About the State Center Consumer Protection Report

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

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

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

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

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

State Center: http://www.statecenterinc.org
StateAG.org: www.stateag.org
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Consumer Protection Cases

ARIZONA

April 25, 2018

**Grand Jury Indicts Woman for Forging Bacteria Test Results in Drinking Water Samples in Southern AZ**

TUCSON - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted Karen L. Hartwell for allegedly altering water sample test results. Hartwell is accused of changing test results for drinking water samples that tested positive for bacteria. Hartwell is facing felony charges of Fraudulent Schemes & Practices and Forgery.

Hartwell allegedly altered 13 drinking water test results for 6 different southern Arizona water districts that were clients of her company, YL Tech. The State alleges Hartwell then submitted the altered results to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. It is alleged that in each of the 13 altered test results, Hartwell modified the testing paperwork with a computer program to replace a positive coliform test result with a negative result. Coliform is a category of bacteria that drinking water quality rules require be tested for on a monthly basis.

All defendants are presumed innocent until convicted in a court of law. …


April 25, 2018

**Fake Dentists Arrested at Dental Office in Glendale**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Special Agents arrested two Valley women for allegedly performing unlicensed dental work on five unsuspecting victims at a dental office in Glendale. Melissa M. Pavey, 45, and Jolene E. Houchens, 38, are accused of performing unlicensed dental procedures, including tooth extractions by utilizing drills, lasers, and surgical tools. Both Pavey and Houchens have never been licensed as a dentist.

Prior to their arrest, a State Grand Jury indicted Pavey and Houchens on multiple felony charges including Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, Aggravated Assault with a Dangerous Instrument, Theft, and Taking Identity of Another. According to the indictment, Pavey and Houchens billed victims thousands of dollars to perform the illegal dental procedures. They are also accused of stealing the identity of a dentist by unlawfully using his prescription pad to write a prescription for one of the victims. …

April 24, 2018

**AG Brnovich Obtains $130,000 for Arizonans from Auto Dealer**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced Arizona consumers will receive up to $130,000 in restitution as part of a settlement with ABC Nissan, an auto dealer in Phoenix. “When Arizonans shop for a car, they deserve an honest, transparent, and fair car buying experience,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “Advertising fake prices and falsifying consumer information on credit applications are completely unacceptable practices.”

The State’s complaint alleged ABC Nissan previously engaged in false advertising practices, including internet advertising that listed vehicles at prices that included all possible rebates and excluded mandatory dealer “add-ons” that had already been applied to the vehicles. The State also alleged that ABC Nissan previously misrepresented consumers’ financial information on loan applications in order to obtain financing for vehicle purchases.

Under the settlement resolving the complaint, ABC will pay Arizona consumers up to $130,000 in restitution. The settlement notes that ABC Nissan has changed some of its...


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April 17, 2018

**Arizona Man Accused of Stealing $4.75 Million in Oil Investment Scam**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted 40-year-old Robert Aguayo for allegedly stealing $4.75 million in an oil investment scam. Aguayo is facing 50 felony charges including Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, Theft, and Misconduct Involving Weapons.

Special Agents with the Arizona Attorney General’s Office investigated the case along with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). Aguayo operated a business called IGot Oil Co, LLC, which claimed to offer investment opportunities for oil wells in Oklahoma. Aguayo solicited investments from 48 individuals totaling $4.75 million between January 2016 to February 2018. It is alleged that the oil wells in Oklahoma were not in production or were not producing oil as Aguayo had represented to the investors. The investigation revealed that Aguayo used new investor money to pay earlier investors. Investors were from Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Texas. ...


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April 02, 2018

**Telemarketing Businesses Banned From Making Telemarketing Calls in Arizona for 6 Years**

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced two businesses that sold work-from-
home opportunities are banned from telemarketing and operating in Arizona for six years. First Progress, Nortec Strategies, and their owner, Eli Rabadi, will also pay $22,300 in restitution to consumers who purchased websites from them.

“My office has zero tolerance for unscrupulous telemarketers that invade our privacy and refuse to follow state telemarketing laws,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. The Attorney General’s Office launched an investigation into First Progress and Nortec Strategies after consumers complained about deceptive statements allegedly made by the businesses when marketing websites to out-of-state consumers. During the investigation, the Attorney General’s Office identified several unlawful marketing practices allegedly employed by the businesses, including making deceptive statements about the value and profitability of the merchandise sold and failing to register as a telemarketer with the State of Arizona. The Attorney General’s Office is in the process of...


ARKANSAS

April 09, 2018

Rutledge Files Lawsuit Against Alarm Company


“Alder deceived and took advantage of consumers and violated Arkansas law,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “The company’s door-to-door sales representatives preyed on elderly Arkansans, lied about whom they represented, and even forged a homeowner’s signature on a contract. Arkansas law also requires a three-day ‘cooling off’ period allowing consumers to cancel services purchased from a door-to-door sales representation. But Alder, in some cases, installed their systems the same day it was purchased. Companies like Alder should not be allowed to engage in high pressure sales tactics that violate Arkansas law.”

To date, 56 instances have been identified where Alder violated Arkansas law. ...

CALIFORNIA

April 24, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Secures $1.6 Million Judgment Against Seller of Lead and Cadmium Tainted Jewelry

LOS ANGELES – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced today that the Attorney General’s Office and the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) secured a default judgment against Luxy Accessory, Inc. (Luxy), a jewelry distributor based in Los Angeles, and its owner Hyun Sook Kim for selling jewelry with excessive levels of lead and cadmium. Much of the jewelry was intended for children, and some was mislabeled as “lead free.” These acts constitute a violation of California’s Metal Containing Jewelry Law and the Unfair Competition Law. They also constitute unlawful advertising. The judgment consists of $1,626,000 in civil penalties and an order to comply with all statutes and regulations applicable to the manufacture, distribution, or sale of jewelry in California. ...


April 16, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Charges Individual for Price Gouging After North Bay Wildfires

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today filed three misdemeanor charges against Melissa “Missy” Echeverria, a real estate agent, for allegedly raising the monthly rent on property she owns in Novato, California by more than 10 percent following the devastating fires in Northern Bay Area counties last year. Due to the blazes, Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency on October 9, 2017. Price gouging during a state of emergency is illegal under Penal Code Section 396.

“In times of crisis, the overwhelming majority of Californians do what is right: we come together and help one another. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case,” said Attorney General Becerra. “There are some unscrupulous individuals who engage in price gouging, taking advantage of those who are already suffering. It’s wrong, it’s unconscionable, and it’s illegal. ...


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 19, 2018

Attorney General Racine Announces Agreement with Pepco That Will Return $24.1 Million to District Ratepayers

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Karl A. Racine announced today that the District government
has reached an agreement with Pepco Holdings Inc. and nine other parties that will result in $24.1 million in savings for electricity users in the District. These savings result from a settlement in which Pepco has agreed to pass on to ratepayers a significant share of the tax cut it received from the recent federal law reducing corporate tax rates. Under that law, the top federal corporate tax rate was slashed from 35 percent to 21 percent.

“This is a significant win for District residents, and I’m proud that the Office of the Attorney General played a key role in helping reach this agreement,” said Attorney General Racine. “With this settlement, residents will see a reduction in their electric bill instead of the increase that Pepco originally requested. The groups we joined with in this negotiation represent a broad…


April 17, 2018
**Attorney General Racine Secures Restitution for Residents of Third Apartment Complex Where Illegal Hotel Rooms Operated**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine announced today that his office has reached a settlement that will provide restitution to long-term residents of an apartment building where the management company and owner allowed two short-term-rental firms to illegally operate apartments like hotel rooms. The agreement with T-C Mas Court LLC (“T-C”) and Greystar RS NE, LLC (“Greystar”) arises out of a larger lawsuit that the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) brought earlier this year against those entities, as well as Ginosi USA Corporation (“Ginosi”); its owner, Eric Ginosian; and the owners and managers of three other apartment complexes in the District. Attorney General Racine is seeking to stop the alleged illegal activity, which reduces the supply of affordable apartments available to District residents, and to recover unpaid taxes, restitution, penalties, and costs from the defendants. OAG has now successfully settled with four defendants in the case...


FLORIDA

April 27, 2018
**Attorney General Bondi Files Lawsuit Against Roofing Company**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Office filed a complaint against Carlson Enterprises, LLC., a Jacksonville construction company, for allegedly taking money from Florida consumers for roofing repair work and then failing to fix the roofs. The company had active offices in Daytona, Orlando and Tampa. The Attorney General’s Office received more than 70
complaints alleging that the company engaged in deceptive practices over the past few years, including taking advantage of some customers post Hurricane Irma.

“Carlson Enterprises took advantage of Florida homeowners, including many who were trying to pick up the pieces following the devastating impact of Hurricane Irma,” said Attorney General Bondi. “Taking thousands of dollars from consumers for repairs that they fail to make is inexcusable and my Consumer Protection Division will hold the company accountable.”

The complaint further alleges that Carlson Enterprises also collected payments from consumers’ insurance carriers, depriving many consumers of funds needed to hire another...

Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/06D36CE83A5074718525827C006A9CB9

April 05, 2018
South Florida Man Sentenced to 38.9 Years for Precious Metals Scam of More Than $1.2 Million

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced the sentencing of Allen Franks, of Palm Beach County, in connection with charges relating to racketeering, grand theft, fraudulent transactions, money laundering and unlicensed telemarketing. Franks is sentenced to 38.9 years in Florida State prison for his involvement in the organization.

Early this year, Franks pleaded guilty to 55 felony charges relating to an enterprise that scammed victims all over the country using various shell companies to broker transactions involving precious metals. Franks and the codefendants solicited victims through telephone and the internet, touting the investment opportunities in precious metals. The scammers instructed victims to wire funds directly to the shell companies bank accounts. Over the course of the criminal enterprise, the defendants defrauded numerous victims, mostly elderly, out of more than $1.2 million. The investigation revealed that the defendants used most of the money for personal use as well as to fund the...

Original Press Release:

GEORGIA

April 04, 2018
Carr Fights for Consumers in $8.5 Million Settlement with Debt Collector

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr today announced an $8.5 million settlement with National Check Resolution, Inc., resolving charges that the debt collection company committed multiple violations of the federal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and the Georgia Fair
“Our office will hold debt collectors that try to coerce and intimidate consumers by employing abusive, deceptive and illegal tactics accountable,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. The Attorney General alleges that National Check Resolution, owner Samuel Tulumello and manager Rhonda Tulumello repeatedly harassed and deceived consumers by:
- Representing that consumers had committed a crime and threatening them with arrest or imprisonment if they did not pay the debt;
- Falsely representing themselves as attorneys, legal couriers or government entities;
- Failing to disclose that they were debt collectors attempting to collect a debt;
- Contacting third parties and divulging information about the debtor’s account; and
- Collecting or attempting to collect...


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ILLINOIS

April 23, 2018

**MADIGAN FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST SUBURBAN EXPRESS**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit against a transportation company for discrimination and harassment against customers and their families. Madigan filed the lawsuit in federal court in the Northern District of Illinois against Champaign, Ill.-based Suburban Express Inc. and owner Dennis Toeppen, alleging that Toeppen and Suburban Express discriminated against customers on the basis of race, national origin and religion, harassed customers with public shame and ridicule, and intentionally compromised customers’ personal information. Suburban Express is a company that provides bus services to students at colleges and universities in Illinois, Iowa and Indiana to the suburban Chicago area and Chicago airports.

According to Madigan’s complaint, Toeppen engaged in discrimination against customers, including a December 2017 mass-marketing email to customers that touted bus rides with, “Passengers like you. You won’t feel like you’re in China when you’re on our buses.” Madigan’s lawsuit also alleges Suburban Express encourages its employees to...

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_04/20180423.html

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April 19, 2018

**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST ILLEGAL LENDER**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a lawsuit against a Nevada-based company for an illegal, predatory lending scheme that exploited Illinois consumers by targeting...
their retirement benefits. Madigan filed the lawsuit against Future Income Payments LLC (FIP) alleging the company illegally made installment loans without a license and tried to disguise the loans as “pension sales.”

According to Madigan’s complaint, filed in Sangamon County Circuit Court, FIP operates illegally in Illinois without a license and charges exorbitantly high rates for its loans that violate Illinois law. In addition, Madigan alleged that FIP illegally advertises its loans as a way to obtain cash quickly in exchange for payments from a consumer’s pension benefits. State and federal laws restrict selling or transferring pension benefits, making the premise of FIP’s sales illegal.

For a $2,000 to $5,000 loan, consumers repay FIP from their monthly pension payments. Due to extremely high finance charges, consumers...

➢ Original Press Release:
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_04/20180419.html

April 09, 2018

MADIGAN FILES ANOTHER ACTION AGAINST ALTERNATIVE RETAIL ELECTRIC SUPPLIER FOR LURING CUSTOMERS INTO EXPENSIVE CONTRACTS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit against Major Energy Electric Services LLC (Major Energy), an alternative retail electric supplier (ARES), for misleading thousands of Illinois customers about the company’s costly electricity contracts using high-pressure sales tactics to push people to enroll without explaining the service or the costs.

Madigan was joined by consumer advocates with AARP, the Better Business Bureau and U.S. PIRG to announce her lawsuit.

The deceptive sales pitches have resulted in nearly all Major Energy customers consistently paying higher rates for electricity. Since April 2012, Major Energy customers have paid nearly $2.5 million more in rates and extra fees than they would have paid if they had remained with the regulated utility.

Madigan’s lawsuit, filed in Cook County Circuit Court, alleges that Major Energy and its sales representatives used aggressive and deceptive sales tactics to enroll customers in the ComEd territory into expensive contracts for...

➢ Original Press Release:
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_04/20180409.html

April 02, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST UNLICENSED USED CAR DEALERS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a lawsuit against two Cook County men for illegally selling used cars and altering titles to make it appear that vehicles being sold had lower mileage.

Madigan filed the lawsuit in Cook County against Arturo Perez, of Chicago, owner of Arturo’s
Auto Sales, and Reyes Vega, of Evanston, owner of JDM Motors Inc. Madigan alleged that even though neither Perez nor Vega is licensed to sell cars in Illinois, the men operated a scheme to sell used vehicles with high mileage to Chicago residents. According to Madigan’s complaint, the scheme started in 2012 when Perez worked for JDM Motors, a wholesale and mainly online car sales business in Hammond, Ind., which was owned by Vega. Vega authorized Perez and other employees to purchase inexpensive vehicles with high mileage from car auctions in Wisconsin. Once the vehicles were transported to Illinois, Madigan alleged the titles...

