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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Grand Jury Indicts Gilbert Man in Multi-Million Dollar Loan Fraud

PHOENIX – Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted Jon Richard Rattray, from Gilbert, on felony counts of Fraud Schemes & Artifices, Money Laundering, Controlling an Illegal Enterprise, Computer Tampering, Aggravated Identity Theft, and Forgery.

The State alleges that Rattray, through his company Hawkeye Real Estate Services, LLC, filed a series of forged lien release documents at the Office of the Maricopa County Recorder with the intent of freeing up equity in homes he owned so that he could take out new loans on those same properties or sell them to purchasers as unencumbered property. The alleged loss to victims is estimated at over $6 million.

This case was referred for investigation by the Office of the Maricopa County Recorder and investigated by agents of the Arizona Attorney General’s Office.

All defendants are presumed innocent until convicted in a court of law. Assistant Attorney General Adam J. Schwartz is prosecuting...


Grand Jury Indicts Used Car Dealership Owner

PHOENIX – Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich and the Arizona Department of Revenue announced a State Grand Jury returned a 19-count indictment against Jalisco Corp aka Jalisco Auto Sales, and its owner-operator, Maria Gutierrez.

The indictment accuses Gutierrez of falsifying Jalisco Auto Sales’ transaction privilege or sales tax returns between January 1, 2015 and July 26, 2016, by underreporting the number of cars sold. It is alleged that Jalisco Auto Sales charged its customers for sales tax but failed to remit the collected taxes to the Arizona Department of Revenue.

Investigators say Jalisco Auto Sales avoided approximately $100,000 in state, county, and city sales tax through the false filings.

This indictment was the result of a cooperative investigation between the Arizona Attorney General’s Office and the Arizona Department of Revenue.

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

August 08, 2018

Grand Jury Indicts Former Psychiatric Nurse with Revoked License
Phoenix- Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced a State Grand Jury indicted Laura Lynn Bell, a former Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, for her alleged involvement in treating Veterans Affairs patients while unlicensed and defrauding multiple insurance companies.

In December of 2016, Bell’s nursing license was revoked by the Arizona State Board of Nursing. Bell is accused of using stolen identities of nurse practitioners and former patients to bill insurance companies for services that were not rendered. She is further accused of treating three Veterans Affairs patients without a license. It is alleged she forged various identification documents, medical certifications, and other credentialing material in order to achieve her scheme. She is accused of fraudulently receiving over $190,000 from various insurance companies.

Bell is facing twelve felony charges, including Fraudulent Schemes and Artifices, Theft, Money Laundering in the Second Degree, Trafficking in the Identity of Another, and Forgery. ...


August 02, 2018

Attorney General Brnovich Files Consumer Fraud Lawsuit Against "Senior Grad Trips"
PHOENIX - Attorney General Mark Brnovich announced the filing of a consumer fraud lawsuit against Texas-based travel company EB Worldwide, LLC, and its CEO, George Barragan. The lawsuit alleges EB Worldwide charged a group of Cienega High School students more than $34,000 for a senior class trip to Disneyland, and then failed to provide the trip or refund the students’ money.

According to the consumer fraud lawsuit, EB Worldwide, which also operates under the names “Senior Grad Trips” and “Exhibit Tours,” allegedly advertised and sold a group vacation package to more than 65 seniors at Cienega High School in 2016 and 2017. The vacation package included bus travel to Anaheim, CA, hotel accommodations, and admission to Disneyland and Universal Studios. The State alleges that EB Worldwide failed to schedule any buses, leaving the young travelers and their chaperones stranded in a parking lot on the scheduled departure date in May...

ARKANSAS

August 30, 2018

Rutledge Files Suit Against Alert America

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge filed a consumer-protection lawsuit today against Alert America LLC for violations of the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act. “Arkansans who pay for services expect to get what they pay for,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Companies like Alert America that act dishonestly will not be tolerated in Arkansas. Alert America willfully chose to deceive and violate the trust of many Arkansans, and I will continue to pursue companies that take advantage of Arkansans’ hard-earned money.” Alert America sold third-party alarm-monitoring services to Arkansas consumers, and many of its contracts included a prepaid service contract. Alert America closed its business and failed to remit payments to the third party. As a result, many Arkansans had services discontinued without any money being returned to consumers who had prepaid for services they never received and without any notice from Alert concerning the cancellation.

The Attorney General’s Office has discovered...


August 17, 2018

Rutledge Announces Trial Victory Over Northwest Arkansas Used Auto Dealer

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced Pulaski County Circuit Judge Chris Piazza has found northwest Arkansas auto dealer John Vancuren, and his wife Michelle Vancuren, as well as their companies, Infinity Auto Sales, Inc., Infinity Towing and Recovery, Inc. and Vancurens Auto Sales, Inc. liable for 59 violations of the Arkansas Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Judge Piazza ordered the Vancurens and their companies liable for $590,000 in civil penalties, $73,001.71 in restitution, and he enjoined the Vancurens from engaging in the business of used car sales.

“I applaud Judge Piazza’s ruling on behalf of the brave men and women who testified and stood up to John and Michelle Vancuren in Court,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “Used car dealers must deliver title according to the law. These types of deceitful actions by an Arkansas business, which harm consumers and the overall business community, must be met with strong consequences.” ...

Attorney General Becerra Files Additional Criminal Charges, Names New Defendant in “Oficina Guerrero” Fraud Scheme Targeting Individuals Seeking Immigration Relief

LOS ANGELES — California Attorney General Xavier Becerra filed new grand theft charges against brothers Edgardo and Hector Guerrero, who operated “Oficina Guerrero” in Inglewood. According to the complaint, the Guerrero brothers defrauded undocumented immigrants and their families seeking lawful permanent residence in the United States. They charged thousands of dollars for legal services that they were not legally qualified to dispense and failed to maintain a required bond. Edgardo’s wife, Sidia Landaverde, was also charged today for her role in the scheme.

“Fraud is fraud, regardless of the immigration status of those being exploited,” said Attorney General Becerra. “All families in California deserve protection from unscrupulous individuals who unlawfully take advantage of fear and vulnerability within our communities. At the California Department of Justice, we will prosecute this exploitation to the fullest extent of the law.”

In addition to the charges filed in March, Edgardo Guerrero and Hector Guerrero now face...


Attorney General Becerra Files Criminal Charges Against Marin County Operators Pamela Kelley and Scott Parke for Rental Property Price Gouging During Last Year’s Tubbs Fire

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today announced criminal charges against Pamela Kelley and Scott Parke for raising the monthly rent on a property in Marin County well beyond the legal limit permitted during the state of emergency declared for the 2017 Tubbs Fire. Under California law, price increases on many goods and services, including housing, during or after a state of emergency generally may not exceed 10 percent. Exceptions to our price gouging law are permitted if the excess amount being charged is directly attributable to costs incurred to offer the good or service.

