’s deceptive practices and misrepresentations to investors in connection with the packaging, marketing, sale, and issuance of residential mortgage-backed securities (RMBS) leading up to the financial crisis. The settlement includes $100 million in cash to New York State and $400 million worth of consumer relief for New York homeowners and communities. This marks the sixth large financial institution to settle with Attorney General Schneiderman’s office since he was appointed co-chair of the RMBS Working Group by President Obama in 2012, and brings the total cash and consumer relief secured by Attorney General Schneiderman in the aftermath of the financial crisis to $3.7 billion—more than any other state. When combined with the National Mortgage Settlement, the total number is $5.83 billion. “While the financial crisis may be behind us, New Yorkers are...


March 06, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces $575,000 Settlement With EmblemHealth After Data Breach Exposed Over 80,000 Social Security Numbers**

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with healthcare provider EmblemHealth and wholly owned subsidiary Group Health Incorporated (“EmblemHealth”) after the company admitted a mailing error that resulted in 81,122 social security numbers being disclosed on a mailing. In addition to paying a $575,000 penalty, EmblemHealth agreed to implement a Corrective Action Plan and conduct a comprehensive risk assessment. Attorney General Schneiderman today reiterated his call to improve New York’s weak and outdated security laws with the “Stop Hacks and Improve Electronic Data Security Act” (or “SHIELD Act”). Introduced by the Attorney General in November 2017, the SHIELD Act would comprehensively protect New Yorkers’ personal information from the growing number of data breaches and close major gaps in New York’s data security laws, without putting an undue
burden on businesses ... 


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NORTH CAROLINA

March 06, 2018

Attorney General Josh Stein Takes Event Producers to Court for Deceptive Practices

RALEIGH, NC – Attorney General Josh Stein today filed a lawsuit against event production companies Lantern Fest Productions and Sack Lunch Productions, alleging unfair and deceptive business practices from both companies. The lawsuit alleges that Lantern Fest and Sack Lunch planned, advertised, sold tickets to events in Fayetteville and Goldsboro while promising that tickets could be refunded up to 7 days before the event. However, once the event was canceled, the companies failed to stop selling tickets immediately and did not provide refunds to people who had purchased tickets. They have also failed to respond to repeated consumer concerns.

“Taking money for an event that never happened is unfair and unacceptable,” said Attorney General Stein. “Businesses simply can’t take people’s money, cancel their event, and then not honor a refund. I am grateful to the consumers and officials who notified my office of this issue, and I’m proud to take this...


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NORTH DAKOTA

March 29, 2018

DUBIOUS “OFFICERS DOWN” RACE ORGANIZER BANNED FOR FRAUD

BISMARCK, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has issued a cease and desist order against Thomas Burke of Pennsylvania, for violations of the charitable solicitations and consumer fraud laws. Burke organized “Officers Down 5K” races in North Dakota, supposedly to raise funds in support of law enforcement efforts.

“Mr. Burke preyed on North Dakota communities known for their support of local law enforcement and used that information to put money in his own pocket while leaving the supposed beneficiaries with unpaid bills. That is reprehensible,” said Stenehjem.

The consumer protection division began investigating Burke in January, after receiving a complaint from a consumer who was told she would not receive a refund of her registration fee after Burke canceled the Officers Down race that had been scheduled to take place in Bismarck in April.
Burke ignored investigators’ efforts to contact him. However, investigators learned that there were financial problems related to the 2016...


March 21, 2018

**ANOTHER PHONY CHARITY OPERATOR BANNED IN NORTH DAKOTA**

BISMARCK, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem issued a Cease and Desist Order today against James Michael Austin, banning him from conducting business in North Dakota. Austin, who also uses the name Michael James Fisher and lists addresses in ND and Texas, violated the state’s charitable solicitations and consumer fraud laws.

Austin created a phony charity, Red Cross of Americas, Inc., and solicited donations from unsuspecting North Dakota residents who may have believed that Austin’s phony charity was affiliated with the actual Red Cross, which it is not. Although Austin registered his trade name with the Secretary of State’s office, he did not complete the state’s licensing requirements for a charitable organization or to be a professional fundraiser.

“Not only did Mr. Austin create a phony charity so that he could take advantage of generous North Dakota residents, but he deliberately used a name that was almost identical to a well-known international...


March 14, 2018

**UNLICENSED CONTRACTORS BANNED**

Two unlicensed contractors have been banned from doing business in North Dakota after a district court found they had violated consumer fraud and licensing laws.

Collin Don Strehlow, doing business as NailedIt Home Improvements, took advance payments from homeowners in Cass County for home improvement projects, including deck repair and garage construction, and then did not deliver the materials or complete the work. The Cass County District Court found that Strehlow was operating without a contractor’s license, abandoned consumer projects, diverted consumer funds, and had engaged in consumer fraud. The court entered a judgment against Strehlow for $5,000.00, banned him from doing any contracting work, and ordered that his trade name, NailedIt Home Improvements, be canceled.

Anthony “Tony” Ronald Cline, doing business under several unregistered business names, including A-Z Handyman Services, Handyman Inc., Jack & Trades, and Handyman on Duty, took advance payments from a dozen homeowners in Cass County for home...

➢ **Original Press Release:** https://attorneygeneral.nd.gov/news/unlicensed-contractors-banned
March 28, 2018

Home Repair Contractor Accused of Failing to Deliver Services to Consumers in Northeast Ohio

(CANTON, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today filed a consumer protection lawsuit against a Carrollton man accused of failing to deliver home improvement services to consumers in northeast Ohio.

Jason S. McCoy, operating under the name M.J. McCoy Electric, is accused of violating state consumer protection laws.

According to the lawsuit, McCoy advertised a variety of home improvement services, including electrical work, new construction, and remodeling, but after taking large deposits from consumers, he failed to provide the promised work. He also allegedly used other business names, including Hunny Do Construction, Honey Do, and HunnyDo LLC.

Nine consumers have filed complaints with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office or Better Business Bureau reporting about $55,000 in total losses...


March 19, 2018

Home Contractor Accused of Failing to Deliver Services to Consumers in Central, Eastern Ohio

(MCCONNELSVILLE, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today filed a consumer protection lawsuit against a contractor accused of taking money for home improvement services he never provided to consumers in central and eastern Ohio.

Patrick Eltringham, of Malta, and his company Logan-Madison Construction LLC are accused of violating state consumer protection laws.

At least 10 consumers have filed complaints against Logan-Madison Construction in the past two years saying they paid for roofs, pole barns, siding, kitchen repairs, additions, or other home improvement services they never received as promised. Consumers complained that the work was shoddy or incomplete. Estimated consumer losses total more than $100,000.

“In this case, we found a pattern of people not getting what they paid for,” Attorney General DeWine said. “Our goal in taking this action is to protect consumers.”

The Attorney General’s lawsuit, filed in the Morgan County Common Pleas Court, accuses Eltringham and Logan-Madison of failing to deliver promised services,...

March 15, 2018

**Hamilton Man Indicted on Theft Charges in Alleged Granite Countertop Scam**

(CINCINNATI)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced that a Hamilton man has been indicted for allegedly stealing money from consumers after offering to install granite countertops for them.

Michael J. Combs, 57, was indicted Wednesday by a Hamilton County grand jury on the following charges:

- One count of theft beyond the scope, a fourth-degree felony
- One count of theft by deception, a fourth-degree felony
- Three counts of theft beyond the scope, fifth-degree felonies
- Three counts of theft by deception, fifth-degree felonies

Combs is accused of stealing about $19,300 from four consumers in the greater Cincinnati area.

According to investigators, Combs operated under the names Granite Designs and First Choice Tops. He provided homeowners with estimates for new granite countertop installations and collected checks for the materials but allegedly never completed any of the work ...


March 12, 2018

**Ohio Man Sentenced to Repay Victims After Phony Energy Drink Investment Scheme**

(NEW PHILADELPHIA, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Commerce - Division of Securities Commissioner Andrea Seidt announced today that a New Philadelphia man has been sentenced to repay tens of thousands of dollars he stole by selling fraudulent securities in Tuscarawas County.

Keith Elsesser, 51, pleaded guilty in January to two felony counts of grand theft and four felony counts of unlawful securities practices for stealing a total of more than $90,000 from two victims.

At his sentencing hearing this afternoon, Elsesser was sentenced to pay full restitution to both victims of the scheme.

An investigation led by the Division of Securities found that Elsesser sold phony securities to two local investors between 2011 and 2013. Elsesser misled the victims into believing they were investing in an energy drink venture. The investigation found that he instead spent the funds on things like groceries, movies, rental cars, and other...

March 02, 2018

**Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Lawsuit Against Home Repair Contractor**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a Columbus-area home improvement contractor accused of failing to deliver promised services to customers.

Max R. Erwin Jr., of Hilliard, and his company, Central Ohio’s Ace Exteriors LLC, are accused of violating state consumer protection laws by taking consumers’ money and failing to provide promised services or performing shoddy work.

“Most contractors do a great job, but there are some people who just don’t finish the work they are paid to do,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We’re taking this action to protect consumers.”

In complaints filed with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office and Better Business Bureau, consumers said they paid Central Ohio’s Ace Exteriors for various home improvement services such as bathroom remodeling, window replacement or deck installation, but that no work was ever done or that the work was incomplete or shoddy. Consumer damages currently total about $27,000...


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**PENNSYLVANIA**

March 30, 2018

**CASE UPDATE: Kickstarter T-Shirt Scam Defendants Ordered to Pay $260K Following Contempt Hearing**

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced that the defendants in the Kickstarter t-shirt case have been held in contempt of court.

Kenneth E. Crockett Jr., owner of Radiate Athletics, Incorporated, failed to comply with the terms of an April 2017 settlement reached with the Office of Attorney General. He operated a West Chester-based sports apparel business that raised $579,000 online from more than 8,500 consumers to create athletic shirts that purportedly changed colors in response to body temperature.

The owner and company failed to deliver the shirts to many consumers as were promised by the defendants, and will now face additional monetary penalties and restitution of $262,606.24 and forfeit the right to do business in Pennsylvania, including online transactions. The court ordered the defendants to pay the monies due under the order by April 12, 2018.

“My office will not stop fighting for the rights of Pennsylvania consumers, whether they’ve been...

March 19, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Holds Philadelphia Tow Truck Operator Accountable for Illegally Towing Cars**

HARRISBURG — At a press conference today in Southwest Philadelphia, Attorney General Josh Shapiro announced his Bureau of Consumer Protection is settling a case against a Philadelphia tow company after an investigation that found cars were illegally towed from various locations throughout the city.

George Smith Towing, of South 61st Street in Philadelphia, and owner Anthony D’Angelo, violated Pennsylvania’s Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Law, the Towing and Towing Storage Facility Standards Act, and Philadelphia’s towing ordinance, according to the Bureau of Consumer Protection investigation. The settlement resolves the case and obtains full restitution for 28 consumers who filed complaints after being towed...


March 05, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Files Lawsuit against Uber for Massive Data Breach**

HARRISBURG – Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro today filed a lawsuit against Uber Technologies, Inc. for violating Pennsylvania’s data breach notification law. Uber knew for more than a year that a data breach potentially impacting 57 million passengers and drivers around the world had happened – but the company failed to disclose the breach until last November.

At least 13,500 Pennsylvania Uber drivers were impacted by the breach. Their first and last names and their drivers’ license numbers were stolen by hackers. Under Pennsylvania’s data breach notification law, Uber was required to notify impacted persons of the breach within a reasonable time frame, but the company failed its duty to do so.

“Uber violated Pennsylvania law by failing to put our residents on timely notice of this massive data breach,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “Instead of notifying impacted consumers of the breach within a reasonable amount of time, Uber hid the incident...


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**SOUTH DAKOTA**

March 14, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley Sues Major Prescription Drug Manufacturers**

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley announced today that his office has filed a civil lawsuit in South Dakota State Circuit Court against prescription drug manufactures Purdue,
Endo and Janssen for deceptive marketing and sale of prescription opioids. “Pharmaceutical companies that knowingly and deceptively harm consumers must be held accountable,” said Jackley. “Misleading and deceptive marketing about the risks and benefits of opioids has fueled an explosion of addiction. We cannot ignore the devastating consequences of their actions as they are directly affecting South Dakota families and communities.” The lawsuit alleges that the drug companies violated South Dakota’s Deceptive Trade laws, Medicaid Fraud statutes and created a public nuisance by disseminating false and misleading statements about the risks and benefits of opioids. The allegations of false marketing included medical journal advertising, sales representative statements, and the use of front groups to deliver information which downplayed the risks and inflated the benefits...


TENNESSEE

March 21, 2018
Statement on Opioid Litigation
Attorney General Herbert H. Slatery III filed motions to intervene in three lawsuits brought by district attorneys general against several opioid manufacturers and health care providers. This Office moved to intervene to protect the interests of the entire state and its citizens while fulfilling our statutory duty to direct the opioid litigation in the state. “Because of the devastating effects this epidemic is having in Tennessee and across the country, we are pursuing a dual track: conducting multiple investigations while also exploring settlement options,” said General Slatery. “We want a global resolution that will provide comprehensive injunctive relief as well as remediation to assist with prevention, treatment, and education efforts.”

The Tennessee Attorney General’s Office is leading a coalition of approximately 40 states actively investigating opioid manufacturers and distributors. The coalition is currently engaging in settlement discussions with certain manufacturers and distributors in connection with the federal opioid multi-district litigation pending in...


TEXAS

March 30, 2018
AG Paxton Urges Texas Appeals Court to Declare Austin’s Short-Term Rental Ordinance Unconstitutional
Attorney General Ken Paxton asked the Court of Appeals for the Third Judicial District in Austin to reverse a trial court’s judgment and rule that the city of Austin’s stringent ordinance against short-term rentals exceeds the lawful scope of the city’s authority and infringes upon property
owners’ fundamental constitutional rights. Short-term rentals have been around at least since Texas independence and have played important roles in local communities over the years. They have provided temporary accommodations for veterans returning from combat, minorities that were wrongfully denied public accommodations in the Jim Crow era, evacuees from natural disasters such as Hurricane Harvey in 2017, and those looking for new homes. But now, through the current ordinance, the city of Austin seeks to end this rich history and tradition of freedom.

In October 2016, Attorney General Paxton intervened in a lawsuit against the city of Austin that was filed by the Texas Public Policy...


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**VIRGINIA**

March 09, 2018

**AG HERRING AND SHERIFF BARON WARN OF ACTIVE SCAM IN HAMPTON ROADS**

NORFOLK (March 9, 2018)-Attorney General Mark R. Herring and Norfolk Sheriff Joe Baron are warning Hampton Roads residents about an active scam in the area in which scammers purporting to sell DirecTV subscriptions are conning people, including area seniors, into sending prepaid cash cards purchased from convenience or drug stores, such as GreenDot or MoneyPak cards.

"Unfortunately we see this kind of scam all the time. The only thing that changes is the company or agency that's being impersonated," said Attorney General Herring. "The bad news is that sending these cards is the same as handing over cash and that makes it nearly impossible to recover money once it has changed hands. But the good news is that you can protect yourself and your hard-earned money by keeping your guard up and resisting pressure to send money in advance to people whose identity you can't confirm."...