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_04/20180402.html

INDIANA
April 27, 2018
AG Curtis Hill warns Hoosiers to take ‘buyer beware’ approach when doing business with used car deal
Two recent cases resolved by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) serve as timely reminders to all Hoosiers to exercise extreme caution when purchasing used vehicles. In both scenarios, used car dealers failed to deliver titles and/or provide promised warranties to customers who paid for vehicles. In Delaware County, Capitol Motors LLC failed to procure warranties for 185 consumers. The business -- owned and operated by Naim Mahmoud -- advertised that each vehicle it sold came with a 3 month/3,000 mile warranty. Upon selling vehicles, however, the business regularly failed to forward payments to a third-party warranty provider, leaving buyers without warranty coverage. In addition, Capitol Motors failed to deliver valid vehicle titles within 31 days from the date of sale to 22 consumers, leaving those consumers unable to register or legally drive their newly-purchased cars and trucks. Following a complaint filed against Capitol Motors and Naim Mahmoud by the Office...

Original Press Release: https://calendar.in.gov/site/oag/event/ag-curtis-hill-warns-hoosiers-to-
take-buyer-beware-approach-when-doing-business-with-used-car-deal/

IOWA
April 18, 2018
Fraudulent web claims for “brain booster” pills lead to advertising reforms
DES MOINES – Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller has reached settlements with marketers of deceptive online advertisements and fake news stories featuring Stephen Hawking, Ashton Kutcher, Bill Gates and other celebrities supposedly promoting “smart pills.”
Miller announced Wednesday that the 18-month investigation resulted in six settlements totaling $205,000 and required marketers to reform their practices or avoid Iowa altogether. The actions by the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division involved 22 subpoenas as investigators tried to track down marketers, many of whom operated in Russia, Ukraine, Pakistan, Canada and elsewhere. All of the affected advertisers were online marketers of Intellux, a dietary supplement claimed to enhance mental abilities and reverse the cognitive decline sometimes associated with advanced age or disease. At least 183 Iowans spent $23,200 on Intellux, with some buyers spending as much as $300 for the grossly over-hyped pills. “Consumer Protection investigators discovered a number of over-the-top online advertisements for Intellux,...

KANSAS

April 23, 2018
Morris County roofer banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (April 23, 2018) – A Morris County roofer has been banned from performing roofing services in Kansas and ordered to repay a consumer, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.
Quinn Wilcox dba Work Busters, of Dwight, has been permanently enjoined from operating as a roofing contractor in Kansas. Wilcox was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $16,759.78 to a Kansas consumer, as well as pay a civil penalty and reimburse the attorney general’s office for the cost of its investigation. Judge Meryl D. Wilson entered the default judgment last week in Riley County District Court after Wilcox failed to respond to a lawsuit filed by the attorney general’s office last month.
Schmidt had accused Wilcox of accepting payment from a Riley County consumer to perform roofing services, but failing to complete the work. In addition, Wilcox was not registered with the attorney general’s office as required by...

Las Vegas salesman banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (April 20, 2018) – A Las Vegas man selling wind and solar energy units has been permanently banned from doing business in Kansas and ordered to refund nearly $20,000 to a Kansas consumer after being found in violation of Kansas consumer protection laws, Attorney...
General Derek Schmidt said.
Zachary Lippa, who did business as Pacific Tool & Machinery/Pacific Management Group and Pacific Tool Co., has been permanently enjoined from doing business in Kansas. Lippa was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of $19,425 to a Kansas consumer, as well as pay a civil penalty and reimburse the attorney general’s office for the cost of its investigation. District Judge Teresa Watson entered the default judgment this week in Shawnee County District Court after Lippa failed to respond to a lawsuit filed by the attorney general’s office in January. Schmidt had accused Lippa of accepting payment from a Kansas consumer...


April 17, 2018
New Jersey man permanently banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (April 17, 2018) – A New Jersey man is permanently banned from doing business in Kansas after falsely billing several Kansas school districts for textbooks, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.
Robert Armstrong, of Franklinville, N.J., is permanently enjoined from doing business in the State of Kansas, including but not limited to submitting any claims for approval, engaging in consumer transactions, engaging in door-to-door sales; and from violating the Kansas Charitable Organizations Act. The consent judgment, approved last week by Shawnee County District Judge Franklin Theis, resolves a lawsuit filed by Schmidt in 2015. Armstrong was recently released from federal prison, allowing Kansas to resume its civil case against Armstrong.
An investigation by the attorney general’s consumer protection division stemmed from multiple complaints received from school districts across Kansas that received false invoices from Armstrong’s business, Scholastic School Supply, between September and December 2014. None of the 317 Kansas public...


April 16, 2018
Wichita roofer temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas
TOPEKA – (April 16, 2018) – A Wichita roofer has been temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas by two court orders while lawsuits alleging violations of consumer protection laws are pending, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today.
Energy Guard Midwest, LLC, of Wichita, is temporarily banned from doing business in Kansas. District Judge Kevin Berens entered temporary restraining orders last week in both Sheridan and Thomas County District Courts prohibiting the company from acting as a roofing contractor...
or a general contractor in the state. The company is allowed to complete roofing and construction services currently under contract under the supervision of the attorney general’s office. The orders were agreed to by the defendant.

The lawsuits allege that the defendant took payment from consumers for roofing services in Thomas and Sheridan counties, but failed to perform the work and then failed to refund the consumers’ down payments. The allegations constitute...


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**KENTUCKY**

**April 18, 2018**

**Beshear Sues Pharmaceutical Company over Deceptive Marketing Scheme that Fueled Kentucky’s Opioid Epidemic**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 18, 2018) – Today, Attorney General Andy Beshear has filed a lawsuit to hold a New Jersey pharmaceutical manufacturer accountable for contributing to an illicit drug market that fueled Kentucky’s opioid epidemic.

In the lawsuit filed today in McCracken Circuit Court, Beshear alleges Johnson & Johnson, and its Janssen Pharmaceuticals Inc. and Ortho-McNeil subsidiaries, devised a deceptive marketing scheme in order to generate higher profits from their opioid drugs Duragesic, Nucynta and Nucynta ER.

Janssen allegedly told doctors and patients that their opioid medications were safer than other alternatives, and misrepresented that opioids were “rarely addictive” when used for chronic pain.

Beshear said the company specifically targeted elderly patients, knowing the population had a higher risk of addiction, adverse effects, hospitalization and death.

“Today’s action against Janssen is the fifth lawsuit I have filed in our ongoing fight to combat the state’s opioid epidemic,” Beshear said. “Janssen has profited from...


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**April 13, 2018**

**Beshear: Small Businesses Receive Refund after Purchasing Scam Services from Michigan Company**

FRANKFORT, KY. (April 13, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear announced today that nearly 2,200 Kentucky small businesses can get money back from a Michigan-based company alleged to have sold scam services.

Beshear’s more than $398,000 settlement resolves alleged violations of the Kentucky Consumer
Protection Act by Michigan-based The Mandatory Poster Company Inc., which also does business as Corporate Records Service. Corporate Records Service was accused of sending Kentucky businesses an official-looking “Annual Minutes Form” mailer offering to provide “corporate minutes” work to business owners. The Attorney General’s Office alleged the form created the impression that the mailer was sent by a government entity or that the purchase of the annual minutes was required by Kentucky law. As part of the agreement, Corporate Records Service, agreed to offer a full, $125 refund to nearly 2,200 businesses that purchased the minutes service and pay a penalty, which includes providing more than $93,000 to Kentucky’s...


MARYLAND
April 25, 2018
Maryland Attorney General and Commissioner of Financial Regulation Fight to Protect Retirees and Veterans
BALTIMORE, MD (April 25, 2018) -Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Commissioner of Financial Regulation Antonio P. Salazar announced today that the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division and the Department of Labor’s Office of the Commissioner of Financial Regulation have each filed charges against Scott Alan Kohn, Glorilyn Cusi, and a web of companies owned and operated by Kohn for making unlicensed and usurious loans, referred to as “pension advances,” to retirees and other veterans in Maryland.
The commissioner has issued a cease and desist order directing these individuals and companies –which include Future Income Payments, LLC (formerly known as Pensions, Annuities and Settlements, LLC), FIP LLC, Cash Flow Outsourcing Services Inc., Cash Flow Investment Partners, LLC, BuySellAnnuity Inc., and Pension Advance LLC, – to immediately stop making new pension advances and other loans to Maryland consumers, and to stop collecting on any existing advances or other loans.
According to...


Attorney General Frosh, MDE Secretary Grumbles Announce $33.5 Million Settlement with Volkswagen
BALTIMORE, MD (April 25, 2018) –Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Maryland Secretary of the Environment Ben Grumbles today announced a $33.5 million settlement with
Volkswagen AG and its affiliates, Audi AG and Porsche AG. The settlement announced today relates to the auto manufacturers’ use of “defeat devices” in violation of Maryland’s environmental laws. The devices were installed in model year 2009-2015 diesel engines to ensure that the vehicle’s emissions controls performed properly during emissions testing, but in real-world driving conditions, the device switched off or scaled back the vehicle’s emissions controls -resulting in harmful nitrogen oxide emissions. “Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche installed defeat devices in their cars to trick regulators, to deceive the public, to defraud thousands of Maryland consumers and to spew massive amounts of pollution into our air,” said Attorney General Frosh. “This settlement is just one of several brought by Maryland against Volkswagen and should send...


MASSACHUSETTS

April 27, 2018
Liberty Mutual to Pay $50,000 Over Allegations It Improperly Cancelled Homeowners Insurance Policies

Boston — Liberty Mutual Insurance Group Inc. has agreed to pay $50,000 to resolve allegations that it improperly cancelled approximately 200 homeowners insurance policies, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today. The assurance of discontinuance, filed today in Suffolk Superior Court, will settle allegations that Liberty Mutual has been cancelling homeowners insurance policies in violation of state law since at least 2012. The $50,000 will be used to provide relief to homeowners who had to purchase more expensive policies as a result of Liberty Mutual’s actions. Massachusetts law prohibits insurance companies from cancelling homeowners insurance policies after they have been in effect for 60 days minus a few exceptions, such as failure of the insured to pay their premium or fraud or material misrepresentation in obtaining the policy by the insured. According to the settlement, Liberty Mutual cancelled approximately 200 policies based on the fraud and misrepresentation exception even though it lacked required...


April 24, 2018
Tax Lien Purchaser Refunds Overcharges to Central Massachusetts Homeowners in AG Settlement

Boston — A company that specializes in buying and collecting on unpaid real estate tax debts will pay $125,000, including restitution, to approximately 100 homeowners located primarily in Central Massachusetts, to settle allegations that it collected unlawful fees in connection with its
purchase of property tax liens, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today. The assurance of discontinuance was filed today in Suffolk Superior Court between the AG’s Office and Stage One Investors LLC, a private business that purchases tax liens from municipalities. The settlement resolves allegations that Stage One required homeowners to pay excessive and unlawful fees in order to pay off the tax liens purchased by the company. “No one should be permitted to take unfair advantage of homeowners struggling to pay their real estate taxes,” said AG Healey. “This settlement ensures that Stage One stops charging illegal and excessive fees and reforms its practices to be a better partner for...


April 13, 2018

Statement From AG Healey on Victory Over Exxon in Massachusetts Supreme Court

Boston — Following today’s ruling from the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court affirming her office’s authority to investigate Exxon Mobil and ordering the company to turn over documents to the AG’s Office, Attorney General Maura Healey issued the following statement: “For the second time this month, Exxon’s scorched earth campaign to block our investigation has been entirely rejected by the courts. In its decision today, our state’s highest court affirmed that Exxon is subject to our laws, and that our office has the authority to investigate. Now Exxon must come forward with the truth, what it knew about climate change, when, and what it told the world. The people of Massachusetts – and people everywhere – deserve answers.”

BACKGROUND:
Following detailed stories in several news outlets that revealed Exxon’s own scientists had knowledge about climate change four decades ago, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey launched an investigation in March 2016 into whether the company...


April 12, 2018

AG Secures $900,000 to Help Students of Online Education Company

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey announced today that her office has secured $898,000 from a Florida-based credit union that made loans to more than 200 Massachusetts students to finance expensive and ineffective online study materials and educational services. Under the terms of the settlement, filed on Wednesday in Suffolk Superior Court, We Florida Financial (We Florida), a credit union with headquarters in Margate, Fla., will discharge loans made to Massachusetts consumers in connection with their purchases from The College Network, Inc., a for-profit company that marketed online study guides and educational services to students, including many prospective nurses.
The total outstanding balance on these loans is approximately $748,000. We Florida will also pay $150,000 to the Commonwealth, to be used to provide additional refunds to certain borrowers. The credit union will also seek to remove negative loan information from affected borrowers’ credit reports.

“The College Network treated their students like ATM machines,”…


MICHIGAN

April 30, 2018

Schuette Charges Insurance Agent with Multiple Felonies for Stealing from Elderly Client When Acting as Power of Attorney

LANSING- Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced his new Elder Financial Crimes Unit has filed criminal charges against a Paw Paw insurance agent. Brian Lietzau, 57, faces 7 felonies stemming from his abuse of his position when given Power of Attorney for a woman suffering from Alzheimer’s Dementia.

Lietzau has been charged with the following:

- Conducting a Continuing Criminal Enterprise, Felony 20 years and/or $100,000
- Embezzlement From a Vulnerable Adult Over $100,000, Felony 20 years and/or $50,000 or 3 times the amount embezzled, whichever is greater,
- 2 counts of Embezzlement by Agent Over $1,000, Felony 5 years and/or $10,000 or 3 times the amount embezzled whichever is greater
- 3 counts of using a Computer to Commit a Crime, Felony 7 years and/or $5,000

“When a person is appointed to act as Power of Attorney, they make a promise to protect the assets of the person they are assisting, not steal their life’s…

Original Press Release: https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-467408--,00.html

MINNESOTA

April 06, 2018

Attorney General Lori Swanson Sues AutoAssure Over Deceptive Car Warranty Sales

Attorney General Lori Swanson today filed a lawsuit against AutoAssure, LLC, a Texas company, for deceptively selling costly and often unnecessary car warranties to nearly 1,000 Minnesotan residents, in some cases falsely telling people the factory warranty on their vehicle had expired, the company or the contract was affiliated with the car’s manufacturer, or that the service contract covered “everything” despite containing dozens of exclusions.
“These contracts are expensive and may contain dozens of exclusions for everything from mechanical problems resulting from normal operation of the car to a list of non-covered parts,” said Attorney General Swanson.

To get people to call the company, AutoAssure sent mass mailings to Minnesota residents under the name “Vehicle Services Department,” claiming that the manufacturer’s warranty on the consumer’s vehicle was about to expire and that they must contact AutoAssure to “update” their repair coverage, even though some people had years or thousands of miles of...