“Using emergency situations to squeeze money from consumers is a disgrace and will not be tolerated,” said Attorney General Becerra. “Anyone who would exploit the fires ripping across our State to make a buck off the backs of Californians will be met with the full force of the law. During times of crisis, it is...

COLORADO
August 08, 2018

Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman Obtains $1.7m Verdict Against Mile High Heating & Cooling

DENVER- Today Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman announced that her office has obtained a $1.7M verdict against Westminster-based Mile High Heating & Cooling and its owner and manager for violations of the Colorado Consumer Protection Act. The Court’s order requires the defendants to pay $1,500,000.00 in civil penalties, $205,146.00 in consumer restitution and to reimburse the State’s attorney fees and costs. The order permanently enjoins Kevin Dykman, the company’s owner, and Kasey Dykman, the company’s manager, from engaging in any activity related to the sale or installation of furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters, air conditioning units or any other type of HVAC equipment. The Attorney General presented her case at a preliminary injunction hearing in September 2017, followed by a trial in February 2018. Mile High Heating & Cooling had installed approximately one thousand furnaces, hot water heaters and air conditioning units in Colorado consumers’ homes and deliberately failed to...


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
August 22, 2018

AG Racine Demands Landlords Explain Short-Term Rentals at 33 Residential Apartment Buildings

Washington, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today sent letters to 19 building owners and managers of 33 residential apartment buildings in the District seeking answers about short-term rentals being offered alongside long-term leases. The purpose of the Office of the Attorney General’s (OAG) requests for information is to determine if the landlords misled their long-standing residents about the short-term rental operations and if they violated District consumer protection or rent control laws. In a separate action related to short-term rentals, OAG recovered $100,000 in penalties from a Columbia Heights landlord for illegally converting a rent-controlled apartment building into a short-term rental hotel. “Under the law, landlords are required to tell tenants if there are short-term rentals in their buildings,” said Attorney General Racine. “We’ve heard complaints that some landlords misled their long-term residents about these rentals. Today’s letters put building owners and managers on notice that short-term rentals must...

FLORIDA

August 30, 2018
Jacksonville Company Sued for Deceptive Mortgage and Foreclosure Relief Services
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi’s Office today filed a court action against a Jacksonville-based company and its owner for deceptively marketing and selling mortgage and foreclosure relief services to consumers throughout the United States, defrauding consumers out of more than $160,000. Brian Roy Lozito, while doing business as American Investigative Services, LLC., allegedly deceived more than 150 consumers by claiming to provide services in return for payments upfront.

According to the complaint, American Investigative Services solicited upfront payments from consumers promising to conduct a forensic audit of consumers’ mortgage documentation in order to uncover evidence of improper robosigning, or improper notarization, assignment, or recording of the mortgage documents, or other technical deficiencies. The defendants told consumers that if these purported legal deficiencies were uncovered in mortgage documents, the lender would be unable to foreclose on the consumer’s mortgage, and the consumer would thereby own the home free and clear, even if...

➢ Original Press Release:

August 30, 2018
Attorney General Bondi Takes Legal Action Over Rental Car Toll Fees
TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi filed legal action against Dollar Thrifty Automotive Group for its billing practices involving toll fees and other charges to customers in Florida. The complaint alleges Dollar Thrifty misrepresents charges for cashless tolls as fines or violations, and bills customers a grossly-inflated fee for each toll incurred. Dollar Thrifty charges $10 to $15 each time one of its rental car customers drives through a Florida cashless toll, and up to $105 during the course of a rental.

The complaint alleges that Dollar Thrifty failed to clearly and conspicuously disclose to consumers the excessive toll fees it charges customers for the use of Florida’s cashless toll roads and misrepresented toll fees and information related to Florida’s cashless toll roads to coerce consumers into purchasing Dollar Thrifty’s toll product, PlatePass. Hundreds of tourists vacationing in Florida filed complaints with the Florida Attorney General’s Office, claiming they were unaware of...

➢ Original Press Release:
   http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/6AB36334023A144D852582F900627E82
August 21, 2018

**Travel Agency Ruins Vacations and Leaves Consumers Out Millions**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today filed legal action against a closed Florida travel agency that still owes consumers nationwide more than $3 million. The defendants, Legendary Journeys, Inc., president and owner Adrian L. Ferguson, Jr., a/k/a Al Ferguson, and vice president Charles T. Scott, a/k/a Chuck Scott, operated a Sarasota-based travel agency with 11 branches across the state. The company abruptly closed in October 2017 after collecting millions from travelers and failing to deliver trips or issue refunds.

According to the complaint filed Tuesday, the defendants misappropriated company assets for personal benefit before closing, then filed an assignment for the benefit of creditors—a legal proceeding similar to bankruptcy. The complaint alleges Ferguson and Scott took money paid by consumers for vacation packages and used it to pay personal expenses and make extra payroll distributions. The two company officers even ran up a $44,000 one-day bill at Saks Fifth Avenue just...

- **Original Press Release:**

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**GEORGIA**

August 13, 2018

**Carr Reaches Settlement with Title Pawn Company to Resolve Allegations of Unlawful Practices**

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr announced today that Complete Cash Holdings LLC and its owner Kent Popham (together, “Complete Cash”) have entered into a settlement with the State of Georgia in response to allegations that it engaged in unlawful practices that violated the Georgia Fair Business Practices Act and the Georgia Pawn Shop Act.

“Consumers who seek out title pawns are already in financial straits,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “Our office is committed to protecting vulnerable consumers from companies that try to take advantage of them through illegal actions.”

A title pawn is essentially a short-term, high interest rate pawn transaction that uses the clear title on a consumer’s vehicle as collateral. If a consumer defaults on his or her payments, the title pawn company’s only legal recourse is to require the consumer to turn over the car, or repossess it if the consumer refuses to do so voluntarily....

August 01, 2018

Carr Settles with PHH Mortgage Corporation over Alleged Deceptive Acts and Practices

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr today announced that PHH Mortgage Corporation (“PHH”) has entered into a settlement with his office to resolve allegations that it violated Georgia’s Fair Business Practices Act by charging unauthorized fees to Georgia consumers. “Our office will hold accountable those that use deceptive means to profit from consumers,” said Attorney General Chris Carr.

The Attorney General’s office alleges that PHH, a New Jersey-based mortgage servicing and mortgage originating business, marketed various third-party products and services, including insurance products and home warranty programs, to certain consumers whose mortgages it serviced and placed charges for these products and services on consumers’ mortgage bills. According to the Attorney General, many consumers did not even realize they had signed up for these products and services. Likewise, they were not aware that the cost of these items was being added onto their monthly mortgage payments. ...