March 07, 2018

**ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING SUES "PENSION SALE" COMPANIES FOR HIGH-COST, ILLEGAL LOANS THAT TARGETED RETIRED VETERANS AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES**

RICHMOND (March 7, 2018) - Attorney General Mark R. Herring has filed a lawsuit against Future Income Payments, LLC; FIP, LLC; and their owner, Scott Kohn (collectively, "FIP"), for allegedly making illegal loans carrying annual interest rates as high as 183%, and for lending practices that violated the Virginia Consumer Protection Act. According to Attorney General Herring's suit, FIP specifically targeted Virginia pensioners-often elderly veterans with military
pensions and public servants with pensions through the Virginia Retirement System—with illegal loans disguised as "sales" that could provide purchasers with a quick lump sum of cash. Attorney General Herring believes the company made more than 950 illegal loans to at least 650 pensioners in Virginia, concentrated in the Hampton Roads area with its significant veteran population.

The Complaint cites the outrageous exploitation of one Virginia veteran who, as the Complaint alleges, received a $5,500 loan from FIP and was required to pay...


WASHINGTON

March 29, 2018

Providence, Swedish to pay $1.4M for failing to inform patients about out-of-network lab testing charges

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson today announced that affiliated health care providers, Providence Health & Services and Swedish Health Services, will pay more than $1.4 million as a result of an investigation by the Attorney General’s Office. Providence and Swedish failed to disclose use of a pathology lab that was out-of-network for many of their patients, resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in unexpected charges for more than 6,400 Washingtonians who received pathology testing in 2015 and 2016.

Providence’s Western Washington facilities and Swedish facilities exclusively use CellNetix for pathology testing. From January 2015 to February 2016, Premera Blue Cross, a health insurer for many Providence and Swedish patients, pulled CellNetix from its network. Despite having advance notice of the change, Swedish and Providence failed to inform their patients that an out-of-network lab would be providing their pathology testing. Consequently, Premera-insured patients received substantially higher medical bills than they...


March 08, 2018

AG Ferguson sues estate-planning company for misleading hundreds of Washington seniors

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a consumer protection lawsuit today against CLA Estate Services, Inc. and CLA USA, Inc. for operating a “trust mill” by misleading hundreds of Washington seniors about estate planning, and persuading them to purchase high-commission insurance products.

The Texas-based company enticed seniors with a “free lunch” to attend workshops about estate planning. During the workshops, CLA salespeople encouraged participants to set up living
trusts and buy CLA’s “Lifetime Estate Plan” packages.
In reality, the ultimate goal was to obtain detailed financial information to sell complex financial products seniors did not understand. The “Lifetime Estate Plan” packages included a referral to an attorney and annual review meetings, under the guise of reviewing the estate plans, where insurance agents, sometimes deceptively posing as investment advisors, attempted to sell annuities and life insurance.
CLA did not adequately disclose that these products could lock up seniors’ assets for years...


WEST VIRGINIA
March 27, 2018
Attorney General Morrisey Wins $443K Judgment, Permanent Shutdown of Bus Company
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey won a nearly $443,000 civil judgment against a charter bus company that violated state consumer protection laws in failing to refund three canceled bus trips.
The order also permanently prohibits Christopher Todd Cavender, sole owner of Cav’s Coach Company, LLC and AllAboard Tours and Charters, LLC, from accepting money for providing charter bus transportation. It additionally requires Cavender to pay refunds should other consumer complaints arise.
“This judgment should send a strong message that we will ensure businesses operate within the boundaries of the law,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “We will not rest until things are made right as it is our mission to protect consumers and hold companies accountable for delivering on promises made.”
This month’s judgment closes out a lawsuit the Attorney General filed in June 2017 against Cavender and his businesses, all based in Cross Lanes in western Kanawha County....


March 19, 2018
CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey won a judgment that will release dozens of automotive liens and permanently block a used car dealer from ever again operating and/or working for such a business in the Mountain State.
The order provides relief for nearly 50 consumers in seven West Virginia counties and beyond, including Huntington’s Tri-State, the Kanawha Valley and areas of central and southern West Virginia.
“Every business, large and small, must comply with our state’s consumer protection laws,”
Attorney General Morrisey said. “This settlement illustrates our commitment to hold bad actors accountable.”

The order targets Thomas J. Mathews and his operation of three used car lots in Huntington, two of which he opened after a January 2015 judgment meant to resolve consumer protection complaints associated with the first dealership – Downtown Used Auto Sales. The Attorney General alleged Mathews’ newer dealerships, Cars R Us and Central City Pre-Owned, both...


MultiState Cases and Actions

Takata Airbag Settlement

Additional States include:


See also Earlier Reports on Takata Airbags.

Continued Investigations into Equifax Data Breach

Additional States include:


See also Earlier Reports into the Equifax Data Breach
AGs demand answers from Facebook regarding data policies and privacy protections

States include:

1. **California** — (26 March 2018) Attorney General Becerra Calls on Facebook to Protect Users’ Data

2. **Colorado** — (26 March 2018) Attorney General Coffman Demands Answers from Facebook

3. **Connecticut** — (26 March 2018) AG Jepsen Co-leads Coalition Demanding Answers from Facebook

   https://oag.dc.gov/release/attorney-general-racine-joins-bipartisan-coalition

5. **Illinois** — (26 March 2018) MADIGAN & 36 ATTORNEYS GENERAL DEMAND ANSWERS FROM FACEBOOK
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_03/20180326.html

6. **Iowa** — (26 March 2018) Attorney General Tom Miller Joins Bipartisan Coalition of State AGs in Demanding Answers from Facebook

7. **Kansas** — (26 March 2018) AG Derek Schmidt asks Facebook for answers on data privacy

8. **Kentucky** — (26 March 2018) Beshear, AGs Expecting ‘Full Cooperation’ from Facebook on Reported Misuse of Users’ Personal Data
   http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=539

9. **New Mexico** — (26 March 2018) AG Balderas Launches Facebook Probe with Bipartisan Coalition of State AGs

10. **Mississippi** — (26 March 2018) AG Hood Investigating Facebook’s User Privacy Practices
    http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/ag-hood-investigating-facebook-user-privacy-practices/

11. **New Mexico** — (26 March 2018) AG Balderas Launches Facebook Probe with Bipartisan Coalition of State AGs

12. **North Carolina** — (26 March 2018) Attorney General Josh Stein Demands Answers from Facebook

13. **Oregon** — (26 March 2018) AG Rosenblum Joins Coalition Demanding Answers from Facebook
    https://www.doj.state.or.us/media-home/news-media-releases/ag-rosenblum-joins-coalition-demanding-answers-from-facebook/


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AGs Urge Congress to Preserve States Authority to Enforce Data Breach & Data Security Laws

States include:


7. Pennsylvania — (19 March 2018) Attorney General Josh Shapiro Takes Action to Preserve Pennsylvania Authority to Protect Consumers Against Data Breaches

8. Rhode Island — (19 March 2018) Attorney General Kilmartin Urges Congress to Preserve State's Authority to Enforce Data Breach & Data Security Laws
http://www.ri.gov/press/view/32761


1998 Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement

Additional States include:


See also Earlier Reports on the TMSA.

Supporting President Trump’s Authority to Appoint CFPB Director

States include:


Compensation for Western Union Fraud Victims

Additional States include:


See also Earlier Reports on Western Union Fraud Settlement.
AGs urge Congress to reject the PROSPER Act

States include:


2. **Illinois** – (20 March 2018) ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN URGES CONGRESS TO REJECT LEGISLATION BLOCKING STATE OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT LOAN SERVICING INDUSTRY
   [Link](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_03/20180320.html)

3. **Kansas** – (15 March 2018) AG Derek Schmidt asks Congress to maintain state authority to curb student loan abuses

4. **Kentucky** – (15 March 2018) Beshear, AGs Urge Congress to Stop Legislation that Dismantles State Oversight of Student Loan Industry
   [Link](http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=531)

5. **Maryland** – (16 March 2018) Attorney General Frosh Joins Bipartisan Coalition Urging Congress to Reject Legislation Blocking State Oversight of Student Loan Servicing Industry

6. **Massachusetts** – (15 March 2018) AG Healey to Congress: Don’t Give Student Loan Servicing Companies a Free Pass to Cheat Students

7. **Mississippi** – (15 March 2018) AG Hood Urges Congress to Reject Legislation Blocking State Oversight of Student Loan Industry
   [Link](http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/ag-hood-urges-congress-to-reject-legislation-blocking-state-oversight-of-student-loan-industry/)

8. **Montana** – (15 March 2018) AG Fox Joins Bipartisan Coalition Urging Congress to Reject Legislation Blocking State Oversight of Student Loan Servicing Industry

   [Link](http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180315b.html)

10. **New Mexico** – (15 March 2018) AG Balderas Urges Congress to Reject Legislation Blocking State Oversight of Student Loan Industry

11. **New York** – (15 March 2018) NY AG Schneiderman, CO AG Coffman Lead Bipartisan Coalition Of 30 AGs Urging Congress To Reject Legislation That Would Block State Oversight Of Student Loan Servicing Industry

12. **North Carolina** – (15 March 2018) Attorney General Stein Fights to Continue to Protect Students in North Carolina
13. Pennsylvania — (15 March 2018) Attorney General Shapiro and Bipartisan Coalition of 30 AGs Urge Congress to Maintain State Oversight of Student Loan Industry

14. Virginia — (15 March 2018) AG HERRING JOINS BIPARTISAN COALITION URGING CONGRESS TO PROTECT STATE OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT LOAN SERVING INDUSTRY

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AGs urge Secretary DeVos to Reject Student Borrower Defense Proposal

States include:


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

States include:
1. District of Columbia – (02 March 2018) AG Racine Calls on Education Secretary DeVos to Reject Accrediting Agency that Approved Failing For-Profit Schools https://oag.dc.gov/release/ag-racine-calls-education-secretary-devos-reject

See also Earlier Reports on Calling for Secretary DeVos to Reject the Accrediting Agency.

Coalition Opposing Expansion of Low-quality Health Insurance Plans

States include:

3. New Mexico — (07 March 2018) AG Balderas Opposes Trump Administration’s Attempt to Sabotage the Affordable Care Act https://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/AG_Balderas_Opposes_Trump_Administration%E2%80%99s_Attempt_to_Sabotage_the_Affordable_Care_Act.pdf

Coalition urge Congress to ease Federal restrictions that limit States’ ability to investigate and prosecute abuse and neglect of Medicaid beneficiaries

States include:

1. Alabama — (29 March 2018) AG STEVE MARSHALL ASKS CONGRESS TO EXPAND STATES’ ABILITY TO COMBAT ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF MEDICAID PATIENTS https://ago.alabama.gov/News#6864
3. **Illinois** — (28 March 2018) **ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ASKS CONGRESS TO IMPROVE STATES’ ABILITY TO COMBAT ABUSE & NEGLECT OF MEDICAID PATIENTS**
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_03/20180328.html

4. **Kansas** — (26 March 2018) **AG Derek Schmidt asks Congress to strengthen states’ ability to combat abuse and neglect of Medicaid patients**

5. **Kentucky** — (28 March 2018) **Beshear, Attorneys General Ask Congress to Improve States Ability to Combat Abuse and Neglect of Medicaid Patients**
   http://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=541

6. **Louisiana** — (29 March 2018) **49 States Call for Expansion in Fight Against Medicaid Fraud**
   https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article/7559/5

7. **Mississippi** — (28 March 2018) **AG Asks Congress to Improve States' Ability to Combat Abuse, Neglect of Medicaid Patients**
   http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/ag-asks-congress-to-improve-states-ability-to-combat-abuse-neglect-of-medicaid-patients/

8. **Ohio** — (28 March 2018) **Attorney General DeWine, 48 Other AGs Urge Passage of Law Improving States’ Ability to Investigate and Prosecute Abuse and Neglect of Medicaid Patients**


10. **South Dakota** — (28 March 2018) **AG Jackley asks Congress to Improve States’ Ability to Combat Abuse and Neglect of Medicaid Patients**

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**Administration urged to withdraw proposed discriminatory rule concerning conscience objections in health care**

**States include:**

1. **Illinois** — (27 March 2018) **ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN OPPOSES FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION’S ATTEMPT TO DISCRIMINATE IN HEALTH CARE**
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_03/20180327c.html

2. **Iowa** — (28 March 2018) **Attorney General Tom Miller asks Congress to improve states’ ability to combat abuse of Medicaid patients**

   http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180328a.html
4. New Mexico — (27 March 2018) AG Balderas Opposes Trump Administration’s “License to Discriminate” in Health Care

5. New York — (27 March 2018) A.G. Schneiderman Leads Coalition Of 19 AGs Opposing Trump Administration’s Attempt To Give Entities A License To Discriminate In Health Care


8. Washington — (27 March 2018) AG Racine Joins Coalition Opposing Trump HHS Proposal to Give Entities a License to Discriminate in Health Care

**Medicaid Fraud**

**ARKANSAS**

March 05, 2018

**Rutledge Announces Arrest of a Phillips County Man**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of a Phillips County man.

Dr. Thomas Bailey, 52, of Lexa turned himself into the Pulaski County Sheriff’s Office. He is charged with one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class B felony, one count of healthcare fraud, also a Class B felony and one count of engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise, a Class Y felony. He appeared in Pulaski County District Court and was released on $5,000 bond.

Bailey’s arrest follows the apprehension of Pearlie Bailey, 63, of Hollandale, Mississippi, Charline Brandon, 61, of Cleveland, Mississippi, Debra Stewart, 59 of Helena-West Helena and Clotee Downs, 79, of Clarksdale, Mississippi.

The five are accused of fraudulently billing for services not rendered and for providing false information for the purpose of requesting payment from a health plan, totaling almost $290,000 from March 2011 to January 2017. This case was referred to the...

Rutledge Announces Arrest of Northwest Arkansas Woman for Medicaid Fraud

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of a Springdale woman. Erin Oliver, 40, turned herself into the Pulaski County Sheriff’s Office on February 28 and was released on $5,000 bond. She is charged with two counts of Medicaid fraud, Class B felonies. She is accused of billing for services not rendered and billing at rates higher than those set by state law, totaling $112,303.04. The case was referred to the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit by the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General.

Medicaid fraud occurs when providers use the Medicaid program to obtain money to which they are not entitled. To report Medicaid fraud or abuse or neglect in residential care facilities, contact the Attorney General’s Medicaid fraud hotline at (866) 810-0016 or oag@arkansasag.gov.


FLORIDA

Two Healthcare Operators Sentenced to Prison and Ordered to Pay More Than $1.3 Million in Restitution

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and United States Attorney’s Office today announced the sentencing of two medical care providers. Shawn Tharpe, 30, and Ruben McLain, 46, both of Winston Salem, NC, have been sentenced to federal prison for participation in a conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud.

The court sentenced Tharpe to two years’ imprisonment and McLain has been sentenced to four years and nine months in federal prison for illegally billing federal healthcare programs. The convicted must also pay approximately $211,000 and $1.1 million in restitution to the victims.