MISSOURI

April 25, 2018

AG Hawley: Major Victory in Opioid Lawsuit, Will Move Forward

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley won a major court victory in the fight to hold opioid manufacturers responsible. The St. Louis Circuit Court today rejected the opioid manufacturers' attempts to halt the case and ordered the lawsuit to proceed. In June 2017, the Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against three of the nation’s largest opioid manufacturers—Purdue Pharma, Endo Health, and Janssen Pharmaceuticals—contending that the companies fraudulently misrepresented the serious risks posed by the drugs they manufacture and sell.

Today’s ruling denied the manufacturers' request to stay the lawsuit indefinitely. The Court also rejected the manufacturers’ motion to dismiss eight of the nine counts brought by the State. In addition, the ruling allows the Attorney General’s Office to seek punitive damages from the manufacturers.

“This ruling is a major victory in our fight to hold opioid manufacturers responsible for the misrepresentations they’ve made about their drugs,”...


April 10, 2018

AG Hawley Investigates Missouri Furniture Company

Jefferson City, Mo. — Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced that his office is investigating possible misrepresentations by Rough Country Rustic Furniture, LLC, an online furniture company based in Wright County, Missouri. The investigation began in December 2017. Approximately 598 complaints have been received from consumers nationwide. The investigation is looking into the circumstances surrounding the numerous consumer complaints directed at the Missouri company. The Attorney General’s Office met with
representatives of Rough Country Rustic Furniture in February. The company agreed to provide the Attorney General’s Office with information on the status of complaints. “My office will aggressively pursue those who defraud Missourians,” Hawley said. “Making consumers whole is always the goal in cases of this nature. However, if that cannot be accomplished, we will pursue other avenues.”


April 02, 2018

AG Hawley Issues Investigative Demands to Facebook

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley today announced that his Office has issued an investigative subpoena to social media giant Facebook Inc. in connection with a new investigation into the company’s business practices related to the sharing and tracking of consumers’ user data. Recent news reports reveal that at least 50 million Facebook profiles may be have been shared with third-party software developers. Facebook has nearly 2 billion user profiles around the world.

Last week, 37 state attorneys general, including Missouri, signed a letter requesting answers from Facebook about these issues. With these investigative subpoenas, Attorney General Hawley is going a step beyond asking and is, instead, demanding answers.

“There is no excuse for this irresponsible handling of user data,” Hawley said. “Missourians need to know that they can trust the companies and platforms that have access to as much user information as Facebook does.”

Today’s investigative demand seeks to...


NEBRASKA

April 30, 2018

Attorney General Peterson Provides Opioid Update

In June of 2017, the Nebraska State Attorney General announced participation in a bipartisan coalition of attorneys general from across the country to evaluate whether manufacturers engaged in unlawful practices in the marketing, distribution, and sale of opioids. Later in September of 2017, the Office notified Nebraskans that the attorneys general served investigative subpoenas for documents and information and specifically named several of the entities.

Today, Attorney General Doug Peterson sent a letter to city and county officials updating them on the state’s efforts to reach resolution with the opioid manufacturers and distributors,
following the consolidation of numerous city and county lawsuits in federal court in Ohio. At the encouragement of the Judge in Ohio, those efforts are ongoing. The letter also alerted officials that the Attorney General will consider recovery for the whole state, making it unnecessary for municipal subdivisions to initiate legal action. According to the Attorney General, such lawsuits...


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NEW HAMPSHIRE

April 06, 2018

Attorney General Resolves Allegations of Unfair or Deceptive Business Practices by Lewis Victor d/b/a National Campus Professionals and American Youth Group for Misleading Local Businesses Into Purchasing Advertisements for the Benefit of New Hampshire Sc

Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that the Consumer Protection and Antitrust Bureau has resolved allegations of violations of the Consumer Protection Act by Lewis Victor of Del Rey Beach, Florida d/b/a National Campus Professionals, Inc. and American Youth Group, Inc. The State alleges that Lewis Victor d/b/a National Campus Professionals and American Youth Group misled local businesses by falsely claiming affiliations with New Hampshire schools in order to induce those businesses to pay for advertisements to be placed in brochures, claiming that advertisement revenue would be for the benefit of local schools, when, in fact, all of the advertisement revenue went to Victor.

The Attorney General’s Office began an investigation in 2017 into National Campus Professionals and American Youth Group based on allegations from a New Hampshire school that local businesses had been misled to purchase advertisements for drug awareness folders. Victor solicited these advertisements in at least 27 school...


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NEW JERSEY

April 30, 2018

Ocean County Lawyer who Hosted Radio Show on Elder Law Indicted on Charges He Stole $1.9 Million from Elderly Clients

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal announced that a prominent Ocean County attorney who hosted a radio show and taught seminars on elder law was indicted today on charges that he stole approximately $1.9 million from elderly clients. The victims generally did not have close relatives to guard their interests and in some cases suffered from dementia.
The Division of Criminal Justice Financial & Computer Crimes Bureau obtained a 10-count state grand jury indictment charging Robert Novy, 66, of Brick, N.J., with the following crimes:
Theft by Unlawful Taking (2nd Degree – Two Counts)
Misapplication of Entrusted Property (2nd Degree – Three Counts)
 Theft by Deception (2nd Degree – One Count)
Money Laundering (1st Degree – Two Counts)
Money Laundering (2nd Degree – Two Counts)
The charges are the result of an ongoing investigation by the Division of Criminal Justice Financial & Computer Crimes Bureau, assisted by the New Jersey Division...


April 25, 2018
NJ Division of Consumer Affairs Settles Lawsuit by Permanently Shutting Down Three Monmouth County Companies that Targeted Seniors in Aggressive and Deceptive Telemarketing of Emergency Response Systems
NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced a $296,000 settlement with two Monmouth County residents and their companies to resolve allegations they defrauded senior citizens by selling emergency response systems through highly aggressive and misleading telemarketing sales tactics. The settlement requires that the companies be dissolved and permanently bans the owners from selling such systems in New Jersey.
According to a civil Complaint filed by the State in 2016, Ezra Rishty, of Oakhurst, and Larry J. Ansell, of Tinton Falls, and their businesses Life Aid Connect, Inc., Safety Alert USA Limited Liability Company a/k/a Med Aid Alert, and Mobile Alert, Inc. (“the defendants”) targeted senior citizens in a telemarketing blitz that employed deceptive and aggressive tactics to pressure them into buying emergency alert systems that sometimes were never delivered, often did not operate properly or, in some cases, could not be activated where the...


April 16, 2018
New Jersey Bureau of Securities Orders New Brunswick Man to Pay $750,000 for Selling Unregistered Securities Tied to Alleged $1.2 Billion Ponzi Scheme
NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the New Jersey Bureau of Securities within the Division of Consumer Affairs announced today that a New Brunswick man and his companies have been ordered to pay $750,000 for selling New Jersey investors more than $7 million worth of unregistered securities that were tied to an alleged $1.2 billion nationwide Ponzi scheme.
Jeffrey Mitchell Isaacs, JB Financial Resources, and related entities sold the unregistered
securities for the Woodbridge Group of Companies (“Woodbridge”), which has been charged by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”) with operating a Ponzi scheme that defrauded 8,400 investors across the country. The scheme collapsed after Woodbridge stopped paying investors and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on December 4, 2017, two weeks before the SEC filed its charges against the California-based real estate investment group. Between 2013 and 2017, Isaacs and his related entities sold approximately 88 of Woodbridge’s...


April 04, 2018
Virtua Medical Group Agrees to Pay Nearly $418,000, Tighten Data Security to Settle Allegations of Privacy Lapses Concerning Medical Treatment Files of Patients
NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that Virtua Medical Group, P.A. (“VMG”), a network of physicians exclusively affiliated with more than 50 South Jersey medical and surgical practices, has agreed to pay $417,816 and improve data security practices to settle allegations it failed to properly protect the privacy of more than 1,650 patients whose medical records were made viewable on the internet as a result of a server misconfiguration by a private vendor. VMG, a non-profit New Jersey captive Professional Association of Virtua Health Inc. headquartered in Marlton, agreed to the settlement terms after the Division’s investigation concluded that VMG’s failure to comply with federal healthcare data security standards publically exposed the medical information – including patient names, medical diagnoses and prescriptions – of up to 1,654 individuals treated at Virtua Surgical Group in Hainesport, and Virtua Gynecological Oncology Specialists and...


NEW MEXICO
April 25, 2018
Balderas Secures Victory for Consumer Protection in New Mexico with Court of Appeals Ruling in ITT Tech Case
Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that the New Mexico Court of Appeals issued an Opinion stating that New Mexico was not bound by the agreements ITT Technical Institute entered into with its students and that there is an important public policy in allowing the Attorney General to bring lawsuits against companies that violate the Unfair Practices Act (UPA). The Court of Appeals said: "[t]he UPA represents New Mexico's public policy in favor of preventing consumer harm and resolving consumer claims." The court also
confirmed the Attorney General's "broad authority to enforce the provisions of the UPA includes the right to bring actions in [the State's] name, alleging violations of the UPA, if such 'proceedings would be in the public interest [.]."

"Yesterday’s Court of Appeals ruling is a win for New Mexico and ensures that the Office Attorney General is able to protect New Mexico consumers from...

➤ Original Press Release:

April 18, 2018
AG Balderas Announces Settlement with Visa & MasterCard Over Excessive Credit & Debit Card Fees
Albuquerque, NM - Attorney General Hector Balderas announced today that he reached a settlement with Visa and MasterCard, the United States’ two largest payment card networks, over a lawsuit brought by the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General alleging excessive fees charged during credit and debit card transactions.

“We negotiated an agreement that will compensate the harm to New Mexico’s economy, enforce our strong consumer protection statutes, and deter companies that seek to exploit our citizens and violate our consumer protection laws,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “I’m committed to protecting New Mexico consumers, but education is also key and that’s why our office will be hosting free financial literacy trainings regarding credit and debit card ‘fine print’ in Albuquerque, Española and Las Cruces.”

The Office of the Attorney General filed the lawsuit in December 2014 in New Mexico state court to disgorge wrongful gains and impose penalties for alleged anticompetitive...

➤ Original Press Release:

NEW YORK
April 17, 2018
Operation Bob The Builder: A.G. Schneiderman Announces Indictment Charging Warren County Couple With Money Laundering Scheme And Theft Of Over $1.2 Million
QUEENSBUY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the unsealing of an indictment charging Robert J. Mirel a/k/a Robert Morel a/k/a RJ Mirel and Debra Burnett a/k/a Deborah Barnett a/k/a “Debbie Turner,” the owners and operators of Arlington Equipment Corp. d/b/a Arlington Manipulators, with defrauding companies and business owners...
throughout New York and the United States by pretending to sell glass installation equipment and laundering hundreds of thousands of dollars in criminal proceeds through their shell and shelf companies. The Attorney General’s investigation, dubbed “Operation Bob the Builder,” revealed that Arlington Equipment Corp. was one of the only manufacturers of glass manipulators in North America at the time the business started in Queensbury, NY. Glass manipulators are used by glass and glazing companies around the world to help perfectly install heavy glass in high-rise buildings and position custom pieces of glass at angles other than 90-degree intervals. As the...


April 17, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Launches Inquiry Into Cryptocurrency “Exchanges”**

Today, New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman launched the Virtual Markets Integrity Initiative, a fact-finding inquiry into the policies and practices of platforms used by consumers to trade virtual or “crypto” currencies like bitcoin and ether. As part of a broader effort to protect cryptocurrency investors and consumers, the Attorney General’s office sent letters to thirteen major virtual currency trading platforms requesting key information on their operations, internal controls, and safeguards to protect customer assets. As the letters explain, the Initiative seeks to increase transparency and accountability as it relates to the platforms retail investors rely on to trade virtual currency, and better inform enforcement agencies, investors, and consumers.

“With cryptocurrency on the rise, consumers in New York and across the country have a right to transparency and accountability when they invest their money. Yet too often, consumers don’t have the basic facts they need to assess the fairness, integrity,...


April 12, 2018

**A.G. Schneiderman Announces State Prison Sentences For Capital Region Pair Convicted Of Money Laundering And Wide-Ranging Fraud Scheme**

ALBANY – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that David Mazzeo, 59, of Guilderland, New York, and Michael Caruso, 62, of Schenectady, New York, were each sentenced to state prison for their participation in a wide-ranging scheme to defraud several investors and lending institutions of nearly $150,000, and for laundering over $200,000 in ill-gotten gains to conceal their crimes from authorities investigating Mazzeo from 2012 to 2013. David Mazzeo, facing his fourth investment fraud conviction in six years, received a prison sentence of nine to eighteen years that will run consecutive to his current 2 1/3 to 7 year
sentence; Michael Caruso received a sentence of six months jail and five years’ probation. Both defendants were ordered to pay restitution to their victims: Caruso in the amount of $127,235, and Mazzeo in the amount of $133,091, for a total of over $260,000. On February 15, 2018, the pair were convicted...


April 11, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces $550,000 Settlement With Energy Service Company That Illegally Deceived New York Consumers

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a $550,000 settlement with Liberty Power Holdings, LLC ("Liberty"), as part of an ongoing investigation into energy service companies (ESCOs). The investigation uncovered that the company's contractors and subcontractors lured consumers with false promises of savings, and then charged them costly early termination fees when they tried to get out of their contracts. Additionally, sales representatives used other deceptive means to enroll consumers, such as falsely claiming to represent the consumers’ current utility provider or having someone who was unauthorized to give consent such as a minor sign the enrollment agreement. As a result, many consumers did not even realize that they had been enrolled in Liberty. According to the settlement, Liberty will implement new restrictions on their marketing practices to prevent future frauds and pay $550,000, which will be used to refund eligible consumers.

“Today's settlement returns more than half a million...


April 11, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlement With Credit Union That Financed Phony Academic Services

ALBANY — Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced a settlement with Tennessee-based Southeast Financial Credit Union, which was named in the Attorney General’s June 2015 lawsuit against The College Network and its owner Gary Eyler, among others. The settlement with Southeast Financial Credit Union secures $2.25 million in refunds for duped New Yorkers and requires the credit union to clean up any students’ negatively-affected credit ratings.

The suit charges The College Network with inducing prospective nursing students to pay thousands of dollars for ineffective study guides through false and deceptive business practices – including preying on as many as 2,000 New York consumers who sought to obtain associate degrees in nursing. Using misleading advertising and high pressure sales tactics, The College
Network also created the false impression that it was offering online nursing degrees and that it was affiliated with Excelsior College, an accredited institution based in Albany that offers...