IDAHO
August 24, 2018

Attorney General Lawrence Wasden Announces Settlement with Idaho Falls Magazine Publisher

(Boise) – Attorney General Lawrence Wasden announced a settlement agreement today with Gary and Sharon Mueller, owners of Idaho Life, LLC. The Idaho Falls-based company, which published lifestyle magazines, sold advertising space to small businesses in 2016 and 2017. The settlement requires the Muellers to pay more than $8,400 in refunds to small businesses that did not receive the ads they purchased.

“This settlement accomplishes two important goals,” Wasden said. “It addresses concerns my office had with the Muellers’ business practices, and it provides for payment of restitution to injured consumers.”

Between May 2017 and March 2018, the Office of the Attorney General received complaints from five small businesses about the Muellers and Idaho Life. The businesses reported that they paid the Muellers for advertising in Idaho Life magazines, but the magazines were never published. When the businesses asked for refunds, they received no responses from the Muellers. ...

MADIGAN SUES OWNER OF PEKIN WELL DRILLING COMPANY

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a lawsuit against the owner of a Pekin drilling company for defrauding homeowners out of thousands of dollars for drinking water wells that were never finished.

Madigan filed the lawsuit in Peoria County Circuit Court against Robert Williams and his company, Sauder Well Drilling LLC (Sauder), a residential well drilling business located at 104 Providence Rd. in Pekin, Ill. Madigan alleged Sauder charged Peoria County residents thousands of dollars for water wells that were never completed.

Madigan’s office received complaints from residents who signed contracts and paid deposits for drilling services in addition to well and pump construction. Madigan alleged that beginning at least in February 2017, Sauder collected large deposits from homeowners, ranging from more than $4,000 to more than $15,000, but never began drilling. Once Sauder’s workers performed initial surveys of residents’ properties, Madigan alleged they never returned to begin the work....

Original Press Release:
http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_08/20180829.html

IOWA truckers receive refunds over ‘past due’ warnings

A Louisiana company has paid $14,850 to refund fees paid by owners of Iowa trucking companies, many of whom thought they were responding to a government agency threatening fines.

The Consumer Protection Division of the Iowa Attorney General’s Office began investigating Compliance Educators LLC after receiving a complaint in April from an Iowa trucker. In May, the Haughton, La.-based company and its owner, Scott Rister of Flower Mound, Texas, agreed to make the refunds as part of an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance with the Iowa Attorney General’s Office.

The company also paid $7,000 to the state’s consumer fraud enforcement fund and agreed to refrain from doing business in Iowa.

Compliance Educators agreed to provide refunds for 150 transactions of $99 each. The Attorney General’s office is now issuing the refunds to a list of Iowans supplied by the company.

Motor carriers must update their information with the U.S. Department of Transportation every...

AG Derek Schmidt sues Florida tobacco manufacturer for failure to comply with Kansas law

TOPEKA – (August 31, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt last week filed a lawsuit against a Florida-based tobacco manufacturer for failing to comply with Kansas law when selling tobacco products in the state.

Schmidt filed the case in Shawnee County District Court alleging that RG Logistics, Inc., of Medley, Florida, violated provisions of Kansas law that place certain obligations on tobacco manufacturers selling products in the state. In particular, the company is accused of failing to make adequate payments to a qualified escrow fund for its 2017 sales.

Kansas Department of Revenue records indicated that the company sold at least 287,000 cigarettes in the State in the third quarter of 2017, which would have required the company to make a $9,704.08 payment to a qualified escrow fund. Because the company failed to do so, the attorney general’s office has also taken administrative action to remove the company from its directory...


Nebraska roofers banned from doing business in Kansas, ordered to repay two consumers

TOPEKA – (August 20, 2018) – A group of Nebraska roofing contractors has been banned from doing business in Kansas and ordered to repay two consumers after being found in violation of Kansas consumer protection laws, Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Mark Schneidewind and Susan Cuthill, of Fremont, Nebraska, and their company Dollhouse, Inc., of Omaha, were permanently enjoined from operating as a roofing contractor in the State of Kansas. The defendants were also permanently enjoined from engaging in any door-to-door solicitations or sales within the State of Kansas. Shawnee County District Judge Teresa L Watson last week entered the injunction as part of a consent judgment with the defendants in response to a lawsuit filed by the attorney general. Watson also ordered the defendants to pay $4,702.89 in restitution to two Kansas consumers, as well as a civil penalty and the costs of the attorney general’s investigation.

Schmidt had alleged that...

Dodge City man fined, ordered to stop misrepresenting himself as a CPA

DODGE CITY – (August 3, 2018) – A Dodge City man was ordered this week to pay a civil penalty for violating consumer protection laws and is barred from misrepresenting himself as a certified public accountant while his CPA license remains revoked, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.

Raymond F. Dechant, and his firm, Dechant, Unruh, Thomas, Inc., were ordered by Ford County District Judge E. Leigh Hood to refrain from misrepresenting Dechant as a practicing certified public accountant and holding him out as a certified public accountant unless his certificate and permit to practice as a CPA is reinstated.

A lawsuit filed by Schmidt alleged that Dechant had solicited certified public accountant services with Kansas consumers, including accounting and audit services, during a years-long period while his CPA certificate had been suspended and then revoked. The misrepresentation constituted a violation of the Kansas Consumer Protection Act.

Dechant’s CPA certificate was suspended by...


MASSACHUSETTS

August 08, 2019

American Military University Pays $270,000 for Alleged Failure to Disclose Job Prospects, High-Pressure Enrollment Tactics

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey today announced a settlement with an online for-profit school over allegations that the school violated Massachusetts law by failing to make mandated disclosures to prospective students about job placement rates, violating requirements that the school provide important information about loan repayment and graduation rates to prospective students 72 hours before enrollment, and engaging in predatory enrollment tactics, including making excessive recruitment calls.

The assurance of discontinuance, filed Tuesday in Suffolk Superior Court against American Public University System, which runs American Military University (AMU), alleges that it violated the state’s for-profit and occupational school regulations aimed at protecting Massachusetts students from the deceptive and unfair practices of for-profit schools.

According to the AG’s Office, American Military University’s students are primarily veterans or serve in the military. The school’s name and other visual images suggest it is part of the United States Armed Services, but the company in...

August 06, 2018

**HSBC to Pay $26.8 Million for Securitization of Subprime Mortgages**

Boston — HSBC Securities (HSBC) will pay $26.8 million to settle allegations that it purchased and securitized unfair residential mortgage loans in violation of Massachusetts law, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Today’s case follows others brought by the AG’s Office against investment giants Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Royal Bank of Scotland, Countrywide Securities, JPMorgan, and Citibank regarding their roles in the subprime lending crisis. In pursuing these cases, the AG’s Office has recovered more than $375 million, including relief for thousands of residents across the state, in connection with securitization claims.

“HSBC’s securitization practices contributed to a financial crisis that deeply harmed Massachusetts communities and caused families to lose their homes,” AG Healey said. “We will continue to help consumers who were sold toxic mortgages by these banking institutions and are pleased that this settlement will provide significant relief for families that have suffered harm from unsustainable subprime loans.”