According to the investigation, Thorpe and McLain worked together to create and manage Coastal Bay, a company that provided medical care to Medicaid patients. McClain had been excluded from billing federal healthcare programs based on a 2011 conviction for healthcare fraud. In an effort to conceal involvement, McLain took on the...

Beshear: Mom, Caretaker Pleaded Guilty to Defrauding Medicaid

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 22, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of Medicaid Fraud and Abuse today announced the guilty pleas of a London mom and a caretaker who defrauded Kentucky’s Medicaid program out of thousands of dollars meant to fund care for the mom’s son.

Angelia Rawlings, 42, of London, submitted more than $1,200 in false receipts for health care items to the Cumberland Valley Area Development District, to be reimbursed by Medicaid. Janice Mosley, 47, of London, submitted 10 months of fraudulent timesheets totaling more than $4,500 to Cumberland Valley Area Development District as a Consumer Directed Option (CDO) employee for Rawlings’ son. From April until December 2014, Mosley submitted timesheets that reflected conflicts with time Rawlings’ son was attending school full-time. Kentuckians may chose treatment through the state’s Consumer Directed Option that allows area agencies to contract as caseworkers for the state to manage treatment for non-medical services.

Rawlings...


Beshear: Louisa Couple Sentenced on Multiple Felony Counts of Medicaid Fraud

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 9, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of Medicaid Fraud and Abuse today announced a Lawrence County couple has been sentenced on multiple felony counts of Medicaid fraud.

Kevin Gauze, 49, and Janice Gauze, 47, both of Louisa, entered guilty pleas in Lawrence Circuit Court Feb. 9 and were sentenced March 9.

According to the plea, the couple fraudulently billed Medicaid nearly $10,000 by claiming a physician was performing services when no physician was present at the Tri-State Family Medical Center in Louisa. They also obtained controlled substances, hydrocodone and oxycodone, through forged prescriptions.

Additionally, Kevin Gauze fraudulently billed Medicaid over $7,000 for office visits when patients were not present and forged prescriptions for controlled substances.

Kevin Gauze entered a guilty plea to two counts of Kentucky Medical Assistance Program fraud of $300 or more; forgery of a prescription; unauthorized dispensing/prescribing/administering of a controlled substance and unauthorized procurement...

March 05, 2018

**Beshear: Lexington Woman Found Guilty of Stealing from State Medicaid Program**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 5, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of Medicaid Fraud and Abuse today announced a Fayette County woman has been found guilty of taking more than $30,000 from the state’s Medicaid program.

A Fayette County jury found Amy Rector, 40, of Lexington, guilty on one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class D felony, and one count of theft by unlawful taking of property valued at $10,000 or more, a Class C felony.

During the two-day trial, Beshear’s Office of Medicaid Fraud and Abuse presented evidence that from 2013 to 2015 Rector, while participating as an employee of the Medicaid Consumer Directed Option (CDO), fraudulently billed the program.

As a CDO employee of her sister, a Medicaid recipient, Rector submitted timesheets for specific patient centered services that she never provided, resulting in overpayment of more than $30,000...


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**MASSACHUSETTS**

March 30, 2018

**Home Health Agency Owner Involved in $2.7 Million Medicaid Fraud Scheme Charged With Providing Forged Document to Court**

Boston — The owner of a Boston-based home health agency accused of orchestrating a $2.7 million Medicaid fraud scheme has been indicted for allegedly providing a false court document that claimed the case against her had been dismissed, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Elena Kurbatzky, age 44, of Boston was indicted on Thursday by a Suffolk County Grand Jury on the additional charge of Uttering False or Forged Records. She will be arraigned on that charge in Suffolk Superior Court on April 5. Kurbatzky was the owner of Harmony Home Health Care, LLC located on Albany Street in Boston.

Kurbatzky was previously indicted on charges of Medicaid False Claims, Larceny over $250 by False Pretenses, and Medicaid Member Eligibility Fraud in connection with allegedly stealing nearly $2.7 million from the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth) by routinely billing for services that were never provided to patients and/or not authorized by physicians...

March 28, 2018

Husband and Wife Charged With Fraudulently Billing MassHealth for Services for Patient Who Died

Boston — A Dorchester husband and wife have been charged with allegedly defrauding the state’s Medicaid program, known as MassHealth, by falsely billing for services not rendered for a patient during her hospitalization and after she was deceased, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

On Monday, a Suffolk County Grand Jury indicted Theodore Gilbert, age 54, and his wife, Madeline Garcia Gilbert, age 51, on one count each of Medicaid False Claims and Larceny over $250. They will be arraigned in Suffolk Superior Court on April 23. Madeline Garcia Gilbert was her mother’s Personal Care Attendant (PCA) surrogate and Theodore Gilbert was her PCA.

The AG’s Medicaid Fraud Division began an investigation after the matter was referred by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Office of the Inspector General (HHS-OIG). The AG’s investigation revealed that between February 2012 and March 2015, Theodore billed for, with Madeline’s approval, PCA services while Madeline’s mother...


March 22, 2018

Owner of Transportation Company Accused of Massive Medicaid Fraud Scheme Charged With Laundering Millions

Boston — The owner of a transportation company already facing criminal charges related to an alleged scheme involving $19 million in Medicaid false claims has been indicted on additional charges that he laundered millions of dollars generated by the criminal operation, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Michael Davini, age 57, of Rindge, N.H., was indicted on Wednesday by a Worcester County Grand Jury on three counts of Money Laundering. Davini was the owner of Westminster-based Rite Way LLC (Rite Way), which primarily provided MassHealth members with non-emergency transportation services to methadone clinics before it ceased operation in 2015. Davini is scheduled to be arraigned in Worcester Superior Court on April 24.

“We allege this individual made clear attempts to disguise millions of dollars in illicit funds obtained through a massive Medicaid false billing scheme,” said AG Healey. “We will continue to take steps to protect the integrity and success of our...

Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing of Reno Behavioral Health Company Owner

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Jeanice Rae Moore, 54, of Reno, was sentenced in a Medicaid fraud case involving her submission of false claims to Nevada Medicaid. The fraud was committed between June 2015 and January 2016.

Second Judicial District Court Judge Connie Steinheimer sentenced Moore to one count of submitting false claims, a category “D” felony. The judge ordered Moore to serve 12-36 months in prison, suspended, and placed her on probation. As a part of the sentence, Moore was also ordered to pay $56,667 in restitution.

“Ensuring that Medicaid recipients receive the behavioral health services they may need is part of the mission of my Medicaid Fraud Control Unit,” said Laxalt. “Each of these convictions ensure that individuals committing these types of fraud are excluded from the Medicaid system and from being enrolled as a Medicaid provider in Nevada and the rest...”

March 06, 2018
Attorney General Laxalt Announces Conviction of Medicaid Provider Business

Las Vegas, NV – Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Because We Care, LLC (hereinafter BWC), based out of Las Vegas, was convicted today for Medicaid fraud.

Eighth Judicial District Court Judge Jennifer Togliatti sentenced BWC on a gross misdemeanor charge of Intentional Failure to Maintain Adequate Records. The fraud was committed between November 2013 and September 2015.

“Medicaid provider businesses can be just as fraudulent as the individuals that commit Medicaid fraud,” said Laxalt. “Prosecution of these crimes helps deter fraud and keep these fraudulent businesses from operating in Nevada.”

Judge Togliatti sentenced BWC and placed it on probation for three years. As part of the sentence, BWC was ordered to pay $16,515.12 in restitution.

The investigation began after the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) received an allegation that BWC had allegedly not provided services to Medicaid recipients as billed to Nevada Medicaid. The investigation revealed that BWC intentionally failed to...
NEW JERSEY

March 09, 2018

**Hudson County Doctor Charged with Health Care Claims Fraud and Other Crimes Following Undercover Sting**

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Office of the Insurance Fraud Prosecutor ("OIFP") announced today that a Hudson County doctor has been charged with health care claims fraud and other crimes in an undercover sting that allegedly caught him on video using an illegal “runner” to recruit patients to his medical practice and then billing an insurance company for treatments that were unnecessary or never performed on the patients.

Dr. Subramaniam Khanthan, 76, a pain management specialist who operates Hudson Medical, P.C. in Jersey City, has been charged with 16 counts of second-degree health care claims fraud and one count each of theft by deception and illegal use of runners (3rd degree.) The indictment was handed up by a state Grand Jury on Monday.

The charges stem from a joint undercover investigation by OIFP’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (‘MFCU”) and the Jersey City Police Department Special Investigations Unit that...

➤ Original Press Release: [http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180309a.html](http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180309a.html)

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NEW YORK

March 30, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces Arrest Of Binghamton Transport Owner Charged With Stealing Over $100K From Medicaid**

BINGHAMTON - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced the arrest of Garabed Kachadourian of Broome County for allegedly stealing over $100,000 in Medicaid payments by knowingly operating a transportation company without Workers’ Compensation Insurance or a valid taxi business license, and falsely filing documents stating the company was in compliance. Kachadourian owned and operated BC Cab, Inc., a transportation company operating in Broome County, which received payments from the Medicaid program for transporting Medicaid beneficiaries to medical appointments.

“Business owners cannot shirk their obligations in order to line their pockets – but that’s exactly what this defendant did, shamelessly stealing government benefits from taxpayers while putting employees at risk,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “My office will continue to enforce these vital laws to protect New York’s workers and taxpayers.”

“This business owner’s brazen scheme of subterfuge and fraudulent filings enabled him to pocket six-figures worth of illicitly obtained government benefits while shortchanging...

March 28, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces $10.3 Million Joint State-Federal Settlement With CenterLight Over False Medicaid Billing

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced today a joint state-federal settlement with CenterLight Health System, Inc. and CenterLight Healthcare, Inc. (together, “CenterLight”) over false Medicaid billing. CenterLight will pay $10.36 million to settle state and federal allegations that its former managed long-term care plan (“CenterLight MLTCP”) submitted fraudulent requests to New York’s Medicaid program for monthly premiums and failed to repay Medicaid for falsely-obtained payments, violating New York and federal False Claims Acts. New York’s Medicaid program will receive $6.36 million in restitution and penalties from the total settlement payment.

“When a care provider submits phony bills to Medicaid, they rip off New Yorkers and undermine the integrity of our Medicaid system,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Today’s settlement should serve as another reminder that we will hold accountable those who seek to game the system for their own benefit.”

The settlement agreement resolves New York State and federal allegations...


March 23, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces State Prison Sentence For Long Island Man Convicted Of Stealing From Medicaid Funded Charity

OYSTER BAY—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a state prison sentence of 2 to 6 years for John Cornachio, 63, of Oyster Bay, NY. Cornachio was convicted after trial of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony, for using a “no-show” job to steal from Narco Freedom Inc., a former Medicaid-funded, not-for-profit corporation based in the Bronx that was founded to provide substance abuse services throughout New York City. In addition to being sentenced to time in jail, Cornachio was ordered to pay $840,000 in restitution to the New York State Medicaid Fraud Restitution Fund.

“Stealing from Medicaid harms both our most vulnerable residents and New York taxpayers," said Attorney General Schneiderman. "No matter how sophisticated the scheme, my office will continue to prosecute Medicaid fraud and bring crooks to justice."

During the jury trial before Hon. Jeanette Rodriguez-Morick, the Attorney General’s office presented evidence that Cornachio colluded...


March 07, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces $750,000 Joint Settlement With Long Island Pediatrics Practice Resolving Allegations Company Submitted False Claims To Medicaid

HOLBROOK, NY—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a joint state-federal settlement with the Long Island, NY-based pediatrics practice Freed, Kleinberg, Nussbaum, Festa & Kronberg M.D., LLP (Practice), as well as various current and former partner physicians of the Practice, including Arnold W. Scherz, M.D., Mitchell Kleinberg, M.D., Michael Nussbaum, M.D., Robert Festa, M.D., and Jason Kronberg, D.O. (Partners)—doing business as Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. The agreement settles allegations that the Practice and Partners did not routinely enroll all of their employee providers treating Medicaid patients in the Medicaid program, and instead used the Partners’ Medicaid provider identification numbers to bill for the treatment of Medicaid beneficiaries by unenrolled employee providers. An investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s office found that the false claims occurred at many of the practice’s Long Island locations. The pediatrics practice has locations in Holbrook, Port Jefferson, Shirley, and Wading River, NY. New York’s Medicaid...


NORTH CAROLINA

March 22, 2018

Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Sentencing in Health Care Fraud Conspiracy

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein announced today that Christopher Leon Brown and Mark Rayfield Brown, Jr., both of Raleigh, have been sentenced to 40 months in prison and 30 months in prison, respectively, for health care fraud conspiracy. Together with Darryl Stanford, another co-conspirator who has pleaded guilty, the defendants are to pay $755,225 in restitution. Mark Brown is liable for $455,480 of the total restitution.

“My office will continue to identify, investigate and prosecute these cases to protect taxpayers,” said Attorney General Josh Stein.

The convictions resolve allegations that Brown and Brown, Jr. stole hundreds of thousands of dollars from the North Carolina Medicaid Program by purchasing and exploiting stolen Medicaid beneficiary information and clinician information. Specifically, Brown and Brown, Jr. used the stolen information to submit thousands of false and fraudulent claims for reimbursement for health care services that were not delivered. Brown and Brown Jr. operated...


March 16, 2018

Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Sentencing in Fayetteville Medicaid Fraud Case

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein announced today that Barbara McDuffie pled guilty to
felony Medicaid fraud in Cumberland County Superior Court. The conviction resolves allegations that McDuffie submitted falsified timesheets and medical service notes to the Autism Society of North Carolina for 1,359 hours of medical services she did not provide. McDuffie, who worked in Fayetteville, provided personal care services and in-home skill building services to Medicaid recipients while working for the Autism Society of North Carolina. “Billing Medicaid for services not provided is not only a waste of taxpayer money, it’s illegal,” said Attorney General Stein. “We will continue to root out fraud and abuse by healthcare providers.” McDuffie was sentenced to sixty months of supervised probation, 48 hours of community service and must repay $37,440.39 to the Autism Society of North Carolina. She is also prohibited from working for any medical provider who submits billing claims to the...
Jackley said. "We appreciate their cooperation."
Black Hills Psychology will pay $32,333.67 to the State as part of the settlement agreement. The settlement funds will be used to reimburse taxpayers’ Medicaid expenditures.
According to the settlement agreement, South Dakota contends that Black Hills Psychology submitted at least some claims for payment for services that were provided by Black Hills Psychology counselors who lacked the level of certification required to submit claims to South Dakota Medicaid, and who were not enrolled as providers with South Dakota Medicaid. The settlement agreement is neither an admission of liability by Black Hills Psychology, nor a concession by South Dakota...