April 09, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Announces Bust Of Broome County Waste Management Cartel For Colluding To Rig Bids And Fix Prices

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced criminal convictions and a civil resolution against two Broome County trash collection firms, Bert Adams Disposal, Inc. and Taylor Garbage Service, Inc., their owners and associated employees for conspiring to rig bids, allocate customers, and fix prices for trash and recycling services. In addition to conspiring to rig bids for private customers – which forced Broome County residents and businesses to pay artificially inflated prices for essential services – Bert Adams Disposal and Taylor Garbage Service also colluded on bidding for certain municipal contracts, inflicting significant economic harm on New York taxpayers.

“Bert Adams Disposal and Taylor Garbage Service illegally and secretly divided up their territory so they could rig the market and rip-off their customers by charging inflated prices,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “I am pleased we were able to bring these perpetrators to justice. My office is committed to...


NORTH DAKOTA

April 04, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL DETAILS INVESTIGATION OF UNLICENSED BUSINESS FOR ALLEGED FRAUD - Tore Maras-Lindeman, dba “A MAGIC CITY CHRISTMAS”

BISMARCK, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem confirmed today that his office is investigating Minot resident Terpsichore “Tore” Maras-Lindeman, doing business as “A Magic City Christmas,” for alleged violations of the consumer fraud laws and charitable solicitation laws. The investigation was initiated in early December, 2017, after the consumer protection division received a media inquiry about claims made by Maras-Lindeman in fund-raising solicitations for a holiday concert supposedly to benefit charities in Minot. Maras-Lindeman is not registered as a charity or professional fundraiser.

“The charitable solicitation law and consumer fraud laws were enacted to protect members of the public. When anyone fails to comply with the reasonable requirements of these laws, it is my office’s duty to investigate and take any necessary action to protect consumers,” said
When the consumer protection investigators made the initial contact in December last year, they informed Maras-Lindeman that state law requires a person to register...


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OHIO

April 24, 2018

Columbus Man Accused of Repeat Consumer Protection Violations

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a Columbus man accused of repeatedly failing to deliver promised stucco, painting, and other home-improvement services to consumers.

The Attorney General’s lawsuit accuses Steven M. DeMatteo, operating as DeMatteo Stucco, of taking money from consumers and then failing to perform the work. Estimated losses currently total about $4,700 among eight complaints.

“We’ve found a pattern of problems, and we’re taking this action to hold the defendant accountable,” Attorney General DeWine said.

In 2012, the Attorney General obtained a judgment against DeMatteo in a similar consumer protection case. The judgment required DeMatteo to pay penalties and damages, but according to the lawsuit, DeMatteo failed to make those payments yet continued to offer services to other consumers.

DeMatteo is accused of violating Ohio’s Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include failing to deliver services, providing shoddy work, and soliciting work while having an...


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April 19, 2018

Cincinnati Rug Seller Accused of Running Deceptive “Store-Closing” Sales

(CINCINNATI)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today filed a consumer protection lawsuit against the operator of Aria Rug Center in Cincinnati for alleged deceptive advertising. The seller is accused of running several store-closing sales yet continuing to operate.

The lawsuit accuses Stalco Enterprises Inc., doing business as Aria Rug Center at 9689 Montgomery Road, of violating Ohio consumer protection laws.

Complaints filed with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office claimed that Aria Rug Center ran continuous going-of-business sales but stayed in business. An investigation by the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section found that the company advertised several store-closing or “distress” sales in 2017 but by March 2018 was again operating in the same store,
under the same ownership. Under Ohio’s Distress Sale Rule, sellers may not advertise a going-out-of-business sale if they aren’t actually going out of business. “We believe this is deceptive advertising,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We’re taking this action to...”

April 17, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Lawsuit Against Ohio Restoration Group Operator

(YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today filed a consumer protection lawsuit against the man who operated Ohio Restoration Group, a roofing company accused of taking thousands of dollars for work never provided. The lawsuit accuses Ancil E. Wilson III of violating state consumer protection laws. In the lawsuit, the Attorney General seeks reimbursement for consumers and an injunction to prevent future violations. “We are taking this action to protect consumers,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We believe the defendant violated Ohio’s consumer protection laws and must be held accountable.” According to the lawsuit, Wilson operated under the name Ohio Restoration Group LLC in Youngstown. He offered roof replacement and installation work, but after taking money from consumers, he allegedly failed to provide the promised work. Reported consumer losses currently total about $55,000. The Attorney General’s lawsuit, filed in the Mahoning County Court of Common Pleas, accuses Wilson of violating Ohio’s Consumer Sales Practices...


April 09, 2018

Monroe County Woman Sentenced to Prison for Scam

(WOODSFIELD, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Monroe County Prosecutor James L. Peters today announced that a woman has been sentenced to 18 months in prison and ordered to pay $641,908 in restitution for defrauding people in eastern Ohio and West Virginia. Darlene Baldwin, 67, of Clarington, was sentenced today in the Monroe County Common Pleas Court. She previously pleaded guilty to one count each of aggravated theft, attempted telecommunications fraud, and attempted money laundering. According to investigators, Baldwin lied to people about needing money for various reasons, such as claiming she had a serious illness or that she was at risk of losing her home. She
generally promised to pay people back promptly, but instead of paying them back, she wired the funds to other people, knowing the money would end up overseas with a man she had been communicating with online.

“Our goal was to stop the scam,” Attorney General...


OREGON

April 18, 2018

Attorney General Rosenblum Announces Settlement with Race Director of the Portland Marathon

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum announced today that the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Portland Marathon have reached an $865,000 settlement with Lester Smith, former board member and Race Director of the Portland Marathon. The settlement requires Mr. Smith to pay the Portland Marathon $865,000, of which $50,000 will be paid to DOJ to reimburse for investigative costs. Under the settlement Mr. Smith is prohibited from serving as a director, officer, or fiduciary of any charitable organization, and requires him to dissolve his for-profit company Next Events, LLC. In addition, he is not able to operate, or be involved with, any foot races in the future, and he is prohibited from seeking reinstatement with the Oregon State Bar.

“Our Charities Section supervises and regulates over 21,000 registered charities in Oregon; this means we have an obligation to make sure each one is run with integrity and in accordance with Oregon...


PENNSYLVANIA

April 25, 2018

Attorney General Shapiro Announces Felony Fraud Charges Against Washington County Insurance Broker

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced that a Washington County insurance broker was charged with insurance fraud for failing to submit more than $93,000 in payments for commercial insurance policies with various companies between 2014 and 2016. Mark Bleier, 44, of High Oak Court, Pittsburgh, former owner of Steel City Insurance, is charged with theft by failure to make required disposition of funds, insurance fraud and other charges
for failing to forward payments made by his commercial insurance customers to the insurers who carried their policies. Bleier stole a total of $93,444 from various clients over a two-year period.

“This man stole money from his clients and cheated them out of the insurance policies they believed in good faith they had purchased,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “Here’s why insurance fraud is a problem: When people commit this crime, it causes premiums to rise for the folks who follow the rules.


April 10, 2018

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Alerts Pennsylvania Consumers to Mortgage Modification Scams

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today alerted consumers to mortgage modification scams taking place across Pennsylvania and announced restitution for consumer victims of Michael Rabel, an attorney who scammed consumers in Western Pennsylvania. During the first three months of 2018, the Office of Attorney General has already received 15 complaints from consumers about mortgage modification scams, compared with 61 complaints last year. A mortgage modification involves obtaining a lower interest rate or extended payment terms on your loan. A mortgage scam happens when a company fails to provide mortgage modification services to consumers after accepting payment — or fails to issue refunds to consumers for modification services that were never delivered.

“If a Pennsylvania resident pays to have their mortgage modified, they deserve to receive that service or they are entitled to a full refund,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “If you believe you’ve been victimized by a mortgage modification scam,


SOUTH CAROLINA

April 26, 2018

SC Attorney General Alan Wilson Announces Health Care Insurance Fraud Conviction

(COLUMBIA, S.C.) – April 26, 2018 – South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson announces the guilty plea and sentencing of a Texas man who defrauded Genworth Financial out of over $35,000. On April 25, 2018, John P. Sankey, 53, pleaded guilty to Making a False Representation over $1,000. Judge George M. McFaddin gave him a three year sentence. This sentence was
suspended to 3 years of probation. A special condition of probation is for Mr. Sankey to pay $35,506.55 in restitution. Probation may terminate upon payment in full of restitution and assessments. Mark Hardee of the Hardee Law Firm in Columbia represented Sankey. “A fraud case of more than $35,000 is serious,” Attorney General Wilson said. “Insurance fraud raises all of our rates and is a very real problem in South Carolina.” John Sankey’s parents, who were living in Columbia, held a long-term care policy with Genworth Financial, and Sankey opened claims...


TEXAS

April 20, 2018
AG Paxton Obtains $2 Million Judgment Against Happie Hippie Smoke Shop for Selling Illegal Synthetic Drugs

Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced that his office and the Harris County Attorney’s Office obtained a $2 million judgment against Happie Hippie Smoke Shop, which sold dangerous and illegal synthetic drugs.

In October 2016, Attorney General Paxton filed a lawsuit against the Houston smoke shop and its operators, Esam M. Ali-Hasan and James Ayling. They were accused of violating the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act (DTPA) by deliberately leading consumers to believe that illegal drugs sold at their business were safe and legal.

According to police reports, the operators of Happie Hippie Smoke Shop appeared to be manufacturing synthetic cannabinoids in a 50-gallon fish tank and applying it to dried leaves, which were packaged and sold. Ayling told officers that 100-150 packets of synthetic cannabinoids were sold daily at the smoke shop. Synthetic drugs can cause serious side effects including severe paranoia, psychotic episodes, violent delusions, kidney damage, suicidal thoughts and...


April 20, 2018
Attorney General Paxton Reaches Settlement with Patterson Companies Over Dental Supply Boycott

Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced a settlement with dental supply distributor Patterson Companies, Inc. after they were discovered violating state antitrust law by conducting an illegal group boycott to eliminate an online rival. The agreed final judgment commits Patterson Companies to pay $200,000 to the state, requires additional antitrust training and prohibits it from repeating an economically damaging practice.
“Conspiring with competitors to prevent the emergence of new distribution channels for goods and services is contrary to the free market and violates antitrust laws,” Attorney General Paxton said. “Such interference should not be tolerated in any industry. My office will continue to ensure that companies doing business in Texas have the opportunity to compete in a truly free market.”

The state’s antitrust action stemmed from a three-year investigation into allegations that dental supply distributors Patterson Companies, Henry Schein, and Benco worked together to thwart the entry of a lower-cost, online source.


WASHINGTON
April 19, 2018
AG’s lawsuit shuts down tech support scammer iYogi
OLYMPIA — When Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit against iYogi accusing it of scamming consumers, it was one of the largest independent tech support providers in the world. Now, iYogi has essentially shut down after the King County Superior Court entered $6.3 million in judgments against iYogi’s international parent company in India and its U.S. subsidiary.

In addition to the judgments, iYogi’s United States president, Vishal Dahr, agreed to cease the company’s illegal practices in Washington state, with $500,000 in suspended penalties. Ferguson’s lawsuit, filed in 2015, accused iYogi and Dhar of using deception and scare tactics to pressure consumers into buying unnecessary tech support services.

Information obtained by the Attorney General’s Office indicates iYogi India has shed most or all of its employees and is largely defunct. The company’s U.S.-based operation appears to have shut down entirely.

As a direct result of Ferguson’s lawsuit, iYogi reports the company’s value dropped by...


April 06, 2018
Judge: Ferguson’s suit against one of the nation’s largest opioid manufacturers will go forward
SEATTLE — Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s lawsuit against OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma over the state’s devastating opioid epidemic will continue, a King County judge ruled today, rejecting Purdue’s request to dismiss the case.

Ferguson’s lawsuit accuses Purdue, one of the nation’s largest opioid manufacturers, of fueling
the opioid epidemic in Washington state, embarking on a massive deceptive marketing campaign and convincing doctors and the public that their drugs are effective for treating chronic pain and have a low risk of addiction, contrary to overwhelming evidence. This deceptive marketing resulted in the deaths of Washingtonians and devastation to Washington families.

Today, King County Superior Court Judge Catherine Moore denied Purdue’s motion to dismiss the state’s lawsuit, allowing the case to move forward. Washington is the third state to defeat attempts by Purdue to dismiss cases over its opioids, joining South Carolina and Oklahoma. “It’s time for Purdue to answer for the devastation its opioids have...


WEST VIRGINIA

April 16, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Pill Mill Lawsuit Yields $550K Settlement

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reached a $550,000 settlement with a pharmacy that stood accused of providing nearly 10 million doses of highly addictive prescription painkillers in just 11 years – all for a county with fewer than 25,000 residents.

The settlement resolves allegations that Larry’s Drive-In Pharmacy, of Boone County, helped fuel the state’s opioid crisis. The nearly 10 million doses it allegedly dispensed proved far greater than the county’s 11 other retail pharmacies, including three operated by national chains.

“Every aspect of the pharmaceutical supply chain bears responsibility the senseless death brought upon our state,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “This settlement demonstrates my commitment to go after all parties, regardless of size, to ensure their conduct adhere to best practices so that our state can reach her full potential.”

Larry’s Drive-In Pharmacy was among three sued in less than a month between December 2016 and... 


April 13, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Wins Shut Down of Car Dealership, Consumer Relief

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey won a resounding victory Friday afternoon in his case against a used car dealership accused of ripping off consumers and selling vehicles without a state dealer’s license.

Kanawha Circuit Judge Jennifer Bailey granted a temporary order that immediately prohibits
Richmond’s Quality Cars, LLC, CMS Pre-Owned Auto Sales, LLC, owner Karen Richmond and co-defendant Brian Richmond from selling any additional vehicles in either a commercial or personal capacity.

The defendants also must stop collecting any debts owed by customers, including the release of all liens, a prohibition on all repossessions and the delivery of a clear title to affected consumers.

The court further prohibited the defendants from any advertising on social media and empowered the sheriff to ensure compliance and seize any remaining inventory as appropriate.

“This is a great victory for consumers,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “The court’s swift action sends a...”


April 12, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Files Lawsuit Against Equifax

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey filed suit against Equifax alleging it ignored warnings to secure its system, failed to safeguard consumer information and stalled in notifying the public of a data breach that affected 148 million consumers nationwide.

The Equifax breach exposed almost half of West Virginia’s population – more than 730,000 residents – to the risk of identity theft, tax return scams, financial fraud and other harm, according to the lawsuit filed Thursday.