While HSBC did...


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**MICHIGAN**

August 08, 2018

**West Michigan Man Charged by Schuette’s Elder Financial Crimes Unit Bound Over for Trial on 14 Felonies**

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced that Gary “Duke” Haynes 57, of Comstock Park has been bound over for trial in Muskegon County on 14 felony counts for allegedly stealing over $300,000 from his elderly widowed client.

The charges are as follows:

- Count 1 – Conducting a Criminal Enterprises – a 20-year felony
- Count 2 – Embezzlement from a Vulnerable Adult - $100,000 or more 20-year felony
- Count 3 – 10 – Embezzlement from a Vulnerable Adult – $1,000 or more but less than $20,000.00 – a 5-year felony
- Count 11 – 14 – Taxes – Failure to File/False Return/Payment – a 5-year felony

Schuette’s new Elder Financial Crimes Unit charged Hayes in May 2018 and will be prosecuting this case with Muskegon County Prosecutor DJ Hilson.

A Preliminary Examination was held before the Honorable Raymond J. Kostrzewa on July 17, 2018 and was continued on Tuesday August 7, 2018.

- [Original Press Release](https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-474816--,00.html)
MISSOURI

August 31, 2018

AG Hawley Files Lawsuit Against Branson Duck Vehicles and Ripley Entertainment

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley today filed a petition in the Circuit Court of Taney County urging the court to enjoin Branson Duck Vehicles, LLC and Ripley Entertainment, Inc. from operating duck boats in Missouri. The Attorney General’s Office alleges violations of the Missouri Merchandising Practices Act, Missouri’s principal consumer-protection statute.

On July 19, seventeen people drowned while on a tour of Table Rock Lake when their duck boat sank during severe weather. The petition cites safety violations that are alleged to have occurred that day—including ignoring life jacket requirements and weather warnings. The suit alleges the defendants have “been on notice for decades of ongoing safety hazards that posed a present and deadly danger to every person who boarded a duck boat. Defendants kept that information from passengers and made false promises, fraudulent statements, and misrepresentations to consumers that safety was a top priority when in...


August 27, 2018

AG Hawley Announces Jeffrey Kowalski Sentenced for Attempted Identity Theft

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced Jeffrey Kowalski of Camden County has been sentenced to 17 months in jail after being found guilty of violating two counts of Missouri’s Merchandising Practices Act, one count of attempted identity theft, and one count of attempted stealing by deceit. He was found guilty of all four counts in July. Mr. Kowalski sent fake invoices, which included threats of adverse credit ratings and lawsuits, to over 70 people in Missouri including state legislators and local school officials. He also sent requests for W-9 forms and sent fake 1099 forms to several people alleging that his company, StarProse, paid income to them – all in attempt to unlawfully obtain their personal information. “Identity theft is an issue my Office takes very seriously,” Hawley said. “We will aggressively prosecute anyone who attempts to steal and profit from another person’s personal information.”

This case was prosecuted...

August 01, 2018

AG Hawley Files Lawsuit Against Rough Country Rustic Furniture, LLC for Deceptive Practices

Jefferson City, Mo. – Attorney General Josh Hawley filed a lawsuit today against Joseph Ross, Ashley Dillard, and their companies Rough Country Rustic Furniture, LLC (“Rough Country”) and Rustic Concealment Solutions, LLC (“Rustic Concealment”). Rough Country is an online furniture company located in Wright County, Missouri. The Attorney General’s lawsuit alleges that the company and its owners used deceptive and unfair business practices in connection with the sale of furniture and home decor.

According to complaints received by the Attorney General’s Office, the company took payments for furniture and home decor but failed to provide the purchased products to consumers, or in some cases provided defective products. Consumers were allegedly promised refunds but never received them. After consumers filed complaints against the company, its owners opened Rustic Concealment, through which they allegedly continued their unfair practices and false promises to consumers. ...


MONTANA

August 27, 2018

Montana’s Lawsuit against Purdue Pharma Returns to State Court

Montana achieved an important victory last Thursday when a federal judge in Ohio remanded the lawsuit against Purdue Pharma from federal court and returned it to state court, where the Attorney General’s Office filed it originally.

In December of 2017, Attorney General Tim Fox filed a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma, alleging the company engaged in deceptive promotion of its addictive and dangerous painkiller OxyContin to increase sales. In February of this year, Fox filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in Montana District Court, asking the court to halt Purdue’s product marketing campaign in the state. In March, in an apparent effort to delay the case and avoid answering Montana’s motion for a preliminary injunction, Purdue moved the case to federal court.

“I am pleased the judge sent this case back to a Montana court, where it belongs,” Attorney General Fox said. “As our investigation revealed and our complaint alleges, Purdue Pharma...

Attorney General Laxalt Announces 11 Felony Count Grand Jury Indictment

Las Vegas, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Lynn Benson, 54, formerly of Las Vegas, was indicted by a Clark County grand jury following her arrest in May by the Cloverdale, CA Police Department. The charges include five counts of Mortgage Lending Fraud, a category “C” felony, one count of Pattern of Mortgage Lending Fraud, and five counts of Theft in the Amount of $3,500 or More, both category “B” felonies. According to the indictment, Lynn Benson misled victims into believing their homes could be saved from mortgage foreclosure. The victims were led to believe that they could follow a devised scheme devised to not make additional payments on their homes.

“Taking advantage of homeowners in need of assistance will not be tolerated by my office,” said Laxalt. “We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect the financial safety of all Nevadans.”

Original Press Release:

Nevada Attorney General Laxalt Announces $650,000 Recovery by Renown Health Foundation Related to a Deceptive Trade Practices Case

Carson City, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt and Renown Health Foundation announced Renown Health’s recovery of $650,327.14 in restitution to be used for Renown’s new Stacie Mathewson Behavioral Health & Addiction Institute. The restitution became available to Renown after the Attorney General’s Office entered into a $220 million multi-state deceptive trade practices settlement with Deutsche Bank. The Stacie Mathewson Behavioral Health & Addiction Institute was recently established and funded with $6 million from Charles N. and Stacie L. Mathewson. The Institute expands community access to prevention and intervention services for mental health disorders and alcohol and drug addiction. In addition to providing much-needed behavioral health and addiction services, the Institute also aims to decrease stigma and encourage more people to seek help in Northern Nevada.

“Big banks that engage in manipulative conduct defrauding Nevada’s not-for-profit organizations and government entities will continue to be investigated by my office,”...
August 01, 2018

**Attorney General Laxalt Announces Sentencing in Complex Fraud Case**

Las Vegas, NV – Today, Nevada Attorney General Adam Paul Laxalt announced that Marlene Fitzgerald, 44, of Las Vegas, was sentenced to up to eight years in prison for one count of theft in the amount of $3,500 or more, a category “B” felony. The conviction results from her involvement in operating an embezzlement scam out of Las Vegas where she held herself out to be a talent booking representative. To perpetuate the thefts, Fitzgerald operated under the names World Entertainment, LLC; Future Management; and Total Entertainment Artist Management. The acts were committed between December 2016 and July 2017.