VIRGINIA

March 20, 2018
Lebanon, Virginia Psychiatrist Indicted on Federal Drug Trafficking, Healthcare Fraud Charges
Abingdon, VIRGINIA – A psychiatrist, whose practice is based in Lebanon, Virginia, faces 25 federal drug trafficking and healthcare fraud charges following the return of an indictment by a federal grand jury in Abingdon. United States Attorney Rick A. Mountcastle, Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring and HHS-OIG Special Agent in Charge Maureen Dixon made the announcement.
Alfredo Cervantes, 61, of Abingdon, Va., is charged in an indictment returned last week following his arrest on 23 counts of unlawfully distributing a Schedule IV controlled substance, one count of healthcare fraud and one count of wire fraud.
The Indictment alleges that Cervantes, a psychiatrist who provides treatment on an outpatient basis, engaged in sexual relations with one of his patients while prescribing her with Schedule IV controlled substances without legitimate medical purpose. The substances included Alprazolam (commonly referred to by the brand name Xanax), Clonazepam (brand name Klonopin), and Zolpidem Tartrate (brand...
Court after previously pleading guilty to one count of healthcare fraud and one count of distributing Ritalin and hydrocodone. In addition to surrendering his medical license, Kanwal agreed to never reapply for a medical license.

After receiving numerous complaints that controlled substances were being diverted by employees and patients at the Coeburn Medical Clinic, agents with the Southwest Virginia Drug Task Force opened a formal investigation into Kanwal. During the course of the investigation, an undercover agent visited Kanwal’s practice as a patient and obtained prescriptions...

Consumer Advocacy

ALABAMA

March 28, 2018
ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL THANKS GOVERNOR KAY IVEY FOR SIGNING ALABAMA DATA BREACH NOTIFICATION ACT INTO LAW
(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall thanked Governor Kay Ivey for signing into law the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act. The new consumer protection law will require entities to notify Alabama consumers if their sensitive information is affected by a data breach. Attorney General Marshall attended Governor Kay Ivey’s signing ceremony in the State Capitol today and expressed appreciation to the Governor for promptly signing the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act into law.

“I applaud Governor Ivey for signing into law today a much-needed consumer protection tool,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Alabama consumers finally join the rest of America in having the right to know if their personal information is stolen or compromised in a data breach. There is no national law requiring companies to notify affected consumers after a data breach so it is up to each state to ensure that its citizens are protected. Until now, Alabama was the only...

March 27, 2018
ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL ANNOUNCES FINAL PASSAGE OF ALABAMA DATA BREACH NOTIFICATION ACT
(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced final passage of the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act, (SB 318), which cleared the Alabama Senate 30 to 0 on Tuesday. Passage of the consumer protection legislation was a major priority of Attorney General Marshall and ensures that Alabama will no longer be the only state without a law requiring entities experiencing a data breach to notify consumers if their personal information has been
compromised.

Attorney General Marshall issued the following statement about the significance of the passage of the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act:

“For years, Alabama consumers have lacked basic information that they needed to not become victims of identity theft. For many years, the Alabama Legislature has attempted to fill that void but with no success. Today, that’s different. As a result of the leadership of this office, Senator Arthur Orr and Representative Phil Williams, the Alabama Legislature passed today the Alabama...

➤ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#6862

March 23, 2018

AG STEVE MARSHALL, HOME BUILDERS LICENSURE BOARD WARN AGAINST HOME REPAIR FRAUD FOLLOWING STORM DAMAGE IN NORTH ALABAMA

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall and Home Builders Licensure Board Executive Director J.R. “Chip” Carden Jr. are warning against possible home repair fraud and unlicensed builders in the wake of tornadoes and severe weather that caused widespread serious damage throughout parts of north and central Alabama* on Monday. They were joined by Jimmy Rutland, president of the Home Builders Association of Alabama; Alabama State Fire Marshall Scott Pilgreen; Brian Powell, director of the Strengthen Alabama Homes Division of the Alabama Department of Insurance; and Brian E. Hastings, director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

“The good people of Alabama are strong and determined, and we come together in times of crisis such as this,” said Attorney General Marshall. “In the devastation left by these storms, there is much rebuilding to be done. As we move forward, it is important that consumers are mindful that unscrupulous people may seek to take advantage of...

➤ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#6860

March 22, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL HAILS HOUSE PASSAGE OF ALABAMA DATA BREACH NOTIFICATION ACT

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall praised the Alabama House today for passing SB 318, the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act, by a vote of 101 to 0. The legislation, introduced by Senator Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, and advanced through the House by Representative Phil Williams, R-Huntsville, requires entities doing business in Alabama to disclose to consumers if their personal data has been compromised in a data breach. Alabama is currently the only state without a data breach notification law, though legislation has been filed in previous legislative sessions.

“Tonight, the Alabama House took action to arm Alabama consumers in the event that their
personal information is compromised in a data breach,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Passage of the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act has been a high priority for my office. It is all the more important now, as yesterday the only other state in the country without such a consumer-protection law...

 ➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#6859

March 06, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL ANNOUNCES TOP ALABAMA CONSUMER COMPLAINTS DURING 2017

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced the top five complaints from Alabama consumers received by his office’s Consumer Interest Division over the last year. The total number of consumer complaints rose slightly from 2,779 in 2016 to 2,967 in 2017. “While National Consumer Protection Week is a time to remind everyone to be on guard against scams and fraud, my office is focused on consumer protection year-round,” said Attorney General Steve Marshall. “My Consumer Interest Division staff work hard each day to help consumers resolve disputes with businesses as well as investigate incidences of fraud. Not every case necessarily involves illegal activity, however, my office is always available to assist consumers with questions about potential scams and unscrupulous business practices.” The Attorney General’s Consumer Interest Division received 2,967 consumer complaints during 2017 with the top five as follows: 1. Automobiles, 2. Internet Purchases, 3. Landlord/Tenant Disputes, 4. Home Repair, and 5....

 ➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#6846

March 01, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL STEVE MARSHALL PRAISES ALABAMA SENATE FOR PASSAGE OF ALABAMA DATA BREACH NOTIFICATION ACT

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall praised the Alabama Senate today for passing SB 318, the Alabama Data Breach Notification Act, by a vote of 24 to 0. The legislation introduced by Senator Arthur Orr, R-Decatur, requires entities doing business in Alabama to disclose to consumers if their personal data has been compromised in a data breach. Alabama is currently one of only two states without a data breach notification law, though legislation has been filed in previous legislative sessions. "I want to thank the Alabama Senate, and Senator Orr in particular, for moving this bill forward and taking us one step closer to giving Alabama consumers the same protections as the citizens of 48 other states who already receive notifications when their sensitive personal information has been hacked," said Attorney General Marshall. “This is a big win for Alabama consumers and I look forward to working with the House to cross the finish...

 ➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ago.state.al.us/News#6844
ALASKA

March 01, 2018

Old Scams are New Again with Personalization

The Consumer Protection Unit of the Alaska Attorney General’s Office warns Alaska that scam phone calls are on the rise in Alaska, and they come with a new, personalized slant. Several victims have reported being taken for thousands of dollars in recent weeks by scammers who have taken old scams to a whole new level.

An Alaskan lost $4,000 to scammer claiming to be her grandson being held in jail. The grandparent scam has been around for several years, with a scammer calling claiming to be a grandchild or other relative who needs money fast. The grandparent is instructed to wire money or to buy gift cards and read the numbers to the person on the phone in order to get a relative in “trouble” out of jail or home from another country. Later, the grandparent discovers that the grandchild was never in trouble at all. By that time, the money...


ARIZONA

March 22, 2018

Arizona Becomes First State in U.S. to Offer Fintech Regulatory Sandbox

PHOENIX - Today, Governor Doug Ducey signed House Bill 2434 into law making Arizona the first state in the nation to enact a groundbreaking regulatory fintech “sandbox.” Arizona joins countries such as the United Kingdom, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, and Australia in encouraging fintech investment by instituting sandboxes. The bill was sponsored by Representative Jeff Weninger and drafted by the Office of Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich. Brnovich first called for the enactment of a fintech regulatory sandbox in a September 2017 op-ed in American Banker.

In Arizona’s sandbox, startups, entrepreneurs, and even established companies can launch products on a limited, temporary scale to consumers to test innovative products, services, business models, and delivery mechanisms in the real market without incurring the regulatory costs and burdens that would otherwise be imposed. The Arizona Attorney General’s Office will administer the sandbox ...

March 10, 2018

AG Brnovich Urges Arizona Consumers Who Purchased Theranos Blood Tests to Claim Refunds

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich today announced there is nearly a million dollars in unclaimed refunds still available for Arizonans who purchased Theranos blood tests. To date, more than $3.7 million dollars in refund checks have been cashed by Arizona consumers. The Arizona Attorney General’s Office is extending the deadline to cash a Theranos refund check through the end of March 2018. Brnovich is asking for help from the media and the public to get the message out that refunds remain unclaimed. Arizonans who purchased a Theranos blood test in the state and believe they are entitled to a refund check should contact the settlement administrator immediately at 1-800-841-6763, and push “0” to talk to a live operator. Many of the unclaimed Theranos refunds belong to consumers who moved and had no forwarding address on file. “Today’s action by the SEC charging Theranos founder and CEO Elizabeth Holmes with fraud…


March 08, 2018

SCAM ALERT: Cosmetology Board Imposter Scam

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich is warning nail salons of a scam involving the Arizona State Board of Cosmetology. A man falsely claiming to be a board member is trying to scam salon owners out of thousands of dollars. The scam artist calls salons from a spoofed number that shows up on a Caller ID as “Board of Cosmetology.” The caller falsely claims the salon owner must attend a State Board of Cosmetology class. In order to register for the class, the salon owner is falsely told they must pay anywhere from $500 to $1,500. The salon owner is then asked to deposit money onto a prepaid Green Dot MoneyPak card and text a picture of the account numbers on the prepaid card. Salon owners in the Tucson and Phoenix areas have fallen victim to the scam...


March 05, 2018

AG Brnovich Kicks Off AZ Consumer Protection Week March 4th - 10th

PHOENIX - In recognition of Arizona Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Mark Brnovich released a list of the Top AZ Consumer Fraud Complaints received in 2017. The Attorney General’s Office received more than 17,500 consumer complaints in 2017. AZAG Consumer Information and Complaint Specialists recovered more than $3.9 million for Arizona consumers by working together with consumers and businesses to settle complaints without
taking legal action. Additionally, the Attorney General’s Office obtained more than $9.46 million in restitution to victims through consumer fraud lawsuits and legal settlements. “Every week is consumer protection week at the Arizona Attorney General’s Office,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “From getting a full refund for every Arizonan who paid for a Theranos blood test to recently obtaining one of the largest consumer fraud trial verdicts in state history, our office is fighting for Arizona consumers.” …


ARKANSAS

March 05, 2018

Rutledge Recognizes National Consumer Protection Week

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge released the below statement recognizing National Consumer Protection Week 2018, which runs March 4-10.

“Consumer Protection Week is an important opportunity to shed light on the complaints and scams commonly faced by Arkansans,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Over the last year, my office resolved 7,229 formal complaints for Arkansas Consumers and one of my top priorities remains protecting Arkansans from bad business practices and harmful scams. Arkansans who have been wronged by a business should contact my office to file a complaint, receive guidance or have a mediator assist them – we want to do the fighting for you.” Rutledge meets with Arkansans in every county yearly to engage in face-to-face conversations, which enhance the office’s ability to effectively handle constituent inquiries. Additionally, the Attorney General has held mobile offices with consumer trainings and prescription drug take-backs in all 75 counties in 2015, 2016…


CALIFORNIA

March 09, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Denounces Education Secretary DeVos’ Attempt to Exempt Contractors That Service Federal Student Loans From Complying With State Law

SACRAMENTO — California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued the following statement after Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced, through a notice of interpretation, that the federal government will now preempt state laws that target abuses by student loan servicers: “With today’s announcement, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is attempting to exempt private contractors that service federal student loans from complying with state law. This is suspicious, unprecedented, and most importantly, without any legal basis under federal law," said Attorney General Becerra. "It is also a direct assault on the work achieved by California, as we
led the country in enacting a licensing program for student loan servicers. The California Department of Justice has been fighting tirelessly to protect our students against unscrupulous loan servicers, and we won't stop. We are prepared to defend the protections we secured for college students by making loan servicers accountable for their conduct every step of the...


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COLORADO

March 08, 2018

**AG Coffman Unveils Top Ten Consumer Complaints and Inquiries for 2017**

DENVER- Today in recognition of National Consumer Protection Week, the Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman unveiled her list of the top ten consumer complaints of 2017. During the 2017 calendar year, consumers filed 9,146 complaints and inquiries with the Consumer Protection Section of the Office of the Attorney General, a 5% increase over the 2016 total.

“My office is committed to protecting consumers from deceptive or predatory business practices and fraud, and it is particularly despicable when these scammers use threats to intimidate their victims,” said Attorney General Coffman. “Our Consumer Protection Section continues to see an increase in debt collection complaints, including disputes about whether debt is owed and the amount of debt owed, as well as claims of harassment and other problematic conduct by debt collectors. My office reviews every complaint we receive, and when we find that any business or individual has violated state law, we...


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CONNECTICUT

March 19, 2018

**Statement from Attorney General Jepsen on Facebook, Cambridge Analytica Reports**

Attorney General George Jepsen today issued the following statement on public reports that personal information from as many as 50 million Facebook profiles was provided to one or more private entities without users' knowledge or consent:

"News reports that personal user information from Facebook profiles was provided to third parties without user consent are concerning and raise serious questions about how this happened in the specific situation involving Cambridge Analytica and about Facebook's policies and practices more generally. Today, my office has in writing initiated an inquiry asking Facebook to answer a series of questions about this matter. While we cannot comment further at this time, Connecticut residents should know that my office takes privacy matters very
seriously, and we will move as quickly as we responsibly can to get to the bottom of this situation."
Please click here to view a copy of the letter sent to Facebook today.
Assistant Attorneys General...


March 15, 2018
AG Jepsen Urges Legislative Committee to End Fees for Credit Freezes in Connecticut
In testimony submitted to the General Assembly's Banks Committee today, Attorney General George Jepsen gave his support to legislation that would prohibit the country's three credit rating agencies from charging fees to place, temporarily lift or remove credit security freezes. While many states already prohibit fees for security freezes, Connecticut law currently allows the three agencies – TransUnion, Experian and Equifax – to charge fees. Fees are prohibited only in limited circumstances. Because each agency can charge its own, separate fee, and because freezes are required at all three agencies to fully freeze credit, the cost to consumers who want to freeze their credit, but do not fall into an exemption, can be considerable. "In recent years, a large number of Connecticut consumers have been victims of massive data breaches that exposed their personal information and put them at risk for identity theft," said Attorney General Jepsen. "The massive Equifax data breach...


FLORIDA
March 05, 2018
Attorney General Bondi Warns of Common Scams in Recognition of National Consumer Protection Week
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi is warning Floridians about common scams in recognition of 2018 National Consumer Protection Week. Scammers often target Florida because of its large senior population, military bases and millions of tourists. Tax scams and vacation rental scams are also common during this time of the year. “My office will continue to work tirelessly to fight fraud and protect Floridians from consumer-related scams, and we need you to join us in this effort.” said Attorney General Bondi. “This National Consumer Protection Week I urge Floridians to learn how to spot scams and what to do if you are targeted.”
Some common types of scams reported in Florida include:
Tech Support: Fraudulent pop-up ads claiming a computer is infected with malware that can be
eliminated by calling the tech support number on the ad. If a consumer calls the number, the scammer will try to take remote control of the computer...