“Equifax’s failure to secure consumers’ personal information constitutes a shocking betrayal of public trust and an egregious violation of West Virginia consumer protection and data privacy laws,” Attorney General Morrisey said.

The lawsuit alleges Equifax took no action to secure its online dispute portal, despite at least four warnings of vulnerability with its framework in months leading up to the breach. Three of the warnings were “critical,” “high” or of maximum severity. ...


April 09, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Seeks Order to Lock Up Tombstone Salesman

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey asked a judge to put a tombstone salesman behind bars for alleged violations of a previous court order.

The contempt petition alleges T&N Monuments and its owner, Tommy Kenneda, violated terms of a September 2016 court order by ignoring its ban on future monument sales and refusing to identify five consumers for whom he owed completed work.

“Grieving families should not have to worry about being taken advantage of,” Attorney General
Morrisey said, “Court orders are binding and must be enforced.”
The prior settlement and court order required Kenneda to wind down his existing business,
complete five pending jobs and never again operate such a business in West Virginia. It is
unknown if the pending jobs have been completed.
Instead, the petition alleges Kenneda sold two headstones to a Logan County woman as
recently as March 2017, seven months after the court...

➢ Original Press Release: https://mailchi.mp/wvago/wva-ag-seeks-order-to-lock-up-tombstone-
salesman?e=5699e8e411

April 04, 2018
Attorney General Morrisey Secures $1.4 Million in Debt Cancellation for Consumers
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey recently sent letters to more
than 300 consumers explaining how they will benefit from approximately $1.49 million in debt
cancellation secured as part of a settlement with First Sentinel Bank of Richlands, Va.
The settlement resolves allegations that First Sentinel Bank violated state and federal laws,
which prohibit banks, debt collectors and other entities from engaging in unfair, deceptive or
abusive practices.
“Banks and debt collectors must conduct business in a lawful manner,” Attorney General
Morrisey said. “The unlawful use of intimidation tactics to collect debts or repossess vehicles
cannot be tolerated. This applies to every business as well as third-party vendors hired on the
company’s behalf.”
The Attorney General alleged First Sentinel Bank representatives frequently visited consumers
at their homes or places of employment to collect debts, a practice generally viewed as
unlawful. He also alleged the bank repossessed vehicles without its...

➢ Original Press Release: https://mailchi.mp/wvago/wva-ag-secures-14-million-in-debt-
cancellation-for-consumers?e=5699e8e411

April 03, 2018
Attorney General Morrisey Seeks Immediate Shut Down of Unlicensed Car Dealership
CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey sought a court order to
permanently shut down a used car dealership, seize any inventory remaining up for sale and
force its owners to forfeit all proceeds from every vehicle they sold to refund consumers.
The lawsuit, filed Monday, alleges four individuals played a part in operating two dealerships
that misrepresented odometer readings and unlawfully sold vehicles “as is,” at times passing
used cars onto the consumer with serious mechanical defects and fraudulent inspection
stickers.
The Attorney General further alleges those involved did so without a state dealer’s license and
in open violation of repeated cease and desist orders from the state Division of Motor Vehicles.
“Our state cannot tolerate such blatant disregard for the law,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Any business that circumvents the law must be dealt with accordingly, and this lawsuit demonstrates our commitment to protect consumers …


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Multistate Cases

Coalition to Protect Retirees Against Unscrupulous Financial Advisors

States include:


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Coalition Urges Trump Administration Not to Weaken CFPB’s Investigative Authority

States include:


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**Coalition of AGs Urge Congress: Don't Give Lawyers a License to Use Abusive Debt Collection Practices**

**States include:**


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**States Receive Tobacco Settlement Funds**

**Additional States include:**


See also Earlier Reports on Tobacco Settlement Funds.

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Coalition of AGs Seek Preliminary Injunction Against Obamacare

**States include:**


See also Coalition of AGs Defend the Affordable Healthcare Act.
Coalition of AGs Defend the Affordable Healthcare Act

States include:


See also Coalition of AGs Seek Preliminary Injunction Against Obamacare.

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**PUERTO RICO**

April 25, 2018

Department of Justice initiates civil investigation in relation to the social network Facebook (San Juan) - The Secretary of Justice, Wanda Vázquez Garced, informed that the Office of Monopolistic Affairs of the Department of Justice began a civil investigation related to the business practices of the social network Facebook, about the collection of data and its consequent use by unauthorized third parties.

The request for information and production of documents seeks to obtain the necessary data to carry out an analysis of security practices and privacy of users in relation to the practice of Facebook in terms of sharing the data with third parties.

Puerto Ricans are aware of recent revelations that the data of 87 billion users of the social platform Facebook that third parties had access to their information without the knowledge or consent of its users. Facebook announced that it is in the process of notifying its users who may have been impacted by the unauthorized use of shared data.

The Assistant Secretary...


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**Medicaid Fraud**

**ALASKA**

April 24, 2018

The ARC of Anchorage to Pay Nearly $2.3 Million Dollars to Settle Medicaid False Claims Act Allegations

(Anchorage, Alaska) – The Alaska Department of Law announced today the Arc of Anchorage has agreed to resolve allegations the company violated the Federal False Claims Act by submitting false claims to the Alaska Medicaid Program and retaining Medicaid overpayment. Under the settlement agreement, The Arc of Anchorage has agreed to pay the Alaska Medicaid Program $2,299,392.16.

This settlement was the result of a coordinated effort by the Alaska Medicaid Fraud Control
Unit (MFCU), the Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Alaska Medicaid Program, and the cooperation of the Arc of Anchorage. The State contends the Arc submitted or authorized the submission of false claims to the Alaska Medicaid Program. Specifically, the State contends the Arc billed for services not provided, and billed for overlapping services with the same provider. The State further contends that the Arc failed to repay money owed to the Medicaid Program identified in audits performed by the...

ARIZONA

April 27, 2018

Rutledge Announces Two Women Sentenced for Deception

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the conviction of two women on unrelated charges. Lindsey Edmonson-Nevels pleaded no contest to theft by deception in Saline County Circuit Court and must pay $15,451.09 in restitution to the Arkansas Medicaid Program Trust Fund plus $4,000 in fines to the General Fund to the State of Arkansas. Edmonson-Nevels was also sentenced to 10 years probation and will be excluded from participation in the Medicaid program for five years. Eva Sykes pleaded guilty in Pulaski County Circuit Court and has already paid $25,000 in restitution to the Arkansas Medicaid Program Trust Fund and has been ordered to pay $600 in fines. Sykes was also sentenced to 3 years probation and will be excluded from participation in the Medicaid program.

“Lindsey Edmonson-Nevels and Eva Sykes broke the law and we have ensured that they will pay for their crimes,” said Attorney...
tolerated in Arkansas. Attorney and investigators at the Attorney General’s office continue to investigate these crimes and stopping this type of fraud continues to be a top priority.” Ward, 44, of Belleville pleaded guilty to one count of theft of property, a Class B felony, and one...


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CALIFORNIA

April 17, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Joins CMS to Announce Release of New Medicare Cards, Issues Consumer Alert for Seniors on Fraud and Identity Theft

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued a consumer alert following today’s joint announcement with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of a new effort to protect Medicare beneficiaries’ personal information by removing Social Security numbers from Medicare cards. To better safeguard the personal information of 5.7 million California seniors and people with disabilities, CMS will begin issuing new Medicare cards in April 2018 that assign each beneficiary a new 11-digit Medicare identification number.

“It is important that all seniors protect themselves from fraud and keep their information safe. A new Medicare card that no longer includes a person's Social Security number is one important way of achieving this goal. Today’s consumer alert provides additional tools to help seniors protect themselves against scam artists,” said Attorney General Becerra. “At the California Department of Justice, we will continue to take proactive steps to help seniors detect and avoid identity...


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CONNECTICUT

April 27, 2018

Conn. Reaches Joint State-Federal False Claims Act Settlement with New Haven, Bridgeport Behavioral Health Provider

A behavioral health and substance abuse treatment provider with locations in New Haven and Bridgeport and its owners have agreed to pay $1,378,533 to resolve a joint state-federal investigation into allegations that they submitted false claims for payment to Connecticut’s Medicaid program, Attorney General George Jepsen and state Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby said today.

New Era Rehabilitation Center and its co-founders and owners – Dr. Ebenezer Kolade and Dr.
Christina Kolade – are enrolled as providers in the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program (CMAP), which includes the state's Medicaid program. As part of their practice, they provide methadone treatment services for patients dealing with opioid addiction. Most of their patients are CMAP beneficiaries.
During the relevant time period, CMAP reimbursed methadone clinics by paying a weekly bundled rate that included all of the services associated with methadone maintenance, including the patient’s doses of methadone; the initial intake evaluation;...


April 26, 2018
State Files False Claims Act Lawsuit against East Hartford Behavioral Health Provider

The state has filed a lawsuit against an East Hartford-based licensed clinical social worker and her company alleging that they billed the state's Medicaid program for services that were not provided to Medicaid recipients, in violation of the Connecticut False Claims Act, Attorney General George Jepsen and state Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioner Roderick L. Bremby said today.
The state alleges that Selina Christian, a resident of Palmer, Mass., and her company, The Center of Attention LLC, engaged in a systematic and persistent pattern of submitting claims for payment through the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program (CMAP) for psychotherapy services that were never actually provided to her CMAP patients.
"We take very seriously our responsibility to safeguard taxpayers by eliminating fraud in our taxpayer-funded healthcare programs," said Attorney General Jepsen. "In this case, we believe our investigation has uncovered a deliberate and sustained scheme to defraud Connecticut’s Medicaid program by falsely billing...


FLORIDA
April 06, 2018
Unlicensed Nurse Arrested for Defrauding Medicaid Out of More Than $715,000
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Miramar Police Department today arrested an unlicensed nurse for defrauding the Medicaid program out of more than $715,000. According to the investigation, Lanre Saad Kelani, 61, practiced as a health care profession without a license for a Medicaid recipient with a serious disease that needed 24-hour home nursing care. Kelani used a sibling’s name and license number to provide the
services.
Kelani faces one count of grand theft and organized fraud, all first-degree felonies and one count of practicing as a health care professional without a license, a third-degree felony. If convicted, Kelani faces up to 95 years in prison. The Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office is prosecuting the case.
The Florida Attorney General’s Control Unit investigates allegations of patient abuse, neglect, and exploitation in facilities receiving payments under the Medicaid program. Additionally, the MFCU investigates and prosecutes...

➢ Original Press Release:
http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/2BF1BC8A3DAC06E985258267004D0E6E

April 05, 2018
North Florida Man Arrested for Neglecting and Defrauding Disabled Victims
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Control Unit and the Suwannee County Sheriff’s Office today arrested a North Florida man for allegedly using personal identification of disabled adults in a fraud scheme. Jared Austin Combee, 31, of McAlpin, allegedly falsified timesheets for services Combee never performed.
The MFCU investigation revealed that Combee falsified progress notes to his employer, Building Dreams, for services not rendered and left two disabled adults without care, supervision, and services that the physician ordered. From the falsified progress notes, Combee received more than $2,000 and defrauded Medicaid out of more than $4,000. Combee’s claimed service dates and times for the disabled adults directly conflicted with the times Combee worked at Advanced Auto Parts, the defendants second job.
Combee faces one count of organized fraud and two counts of criminal use of personal identification information of a disabled adult, all third-degree felonies. The State Attorney’s Office for the...

➢ Original Press Release:

KENTUCKY
April 27, 2018
Beshear: Medicaid Program to Receive $41,000 from Fraud Settlement Involving Genetic Testing
FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 27, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today announced a settlement of more than $41,000 as part of a case involving genetic testing services.
The settlement resolves allegations that Delaware-based Natera submitted false or fraudulent claims to government health care programs for its preconception and prenatal genetic testing services.

Specially, the states alleged that Natera improperly billed for tests that were not subject to reimbursement, caused misrepresentations of the services and thus falsely obtained payments, and caused reimbursements of tests at a higher rate than otherwise allowed.

As part of the agreement, Kentucky’s share of the settlement is $41,100 for the state and federal shares of restitution to the Medicaid program and other recovery. Kentucky’s amount from the settlement is based on the usage of the genetic testing services by doctors in the state. ...


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LOUISIANA

April 11, 2018

**Two Arrested on Medicaid Welfare Fraud Charges**

BATON ROUGE, LA – Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry today announced the arrests of two people for Medicaid Welfare Fraud.

“Welfare fraud not only jeopardizes resources from our most needy but it also steals from our taxpayers,” said General Landry. “From provider fraud to recipient fraud, all is wrong; and I will continue to do all that I legally can to stop it.”

Brian Joseph, 54 of New Orleans, was arrested on four counts of . He allegedly provided falsified service logs for times he was also working as a fulltime teacher in the Jefferson Parish School System – amounting to $6,937.29 paid by the Medicaid program for services not rendered.

Desiree Olivier, 27 of New Iberia, was arrested on two counts of . She allegedly submitted falsified timesheets and service logs for overlapping services on two clients – amounting to $674.12 paid by the Medicaid program for services...


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MARYLAND

April 13, 2018

**Baltimore Psychologist Pleads Guilty to Felony**

BALTIMORE, MD (April 13, 2018)-Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that Lindsey Daniels, 49, of Baltimore, pleaded guilty to one count of felony for submitting claims that caused the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to reimburse Daniels more than $30,000 for services that she did not provide.
Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Timothy J. Doory sentenced Daniels to a six-month suspended sentence; placed Daniels on five years unsupervised probation; and ordered that Daniels not work as, or with any provider in a federally-funded health care program for five years. Prior to sentencing, Daniels paid restitution to Medicaid in the amount of $30,029.70. Daniels is a licensed psychologist who operated a private mental health practice. From January 2011 through October 2014, Daniels submitted false claims in connection with her private practice. Specifically, Daniels submitted claims to Medicaid, and was reimbursed for services that she did not provide...


April 12, 2018
Pikesville Health Care Company to Pay Nearly $500,000 for Health Care Fraud
BALTIMORE, MD (April 12, 2018) –Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced that his office obtained a judgment of $491,922.02 against A1 Reliable Medical & Healthcare Services, Inc., based in Pikesville, and its owner, Bernadette Nwanguma, (collectively “Reliable”) for health care fraud. The Office of Attorney General filed a lawsuit in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County when Reliable failed to comply with its obligations under a 2014 settlement agreement. That settlement resolved allegations that Reliable submitted claims to the state’s Medicaid program for durable medical equipment and disposable medical supplies for which the company did not have a prescriber’s order or certification of continuous medical need, or for which it had not obtained a proof of delivery. The settlement also covered allegations that Reliable submitted claims for payment for home health care services provided by individuals who did not possess the requisite professional licenses.