Earlier this year, Fitzgerald pleaded guilty to embezzling more than $230,000 from victims to whom she promised to use her strong celebrity connections to arrange performances by recording star Justin Bieber and Las Vegas DJs, The Chainsmokers, as well as for personal appearances by and marketing rights related to boxing superstar Floyd Mayweather,...


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NEW HAMPSHIRE

August 09, 2018

**Newton Health Club Found in Violation of Consumer Protection Act, Fined $45,000, and Ordered To Cease Operating**

Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that the Rockingham County Superior Court has found Thomas Lavigne, owner and operator of CrossFit Affirmation, a health club located at 4A Puzzle Lane, Unit #3, Newton, NH, to be in violation of the Consumer Protection Act, RSA 358-A and the Health Club statute, RSA 358-I.

In an order dated July 31, 2018, the Court found Mr. Lavigne liable for his failure to comply with the Attorney General Office’s subpoena and ordered him to pay a fine of $5,000.

The Court further found Mr. Lavigne liable for 4 separate violations of the Consumer Protection Act for (1) his failure to register his health club with the Attorney General, (2) his solicitation of health club memberships for a term of more than 1 year, contrary to the Health Club statute, (3) his failure to disclose his membership liability for purposes of bonding to protect prepaid membership dues,...

NEW JERSEY

August 28, 2018

New Jersey Bureau of Securities Takes Action Against Middlesex Man and His Companies for Allegedly Defrauding More than $1.3 Million from NJ Investors in his Online Gambling Companies

NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Bureau of Securities within the Division of Consumer Affairs today filed suit against a Middlesex County man and the various investment companies he operated, alleging he defrauded more than $1.3 million from 26 New Jersey investors who bought stock in his online gambling companies, and then used the money to bankroll his lavish lifestyle.

In a complaint filed in New Jersey Superior Court, the Bureau alleges that Sandy J. Masselli, Jr., of Old Bridge, New Jersey, told investors that the money they invested in his Carlyle Gaming & Entertainment Ltd, and its successor company, Carlyle Entertainment, Ltd. (collectively the “Carlyle Companies”) would be used for proper corporate purposes.

However, according to the complaint, Masselli, used more than $1.3 million of the investor funds for the personal benefit of himself and his family, including his wife Charlene T. Masselli, a.k.a. Charlene Dunn, who is...

➢ Original Press Release: https://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180828a.html

August 20, 2018

Sting Operation by New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs Catches 29 Unlicensed Movers in “Operation Mother’s Attic”

NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that 29 unlicensed movers have been issued Notices of Violation (“NOVs”) as a result of “Operation Mother’s Attic, a State-led undercover sting targeting public movers suspected of operating without licenses. Each unlicensed mover was also assessed a $2,500 civil penalty.

The sting operation occurred over the course of four days in April 2018. Investigators from the Division’s Office of Consumer Protection (“OCP”) posed as individuals planning to move from an upscale neighborhood in Montville. The investigators found various unlicensed moving companies advertising online and hired them for their “move.” The movers drove to Montville, expecting to find a luxury home full of items to load, and were instead met by a team of OCP investigators, who issued them NOVs for operating without licenses.

Also awaiting the movers were members of the State Police’s Mobile Safety Freight Unit,...

➢ Original Press Release: https://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20180820a.html
August 09, 2018

New Jersey Board of Medical Examiners Revokes License of Five Doctors in Unrelated Cases Involving the Prescription of Opioids, Anabolic Steroids, or Other Controlled Substances

NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that the State Board of Medical Examiners (“the Board”) has revoked the licenses of five doctors in unrelated cases involving the prescription of opioids, anabolic steroids, and/or other controlled substances to their patients, including two doctors convicted on federal charges of illegal drug distribution.

Dr. Jose J. Leyson, a Newark urologist; Dr. Kevin T. Custis, a family physician in Asbury Park; Dr. William F. McLay, a family physician in Cape May County; Dr. Bonnie Chen, a West Caldwell internist; and Dr. Anthony Enrico, Jr., a Paterson podiatrist, all agreed to the license revocations to resolve separate investigations involving allegations they prescribed controlled dangerous substances (“CDS”) without a legitimate medical purpose.

“Doctors are entrusted with the authority to prescribe dangerous drugs, but it is a power they must wield responsibly – and it is a power that will...


August 07, 2018

State Board of Massage and Bodywork Therapy Permanently Revokes License of Monmouth County Massage Therapist for Alleged Inappropriate Sexual Contact with Clients

NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that the State Board of Massage and Bodywork Therapy (“the Board”) has permanently revoked the license of a Monmouth County massage therapist for allegedly engaging in inappropriate sexual contact with two female clients during massage therapy sessions at Massage Envy spas in 2013.

In a Complaint filed with the Board last month, the State alleged that Steven A. Segovia committed acts of gross negligence and professional misconduct by engaging in oral sex with a female client during a massage therapy session at Massage Envy in Manalapan, and engaging in sexual intercourse with another female client during a massage therapy session at Massage Envy in Freehold.

Board regulations strictly prohibit licensees from engaging in sexual contact with clients, even if it’s consensual.

Segovia agreed to the permanent revocation of his license to resolve the allegations against him. ...

Operator of Teen Social Website Breached by Hacker Agrees to Close Site and Reform Practices to Settle Allegations it Violated Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act

NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that a California company agreed to shut down its fashion-themed social website for teens and reform its business practices to resolve allegations that the company violated state and federal laws by improperly collecting personal information from more than 2,500 New Jersey children and by failing to appropriately safeguard its users’ account information which was compromised in a 2016 data breach.

The Division alleged that Unixiz, Inc., the company that owned and operated the online social website “i-Dressup”, violated the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act, by, among other things, failing to adequately safeguard user information and failing to obtain verifiable parental consent prior to collecting and processing children’s personal information.

“Children are extremely vulnerable on the internet and we must do all we can to protect them...”


NEW MEXICO

August 16, 2018

AG Balderas Brings Lawsuit against Wells Fargo for Opening Thousands of Fake Accounts

Albuquerque, NM - Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that the Office of the Attorney General’s Consumer and Environmental Protection Division filed a lawsuit against Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. for illegal business practices in opening unauthorized accounts in the name of thousands of New Mexicans.

“As the fiscal agent for the State, and a provider of banking services to thousands of New Mexicans, Wells Fargo has failed to resolve their violations of law," said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “Its deeply troubling that a company with this much at stake in our state would mislead New Mexico consumers and allow unlawful profiteering. We look forward to seeking justice in a court of law."