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**GEORGIA**

March 26, 2018

**SCAM ALERT: Con Artist Impersonating Representatives from Publisher’s Clearing House**

ATLANTA, GA – The Georgia Department of Law’s Consumer Protection Unit has received a number of complaints about scammers posing as representatives from Publisher’s Clearing House. The scammers call consumers and tell them they have won a big prize through the Publisher’s Clearing House Sweepstakes. They then instruct the consumer to send several hundred dollars via wire transfer or a Green Dot MoneyPak card to secure their prize or pay for fees or taxes. Consumers who comply soon discover that the “big win” they had imagined was actually a win for the scammer who made off with the consumer’s money.

To help you avoid Publishers Clearing House (PCH) scams, the Consumer Protection Unit offers the following tips:

Never pay money to receive a prize. Not only is this a sure sign of a scam, it is a violation of Georgia law.

PCH sweepstakes are always free to enter, and there is...


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March 05, 2018

**Carr Celebrates National Consumer Protection Week**

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr today announced that the Georgia Department of Law is joining a group of federal, state and local government agencies and national consumer advocacy organizations in recognizing National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), March 4-10, 2018.

“Our office will continue to do everything in our power to protect and defend our consumers from deceptive practices in the marketplace,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “But, the best defense against scams and unscrupulous business activities is to be a savvy consumer. We encourage all Georgians to use our resources to educate themselves and know their rights and responsibilities under the law.”

The Department of Law’s Consumer Protection Unit (CPU) receives hundreds of consumer complaints a month about unlawful business practices and investigates those businesses that
demonstrate a pattern or practice of bad behavior. In 2017 CPU was responsible for obtaining $37,609,969 for consumers and the State – $24,439,936...


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**ILLINOIS**

March 14, 2018

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

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded the Senate for passing legislation to prohibit credit reporting agencies from charging fees to put in place credit freezes to protect consumers from identity theft.

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, and the bill will be sent to the governor. Many states already ban or restrict these fees by the credit reporting agencies Equifax, Experian and TransUnion.

"Companies that collect our personal and financial information and fail to protect it from cybercriminals should have to pay for credit freezes in the aftermath of a breach," Madigan said. "It's common sense to require companies that hold our information to help people take the most important step to prevent identity theft and freeze their credit."


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March 05, 2018

**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ANNOUNCES FINAL TOP 10 LIST OF CONSUMER COMPLAINTS**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced her office’s list of Top 10 consumer complaints for 2017. Since taking office in 2003, Madigan’s office has mediated nearly 400,000 formal complaints from consumers across Illinois, fielded hundreds of thousands of phone calls and inquiries every year and recovered billions in direct relief to Illinois consumers through litigation and mediation.

Last year, Madigan’s office received 24,669 complaints, and identity theft ranked No. 1 for the first time since 2007, with 2,511 complaints. The jump, in part, is due to the massive data breach sustained by Equifax, one of the largest credit reporting agencies that compromised information for nearly 148 million Americans. In addition, education-related complaints made another big increase, jumping to No. 2 on the list with 2,399 complaints, further reflecting the country’s persistent student loan debt crisis.
Joining Madigan today to discuss this year’s Top 10 list were Todd Kossow, Director of...

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_03/20180305.html

INDIANA

March 05, 2018

VIDEO: Director of Consumer Protection Division offers tips for avoiding tax scams

Many Hoosiers know the drill all too well. They answer the phone to hear a caller claiming money is owed to the Internal Revenue Service – and they need to pay up or else. Further, the caller often insists on unconventional terms of payment – such as the use of gift cards.

Betsy DeNardi, director of the Consumer Protection Division for the Office of the Attorney General, recently shared tips for consumers who might be wondering how to handle such unwelcome intrusions.

See the video here. (All media outlets are welcome to use this footage in broadcasts.)

If you believe you have been the victim of tax-related or any other type of scam, the Office of the Indiana Attorney General office can help. Go to indianaconsumer.com or call 1-800-382-5516 to make a complaint.


KANSAS

March 29, 2018

AG Derek Schmidt, Revenue Secretary Sam Williams announce efforts to strengthen tax fraud prosecution

TOPEKA – (March 29, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt and Secretary of Revenue Sam Williams today announced that their offices have entered into an agreement to strengthen the state’s efforts to prosecute tax fraud and related crimes.

Under the agreement, the Office of the Attorney General will assume responsibility for the prosecution of cases of tax fraud and related crimes investigated by the Department of Revenue. In coordination with local county and district attorneys, the prosecutions will be handled by the attorney general’s Fraud and Abuse Litigation Division, which also handles prosecution of cases referred by the Department of Insurance and the Office of the Securities Commissioner.

“This agreement reflects our ongoing commitment to strengthening the state’s efforts to combat financial crimes,” Schmidt said. “By pooling resources from several state agencies, and by focusing each agency on what it does best, we are able to achieve efficiencies and better
March 27, 2018
AG Derek Schmidt praises Legislature for making security freezes free for Kansans

TOPEKA – (March 27, 2018) – Kansans will no longer have to pay a fee for credit reporting agencies to “freeze” or “thaw” access to their credit reports under legislation that won unanimous approval today by the Kansas Legislature.

The measure, House Bill 2580, was introduced in January at the request of Attorney General Derek Schmidt. It would prohibit the credit reporting agencies from charging Kansans who wish to freeze access to their credit reports as a measure to help prevent identity theft. It also would prohibit fees for requests to temporarily allow access to a consumer’s report, a process known as a “thaw,” for legitimate credit purposes.

“Kansas already prohibits the credit reporting agencies from charging a fee to place or lift a security freeze on the account of a person who is a victim of identity theft,” Schmidt told the legislative committees in testimony supporting the measure. “It seems to...

March 05, 2018
Consumer Corner: Avoid these most-common scams of 2017

This week – the first full week of March – we observe National Consumer Protection Week. While our office focuses year-round on protecting consumers from scams and rip-offs, this week in particular we remind Kansans to be diligent in keeping themselves safe.

It has become one of our traditions this week to report to you some of the most common scams our office received complaints about over the past year. This year’s report includes some old favorites of the scammers, which have reclaimed the top spots.

Card Services. Back after several years away from our list, “Rachael” and her friends from “card services” took the top spot in 2017. In this scam, a robocaller placing thousands of calls at a time will ask you to “press 1” to speak to an account representative about lowering your credit card interest rate. These scammers are after information. If you press anything on your phone,...
March 23, 2018

Beshear: Don’t Pay Upfront for Credit Card Debt Relief
FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 23, 2018) – In a new scam alert issued by Attorney General Andy Beshear today, Kentuckians are being warned of telemarketing calls offering instant credit card debt relief for a fee.

The Attorney General’s office obtained a recording of a call from an agent with “Financial Planning Card Services.” The caller claims to be affiliated with all major banks and can provide credit card debt relief by negotiating a lower interest rate, as low as zero percent.

Beshear said these type of calls often end with a victim providing their personal information and an upfront fee to the scammer who never delivers on the deal to lower the interest rate. “Charging Kentuckians, then failing to help them lower their debts is no service at all – it is a scam,” said Beshear. “Kentuckians concerned about their credit card interest rates should work directly with the credit card company to determine...


March 07, 2018

Beshear: Kentucky Families Lost $6 Million to Scams Last Year
FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 7, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear is urging Kentuckians to take six steps to avoid falling victim to scammers and identity thieves who pocketed $6 million from Kentucky families last year.

In a new report from the Federal Trade Commission, Kentuckians made more than 22,000 fraud reports and 3,000 reports of identity theft last year. The categories with the most reports were debt collection, impostor scams and identity theft.

Beshear said his office recommends Kentuckians take time during National Consumer Protection Week, March 4–10, 2018, to complete a few simple steps that can help them make well-informed decisions about their finances and avoid scammers, identity thieves. Check your credit.

Check your credit report at annualcreditreport.com to get a free annual credit report from the major credit reporting agencies. If you notice suspicious activity, follow the steps in the Office of the Attorney General’s Identity Theft Tool Kit. ...


March 02, 2018

Beshear: Text Message Scammers Posing as Law Enforcement Officials
FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 2, 2018) – In a new scam alert issued by Attorney General Andy
Beshear, Kentuckians are being warned of scammers posing as law enforcement officials demanding payment and threatening arrest via text messages. Kentuckians in Greenup, Jefferson and Montgomery counties have recently reported losing more than $110,000 after they thought they were sending payment to an official law enforcement agency.

Beshear said Kentuckians are now reporting a number of text messages from con artists identifying themselves as prosecutors or police officers who claim a lawsuit and arrest warrant have been issued and unless Kentuckians call within 30 minutes to make a payment, they will go to jail for six months.

Beshear said the best way to avoid the scam is to know that no law enforcement office would ever send a text message to demand payment or threaten arrest.

"We are constantly working with our many partners to track down and..."

MASSACHUSETTS

March 29, 2018

AG Healey Calls for Shut Down of Individual Residential Competitive Supply Industry to Protect Electric Customers

Boston — Citing aggressive sales tactics, false promises of cheaper electric bills and the targeting of low-income, elderly, and minority residents, Attorney General Maura Healey today issued a report calling for an end to the competitive electricity supply market for individual residential customers in Massachusetts.

AG Healey made the announcement today standing with Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch, along with consumer and civil rights advocates. The report found that Massachusetts electric customers who switched to a competitive electric supplier paid $176.8 million more than if they had stayed with their utility company during the two-year period from July 2015 to June 2017. “Competitive electric suppliers promise big energy savings but are actually burdening customers with hundreds of dollars in extra costs,” said AG Healey. “In two years, Massachusetts residents lost over $176 million to these predatory companies. I’m calling for an end to this industry because that’s the best way to protect our..."

March 02, 2018

AG’s Office Hosting Events Across the State for Annual National Consumer Protection Week

Boston — In celebration of the 20th annual National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Maura Healey today announced a week-long series of events designed to help...
Massachusetts residents become more savvy consumers.
“Every day, our office is focused on protecting consumers whether they are buying a car or a cruise, paying an electric bill, or taking out a student loan,” said AG Healey. “Whether it’s this week or any week, we hope residents know we have their back and to call if they need help.” During National Consumer Protection Week, the AG’s Office will offer consumer education events across the state on topics such as identity theft and online safety, auto laws, mortgage scams, home improvement and utilities. Click here for a full list of events.
Each year, the AG’s Office provides directs assistance to thousands of consumers across Massachusetts. The staff in AG Healey’s Consumer Advocacy & Response Division (CARD) directly assists…


MICHIGAN

March 15, 2018
Schuette: Important Tips for Toy "R" Us Customers Following Notice of Closure
LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today called attention to best practices to be used by Michigan consumers, when protecting themselves from bankrupt retailers. This notice results from the nationwide shutdown of toy store, Toys "R" Us, which has left consumers with questions on current orders and Toys "R" Us gift cards.
“Any sudden closure or bankruptcy of a retailer comes as a surprise,” said Schuette. “Employees and consumers are left with many unanswered questions, frustration, and fear. Working through the fear by reading consumer alerts and being aware of the situation is key to limiting financial loss and protecting personal information.”
Concerned customers can visit the Better Business Bureau’s report on Toys "R" Us where updates will be posted as more information becomes available. Toys "R" Us has said that gift cards will be valid through the next 30 days …


March 12, 2018
Schuette: Don’t Let Fake Tickets Ruin March Madness
LANSING- With March Madness quickly approaching, Attorney General Bill Schuette today issued an alert advising consumers to be cautious of online ticket purchasing scams.
“Some people are willing to spend top dollar on travel far and wide to see their favorite team compete in the biggest basketball tournament of the year,” said Schuette. “Michigan consumers should do their research and know the false sales tactics before making any purchases. You could be signing yourself up for counterfeit tickets or identity theft.”
Attorney General Schuette offers the following tips to consider before you buy tickets online:

Know your vendor. If you purchase tickets online, make sure you are buying from a reputable website, especially before providing any personal financial information. Anyone can set up a "spoof" website and make it seem like it is the official website of a legitimate venue or ticket outlet. Counterfeiting is also a common problem on websites that...


March 08, 2018

**Schuette Releases New "Robocall" Scam Consumer Alert to Help Protect Michigan Consumers from Being Scammed**

LANSING-- Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced his Consumer Protection team has released a new Consumer Alert “Robocalls Threatening Arrest” to help Michigan consumers understand robocalls and how to avoid being scammed by them.

Recent robocalls have been threatening consumers with arrest for failure to pay requested fees.

“Most people carry a cell phone wherever they go, meaning scammers are finding ways to contact residents 24/7,” said Schuette. “The easiest step to take if you get a suspicious or threatening call: hang up. Neither the State of Michigan nor the Federal Government will ever threaten you via phone.”

What the Calls Sound Like:

If you answer a phone call and hear a recorded message instead of a live person, that’s a robocall, and it is probably a scam designed to get you to give your personal information or money. Do not call back and do not provide any information unless you’ve initiated...

- Original Press Release: http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-462975--,00.html

March 08, 2018

**Schuette Applauds Legislature for Passing No-Fee Credit Freeze Legislation**

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today praised the Michigan House and Senate for passing legislation that amends the Security Freeze Act to prohibit a consumer reporting agency from charging a fee for placing, temporarily lifting, or removing a security freeze on a consumer’s credit report.

Schuette worked with the legislature to get this bill passed following the 2017 Equifax security breach that left many Michiganders scrambling to freeze their credit, only to discover the associated fees.

Under current law, a consumer reporting agency is allowed to charge a fee of up to $10 to place, temporarily lift, or remove a credit report security freeze. The fee must be waived if the consumer has filed a police report alleging identity theft.
“No one should be charged a fee when their personal information is breached through no fault of their own, nor should they be charged for taking preventative measures to protect themselves...


March 05, 2018

Schuette Releases Annual List of Top Ten Michigan Consumer Complaints

LANSING – Attorney General Bill Schuette today marked the 20th annual National Consumer Protection week by releasing his 2017 list of the Top Ten Consumer Complaints in Michigan and highlighting free educational resources provided by the Department of Attorney General.

“This is a significant milestone for the National Consumer Protection Week and a great time to remind Michigan citizens about programs available to protect consumers,” said Schuette.

“From teaching students how to be safe online to bringing actions against unscrupulous companies and prosecuting elder financial exploitation, the Department of Attorney General’s Consumer Protection team is working every day for Michigan consumers.”

Schuette's Top Ten List is compiled by analyzing the 10,116 written complaints filed with the Attorney General's Consumer Protection team in 2017. The purpose of this list is to educate consumers about scams and problems to avoid. Schuette's Consumer Protection and Charitable Trust teams also recovered more than $26 million in consumer...


March 01, 2018

After Historic Floods, Schuette Warns Michigan Residents to be on the Lookout for Flood-Damaged Vehicles When Purchasing a Car

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today cautioned Michigan drivers searching for a new vehicle to be on the lookout for flood damaged cars, trucks and SUVs. Flooding in many parts of the state over the last week has likely damaged vehicles, and many will end up on the used car market. Vehicles with flood damage can appear for sale on the internet or at car lots far away from the storm area, without any mention flood damage or obvious signs of damage.