“This company agreed to operate...


MISSISSIPPI
April 10, 2018
Former Meridian Nursing Home Employee Arrested On 7 Count Indictment
A former office manager at a Meridian nursing home faces 70 years in prison for allegedly stealing money from nursing home residents and the facility, announced Attorney General Jim Hood. Christy Moulds, 39, surrendered to authorities Monday and was booked into the Lauderdale County jail on a seven count indictment. A Lauderdale County grand jury charged her with six felony counts of exploitation of a vulnerable person and one felony count of embezzlement. The indictment states she stole more than $250 from each account of six different patients by
falsifying Trust Fund Cash Request Forms. Under the embezzlement charge, the indictment states that she took between $5,000 and $25,000 from the nursing home’s Resident Trust Account.

If convicted, Moulds faces 10 years for each count of exploitation and 10 years for embezzlement. She also faces up to $35,000 in fines. A charge is merely an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent...

➢ Original Press Release: http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/former-meridian-nursing-home-employee-arrested-on-7-count-indictment/

NEBRASKA
April 05, 2018
Attorney General Peterson Announces Settlement with Mary Lanning Healthcare
Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson announced today that the State of Nebraska and the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Inspector General have entered into a settlement with Mary Lanning Healthcare, doing business as Mary Lanning Hospital regarding Mary Lanning’s submission of false claims to the Nebraska Medicaid program and to Medicare.

The false claims were for services provided by one of Mary Lanning’s contract employees, Daniel Mazour, MD, who provided services to Mary Lanning’s patients at its Blue Hill Clinic. Mary Lanning billed Medicaid and Medicare for Mazour’s services. The hospital later discovered that Mazour billed for medically unnecessary services. The false claims were made from January 2010 until April 2016. After making the discovery, Mary Lanning self-disclosed the false claims to Medicaid and Medicare, which were then settled under the federal government’s Civil Monetary Penalty Law and the Nebraska False Medicaid Claims Act. ...


NEW YORK
April 23, 2018
A.G. Schneiderman Announces Arrest Of Jamestown Taxi Driver Charged With Defrauding Medicaid
BUFFALO – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced the arrest of Haimid Thompson, a/k/a “Mookie”, of Jamestown, NY for allegedly stealing over $7,500 from Medicaid by submitting false claims for rides he claimed he provided to a Medicaid recipient through the taxi service 716 Transportation, Inc. (716). Thompson allegedly paid an individual, who was working with the Attorney General’s office, to request transportation services from 716 and
then falsely reported to the company that he provided daily rides to that individual. The Attorney General’s ongoing investigation into Medicaid transit scams—an investigation dubbed “Operation Ghost Ride”—revealed that 716 submitted claims to, and received payment from, Medicaid for rides that in fact did not take place. Thompson was arrested on a 30-count felony complaint and was released on $5000 bail. He is charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony; Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the...


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

April 27, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Nearly $500,000 Settlement Over**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today announced a settlement with Dr. Carlos J. Privette, D.D.S., a dentist in Cary, over the submission of fraudulent claims to the North Carolina Medicaid program. Claims were submitted on Dr. Privette’s behalf for inhalation of nitrous oxide, performance of full mouth debridements, performance of limited and complete oral evaluations, and the surgical removal of teeth from Medicaid recipients. It has been alleged that these services were not medically necessary and/or had no supporting clinical documentation. Dr. Privette will pay the North Carolina Medicaid Program $470,000 in restitution.

“Providing unneeded services defrauds the taxpayer and may put patients at unnecessary risk,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “My office will not allow it.”

The investigation and settlement stemmed from Medicaid Investigations Division’s continuing focus on Medicaid dental providers within the program who are engaged in fraudulent practices involving a wide variety of services including, but not...


April 26, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Nearly $1 Million Settlement with K-Mart over Medicaid Overbilling**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today announced a settlement with Kmart Corporation (K-Mart) over allegations that K-Mart charged the Medicaid program more than its usual and customary charge for certain drugs. K-Mart will pay North Carolina and the federal government $932,492.11.

“Overbilling for drugs is unacceptable,” said Attorney General Stein. “It cheats taxpayers and
harms the Medicaid program – potentially keeping needed health care services from other people. My office will continue to fight against this type of abuse.”

In the mid-2000s, K-Mart began to offer discounted generic drugs to cash-paying customers through a variety of programs. It was alleged that K-Mart billed and received $5 from Medicaid for a prescription that cash-paying customers could purchase for $4. As a result of K-Mart’s actions, it received reimbursements from Medicaid, Medicare, and other federal programs that were higher than it was entitled to receive in violation of federal and state false...


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**OHIO**

April 26, 2018

**Athens County Home Health Care Agency Owner Sentenced for Committing $2 Million Fraud**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today joined Benjamin C. Glassman, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, and other officials in announcing that the owner of an Athens County home health care agency has been sentenced to prison for committing fraud.

Cheryl McGrath, 50, of Guysville, Ohio, was sentenced today in U.S. District Court to 36 months in prison for committing health care fraud and willful failure to pay over tax. The sentence was handed down by Chief U.S. District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

Joining Attorney General DeWine and U.S. Attorney Glassman in announcing the sentence were Ryan L. Korner, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Criminal Investigation; Lamont Pugh III, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General; and Angela L. Byers, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Cincinnati Field Office. ...


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**Pennsylvania**

April 19, 2018

**CASE UPDATE: Philadelphia-Area Dentist Pleads Guilty, Pays $1.5 Million Restitution for**

Harrisburg — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced a Philadelphia-area dentist has pleaded guilty to felony and paid $1.5 million in restitution after he and his company submitted fraudulent claims to the Medicaid Program for dental work which was never performed.

Dr. Ilya Babiner, 63, of Bridge View Road, Langhorne, pleaded guilty to and tampering with public records arising from $1.5 million in fraudulent claims he and his company submitted to
Medicaid for dental work which was not performed at his offices in Feasterville and Philadelphia. Babiner owned and operated General Dentistry Number One in Feasterville, which was also a defendant in the case and pleaded guilty as well.

“When people commit , they’re stealing taxpayers’ money that’s used to assist people who are in real need of those health care services,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “It’s wrong, it’s criminal, and we’re taking action to stop it...


April 18, 2018

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Charges Ohio Pair with Defrauding PA’s Medicaid Program

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced felony charges against an Ohio man and woman for their roles in a scheme to defraud Pennsylvania’s Medical Assistance program out of nearly $50,000 and split the money.

John Miller, 57, of Orchard Dale Drive Northwest, Canton, Ohio, and Jeanette Turner, 36, of East Porter Street, Malvern, Ohio, were charged with theft by deception and provider prohibited acts for falsely submitting timesheets for Medicaid services that were never performed.

“This is a case of a Medicaid recipient moving out of state and fraudulently stealing Pennsylvania tax dollars, falsifying records for the care he was supposed to receive, and splitting the money with his co-conspirator for their own gain,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “Medicaid provides essential medical care to Pennsylvanians who require assistance with daily living. Criminals like these who defraud our Medicaid program will be held accountable.”

The investigation began last July when agents...


Consumer Advocacy

ALASKA

April 19, 2018

There’s No Such Thing as a Free Lunch

Out-of-state home improvement scammers are back in Alaska. Beware solicitations inviting you to a free lunch. Lunch will include a hard sell for expensive home improvements such as insulation, roofing, or driveway paving. Local officials have identified free lunch events in Mat-Su that are parting elderly homeowners with their hard earned dollars.
Remember that when contractors are meeting you at a restaurant, it may mean that they have no local licenses or business presence. If something goes wrong with their work, they will be long gone and it will cost you even more to fix the problem. Be wary of door-to-door solicitations as well as invitations to a free lunch. If you need repairs to your home, do your research and use a reliable, local contractor licensed to do business in Alaska.


ARIZONA

April 13, 2018

New Arizona Law to Protect Data Breach Victims

PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich is proud to announce Governor Ducey signed HB2154 into law, updating and strengthening Arizona’s data breach consumer protection statute. The bill, sponsored by Representative T.J. Shope and authored by the Arizona Attorney General’s Office, bolsters protections and adds notification requirements for victims of a data breach.

“I applaud Representative Shope and members of the legislature for adopting these common sense improvements to our data breach laws,” said Attorney General Brnovich. “Consumers have a right to know when their sensitive information has been breached so they can protect themselves from financial loss. A key component of the legislation was notification to the Attorney General’s Office of a breach. My office will be better positioned to investigate massive breaches in the future and assist consumers to protect their assets from theft.”

Highlights from the new state law include:

Expanding the definition of protected “personal information” to include online...


ARKANSAS

April 25, 2018

AG Alert: Statewide Prescription Drug Take Back is April 28

LITTLE ROCK – As the opioid epidemic continues to wreak havoc across the state, Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge is encouraging all Arkansans to participate in the statewide Prescription Drug Take Back this Saturday, April 28. In the face of an epidemic that claimed 401 Arkansans in 2016, it is more critical than ever to clean out medicine cabinets and ensure that unused, expired and unwanted prescriptions remain out of the hands of children and those with addiction.
“The number of Arkansans impacted by the opioid epidemic is staggering and we all must work together to end opioid abuse and misuse,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have unknowingly become drug dealers to their family members. By cleaning out our medicine cabinets and properly disposing of expired and unused prescription medication, whether at the Arkansas Prescription Drug Take Back on April 28 or one of my office’s take…


April 18, 2018

AG Alert: Storm Victims Seek Repairs
LITTLE ROCK – Con artists are trying to take advantage of Arkansans who suffered property damage from the eleven tornados that touched down across our state last Friday, April 13. Damage is strung from the northwest corner to the southeast corner of the Natural State, leaving countless storm victims vulnerable to scams as they assess the damage and seek repairs this week.

“Home repair scams are common following severe weather and place additional strain on hard working Arkansans when repairs aren’t completed as promised,” said Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge. “These bad actors prey on victims of severe weather and take advantage of the unexpected and urgent nature of storm damage repairs. I urge all Arkansans to stay alert and use caution as they begin the clean-up process.”

Attorney General Rutledge released the following tips to ensure they hire a reputable contractor to complete the repairs:

Beware of door-to-door solicitors selling home-repair...


April 04, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL ALERT: Springtime Scams Hit the Streets
LITTLE ROCK – Scammers are taking to the streets to con homeowners, convincing unknowing and trusting Arkansans to make costly repairs that are not needed. Worse, these criminals may demand payment up front for promised work that they have no intention of completing.

“Many hard working Arkansans look to make pricey updates and repairs to their homes during the spring season,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “But con artists are taking advantage of the warmer temperatures and looking to scam homeowners this time of year. Consumers should do their due diligence in hiring contractors and researching companies to ensure they are reputable.”

Attorney General Rutledge released the following tips homeowners should consider before
hiring a contractor:
Think twice before hiring out-of-town or unknown contractors, especially those soliciting door-to-door.
Question contractors who use terms like “special introductory offer,” “limited-time offer” or those who offer discounts to use your house as a “model home.” …


CALIFORNIA

April 27, 2018
Attorney General Becerra: $30 Million in Grants Available to Local Governments and Law Enforcement to Reduce Illegal Sales of Tobacco
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today urged local governments and agencies to apply for a new grant program that aims to reduce the illegal sale of tobacco products, especially to minors. The multimillion-dollar grant program was established and is funded by the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016 (Prop. 56).
The deadline for localities to apply is May 25, 2018. Additional information on application requirements and eligibility criteria is available here.
Examples of local entities that could apply for the grant funding include ...


April 23, 2018
Attorney General Becerra Fights to Protect Californians’ Out-of-Pocket Healthcare Costs, Opposes Expansion of Low-Quality Health Plans
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today expressed strong opposition to a Trump Administration proposal that would allow insurers to sell inadequate, short-term health plans to consumers. The proposed change would flood the market with short-term plans that do not include essential benefits like coverage of preexisting conditions, maternity care, or substance abuse treatment. While the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has helped millions of Californians access more affordable coverage, this proposal would create a loophole for insurance companies that undermines this progress. According to the Urban Institute, under this proposed rule, California would face an estimated 9.4 percent increase in individuals without coverage, and would see patients’ premiums increase by 17.8 percent.
“This is just another attempt by the Trump Administration to undermine the ACA and go back to the days of buyer beware health insurance. California has led the country in ensuring high-

56
quality and affordable healthcare and we do...


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**DELAWARE**

April 16, 2018

**Attorney General Denn Announces New Online Data Security Breach Reporting Resource**

Amendments to Delaware’s data security breach notification law that went into effect Saturday require companies to notify the Delaware Attorney General when they experience a breach affecting the personal information of more than 500 Delaware residents, and the Delaware Department of Justice’s Consumer Protection Unit has launched an online portal to assist consumers, businesses, and other individuals and organizations who are involved in, or want to learn more about, data security breaches affecting Delaware residents.

Since 2005, any person who conducts business in Delaware, and who owns, licenses, or maintains personal information of Delaware residents, has had to provide notice to Delaware residents when the personal information of those Delaware residents has been subject to a security breach. Amendments to Delaware law passed in 2017, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach and Sen. David Sokola, and backed by the Consumer Protection Unit, greatly expanded the definition of “personal information” to protect more...


April 04, 2018

**Attorney General’s Office Warns Delawareans About Vacation Rental Scams**

With people already making summer vacation plans, the Consumer Protection Unit of the Delaware Department of Justice warns Delawareans to be careful when looking for a vacation rental. Scammers operating rental schemes find legitimate rental postings and capture the information and photos of the property, and then list it on Craigslist or other online advertising platforms. Unsuspecting consumers looking for a good deal on a vacation rental find the bogus posting, send a deposit, and receive confirmation of their rental only to arrive to find other people in the home, unable to gain access, or otherwise turned away from the property they believed they had rented.

Scams also can occur with regards to long term leases for homes or apartments, where scammers may even have changed to locks illegally on a property and allow someone to move in, even though they are not the true owner.

All consumers should be diligent before...

CONSUMER ALERT: Attorney General Racine Urges Consumers to Protect Themselves on Facebook and Other Social Media

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Karl A. Racine is urging all District residents to take action to protect their privacy online in the wake of recent reports that the private information of as many as 87 million Facebook users was misused.

“Recent disclosures about how much information Facebook collects from its users and how that information is handled raise serious questions about Facebook’s policies, and my counterparts and I have demanded answers from Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg,” said Attorney General Racine. “In the meantime, District residents need to take extra steps to protect themselves.”