The complaint alleges that Wells Fargo violated the New Mexico Unfair Trade Practices Act by opening accounts without authorization of the consumer, enrolling consumers in unauthorized products and lying to consumers about the true status of their relationship with Wells...

NEW YORK
August 29, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Indictment Of Former Stockbroker For $250K Securities Fraud Scheme
NEW YORK – Attorney General Barbara Underwood today announced a felony indictment charging former stockbroker Jason Ari Amada, 41, of Forest Hills, Queens, with falsely claiming to be a broker who successfully traded foreign currencies through his company, Amada Capital Management LLC, in order to lure an investor to give him over $250,000. Amada allegedly executed a contract committing to no loss greater than one percent and that he wouldn’t take any commission unless he generated a profit, but still proceeded to engage in an aggressive day-trading strategy that generated over $150,000 in fees and commissions for himself – while resulting in the loss of over 99% of the investor’s money.
“As we allege, the defendant misrepresented his professional experience, failed to disclose his expired license, lost his clients’ investment, and diverted $20,000 to his personal account,” said Attorney General Underwood. “My office won’t hesitate to prosecute those who scam...


August 29, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces $200,000 Settlement With Buffalo Non-Profit For Exposing Clients' Sensitive Personal Information On Internet For Years
BUFFALO – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a settlement with The Arc of Erie County, a Buffalo-based nonprofit that provides services to people with developmental disabilities and their families, after finding that the company exposed clients’ sensitive personal information on the internet for years. The settlement requires The Arc of Erie County to conduct a thorough risk analysis of security risks and vulnerabilities of all electronic equipment and data systems, review its policies and procedures, and pay a $200,000 penalty.
“The Arc of Erie County’s work serves our most vulnerable New Yorkers – and that comes with the responsibility to protect them and their sensitive personal information,” said Attorney General Underwood. “This settlement should provide a model to all charities in protecting their communities’ personal information online.”
The Arc of Erie County, formerly known as Heritage Centers, is a chapter of The Arc New York – a national community-based organization...

August 25, 2018

A.G. Underwood Announces Indictment Of Former CEO Of Global Crowdsourcing Company For $600K Securities Fraud Scheme

BROOKLYN – Attorney General Barbara Underwood today announced a felony indictment charging the former CEO of Springleap, Inc., Eran Eyal, 43, of Brooklyn, with allegedly stealing $600,000 from investors by fraudulently soliciting investors to purchase convertible notes through false representations of his company.

“As we allege, this massive securities fraud scheme bilked investors out of hundreds of thousands of dollars,” said Attorney General Underwood. “Defrauding New Yorkers through false representations and fabrications about a business will not be tolerated by my office – and we’ll continue to do what it takes to root out and prosecute securities fraud.”

Springleap was a purported global crowdsourcing company that offered marketing, digital media, and platform design services to clients. According to statements made by the prosecutor, between 2014 and 2015, Eyal allegedly attracted investors to Springleap through a series of false representations about the company’s management team, advisory board, creative professionals, and client...


August 21, 2018

A.G. Underwood Announces $190K Settlement With Sham Coop For Operating As A Rental Building

NEW YORK—Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a settlement with 417 E 60 Owners Corp, a former cooperative corporation on the Upper East Side of New York City, for violating state law by using a cooperative as a rental building for decades and depriving tenants of protections they’re entitled to under rent stabilization laws.

The settlement agreement requires 417 East 60 Street to operate exclusively as a rental building and abandon the cooperative plan so that it can no longer claim cooperative exemption under the Rent Stabilization Law. In addition, the corporation must pay $190,000 to the New York City Department of Finance – which will be used by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to finance housing projects for low-income New Yorkers.

“Sham cooperatives acting as rental properties diminish opportunities for homeownership and fail to provide rent stabilized protections for New York tenants,” said Attorney General Underwood. “...”

August 15, 2018

A.G. Underwood Announces Lawsuit Against Three Employment Agency Operators For Scamming Vulnerable New Yorkers

NEW YORK – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a lawsuit against employment agency operators Jose M. Ortiz (a/k/a Jose M. Velez, Jose M. Ortiz-Velez, Joseph Ortiz), 44, of New Jersey; Maritza M. Quinones (a/k/a Ms. Velez), 42, of Pennsylvania; and Johanna Y. Miranda (a/k/a Lisa Garcia, Julia, Isabella, Carmen, Karol), 42, of the Bronx, for allegedly conducting deceptive business practices in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens that targeted unemployed and financially vulnerable individuals looking for low-wage cleaning and maintenance jobs. The Attorney General’s lawsuit seeks a court order enjoining Ortiz, Quinones, and Miranda from engaging in fraudulent conduct; restitution for complainants; and over $300,000 in fines and penalties.

“It is shameful to steal money from vulnerable New Yorkers looking for honest work,” Attorney General Underwood said. “We allege that these scam artists set up their business to target unemployed and financially vulnerable New Yorkers with the promise of a...


August 15, 2018

A.G. Underwood Announces Win In Lawsuit Against Bronx & Westchester Car Dealerships For Illegally Overcharging Consumers For Bogus Theft Protection Product

NEW YORK — Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a court order that permanently enjoins Victory Motors, LLC (Victory Mitsubishi of Larchmont in Westchester) and Victory Auto Group, LLC (Victory Suzuki of the Bronx) from engaging in persistent fraudulent, deceptive, and illegal business practices in the sale of a passive security system and requires the dealerships to pay restitution, damages, and civil penalties. The court order is the result of a lawsuit filed by the Attorney General in December 2017, alleging that the car dealerships deceptively charged as many as 1,100 consumers for an unwanted and bogus anti-theft product that cost up to $4,000 per consumer. Known as an “after-sale” product, this item was often added onto the final cost of the vehicle without the consumer’s knowledge or consent – after the customer had agreed upon the purchase price of a vehicle but before the sale transaction was finalized. ...


August 14, 2018

Attorney General Underwood And Governor Cuomo Announce Suit Against Purdue Pharma For Widespread Fraud And Deception In Marketing Of Opioid Products

NEW YORK—New York Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood and Governor Andrew M.
Cuomo today announced a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma L.P., Purdue Pharma Inc., and Purdue Frederick Company, Inc. (“Purdue”). The lawsuit alleges a decades-long and continuing pattern of persistent deceptive and illegal conduct, whereby Purdue misled prescribers and patients about the risks of its opioids, including OxyContin, intentionally understating the risks and overstating the benefits of these powerful and dangerous drugs. Specifically, the Attorney General’s complaint alleges that Purdue persistently made – directly and through third party groups – numerous misrepresentations about its products, including concealing the link between long-term use of opioids and abuse and addiction, masking the signs of addiction by referring to them as “pseudoaddiction,” falsely claiming that withdrawal from its products can be easily managed, overstating the risks of alternative pain relief therapies as compared to opioids, and misrepresenting the extent to which opioids improve body...