“It is important to do your research before making a car purchase, and I urge anyone looking into purchasing a used vehicle to take extra time in examining their potential new car,” said Schuette. “While most auto retailers would never sell a damaged vehicle, unfortunately there are still unscrupulous vendors who take advantage of hard-working individuals to make a buck.”
Water can damage vital parts of a car...


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**MISSISSIPPI**

March 29, 2018

**AG Statement on 2018 Legislative Session**

Attorney General Jim Hood released the following statement at the close of the 2018 legislative session:

“Unfortunately for the taxpayers of Mississippi, the Senate leadership was bought and paid for this legislative session by giant corporations with little interest in the well-being of our citizens. As an example, campaign finance reports from 2010 through 2017 show that our lieutenant governor has raked in $193,750 in contributions from the companies that were awarded the contracts for the state’s Medicaid program. Of that amount, $50,000 was donated just last year to the lieutenant governor by Centene, the out-of-state parent company of Magnolia Health. The Senate successfully killed a proposal that would have allowed our own in-state hospitals to compete with the three managed care companies for the $3 billion Medicaid contracts. In another example of huge corporations writing our laws, the Senate leadership allowed utility giant Entergy to slip an amendment into a bill...


March 02, 2018

**Community Shred Days Announced**

Mississippians who need to shred sensitive documents should pack them up, as four cities across the state will soon hold the annual Community Shred Days. Attorney General Jim Hood announced the 12th annual event, which is an opportunity for consumers to better protect themselves against identity theft. Shred Days coincides with National Consumer Protection Week...

- Original Press Release: http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/community-shred-days-announced/
MISSOURI
March 28, 2018
AG Hawley Warns of IRS Phone Scams and Tax Identity Fraud Theft During Tax Season

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley reminds Missouri taxpayers to be wary of telephone and email scams throughout tax season. In past years, phone scammers have acted like IRS agents in order to steal money.

“During tax season, my Office sees a rise in complaints from consumers regarding phone calls that threaten consumers with arrest and other consequences for allegedly failing to pay a tax bill,” Hawley said. “Be alert this tax season.”

The scams usually work as follows: a con artist makes unsolicited calls claiming to be an IRS agent and demands that the victim pay a tax bill. They try to get the victim to pay cash, usually through a wire transfer or a prepaid debit or gift card. The scammer will often make substantial threats, such as the threat of arrest or conviction, as means of intimidating a victim into paying. Scammers often alter caller ID...


NEBRASKA
March 05, 2018
Attorney General Peterson Announces National Consumer Protection Week

Lincoln – In recognition of National Consumer Protection Week - a campaign that helps consumers understand their rights and make better-informed decisions – the Attorney General’s Office is focusing its efforts on helping Nebraskans protect their personal information. Identity theft and fraud are on the rise. Data breaches seem inevitable. Yet, our personal lives, our children, and even our businesses are migrating online. This migration is welcome for many, but it also poses risks. During National Consumer Protection Week, the Attorney General will remind Nebraskans of the simple steps they can take to protect themselves from the loss or misuse of their most sensitive data.

Each day during the week of March 5, the Consumer Protection Division of the Attorney General’s Office will update ProtectTheGoodLife.Nebraska.gov with tips and reminders for how to keep your smartphones and computers secure, talk to your children about their online activity, protect your credit, and ensure your...

NEVADA

March 09, 2018

Attorney General Laxalt Advises Consumers on Contracts Related to Goods and Services

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt encourages consumers purchasing goods or services to be mindful of potential scams and to make sure they understand the obligations they are agreeing to and the benefits they are receiving. Many contracts for consumer goods or services can be enforceable whether they are oral or written. They can include goods and services such as Internet and television services, new and used cars, security alarm services, timeshares, residential services and others. Oral contracts are often made over the phone. Consumers should be aware that unscrupulous companies and scammers have been known to use recordings of consumers saying “yes” as proof of agreement to terms that were not disclosed to the consumer by altering the recording. When asked to say “yes” to verbally disclosed terms, consumers are encouraged to instead restate the terms. For example, “I agree to allow you to make...

 ➢ Original Press Release:

March 07, 2018

Attorney General Laxalt Warns of Utility Impostor Scams

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt warns individuals and businesses of utility impostor scams. In these scams, a caller claims to be from the utility company and threatens to shut off a property’s supply of power, water or gas because the customer’s account is past due. These scams take advantage of a homeowners need to access basic utilities such as heat, air conditioning or drinking water. Similarly, the scam also takes advantage of businesses’ reliance on these same utilities to keep their customers comfortable or preserve perishable goods. Faced with the possibility of losing access to these essential utilities, many consumers are quick to pay hundreds of dollars or more to scammers. “These scams are advanced through scare tactics—where individuals and businesses are faced with the frightening prospect of losing access to heat, cooling or water,” said Laxalt. “These impostors want you to act out of...

 ➢ Original Press Release:

March 06, 2018

Attorney General Laxalt Warns Against Notario Scams

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt and his Bureau of Consumer Protection warn Nevada residents to be on the alert for notario scams. These scams
often take advantage of unsuspecting individuals looking for immigration assistance and other legal issues. While Notaries Public or “Notario Publico” may perform duties of attorneys in Spanish-speaking countries, those in the United States cannot practice law, give legal advice or accept fees for legal advice. Notaries may provide only specific services, including taking an acknowledgement, administering an oath or affirmation, executing a jurat or taking a verification upon oath or affirmation, witnessing or attesting a signature, certifying or attesting a copy, and noting a protest of a negotiable instrument. The term “Notario Publico” is not recognized in the United States, and non-attorneys are not authorized to assist with legal-related matters.

“In Nevada, attorneys are regulated by the State Bar of Nevada to…

➢ Original Press Release:

March 05, 2018
Attorney General Laxalt Advises Consumers on Illegal Debt Collection Practices
Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt advises consumers to be aware of conduct that constitutes illegal debt collection practices. With the availability of contact information on the Internet, debt collectors can conveniently contact consumers using automatic telephone dialing systems that repeat artificial or prerecorded voice messages. These types of calls are known as “robocalling.” Robocalling has made it easier for debt collectors to employ abusive debt collection tactics.
In general, debt collectors who use robocalling must abide by laws that apply to both debt collection and telephone consumer protection. This means that debt collectors, even when placing robocalls, are prohibited from engaging in conduct that harasses, oppresses or abuses any person in connection with the collection of a debt. A debt collector, whether live or through an automated system, is not allowed to repeatedly call a consumer with the intent to annoy, abuse or harass any…

➢ Original Press Release:

March 02, 2018
Attorney General Laxalt Announces 2018 National Consumer Protection Week
Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt and the Bureau of Consumer Protection are joining with federal, state and local government agencies to celebrate the annual occurrence of National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW), March 4-10, 2018. NCPW was first organized in 1998. During this annual event, government agencies and other national organizations share tips and information that help consumers understand their rights, protect their personal information and avoid fraud and other scams.
“Consumer protection requires consumer education,” said Laxalt. “When consumers can recognize the warning signs of a scam, they can make a more informed decision. My office is pleased to participate in National Consumer Protection Week in order to further our consumer protection mission through awareness and education.”
From March 5th through March 9th, the Nevada Attorney General’s office will issue daily consumer alerts to Nevadans that include topics such as data collection and targeted...

➢ Original Press Release:

NEW JERSEY
March 27, 2018
Attorney General Grewal Announces New Leadership at the Division of Consumer Affairs
Trenton – New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal today announced that Governor Murphy will nominate Paul R. Rodriguez to serve as the Director of the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, the lead state agency charged with protecting consumers’ rights, regulating the securities industry, and overseeing 47 professional boards. Rodriguez’s selection highlights the Administration’s efforts to fill the void left by the Trump Administration’s pullback of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), fulfilling one of Governor Murphy’s promises to create a “state-level CFPB” in New Jersey.
Rodriguez, a New Jersey native, is currently serving as Acting Counsel to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio where he provides advice and strategic guidance to the mayor and top administrative officials on legal, management, and policy objectives. As a member of Mayor de Blasio’s senior management team, Rodriguez was dedicated to ensuring a fairer and more just city for all ...


NEW MEXICO
March 29, 2018
SCAM ALERT: Attorney General Warns New Mexicans about New Facebook Scam in Wake of Massive Facebook Privacy Breach
Albuquerque, NM -- Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued the following scam alert warning New Mexicans to be extra cautious about people pretending to be able to help them with their Facebook data in the wake of the Facebook privacy breach. On the heels of the furor over Facebook’s sharing of subscriber data, new Facebook scam artists are calling people in New Mexico, attempting to access data the subscriber may not wish to share.
“Never share your personal information with a stranger, no matter who the caller pretends to
be,” Attorney General Hector Balderas said. “If you need your Facebook information fixed, go to Facebook and access your account settings and fix it that way. Please, do NOT rely on a stranger to fix it, even if the stranger pretends to be a Facebook employee or contractor.” ...

- Original Press Release:

March 23, 2018

CONSUMER ALERT: Balderas Urges New Mexicans to Use Toys R Us & Babies R Us Gift Cards & Credits
Albuquerque, NM – This morning, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a Consumer Alert regarding the announcement that Toys R Us and Babies R Us stores are going out of business. Both stores have locations in New Mexico, but are currently liquidating their inventory to shut their doors for good as the parent company goes out of business. Attorney General Balderas is urging New Mexicans to use their gift cards and store credits before April 15, 2018, the last day they will be valid according to the bankruptcy plan.
“’I am urging New Mexicans to use their gift cards and store credits at Toys R US and Babies R Us as soon as possible,” Attorney General Hector Balderas said. “Not only is inventory being liquidating and products moving quickly, the company has said gift cards and credits will be no longer be valid after April 15th.”

Tips for liquidation sales:
No Returns: You’ll want...

- Original Press Release:

March 22, 2018

AG Balderas Issues Consumer Safety Advisory Regarding New Mexico Facebook User Data
Albuquerque, NM - Attorney General Hector Balderas, as New Mexico’s chief law enforcement officer, has issued a Consumer Safety Advisory intended to protect all users of Facebook in the aftermath of the revelation that Facebook gave away the personal information of some 50 million subscribers to a political campaign.
“You, as a Facebook user, are the best editor of your own information,” Attorney General Balderas said. “You can decide who can see and use your data just as you can decide who to allow into your home. However, everyone should be aware that ‘sharing’ information in cyberspace multiplies the possibility that a third party has and will use your information.”
As an example, the Attorney General explained that a business that takes data such as phone
numbers, addresses, “likes” and personal opinions from a Facebook account also has access to the same information from all the individual’s Facebook friends. A Facebook...

- **Original Press Release:**

March 09, 2018

**Consumer Protection Week FACTS: Hundreds of New Mexicans Helped & “S” is for Scams**

Albuquerque, NM - During the past week, the Office of Attorney General has helped more than 300 different people with problems involving scams, consumer complaints against businesses, and constituent problems with government agencies. Today, the last day of Consumer Protection Week, consumer advocates saw scores of people who came to the Attorney General’s offices in person to seek free advice and help on housing problems, charities fraud, internet scams, and many other problems.

“We hope that events like Consumer Protection Week will help more New Mexicans become aware of the dangers of shopping online or ordering services through unsolicited calls,” Attorney General Balderas said. “We hope people will become more confident that it is okay just to hang up on scammers whose primary job is to rob anyone who answers a phone--you. With events such as the one this week, we are able to raise awareness and get people talking about...

- **Original Press Release:**

March 08, 2018

**Consumer Protection Week FACTS: “T” is for Tools for Avoiding Scams**

Albuquerque, NM - During National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Hector Balderas urges New Mexico consumers to get the FACTS and have the Tools they need to help combat scams.

“The best protection you can have to prevent being scammed is knowledge,” Attorney General Balderas said. “Knowing what to look out for and where to go for help can empower consumers to avoid scams.”

Here are some Tools to help you make better consumer decisions:

- Federal Trade Commission (FTC): the FTC is the nation’s consumer protection agency. The FTC works to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace. At their website specific for consumers (www.consumer.ftc.gov/), you can file complaints, register for Do Not Call, and learn many tips to avoid scams. You can also report identity theft...
March 07, 2018  

**Consumer Protection Weeks FACTS: “C” is for Cars**  
Albuquerque, NM - As part of National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Hector Balderas wants New Mexicans to get the FACTS when it comes to Cars. Purchasing a car is the largest purchase many New Mexicans undertake, so it’s crucial that consumers make informed decisions during their car shopping process.

“The most important tool for car shopping is to know what you can afford,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “Know your finance options and your overall family budget before you begin to shop. That way you won’t get in over your head purchasing a car without considering all your income and expenses.”

Attorney General Balderas suggests these additional steps to protect yourself as you shop and before entering an agreement to purchase a car:

- Follow this rule of thumb: Your car payment should not exceed 15% of your take-home pay. The 15% threshold should include operating expenses such as repairs, fuel and...

March 06, 2018  

**Consumer Protection Week FACTS: “A” is for Awareness for Military Families and Veterans**  
Albuquerque, NM - Attorney General Hector Balderas wants New Mexico’s Active Duty Military personnel, National Guardsmen, Reservists and veterans to get the FACTS during National Consumer Protection Week regarding identity theft. Awareness regarding identity theft is crucial because it is one the top complaints from military consumers in New Mexico.

“In New Mexico, we’re focused on national security and have a long history of protecting our nation through our national laboratories and military bases,” said Attorney General Balderas. “My office fights aggressively for service members, those serving in the National Guard, Reservists, veterans, and all of their families’ well-being in New Mexico. If service members or veterans believe they are victims of identity theft, I want them to know our office stands ready to assist them immediately.”
During National Consumer Protection Week, and all year, the Office of the Attorney General is available to assist New Mexico’s military personnel and veterans...

- **Original Press Release:**
  https://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/Consumer_Protection_Week_FACTS_%E2%80%9CA%E2%80%9D_is_for_Awareness_for_Military_Families_and_Veterans.pdf

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**March 05, 2018**

**Consumer Protection Week FACTS: “F” is for Finances**

Albuquerque, NM - During National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Hector Balderas urges New Mexico consumers to get the FACTS about their finances. The New Mexico Office of Attorney General receives frequent complaints of finance-related problems—that is, problems with debt collectors, banks and credit unions, and also the payment of loans, including student loans and mortgages.

Attorney General Balderas advises, “Educating yourself on your own financial strengths and weaknesses is the first step to controlling your financial well-being. However, if you're already in debt and struggling to pay all you owe, remember your rights.” ...

- **Original Press Release:**
  https://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/Consumer_Protection_Week_FACTS_%E2%80%9CF%E2%80%9D_is_for_Finances.pdf

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**March 05, 2018**

**Attorney General Balderas Kicks Off National Consumer Protection Week; Offers Free Consumer Workshop**

Albuquerque, NM - Looking to protect yourself from fraud, identity theft, and scams? Maybe you’re wondering about the best way to use credit, how to shop for a used car, or maximize your security online. The week, Attorney General Hector Balderas wants New Mexicans to get the FACTS during National Consumer Protection Week, and every day will release new consumer protection information. ...