Cambridge Analytica, a political data firm, was able to obtain and use information Facebook gathers about its users without those users’ knowledge. At the time, Facebook’s policies allowed third-party software developers to access the personal data of “friends” of users who downloaded apps on the platform, without the consent of those “friends.” News reports suggest that the personal information...


Attorney General Racine Warns District Residents About Six Scams to Avoid This Tax Season

WASHINGTON – With this year’s April 17 deadline looming for filing District and federal income tax returns, Attorney General Karl A. Racine today cautioned District residents to be on the lookout for fraudulent schemes common during tax season. He also warned taxpayers that recent data breaches affecting tens of millions of consumers mean that fraudsters and their schemes have evolved – and consumers should be on the lookout.

“Because of the Equifax data breach and similar breaches over the past couple of years, scammers have enough information to pull off increasingly elaborate deceptions,” said Attorney General Racine. “We’ve taken note of warnings we’re getting from the Internal Revenue Service, and we’ve also offered District residents information and tools they can use to protect themselves.”

If you believe you have been a victim of one of the below tax-season scams, please call our Consumer Protection Hotline at (202) 442-9828 or send an e-mail...

➤ Original Press Release: https://oag.dc.gov/release/attorney-general-racine-warns-district-residents-0
Carr Celebrates April as Financial Literacy Month in Georgia

ATLANTA, GA – Governor Nathan Deal has proclaimed April as Financial Literacy Month in Georgia. Accordingly, Attorney General Chris Carr is encouraging Georgians to take advantage of the educational resources available through the Office of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Unit.

“Understanding how to manage your money, make smart purchases and protect your data is key to having greater financial ease and success,” said Attorney General Carr. “Georgians can call or visit our Consumer Protection Unit’s website to learn more about the resources we have in place to help them with their important financial decisions.”

A 2016 Federal Reserve study reported that 44 percent of adults either could not cover an emergency expense costing $400 without borrowing money or selling assets, and the national personal saving rate of disposable personal income was 3.2 percent in January 2018, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. In addition, student loan debt continues to rise.


AG Curtis Hill offers Tax Day tips for Hoosiers who find themselves victims of tax identity theft

With April 17 being Tax Day, some Hoosiers will discover they are victims of tax identity theft. This occurs when someone files a fraudulent tax return on another person’s behalf, resulting in the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) potentially rejecting the return filed by the appropriate person.

A victim of this type of scam should:

1) Contact the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) via IndianaConsumer.com and file an ID theft complaint. Our office can help you navigate the next steps in the process.
2) File a police report documenting the identity theft.
3) Contact the IRS via identitytheft.gov.
4) Immediately request copies of your credit report from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. Look them over immediately for any signs of suspicious activity. Place alerts or freezes on your reports if you suspect an identity theft problem.

As of last week, OAG has received 21 complaints in 2018 for this type of scam.

IOWA

April 19, 2018

Governor signs AG’s bill to protect veterans

Iowa veterans will receive added consumer protection after Gov. Kim Reynolds signed Senate File 2200, which was proposed by the Iowa Attorney General’s office. The bill prohibits anyone from receiving compensation for advising or assisting someone with veterans’ benefits or referring a person to an accredited veteran service representative. It also requires organizers of events or presentations on veterans benefits to disclose that the event is not affiliated with U.S. or Iowa departments of veterans affairs.

“Applying for veterans’ benefits is free, and Iowa veterans and their families should beware of advisers who are not accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,” said Attorney General Tom Miller.

This bill passed the Iowa House on March 19 on a 96-0 vote and the Iowa Senate on April 2, 47-0. Reynolds signed the bill on Monday. The bill was managed by Sen. Ken Rozenboom, R-Oskaloosa, and Rep. Terry Baxter, R-Garner.

In February, Miller...


April 10, 2018

Governor signs AG’s bill to end credit freeze fees

DES MOINES — Starting July 1, Iowans will pay no fees to place or remove a freeze on access to their credit reports. On Tuesday, Gov. Kim Reynolds signed Senate File 2177, which was proposed by the Iowa Attorney General’s office as well as state legislators.

Iowans pay some of the highest freeze-related fees in the nation to credit reporting agencies. “I just don’t think these fees are fair to Iowa consumers, and the Equifax case is Exhibit A,” Attorney General Tom Miller said. “If a company you have no control over exposes your personal information through negligence or as a result of someone else’s criminal act, you shouldn’t get left holding the bag simply because you want to protect yourself from identity thieves through credit freezes.”

The bill passed the Iowa Senate on March 20 on a 49-0 vote and the Iowa House on March 28, 100-0. The bill was...

KANSAS

April 05, 2018

Kansas AG sending notices to 25,000 Kansans to reach some who might be eligible for refunds

TOPEKA – (April 5, 2018) – The Kansas Attorney General’s Office is mailing notices to nearly 25,000 Kansans who may be eligible for a refund of money they sent by wire transfer to scammers, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

In 2017, law enforcement officials entered into a settlement with Western Union, which was accused of knowingly allowing its wire-transfer services to be used by scammers to defraud people. As part of the settlement, Western Union set aside $586 million to pay claims from people who lost money to scammers and transmitted the lost funds by Western Union wire transfer. However, to receive a refund, Kansans who have been scammed and qualify for a refund must file a claim with Western Union before May 31, 2018.

“To get their money back, Kansans who were scammed and who qualify for these refunds must file a claim,” Schmidt said. “We are concerned many Kansans who…


KENTUCKY

April 26, 2018

Scam Alert: Do Some Digging before Investing in Gold

FRANKFORT, KY. (April 26, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear issued a new scam alert today, after two Kentuckians reported losing nearly $900,000 this year to scammers promising access to gold markets and millions in investment returns.

A Fayette County resident recently lost $420,000 to a con artist on Facebook who said “investing” in a foreign gold market would quickly generate millions of dollars. An Inez resident also “invested” $475,000 with a con artist who guaranteed gold.

Gold scammers typically attract victims with deceptive sales scripts, stating that the precious metal markets can double and triple in just 30-days and are less risky than traditional IRAs, 401(k)s. The scam typically ends with the victim sending money to a scammer to purchase gold they never receive. …


April 23, 2018

Beshear: Kentucky Can, Should Require Free, Open Internet

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 23, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear says Kentucky has the
authority to ensure Kentucky families have high-quality internet despite current federal rollbacks of net neutrality.

Beshear is among more than 20 state attorneys general fighting actions by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that retreat from previous broadband protections requiring internet providers to remain “neutral” in the services it provides to customers.

Beshear said the FCC’s net neutrality repeal order still allows states, as internet consumers, to create net neutrality though their purchasing power, and at least five governors have taken a bipartisan stance by signing executive orders requiring all internet service providers contracting with their state to adhere to net neutrality for all of their state’s consumers.

“The internet is a part of our state and national infrastructure that is just as critical as our roads and bridges,” Beshear said. “Small business, school districts and rural hospitals rely on...


April 06, 2018

Scam Alert: Do Not Pack Your Suitcase for a Scam Vacation

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 6, 2018) – As many Kentuckians begin to plan their summer vacation, Attorney General Andy Beshear is warning of scam calls offering deep discounts on travel to Orlando, Florida, and the Bahamas.

Beshear said his office issued a Scam Alert after Kentuckians in Bourbon, Boyd, Calloway, Fayette, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison and Woodford counties have reported receiving vacation scam calls.

In a recording obtained by the Office of the Attorney General, a caller claims qualified travelers can book a weeklong vacation to Orlando, Florida, right next to Disney, and a three-day stay on a beach in the Bahamas for 75 percent off the retail rate. The caller says vacationers receive a complementary cruise to the Bahamas, a bonus gift and food.

Beshear said these type of calls often end with a victim providing an upfront payment and their personal and financial information in exchange for the promise of a luxury...


LOUISIANA

April 24, 2018

Fair Housing Month is Great Reminder of Our Rights

BATON ROUGE, LA - In recognition of the 50th Annual Fair Housing Month, Attorney General Jeff Landry is encouraging Louisiana citizens to know their rights when renting or buying a home and to report any potential violations.
"Federal and State Laws are clear: it is illegal to practice housing discrimination based on someone's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability," said General Landry. "My office is working together with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to inform Louisianans of their rights and ensure they are treated fairly." General Landry's Office routinely holds Fair Housing Workshops across the State to inform contractors, developers, architects, landlords, tenants, housing advocates, and the general public of their housing rights under Louisiana law. In partnership with HUD, the Louisiana Department of Justice (LADOJ) handles various types of fair housing discrimination complaints; including: real estate, mortgage and lending, and rental dwellings of...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/7570?Typeld=1&CatId=3

April 16, 2018
Attorney General Jeff Landry Highlights Financial Literacy Month
Baton Rouge, LA – April is Financial Literacy Month, and Attorney General Jeff Landry is offering tips on how Louisiana consumers may establish healthy habits while managing their finances.

“Financial planning is something that people of all ages should take seriously,” said General Landry. “My office is happy to offer tips to consumers on how to better protect their personal information and better plan for their financial futures.”

With many consumers interested in saving for a special purchase like a new home or car, a college education, retirement, or an emergency financial fund – General Landry is offering the following tips to assist consumers in their efforts:

Create a budget in order to keep track of how much money is coming in and going out and where it is being spent.
Consider using a payroll savings plan that automatically deposits a certain amount of money into your account every payday....

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/7566?Typeld=1&CatId=3

April 09, 2018
Several Child Products Recently Recalled, Attorney General Jeff Landry Cautions Consumers
Baton Rouge, LA - Attorney General Jeff Landry is advising consumers to be mindful of various child products that have been recently recalled.

“As Attorney General, I am dedicated to making Louisiana an even better place to live - starting with the safety of our families,” Attorney General Jeff Landry said. “I encourage all parents and guardians to be aware of recently recalled products to ensure the safety of our State’s youth.”

Attorney General Jeff Landry listed the following recalled products ...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/7563?catId=3
MISSISSIPPI
April 06, 2018
Shred Day Results Announced
Events were hosted last month in Jackson, Tupelo, Hattiesburg, and D’Iberville as an easy and free way for consumers to safely get rid of sensitive paper documents. This year marked the twelfth year for the annual event, with a total of 1,184 consumers participating.
Consumer Protection Division staff Front L-R: Investigator Leslie Owens, Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) Gail Lowery, Division Director Bridgette Wiggins, Annie Jones Back L-R: SAAG Patrick Beasley, Shred Day Event Coordinator Lana Fuqua, SAAG Martin Millette
“The turnout for this event confirms consumers’ awareness of the importance of shredding sensitive documents,” said General Hood. “At a time where personal information is considered gold, it’s important to take the proper steps to protect our identity. This free service to the state wouldn’t be possible without our sponsors, who together are helping Mississippians avoid becoming victims of identity theft.”
The totals for both poundage and turnout are included below along with...

Original Press Release: http://www.ago.state.ms.us/releases/11192/

NEW HAMPSHIRE
April 04, 2018
Consumer Alert – IRS Related Scams Continue to be Prevalent Throughout New Hampshire
Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald warns New Hampshire residents that IRS scam calls are on the increase throughout New Hampshire. In the last few days, the Attorney General’s Office has received over 90 complaints related to IRS scams. Many of these calls are being directed to senior citizens. In the past few years, there have been a flood of these calls to New Hampshire residents, and throughout the country.
Residents report receiving unsolicited calls fraudulently claiming to be from the IRS and demanding payment for delinquent taxes. The callers typically ask for some sort of immediate payment and threaten arrest, wage garnishment or other forms of legal process to coerce the payment.
The IRS continues to caution taxpayers that, with very few exceptions, their first contact with a delinquent taxpayer will not be a phone call but will be in the form of a letter from the IRS sent through the mail....

NEW JERSEY

April 02, 2018

Division of Consumer Affairs to Hold Public Events on Classification of Marijuana as a Controlled Substance in New Jersey

NEWARK – The Division of Consumer Affairs ("the Division") today announced plans to solicit public comment on how marijuana is classified under state law and whether any change in its classification status is warranted. The Division will solicit comments during a series of public events, known as “informal conferences,” in Newark and Trenton later this month. The Division also will accept written submissions.

The informal conferences - scheduled for April 19 and April 24 – are part of a process to reevaluate whether the currently accepted uses for medical marijuana warrant a change in its classification as a “Schedule I” drug in New Jersey, a designation that ranks it alongside heroin and LSD as the most strictly regulated drugs in the state.

The Division is the agency authorized to schedule drugs for regulation under the New Jersey Controlled Dangerous Substances Law. The Division schedules controlled dangerous substances on a scale from...


NEW MEXICO

April 24, 2018

REFUND ALERT: AG Balderas Urges New Mexicans to File Scam Claims with Western Union for Share of $586 Million Settlement

Albuquerque, NM - Attorney General Hector Balderas is alerting New Mexicans who lost money to scammers using Western Union’s money transfer system between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017, that they can now file a claim to get their money back by going to www.FTC.gov/WU before May 31, 2018.

“New Mexican families got ripped off while Western Union made huge profits,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “Whether a company scams the hard earned money of New Mexico consumers directly, or allows scammers to get paid by turning a blind eye to their illegal activities, my office will do everything in its power to get that money back in the pockets of New Mexicans. I want to make sure New Mexicans receive all of the money they are owed, so I am urging them to file claims before May 31, 2018.”

The refund program follows a settlement with the Western Union Company,...

NEW YORK
April 26, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Issues Urgent Alert Warning New Yorkers Of Telephone Scam Targeting Chinese-American Community

NEW YORK—Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today issued an urgent consumer alert, notifying New Yorkers of a new telephone scam in which consumers receive calls from potential fraudsters impersonating the Chinese Consulate to demand payment in exchange for a package or to prevent punishment from the consulate office. New Yorkers who receive such calls should immediately contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at 1-877-FTC-HELP.

“It’s unconscionable that someone would prey on New Yorkers — including vulnerable recent immigrants — to try to turn a profit,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “As these scammers continue to target people across the state, I’m urging all New Yorkers to be on high alert and immediately contact the FTC if they receive such a call.”

The Attorney General’s office recently received a report that New York consumers were receiving calls from someone falsely claiming to be a representative from a nearby consulate office. Some consumers reported receiving...


April 09, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Statement On Final Trump University Settlement

New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement upon U.S. District Court Judge Gonzalo Curiel’s order finalizing the $25 million Trump University settlement:

“Judge Curiel’s order finalizing the $25 million Trump University settlement means that victims of Donald Trump’s fraudulent university will finally receive the relief they deserve. We are particularly pleased that the final settlement we negotiated with class counsel ensures that members of the class will receive an even higher settlement than anyone originally anticipated. This settlement marked a stunning reversal by President Trump, who for years refused to compensate the victims of his sham university.