August 08, 2018

Operation Bob The Builder: A.G. Underwood Announces Convictions Of Warren County Couple For Stealing Over $1.3 Million And Laundering Proceeds

NEW YORK— Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced the guilty pleas of Robert J. Mirel (a/k/a Robert Morel, a/k/a RJ Mirel) and Debra Burnett (a/k/a Deborah Barnett, a/k/a “Debby Turner”)—the owners and operators of Arlington Equipment Corp. d/b/a Arlington Manipulators—for defrauding numerous companies and business owners throughout New York and the United States by pretending to sell glass installation equipment and laundering millions of dollars in criminal proceeds through their shell and shelf companies. Both defendants pleaded guilty today in Warren County Court to Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, Money Laundering in the Second Degree, Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, and Criminal Tax Fraud in the Third Degree. Mirel will be sentenced to 5 to 15 years in state prison and Burnett will be sentenced to 3 to 9 years in state prison on September 27th, 2018. They will also be required to pay over $1.3...


August 07, 2018

A.G. Underwood Announces Croman Tenant Restitution Fund Claims Process

NEW YORK — Today, New York Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood announced that tenants who live or formerly lived in buildings owned by New York City landlord Steven Croman will be able to apply for restitution, as part of the unprecedented settlement reached by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in December 2017. The settlement arose out of an investigation and lawsuit filed by the Attorney General’s office against Croman for engaging in
illegal conduct — including harassment, coercion, and fraud — in order to force rent-regulated tenants out of their apartments and convert their apartments into highly profitable market-rate units.

“This office has zero tolerance for predatory landlords who seek to line their pockets at the expense of their tenants’ wellbeing,” said Attorney General Underwood. “Now, Croman tenants will finally get the restitution and protections they deserve as a result of this unprecedented settlement — the largest-ever with an...


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

August 20, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Stein Files Suit Against Contractors over Deceptive Trade Practices**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today filed a suit against Randy Briel, Glenn Dunnam, Signature Sun Decks, and Decks Patios and Porches over a contractor scheme in the Charlotte area. The suit alleges that these defendants take money from consumers without doing the work they’ve promised to perform. The lawsuit seeks a temporary restraining order, preliminary injunction, and other civil penalties for victims.

“Unfortunately, some contractors are crooked: they take people’s money but don’t do the work,” said Attorney General Stein. “My office will not allow it.”

The suit, filed over deceptive trade practices, alleges that the defendants, neither of whom is a licensed contractor, advertise a legitimate residential contractor business with more than 20 business names. They enter into a written contract, require a deposit before work begins and at various stages during construction. The defendants then do work and demand installment payments – and quickly thereafter abandon the...


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**NORTH DAKOTA**

August 20, 2018

**ANOTHER FRAUDULENT CONTRACTOR BANNED**

BISMARCK, ND – The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division sued Joshua James Vance of West Fargo, ND, doing business as JMB Builders, Inc. and JMB Builders, LLC, for violations of the consumer fraud law and contractor licensing laws.

Vance has a history of fraudulent behavior going back several years. Vance was doing business as Vance Construction but let his contractor’s license expire on March 1, 2014. The Consumer Protection division initiated an investigation in late 2014, after learning that Vance was
continuing to do business as a contractor even after his contractor’s license had expired. Investigators determined that Vance had not disclosed civil and criminal actions against him, and advised the Secretary of State’s office against renewing the license. The Consumer Protection Division initiated another investigation in September 2017, after receiving new complaints about Vance. Investigators determined that in 2015, Vance had his ex-wife submit a new application for a contractor’s...


OHIO

August 31, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Seeks Reimbursement From Used Car Seller Over Title Problems

(DELAWARE, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against the operators of a used car dealership accused of failing to deliver vehicle titles to central Ohio consumers. The lawsuit accuses Tommy’s Auto & Performance LLC, its owner, and its general manager of violating Ohio consumer protection laws. According to the lawsuit, the dealership last operated at 4 E. High St. in Ashley, Ohio. More than a dozen consumers filed complaints against the dealership, with most saying they never received the title to a vehicle they bought from Tommy’s Auto & Performance. The Ohio Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section worked to resolve the complaints, in some cases making payments from the Title Defect Resolution Fund — a program that helps used car buyers resolve certain title problems. The Attorney General’s lawsuit, filed in the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, seeks to recover more than $47,000 that was paid from...


August 27, 2018

Appliance Repairman Accused of Failing to Deliver Services to Cincinnati Consumers

(CINCINNATI)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a home appliance repairman accused of failing to deliver promised services to Cincinnati-area consumers. The lawsuit accuses Terry Haynes, doing business as A Plus Appliance Repair, of violating Ohio consumer protection laws. According to the lawsuit, Haynes offered home appliance repairs under the name A Plus Appliance Repair and also reportedly under the name Rescue Appliance. After accepting money from consumers, Haynes allegedly failed to deliver the promised services or did repair work
that was shoddy or incomplete.

Twelve consumers have filed complaints, with reported losses totaling more than $5,000. In most cases, consumers said they paid for services they never received. In a few cases, they said the work was shoddy or incomplete.

“Most contractors are reputable and do a great job, but there are some people who just don’t finish the work they were paid to do,” Attorney General DeWine...

August 23, 2018

Grain Handler Sentenced to Prison for Stealing Millions from Ohio Farmers

(NORWALK, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine and Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) Director David Daniels announced today that a Huron County man has been sentenced to prison for the theft of more than $3 million in grain from nearly three dozen Ohio farmers. Huron County Common Pleas Court Judge James W. Conway today sentenced Richard J. Schwan, 79, of Monroeville, to four years in prison. The defendant was also ordered to pay $3,222,209.70 in restitution as part of his sentence. The money, which has now been paid in full, will reimburse the farmers, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and the Ohio Grain Indemnity Fund.

"This defendant sold grain for 35 hardworking farmers, but he deliberately failed to pay them their shares of the profits. He then essentially stole from every grain farmer in the state when the Ohio Grain Indemnity Fund was used to pay for the majority of the...

August 16, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Lawsuit Against Used Car Seller

(WARREN, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against the operators of a Niles used car dealership accused of failing to deliver vehicle titles to customers.

The lawsuit accuses Leroy Braxton and Donetta Braxton, both doing business as Steals on Wheels, of violating Ohio consumer protection laws.

“We’re taking this action to protect consumers,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We’ve helped a number of people who had problems with this dealership, and we don’t want other people to have similar problems in the future.”

According to the lawsuit, Steals on Wheels last operated at 3045 South Main Street in Niles. In the past two years, about 25 consumers have filed complaints against the dealership, with many consumers saying they never received the title to a vehicle they purchased from Steals on Wheels.
The Ohio Attorney General’s Office worked to help resolve consumers’ complaints, in some cases making payments from the...


August 02, 2018

**Wilmington Man Sentenced to Prison for Fence Scam**

(CINCINNATI)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced that a Wilmington man has been sentenced to prison and ordered to pay restitution for running a fence scam affecting southwest Ohio consumers.