- **Original Press Release:**
NEW YORK

March 29, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Record Number Of Data Breach Notices For 2017

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today released “Information Exposed: 2017 Data Breaches in New York State,” documenting the record number of data breach notices filed with his office in 2017. In 2017, companies and other entities reported 1,583 data breaches to NYAG, exposing the personal records of 9.2 million New Yorkers – quadruple the number of New Yorkers impacted in 2016.

Attorney General Schneiderman announced that he would introduce legislation to require Facebook and other social media sites to notify his office and New York consumers when they learn that users’ personal data was obtained and misused in violation of the law or the platform’s terms of service.

Attorney General Schneiderman also urged the State legislature to pass his Stop Hacks and Improve Electronic Data Security Act (SHIELD Act), which was introduced by Attorney General Schneiderman last fall and would close major gaps in New York’s data security laws....


March 21, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Reminds New Yorkers Of Consumer Alert Regarding Price Gouging During Winter Storm Toby

NEW YORK – With severe winter weather continuing to affect New York State, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued another consumer alert encouraging New Yorkers to contact his office if they experience any potential price gouging for winter weather-related services.

New Yorkers can contact the Attorney General's hotline at 518-776-2000 or file a complaint online.

General Business Law prohibits excessive increases in prices of essential goods and services like food, water, gas, generators, batteries, and flashlights, hotel lodging, and transportation, during natural disasters or other events that disrupt the market. During and after severe winter weather events, these goods and services might also include snow plowing, snow removal from roofs, shovels and other snow removal equipment, salt, and contract services for storm-related damage. In January, after receiving a flood of complaints from across New York State, Attorney General Schneiderman announced an investigation into possible misconduct by propane suppliers across...

March 20, 2018

**Statement From A.G. Schneiderman On Facebook/Cambridge Analytica**

New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement:

“Consumers have a right to know how their information is used – and companies like Facebook have a fundamental responsibility to protect their users’ personal information. “Today, along with Massachusetts Attorney General Healey, we sent a demand letter to Facebook – the first step in our joint investigation to get to the bottom of what happened. “New Yorkers deserve answers, and if any company or individual violated the law, we will hold them accountable.”


March 19, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman’s Health Care Helpline Recovers Nearly $2 Million In Restitution And Savings For Consumers**

NEW YORK - Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today released a report detailing the work of his Health Care Bureau’s Helpline, a free service offered by the Office of the Attorney General that has investigated and resolved over 2,500 consumer complaints during the past year – saving or returning almost $2 million in health care expenses to consumers. The service has also helped countless New Yorkers access medically necessary care or prescription medication previously denied to them.

“I’m proud of the free, vital service our Health Care Helpline provides to New York families. By intervening in claims to ensure timely, adequate, and cost-effective care, our Helpline advocates have saved New Yorkers millions of dollars – while helping ensure that they have access to the critical medical care they need,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “As uncertainty surrounding the future of health care grows, New Yorkers can rely on our Health Care...


March 18, 2018

**As Tax Day Approaches, A.G. Schneiderman Issues Consumer Alert On Frequent Tax Season Scams**

NEW YORK – With this year’s tax day less than a month away, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman provided taxpayers with tips to help avoid fraudulent tax schemes. The Attorney General also urged New Yorkers to stay vigilant and report any suspected scams intended to steal personal and financial information from consumers to his office.

“One of my most important jobs is to help keep New Yorkers safe from scam artists,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “With tax day around the corner, I wanted to share some tips
to protect New Yorkers from being ripped off. If you suspect a scam, report it to my office.”

Each year, the Office of the Attorney General receives complaints from consumers about various tax-related schemes. The Attorney General’s Office continues to receive complaints about scammers who impersonate the U.S. Treasury Department, IRS, or other government officials and attempt to collect bogus tax debts. Fraudsters will pose...

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March 16, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Statement On FERC Decision Regarding Utility Rates**

Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman issued the following statement after the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) directed federally regulated energy companies to take action to lower transmission rates for federally-regulated utilities. That decision follows a bipartisan push by Attorneys General, state agencies, and consumer advocates urging FERC to ensure that public utility companies pass along savings from the new federal tax law to customers.

“Earlier this year, our bipartisan coalition of Attorneys General urged FERC to do the right thing and ensure that the new tax bill did not create a huge windfall for utility companies at the expense of regular families. This week, FERC agreed, which should result in lower rates for many consumers. This is an important step forward as we continue to fight to protect consumers in New York and across the country.”


March 09, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Issues Consumer Alert Warning New Yorkers Of Extortion Telephone Scam**

SYRACUSE – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued a consumer alert, notifying New Yorkers of a new scam in which New Yorkers receive calls from potential fraudsters who threaten to harm the New Yorkers’ family members if they do not pay a ransom. New Yorkers should immediately contact the New York State Police at 1-800-GIVETIP.

The Attorney General’s office has received several reports in recent days of Syracuse-area consumers receiving a call from someone falsely claiming that the consumer’s relative has been in an accident that resulted in injury to the scammer’s nephew. The scammer claims to have taken the consumer’s relative—often a daughter, wife, niece, or mother—from the scene of the accident to a nearby house. The scammer then demands money from the consumer, claiming
that the injured nephew does not have any insurance to pay related bills. The scammer tries to scare the consumer into cooperating by claiming...


March 08, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Releases Top Ten Frauds Of 2017, Warns NY Consumers To Beware Of Scammers
NEW YORK – To mark National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the list of the top ten consumer fraud complaints received by his office in 2017. Attorney General Schneiderman also offered a variety of tips for New Yorkers on how to avoid future scams. “The best weapon against fraud is an informed consumer,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “Fraudsters will always look for new ways to line their pockets at the expense of unsuspecting consumers. I encourage New Yorkers to educate themselves – and to continue reporting scams to my office, so that we can continue to crack down on scammers seeking to take advantage of New York consumers.”
The Attorney General’s office analyzed the consumer complaints received statewide throughout 2017. For the twelfth year in a row, Internet-related complaints topped the list with 5,153 complaints. This category covered a range of issues, including child safety, privacy, civil rights,...


March 07, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Reminds New Yorkers Of Consumer Alert Regarding Price Gouging During Winter Storm
NEW YORK – With severe winter weather continuing to affect New York State, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued another consumer alert encouraging New Yorkers to contact his office if they experience any potential price gouging for winter weather-related services. New Yorkers can contact the Attorney General's hotline at 518-776-2000 or file a complaint online.
General Business Law prohibits excessive increases in prices of essential goods and services like food, water, gas, generators, batteries, and flashlights, hotel lodging, and transportation, during natural disasters or other events that disrupt the market. During and after severe winter weather events, these goods and services might also include snow plowing, snow removal from roofs, shovels and other snow removal equipment, salt, and contract services for storm-related damage. In January, after receiving a flood of complaints from across New York State, Attorney General Schneiderman announced an investigation into possible misconduct by propane...
suppliers across...


March 02, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Issues Consumer Alert Regarding Price Gouging During Winter Storm In New York State**

NEW YORK – With severe winter weather throughout New York State, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued a consumer alert encouraging New Yorkers to contact his office if they experience any potential price gouging for winter weather-related services. New Yorkers can contact the Attorney General’s hotline at 518-776-2000 or file a complaint online.

General Business Law prohibits excessive increases in prices of essential goods and services like food, water, gas, generators, batteries, and flashlights, hotel lodging, and transportation, during natural disasters or other events that disrupt the market. During and after severe winter weather events, these goods and services might also include snow plowing, snow removal from roofs, shovels and other snow removal equipment, salt, and contract services for storm-related damage. In January, after receiving a flood of complaints from across New York State, Attorney General Schneiderman announced an investigation into possible misconduct by propane suppliers across New York,...


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

March 09, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Stein Applauds Decision to Extend School Discharge Eligibility for Former Charlotte School of Law Students**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today thanked U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos for heeding the calls of his office and congressional leaders to help former Charlotte School of Law students obtain relief for student debt. Specifically, Secretary DeVos extended the closed-school discharge eligibility period. Attorney General Stein asked her to do so on April 12, 2017. With this extension, an estimated 300 former students in total will now be eligible for forgiveness of their federal student loans.

“These students, through no fault of their own, were left with staggering debt and few options when their school abruptly closed last year,” said Attorney General Stein. “A closed-school discharge represents a real chance for those students to make a fresh start. I look forward to
working with the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that all eligible former Charlotte School of Law students know how to take advantage of this option.” …


March 05, 2018
Attorney General Josh Stein’s Tips during National Consumer Protection Week
RALEIGH, NC – This year during National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Josh Stein is sharing valuable information to help North Carolinians protect themselves from frauds, scams, bad actors, and financial loss.

Last year in North Carolina, the North Carolina Department of Justice received 20,464 complaints about scams and damaging business practices. These scams cost consumers millions of dollars and often come with the loss of personal and financial information.

“Scammers and bad actors are incredibly creative in coming up with tricks and lies to take people’s hard-earned money,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “That’s why we work to educate consumers about warning signs and other ways to prevent becoming victims of scams and frauds.”


OHIO
March 22, 2018
Attorney General DeWine Warns of Puppy Scams
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ahead of National Puppy Day (March 23), Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is warning consumers to beware of online puppy scams, which cost victims about $1,000 on average according to dozens of complaints filed with the Attorney General’s Office.

“Some scam artists will try to sell you a puppy that doesn’t exist,” Attorney General DeWine said. “They’ll show you a picture and say they’ll deliver the puppy to you, but after you pay, you won’t get anything in return. We just warn people to be very careful if they’re trying to buy a puppy online.”

A typical puppy scam begins when a consumer finds a website offering a certain kind of dog, such as a Corgi, Shih Tzu, or teacup puppy. The website may include words like “adorable,” “precious,” or “cute” along with the name of the breed or the seller. To buy a puppy, consumers are told to wire...

March 09, 2018

Short-Term Loan' Petition Rejected

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—The Ohio Attorney General's Office today rejected the petition for a proposed amendment to the Ohio Constitution which would establish new regulations of short-term loans.

On February 28th, the Ohio Attorney General’s Office received a written petition to amend the Ohio Constitution, entitled the "Short-Term Loan Consumer Protection Amendment," from the attorney representing the petitioning committee. The summary was rejected for several reasons, including:

The summary language stating “contracts for short term loans cannot be for a longer time period than the original loan amount…” conflicts with amendment language stating “the minimum duration of a short-term loan shall be the number of months equal to the sum of the originally contracted loan amount.”

The summary language regarding loans exempted from the definition of "short-term loans" conflicts with the amendment language exemptions.

The summary language regarding a notice on electronic funds authorization revocations does not exist in the amendment language, referring...


March 08, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Announces Winners of High School Consumer Video Contest

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced the winners of the 2017 Take Action Video Contest, which was open to Ohio high school students. For the contest, high school students were asked to create a 60-second video about one of the following cybersecurity topics: privacy on your smartphone, social networking scams, or creating strong passwords.

Attorney General DeWine congratulated the following winners:

First place: Aujolie Baker from the Arts & College Preparatory Academy will receive a $2,500 college scholarship for her video “Internet Treasure.”

Second place: Hailey Phister from Dublin Coffman High School will receive a $1,500 college scholarship for her video “Keep It Safe.”

Third place: Nicholas Kudlapur from Logan High School will receive a $1,000 scholarship for his video “Password Protection.”

“These students found creative, entertaining ways to share information about important consumer protection topics,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We appreciate their hard work...

OKLAHOMA
March 26, 2018

Attorney General Hunter Seeks Consumer Champion Nominees

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter’s Consumer Protection Unit is seeking nominees for the 2018 Consumer Champion Award, given each year at the attorney general’s Consumer Protection Day.

This year’s Consumer Champion will be awarded to an individual who has assisted in preventing fraud against the elderly. Ideal nominees are individuals who have taken action to protect an Oklahoma senior citizen from scams or someone who has actively participated or volunteered in consumer advocacy programs to protect seniors.

Attorney General Hunter said his office chose to focus this year’s award on the elderly because senior citizens are among the most vulnerable.

“My office is committed to protecting senior citizens, which is why we are specifically seeking nominees who have gone above and beyond for elderly Oklahomans,” Attorney General Hunter said. “Crimes against the elderly are intolerable. By focusing this year’s award and program on how to prevent fraud and scams against our...


OREGON
March 06, 2018

AG Rosenblum Releases Oregon DOJ’s Top 10 Consumer Complaints of 2017

In honor of National Consumer Protection week (March 4—10, 2018), Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum today released the annual Oregon Department of Justice’s 2017 Top Ten Consumer Complaints list. For the first time, a new category of consumer complaints “Travel Accommodations” made the list. This new category includes complaints related to the August 2017 solar eclipse, but it also includes complaints against car rental companies and hotels.

For the third year in a row, imposter scam calls also topped this list, with 5,378 complaints from Oregonians last year. Imposter scam calls can impersonate a number of people, including the IRS, grandchildren, police, or other law enforcement.

The full list can be downloaded here for distribution: https://www.doj.state.or.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/DOJ-Top_Ten_Complaints_2017.pdf

“As we celebrated the solar eclipse last year, there were companies who tried to take advantage of consumers by cancelling reservations, or changing the price of hotel rooms, food and rental cars. Based on the high number...

PENNSYLVANIA

March 07, 2018

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Warns Pennsylvanians to be Cautious of Scams following Winter Storm Quinn

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro is alerting Pennsylvania residents and businesses to be on the lookout for scams as another nor’easter winter storm blankets parts of Pennsylvania in snowfall. The latest weather – Winter Storm Quinn – is expected to leave between eight and 12 inches of snow throughout much of southeast Pennsylvania and surrounding areas.

“As this latest snowstorm hits sections of Pennsylvania, consumers should beware of scam artists,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “We want Pennsylvanians to be aware of scams and report any suspicious activity or their concerns to my Bureau of Consumer Protection.”

Attorney General Shapiro said the Bureau of Consumer Protection has received complaints from the public after previous storms and major snowfalls. The complaints involve home repair schemes, snow plow operators, tree removal operators, government loan schemes and fraudulent disaster-related fundraising efforts.

If your home or business sustains storm-related damage, Attorney General Shapiro reminded Pennsylvanians that home...


SOUTH DAKOTA

March 29, 2018

Attorney General Jackley Reminds Consumers to Use Toys R Us Gift Cards and Store Credit by April 21

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley is reminding South Dakota consumers to use their Toys R Us or Babies R Us gift cards and store credits before April 21, 2018. Toys R Us recently announced the closing of their stores across the country, including one location in South Dakota.

“Consumers have until April 21st to use their gift cards, e-gift cards and store credits,” said Jackley. “Gift cards cannot be redeemed for cash and all purchases made during the store closing process will be final.”

Below is a link to the Toys R Us Liquidation Information: https://www.toysrusinc.com/customer-faq

If you have any additional questions regarding your Toys R Us gift cards contact the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-300-1986 or consumerhelp@state.sd.us.

March 21, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley’s Data Breach Bill Signed into Law**

PIERRE, S.D. - Attorney General Marty Jackley extends his appreciation to the South Dakota Legislature and Governor Dennis Daugaard for signing SB 62 into law that requires the reporting of data breaches of personal information to consumers.