My office won’t hesitate to hold those who commit fraud accountable, no matter how rich or powerful they may be.”

In 2013, Attorney General Schneiderman sued Donald Trump for swindling thousands of Americans out of millions of dollars through Trump University. In late 2016, Attorney General Schneiderman and class counsel announced a $25...


66
April 05, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Releases New Report On Mutual Fund Fees, Announces Agreement By 13 Major Firms To Make New And Enhanced Disclosures To Retail Investors Following Industry-Wide Investigation

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced that after an industry-wide investigation into mutual fund disclosures and fees, 13 major mutual fund firms—including those run by some of the largest players in the mutual fund industry—have agreed to voluntarily publish important information about their mutual funds to all retail investors. Under the agreements announced today, the firms will disclose new information that can help retail investors determine whether a higher-cost, actively managed mutual fund fits their investment goals better than another, lower-cost alternative.

The newly disclosed information, known as Active Share, measures the percentage of stock holdings in a fund’s portfolio that differs from that fund’s benchmark index—key information investors can use to determine whether a higher-fee, actively managed fund has the potential to beat the benchmark returns of a lower-cost, passively managed fund. The AG’s investigation found that while these major mutual fund firms regularly disclosed this information...


April 02, 2018

A.G. Schneiderman Statement On Trump Administration Rollback Of National Auto Fuel Economy And Pollution Standards

New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman released the following statement on the Trump Administration’s announcement today that it will roll back national fuel economy and pollution standards for automobiles:

“By cooking the books on its review of national auto emissions standards, the Trump Administration is putting special interests ahead of New Yorkers’ health and wallets.

“This illegal rollback of achievable, common sense fuel efficiency and pollution standards for cars will result in higher fuel costs and more dangerous air pollution, including the carbon dioxide that drives climate change – creating real, direct, and damaging impacts on New Yorkers and our environment. ...”


NORTH CAROLINA

April 26, 2018

Distraction Scammers

Law enforcement officials in Wake County have received multiple reports of scammers posing
as flooring salesmen, and targeting the elderly. These crooks work as a two or three-person team. They often put the victim off-balance by pretending to have met or done work for them previously. They may also claim to have known a close family member, or to have once lived in the neighborhood. After gaining entry, one scammer engages the victim in conversation. Another brings flooring samples into the home, but eventually one of the group slips away to steal credit cards, cash and jewelry. These thieves are striking every few months, hitting one or two victims before moving to another area.

In this instance the suspects are male but another version of the distraction scam involves two women, one of them apparently pregnant and in some distress. They appear at a potential victim’s door, asking if the pregnant...


April 18, 2018
North Carolina Price Gouging Law in Effect in Guilford County
RALEIGH – The price gouging law that protects consumers from scammers is now in effect in Guilford County due to the City of Greensboro and Guilford County’s states of emergency. Attorney General Josh Stein notified businesses and consumers today to be on the lookout for any issues.

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

North Carolina has a strong statute against price gouging – charging too much during a time of crisis – that is tied directly to a declaration of a state of emergency. When the City of Greensboro and Guilford...


April 16, 2018
Internet Rental Scams
Finding affordable housing is a challenge in many parts of North Carolina, and rental scammers are well aware of this fact. They exploit the situation by “hijacking” existing online ads (substituting their contact information for the real owner or agent), or by cutting and pasting photos from actual rental property listings to create a new online listing, or by making up online listings for rental units that don’t exist.

These scammers, who tend to use free sites like Craigslist to post their fake ads, generally offer to rent at a bargain price to get your attention. If you have conditions (needing it on short
notice, only needing it short term, or not knowing how long you will need it), those conditions will turn out to be no problem for the owner or agent. Depending on the length of the rental you need, be wary of owners or agents who ask you...


April 11, 2018

**As Tax Day Approaches, Feds Smooth Path for Tax Fraud Victims**

Tax ID Theft occurs when someone files a tax return (and claims a refund) in someone else’s name, and it creates multiple headaches and problems for the victim. Although Tax ID Theft is declining from previous years, it was confirmed by the IRS in 597,000 tax returns in 2017. A total of $6 billion dollars in fake refund claims were detected and stopped. Victims of any kind of ID Theft are strongly encouraged to make use of the Federal Trade Commission’s comprehensive IdentityTheft.gov website, which allows victims to report the ID theft and receive a personal recovery plan. Now, a cooperative effort between the FTC and the IRS will allow victims of Tax ID Theft to use that website to report it, saving time and steps as they work to clean up the mess caused by the tax refund scammers. ...


April 05, 2018

**Blue Cross, State Health Plan Warn of Phony Calls**

The North Carolina State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (which administers the plan), are reporting that some of their members are receiving phone calls from scammers. The callers identify themselves as representatives of BCBSNC or the Health Plan, and ask for confidential information including Social Security numbers. The scammers have manipulated or “spoofed” Caller ID, so some of the calls appear to be coming from a BCBSNC telephone number. If you receive one of these calls, hang up. Then call the number on the back of your BCBSNC/Health Plan ID card to report the scam. If you were deceived into surrendering your private information by one of these scammers, consider getting a free security freeze on your credit files, to prevent crooks from opening new accounts using your stolen information. In fact, security freezes are recommended for all consumers because...

OHIO

April 12, 2018

Naloxone Rebate Extended, More than $730,000 Saved
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine announced today that a rebate agreement that has saved Ohio agencies more than $730,000 on the cost of naloxone has been extended for another year.

The renewed agreement with Amphastar Pharmaceuticals, Inc. will continue to allow non-federal public entities in Ohio to receive a $6 rebate for each Amphastar naloxone syringe purchased until March 31, 2019.

"This rebate has had a major impact on the cost associated with using naloxone to save lives," said Attorney General DeWine. "Those battling addiction deserve the chance to recover, and by securing this rebate for Ohio, agencies have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars off of the normal price for this drug."

So far, the rebate has saved 127 agencies a total of $732,384 for naloxone purchases made between March 2015 and December 2017.

A full list of agencies that have received naloxone rebates can be found on the Ohio Attorney...


April 03, 2018

More Tax Scams Reported as Filing Deadline Nears
(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today warned that more consumers are reporting tax scams ahead of the April 17 tax-filing deadline.

In March, the Ohio Attorney General’s Help Center logged more than 340 reports of tax scams, compared to about 160 in January and 280 in February.

“Scam artists cast a wide net. They know not everyone will fall for it, but some will,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We encourage people to be very careful, especially this time of year. Scam artists will try to scare you to death, saying they’re the IRS and they’re coming to throw you in jail if you don’t pay them immediately. The real IRS doesn’t operate like that.”

Among the tax scams reported to the Ohio Attorney General’s Office, the IRS impostor phone scam is the most common. In this scam, people generally get a call saying the federal government is taking action against them...

OKLAHOMA

April 24, 2018

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter today hosted the eleventh annual Consumer Protection Day to raise awareness of scams and fraud and named the 2018 Consumer Champion.

Opening the event, Attorney General Hunter spoke about the important work being done by the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Unit on behalf of Oklahomans.

“In 2017, our team of attorneys, investigators and support staff in the consumer protection unit received nearly 20,000 complaints and recovered close to $250,000 for victims and over $135,000 in criminal restitution,” Attorney General Hunter said. “Our team works overtime to protect Oklahomans from fraud and help make them whole after they become victims.”

Receiving the 2017 Brad Edwards Consumer Champion Award was BancFirst Vice President and Operational Security Officer Sharon Lewis-Williams.

“Through her career and volunteer service, Sharon Lewis-Williams has spent her life in service to others,” Attorney General Hunter said. “She is a passionate advocate for the elderly and exemplifies...


April 20, 2018
Attorney General Hunter Warns About Charity Scams during Wildfires, Provides Tips to Avoid Fraud

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter is urging Oklahomans to use caution and to carefully research charities before making a donation to benefit individuals impacted by the recent wildfires.

Attorney General Hunter said the assistance through charitable giving and donations provided by Oklahomans after a disaster is crucial in the course of recovery.

“By nature, Oklahomans are giving people who want nothing more than to help their neighbors in a time of need,” Attorney General Hunter said. “Unfortunately, fraud inevitably follows disasters, which is why I am urging Oklahomans to use caution and research organizations and charities claiming to be providing aid to victims of wildfires. By thoroughly vetting each organization, or by only giving to familiar charities, individuals looking to help can avoid becoming victims themselves.”

Charities looking to solicit donations in Oklahoma must be registered through the Secretary of State. A list of registered charities is available on the Secretary...

Pennsylvania

April 13, 2018
Attorney General Josh Shapiro Warns Pennsylvanians of Job Search and Employment Scams

HARRISBURG – Attorney General Josh Shapiro today warned Pennsylvania consumers to use caution when searching for job opportunities online.

The Office of Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection recently learned of a new online scam that targets job seekers. Scam artists are targeting online employment sites with fake listings in order to obtain personal information, such as birthdays or Social Security numbers, from unsuspecting applicants. Some employment scammers also directly request cash payments by charging consumers an “application fee” to apply for a fake position.

Here’s how the scams work: Job seekers go to online employment sites, such as Monster.com or Indeed.com, and see an interesting job opportunity. The listing asks them to pay $50 or more as a “fee” to apply for the position — or give their personal information as well. These are likely scams.

“Scam artists are always trying new ways to cheat people out of their hard-earned money. ... 


Rhode Island

April 03, 2018
As Tax Filing Deadline Approaches, IRS Scam Ramps Up

With the federal and state tax filing deadline in a couple of weeks, consumer calls into the Rhode Island Attorney General’s Office report a significant uptick in the frequency and aggressiveness of IRS scam phone calls. Consumers report receiving multiple phone calls per day, with most calls threatening immediate arrest for failure to make a payment for allegedly owed taxes.

"I think most, if not all, Rhode Islanders know this is a scam, but with these increasingly aggressive scare tactics, especially as we get closer to the filing deadline, I am concerned that vulnerable groups — including new taxpayers and older residents — will feel pressured into paying these scammers," said Attorney General Kilmartin. "I implore everyone with older parents, children, relatives, and neighbors to have a conversation on how to spot this scam and what to do when these phone calls are received."

Since the IRS scam first became prevalent in...

Original Press Release: https://www.ri.gov/press/view/32888
VERMONT

April 02, 2018

Attorney General, Tax Commissioner Warn Vermonters of Tax Scams, offer Helpful Tips as Filing Deadline Nears

Vermont’s Attorney General and Tax Commissioner are urging Vermonters to avoid the worst kind of April Fool’s trick: scams that could lure them into losing hundreds or thousands of dollars. State officials met at the Tax Department two weeks before the April 16th tax filing deadline to warn Vermonters about the “IRS scam”, identity theft, and what they can do to protect themselves.

“Don’t be fooled,” said Attorney General T.J. Donovan. “With tax season just around the corner we want Vermonters to be alert and avoid problems that could cost them money,” he said. Donovan said that his office received over 5,000 calls reporting scam activity in the last year. More than 45% of those were related to the IRS scam. “The IRS will not call you if you owe them money, they send a letter,” said Donovan. “If you aren’t sure, hang up and call the IRS directly.”

Suzanne Marshall of...


WEST VIRGINIA

April 25, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Announces Credit Report Event During Money Smart Week In Hurricane

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced a free credit report event in Hurricane to celebrate Money Smart Week, which will emphasize the importance of identifying and reporting elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The event will take place Thursday, April 26 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at John Henson Senior Center, 2800 Putnam Ave., Hurricane.

Office representatives will host numerous events across the Metro Valley to raise awareness as to the warning signs of financial exploitation, a key part of the Attorney General’s newly-formed elder abuse litigation and prevention unit.

Each location will have special material on how to identify and report exploitation. It will include contact information for the Attorney General’s newly established senior services and elder abuse hotline – 304-558-1155 or HelpForSeniors@wvago.gov.

“Money Smart Week allows us to provide important information to consumers of all ages, however the vulnerability of our senior citizen population demands specific attention,” Attorney...
April 16, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Warns Against Price Gouging During State of Emergency

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warned against price gouging during a state of emergency due to heavy rain across West Virginia. Laws prohibiting such activity took effect Monday with the governor’s declaration of a state of emergency in Barbour, Braxton, Gilmer, Lewis, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur and Webster counties.

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

“This is a time when all West Virginians should come together and help their neighbors,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Historically, West Virginians have responded heroically during times of need.”

The law takes effect during any state of emergency or state of preparedness, as issued by West Virginia’s governor. Price gouging laws remain in effect until the declaration is lifted or 30...

April 13, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Warns Consumers Of Tax Scams As Filing Deadline Approaches

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds consumers to be on the lookout for tax scams or tactics that could jeopardize personal information as consumers work to meet the approaching filing deadline of Tuesday, April 17.

Consumers who are in a rush may easily and inadvertently let information slip through the cracks and into the hands of those with ill intent.

“No matter the rush it is very important for consumers to always handle personal information wisely and responsibly,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Scammers are well aware of the vast amount of information shared at tax time and will jump at any opportunity to use it to their advantage.”

Those filing returns 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...
April 09, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Warns Consumers of Pay-For-Prayer Scam**

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey warned of a pay-for-prayer scam targeting West Virginia consumers. Those choosing to perpetrate such a scam have been known to utilize robocalls, websites and unsolicited email to exploit the consumer’s desire for prayer. The scheme typically involves a donation in exchange for prayer.

The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division recently learned of consumers receiving such calls from the “St. Mary’s Prayer Center Ministry,” an entity having no connection to the similarly named St. Mary’s Medical Center located in Huntington.

“West Virginians should always remember to exercise caution when receiving unfamiliar and unsolicited calls,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Consumers must know the voice and/or entity on the other end and know what they are committing to beforehand.”

The Attorney General urges anyone receiving such a call to simply hang up. Choosing to select one of the prompts can subject the consumer to receiving additional calls.

Other tips include...


April 05, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey, Secretary of State Warner Announce Enhanced Business Search Tool for Consumers**

CHARLESTON — Attorney General Patrick Morrisey joined Thursday with Secretary of State Mac Warner to inform consumers that they have a new weapon to combat fraud. The West Virginia Tax Department recently shared 77,000 sole proprietor business names with the Secretary of State’s Office for use in a searchable database. The business names were not publically available until a 2017 change in the law.

“Consumer protection is a top priority of my office,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It is essential that we give consumers an easy path to verify if a business is registered with the Secretary of State. This database will stand as a one-stop location. I applaud our Legislature for changing the law, as well as Secretary Warner for making this accomplishment happen.”

The tradenames for sole proprietors will join other businesses registered with the Secretary of State, such as for-profit and non-profit corporations, limited liability companies,...