“Thank you to our legislators and Governor Dennis Daugaard 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...


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March 02, 2018

**Attorney General Jackley Marks National Consumer Protection Week with Top Ten Complaint List**


1. Landlord/Tenant
2. Internet Goods
3. Auto
4. Retail General
5. Telemarketing
6. Lending
7. Collection
8. Credit Cards
9. Travel
10. Home Improvement

“The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division works with consumers and businesses to address a variety of consumer related issues,” said Jackley. “The Division is committed to serving South Dakotans and dedicated to stopping deceptive and unfair business practices.”

In FY2017, the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division recovered $9,427,745.00 for South Dakota consumers. The Division fielded 30,646 consumer inquiries including phone calls, emails and correspondences.

The Consumer Protection Division continues to take a high volume of consumer calls on the grandparent, IRS and sweepstakes scams....

March 09, 2018

**PUPPY SCAM AND ITUNES SCAM CONTINUE TO COST VIRGINIANS MONEY**

RICHMOND (March 9, 2018)-During National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Mark R. Herring is urging Virginians to protect themselves and their hard-earned money from scams and frauds, whether they are perpetrated in-person, online, or on the phone. Attorney General Herring's Consumer Protection Section is particularly concerned about a spike in two scams:

Puppy Scam—Despite issuing a consumer warning in 2017, Attorney General Herring’s Consumer Protection continues to receive complaints from Virginians who thought they were buying an incredibly cute puppy from an online breeder only to find out it was a scam and the dog didn’t exist. Consumers often pay hundreds of dollars for the animal and various costs like "transportation insurance" only to have the scammer make off with their money. Red flags for this scam include stock photos, exotic or designer breeds offered at significant discounts, and poorly constructed websites that include misspellings and grammatical errors.

iTunes Gift Cards—This...


March 08, 2018

**HERRING WARNS VIRGINIANS ABOUT DANGERS OF PREDATORY LOANS**

RICHMOND (March 8, 2018)-During National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Mark R. Herring is encouraging Virginians to familiarize themselves with the risks associated with small-dollar loans including online, payday, car title, and open-end loans, and to understand their rights when taking out one of these potentially risky loans. "Predatory lenders try to make a buck by tying a weight around the ankles of our friends and neighbors who are looking for a financial lifeline. It's exploitative, it's wrong, and unfortunately Virginia law doesn't do nearly enough to protect our friends and neighbors who find themselves in a tough spot. I thought new federal regulations from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau might give us some additional protections, but unfortunately the Trump administration has put those rules on hold," said Attorney General Herring. "I'd really encourage any Virginian in need of a loan to explore and exhaust every possible alternative before seeking a...


March 07, 2018

**HERRING HIGHLIGHTS CONSUMER PROTECTIONS FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES**

RICHMOND (March 7, 2018)-As part of National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General
Mark R. Herring is encouraging Virginia veterans and military families to familiarize themselves with the special consumer protections in state and federal law that may protect them and their families from fraud, scams, predatory lending and abusive business practices. Veterans and military families are often targeted by scammers and unscrupulous businesses because they have a consistent income and can often be called away from home for long periods of time. Attorney General Herring has made the needs of veterans and military families a priority for his re-organized and expanded Consumer Protection Section.

"It's pretty despicable, but there are actually people out there who try to make themselves money by ripping off veterans and military families," said Attorney General Herring. "Our military families already bear an incredible burden on behalf of our Commonwealth and our country, so we...


March 06, 2018

HERRING URGES VIRGINIANS TO WATCH FOR ILLEGAL FEES FROM PAWNBROKERS

RICHMOND (March 6, 2018)- As part of National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Mark R. Herring and his Consumer Protection Section are warning Virginians to be wary of pawnshops that charge illegal interest or fees. In recent years, his office has taken action against a number of Virginia pawnbrokers that have imposed excessive and unauthorized fees on their customers.

"Virginians who utilize pawnshops and pawnbrokers for low-dollar loans should know their rights and carefully review any terms and conditions to ensure they're not being taken advantage of," said Attorney General Herring. "We've noticed that several Virginia pawnshops have tacked unauthorized fees on to their pawn loans. We're going to take action when we find unlawful charges, but we also want to help borrowers understand their rights so they don't end up paying more than they have to."...


March 05, 2018

PRICE GOUGING PROTECTIONS IN EFFECT AS CLEANUP FROM WINDS CONTINUES

RICHMOND (March 5, 2018)- As Virginians continue to cleanup from last week's damaging winds, Governor Ralph Northam's declaration of a state of emergency has triggered Virginia's anti-price gouging statutes designed to protect consumers from paying exorbitant prices for needed goods and services during an emergency. In addition, state law includes protections for Virginians who purchase tree removal, home repair, or other services via door-to-door sales.

"When you're cleaning up after severe weather, the last thing you want to deal with is a scam
or an exorbitant price for a needed service or product," said Attorney General Herring. "Virginia law offers protections for consumers who find themselves in need of things like tree removal or home repair after extreme weather. I’d encourage all Virginians to carefully review any terms before paying for any good or service, and contact my office as soon as possible if you think you’re being illegally overcharged or suspect...


March 05, 2018

**HERRING HIGHLIGHTS CONSUMER PROTECTION RESOURCES AS NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK BEGINS**

RICHMOND (March 5, 2018) - As National Consumer Protection Week gets underway, Attorney General Mark R. Herring is highlighting the resources available through his Consumer Protection Section to protect Virginians from being exploited by abusive, deceptive, predatory, or illegal business practices. Since 2014, Attorney General Herring’s Consumer Protection Section has recovered more than $240 million in relief for consumers and payments from violators. The Section has also transferred more than $28.6 million to the Commonwealth's General Fund. Following a major reorganization and enhancement in 2016, the OAG's Consumer Protection Section has been even more effective in fighting for the rights of Virginians.

"As the Trump administration and Mick Mulvaney continue their assault on the CFPB and federal consumer protection resources, we're going to be ready to help pick up the slack at the state level," said Attorney General Herring. "We've gotten millions of dollars returned to consumers from predatory lenders, shady debt collectors,...


March 04, 2018

**HERRING TO ENCOURAGE VIRGINIANS TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS DURING NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK**

RICHMOND (March 4, 2018) - From March 4-10, Attorney General Mark R. Herring and his Consumer Protection Section will mark National Consumer Protection Week with a week-long campaign to help Virginians understand their rights as consumers, and to help Virginia businesses understand their responsibilities to their customers. Each day, Attorney General Herring will highlight a common consumer protection challenge and ways that Virginians can protect themselves and their hard-earned money:

Monday - What can the OAG Consumer Protection Section do for you?
Tuesday - Pawn shops
Wednesday-News on a major enforcement action; Veterans' consumer protection issues
Thursday-Predatory lending including payday loans, online, car title, and open-end loans
Friday-Scams and frauds, in-person, online, or on the phone
"Consumer protection has been a real focus of my time as attorney general, whether it's protecting veterans from illegal debt collection, protecting students from fraudulent for-profit schools, or warning financially vulnerable Virginians about the dangers of predatory loans," said Attorney General...


March 02, 2018
HERRING TO ENCOURAGE VIRGINIANS TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS DURING NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK
RICHMOND(March 2, 2018)-From March 4-10, Attorney General Mark R. Herring and his Consumer Protection Section will mark National Consumer Protection Week with a week-long campaign to help Virginians understand their rights as consumers, and to help Virginia businesses understand their responsibilities to their customers. Each day, Attorney General Herring will highlight a common consumer protection challenge and ways that Virginians can protect themselves and their hard-earned money:
Monday-What can the OAG Consumer Protection Section do for you?
Tuesday-Pawn shops
Wednesday-News on a major enforcement action; Veterans' consumer protection issues
Thursday-Predatory lending including payday loans, online, car title, and open-end loans
Friday-Scams and frauds, in-person, online, or on the phone
"Consumer protection has been a real focus of my time as attorney general, whether it's protecting veterans from illegal debt collection, protecting students from fraudulent for-profit schools, or warning financially vulnerable Virginians about the dangers of predatory loans," said Attorney General...


WASHINGTON
March 02, 2018
AG-request bill protecting hundreds of thousands of Washington student loan borrowers passes the Legislature
OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s agency-request legislation providing vital
protections for Washington’s more than 800,000 student loan borrowers passed the Legislature today. The Student Loan Bill of Rights creates a dedicated student loan advocate and adopts standards for student loan servicers.

Senate Bill 6029, sponsored by Sen. Marko Liias, D-Lynnwood, passed the state House of Representatives with an 87-11 vote. The bill previously passed the state Senate with a bipartisan vote of 35 to 13. The bill will now head to the Governor for his signature.


“Too many Washingtonians are struggling to repay more than $24 billion in student loans,” said Ferguson. “The Student Loan Bill of Rights provide borrowers an advocate and requires servicers to treat them fairly.”

More than 800,000 Washington borrowers owed more than $24.4 billion in student loan...


WEST VIRGINIA

March 27, 2018
Attorney General Morrisey Applauds Passage of Anti-Spoofing Legislation

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey believes new legislation signed Tuesday will bolster his office’s ability to hold accountable those who spoof, or otherwise misrepresent, their call identification data to prey upon West Virginia consumers. The legislation, House Bill 4150, signed by Gov. Jim Justice and introduced by Rep. Gary G. Howell, R-Mineral, prohibits any seller and/or telemarketer from misrepresenting his or her caller identification data so as to deceive call’s recipient.

“This legislation will bolster our efforts to punish those who scam and deceive West Virginia consumers,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Rep. Gary Howell’s legislation makes it crystal clear that such activity will not be tolerated in West Virginia and, to the extent possible, our office looks forward to incorporating his effort into our never ending quest to protect consumers.”

Scammers often use spoofing technology to represent themselves as a local caller and hide their true point...


March 22, 2018
Attorney General Morrisey Targets Elder Abuse and Exploitation with New Prosecution Unit, Hotline
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced the formation of an elder abuse litigation and prevention unit.
The unit will include a dedicated team of seasoned civil prosecutors to hold accountable anyone who exploits, abuses or neglects West Virginia’s senior citizens. It also will utilize a newly established hotline, email address and scam alert database to better connect seniors with the office’s already robust capabilities.
“Senior citizens represent the best of what West Virginia has to offer,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Unfortunately, all too often con artists, deceptive businessmen, caretakers and even family members take advantage of our elderly friends.
“Such conduct cannot be tolerated. We succeed in fighting back against these bad actors by harnessing all of our resources to protect the most vulnerable among us. Our formation of this unit will do just that,” he added.
National research estimates 10 percent of persons age 60 and...

March 20, 2018
**Attorney General Morrisey Urges Consumers To Be Wary Of Fraudulent Tax Filing Methods**
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges consumers to exercise caution when evaluating the many different ways to file tax information.
Consumers have the option of filing through electronic services, tax preparers or other options.
“There are many ways consumers can file their tax information,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It’s important that whichever way you choose to do so is legitimate and reputable. Doing so will help avoid having your information fall into the wrong hands.”
Consumers should watch for phony or dishonest tax preparers who would jeopardize their personal information. Ask for the Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) and check the U.S. Internal Revenue Service list found at [https://irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf](https://irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf).
Consumers mailing a tax return should double check the federal and state mailing addresses at IRS.gov and tax.wv.gov.
Tax identity thieves also have been known to steal tax documents from mailboxes and send legitimate-looking emails to phish for...

March 15, 2018
**Attorney General Morrisey Warns Residents of Jury Duty Scam**
CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warned consumers about a phone scam in which a person receives a call threatening arrest or other punishment for missing jury duty.
The scam frequently circulates throughout West Virginia. Oftentimes the con artist will pose as a law enforcement official and, in lieu of arrest, demand immediate payment of a fine via credit card, debit card, prepaid Green Dot card or any number of gift cards, including those for iTunes. Most recently, an Eastern Panhandle businessman lost $1,500 as he was one of multiple area residents to report having received such a call. Similar incidents have been reported this year in Kanawha, Putnam and Wood counties.

“These calls can be unnerving,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “No one wants to get tangled up in legal issues, however it’s crucial to call local authorities before complying with any such demand.”

Scammers will pose as federal marshals...


March 12, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Urges Tourney-Bound Fans to Watch for Ticket Scalping

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urged Mountaineer and Thundering Herd basketball fans to use caution as they purchase tickets for the upcoming NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament in San Diego.

The Attorney General congratulated both teams on making it to the big dance. He also acknowledged the tremendous excitement surrounding their accomplishment, and underscored the importance for fans to resist impulse buys and deals that seem too good to be true.

“March Madness is at a fever pitch in West Virginia,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “As the excitement builds, I urge WVU and Marshall fans to vigilantly research any ticket deal offered by an individual or third-party reseller. Unscrupulous scalpers are more than happy to prey upon your excitement, take your money and leave you empty-handed at the turnstile in San Diego.”

The Attorney General urges consumers to purchase tickets from the university or well-known ticket vendors. The NCAA offers...


March 07, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Reminds Consumers to Vigorously Safeguard Personal Information

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds consumers to vigorously safeguard personal and sensitive information. The reminder coincides with National Consumer Protection Week, which continues through Saturday, March 10.

Scammers and those looking to steal personal and financial information have easy access due
to technological advances and the increased amount of such data available in the public domain.

“Consumers need to be extremely cautious when handling and exchanging personal and sensitive information,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Unfortunately, there are more ways than ever for such information to end up in the wrong hands.”

Consumers can do several things to keep their personal information safe:

Never hand over personal information without identifying the identity of the recipient.
Always use a website that starts with https://. This verifies a secure connection.
Be wary of suspicious emails that look legitimate but are really meant to steal personal information.
Never click on...


March 05, 2018


CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced his office will host various events across central West Virginia aimed at consumer education and fighting fraud as part of National Consumer Protection Week 2018.

The Attorney General collaborates with the Federal Trade Commission and federal, state and local agencies, consumer groups and national organizations to raise awareness about consumer fraud issues from Sunday, March 4, to Saturday, March 10.

“Consumers must be educated on ways they can protect themselves,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “There is never a shortage of scam artists trying to take advantage of anyone that could fall prey to their tactics.”

The week’s events include:

March 5: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. – Credit Reporting Information Table at West Virginia State University, James C. Wilson University Union, 301 Washington Ave., Dunbar
March 6: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. – Mobile Office Hours at Charleston Main Post Office, 1002 Lee St., Charleston...


March 02, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Announces First Events To Jumpstart National Consumer Protection Week

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced his office will host various events to jumpstart National Consumer Protection Week, all aimed at consumer education and fighting fraud.

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local agencies, consumer groups and national organizations to raise awareness about consumer fraud issues from Sunday, March 4, to Saturday, March 10.

“Consumers must be educated on ways they can protect themselves,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “There is never a shortage of scam artists trying to take advantage of anyone that could fall prey to their tactics.”

Events take place across the Mountain State beginning Sunday and Monday at the following locations. Additional events for the remainder of the week will be announced Monday.

Sunday, March 4
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. – Information Booth at WV Fishing & Hunting Show, Mylan Park Expo Center, 500 Mylan Park Ln., Morgantown
2 p.m. to...