Phillip R. Sholler Jr., 42, pleaded guilty today to six felony counts of theft, including three counts of theft from the elderly. He was sentenced in the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas to one year in prison and ordered to pay $48,466.50 in restitution.

“We’re committed to protecting Ohio families, and we target scams aggressively,” Attorney General DeWine said. “In this case, people paid thousands of dollars for services they never received. Our goal was to help them and to hold the defendant accountable.”

Sholler, who did business as Shollers Fence LLC, was accused of stealing from six homeowners between July and December 2017. According to investigators, he took cash or checks from the homeowners but never installed the fencing and...


OKLAHOMA

August 24, 2018

**Judge Orders Purdue Pharma, Janssen Pharmaceuticals to Produce Witnesses After Emergency Hearing**

NORMAN – Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman today ordered Purdue Pharma and Janssen Pharmaceuticals to make witnesses available next week for deposition by Attorney General Mike Hunter’s legal team.

The order came in response to emergency motions filed by the state earlier this week asking the court to sanction the companies for not complying with prior court orders to produce witnesses for depositions.

In the two emergency motions, the state claimed that both Purdue and Janssen have violated previous court orders requiring the companies to provide witnesses for depositions.

Attorney General Hunter applauded the court’s decision.

“The companies’ repeated disrespect for this court, the state of Oklahoma and Judges Thad Balkman and William Hetherington, whose deadlines they continue to blatantly ignore, will not be tolerated,” Attorney General Hunter said. “I commend the order from Judge Balkman, which
will enable our team to keep this case on track for the May 2019 trial. We...


August 22, 2018

Attorney General Hunter Commends Judge Balkman’s Decision to Allow Cameras in the Courtroom for State Opioid Trial

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter today commended the decision by Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman to allow journalists to use cameras in the courtroom during the state’s trial against the nation’s leading manufacturers of opioids, scheduled for May 2019. The announcement comes after attorneys representing The Oklahoman Publishing Company sent a letter to Judge Balkman requesting the use of cameras during the trial.

In May, Attorney General Hunter sent the state’s response, agreeing that cameras should be allowed, citing a 1981 attorney general opinion that says cameras and tape recorders improve accuracy in reporting on events and therefore may not be categorically barred from meetings. “Judge Balkman’s decision will bring transparency, accountability and clarity to this trial and I applaud his decision,” Attorney General Hunter said. “Allowing cameras in the courtroom will give Oklahomans across the state and individuals from across the country a firsthand account of the proceedings. It...


August 22, 2018

Attorney General Hunter Files Charity Fraud Charges against Former President of the Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa

TULSA – Attorney General Mike Hunter today charged a former board president of the Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa for allegedly embezzling money from the organization. Jamie Harper faces 19 counts of embezzlement and one count of engaging in a pattern of criminal offenses after an investigation by the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Unit. A complaint filed by a member of the organization’s board led to the investigation. The complaint alleged Harper was making misrepresentations regarding finances to the organization’s board members and claimed they also found financial inconsistencies. “The facts of this case are disheartening,” Attorney General Hunter said. “Harper was entrusted to provide leadership and care, and to ensure the money donated to the organization was going to enhance the lives of individuals with Down syndrome, not enrich herself. My office will not tolerate anyone who tries to take advantage of charities that provide vital resources to those in
August 03, 2018

Attorney General Hunter Announces State’s Opioid Lawsuit Returned to State Court to be Tried in Cleveland County

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter today announced United States District Judge Vicki Miles-LaGrange granted the state’s motion to remand, returning the state’s lawsuit against the nation’s leading manufacturers of opioids back to Cleveland County.

Attorney General Hunter said the state’s case remains on track for the May 2019 trial date before Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman.

“With today’s ruling, our case moves back to where it has always belonged – Cleveland County,” Attorney General Hunter said. “The time for the defendants’ games is over. This case needs to be decided by a jury of Oklahomans, not buried in an Ohio court with hundreds of other cases. We want the defendants to specifically answer to Oklahomans for their deceitful acts that have led to the death and addiction of our loved ones and friends.

“I applaud our legal team, led by former Federal Judge Mike Burrage and Reggie Whitten, attorneys in...

August 03, 2018

Attorney General Hunter Supports Chickasaw, Choctaw Lawsuits Against Opioid Manufacturers

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter today joined Chickasaw Nation Gov. Bill Anoatubby and Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton in support of lawsuits separately filed by the two tribes against the nation’s leading manufacturers of opioids.

In similar filings in state court, the tribes claim the decades of deceptive marketing by the companies led to the ongoing public health crisis that continues to claim the lives of men and women across the state and tribal nations.

Attorney General Hunter said the state stands by the tribes’ decision to sue.

“Opioid manufacturers are the root cause of the ongoing epidemic,” Attorney General Hunter said. “These companies knew the addictive qualities of opioids and still preyed on the suffering of Americans for decades. “The state is ready to work closely with our tribal partners to ensure success in both the tribes' and state’s lawsuits. They chose the most qualified law firm to
**PENNSYLVANIA**

August 28, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Shapiro Announces Results of Statewide Consumer Protection Initiative to Secure Restitution Payments to Consumers**

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro announced that the Office of Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection has filed 12 legal actions involving the failure of various businesses and individuals in nine counties to comply with court orders by paying more than $75,000 to Pennsylvania consumers.

The legal actions, which were filed to enforce these settlements and ensure Pennsylvanians receive the restitution they have been awarded, followed a review of compliance issues related to the settlements and court orders. The prior settlements and court orders included Assurances of Voluntary Compliance, Consent Petitions, Default Judgments and prior actions for contempt or sanctions.

“When businesses and individuals break the law and then enter into settlement agreements with my Office, they are required to keep up their end of the bargain,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “If a court issues an order, we expect people to respect the court’s authority by fully complying. We will take...”

**PUERTO RICO**

August 03, 2018

**Department of Justice files charges against person who committed illegal appropriation and fraud against elderly person**

(Bayamón) - The Secretary of Justice, Wanda Vázquez Garced, and the director of the Economic Crimes Division, Lourdes Acevedo, reported that nine criminal charges were filed against María C. Vázquez Meléndez for acts committed against her exsuegra.

The investigation of the Economic Crimes Division revealed that the ex-wife of Antonia Santos Torres, 85, was dedicated to taking care of her. It is further reflected that Vázquez Meléndez learned that Santos Torres had a savings account in Banco Popular de Puerto Rico and that he had the money he obtained as a result of the purchase and sale of a property in Orlando, Florida.
It was then that he defrauded her to appropriate those funds, which totaled $54,750, leaving a balance of $46 in the bank account. The imputed today made 113 withdrawals of money from the account between October 21, 2015 and April 20, 2016 in an automatic money withdrawal...


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**SOUTH CAROLINA**

August 22, 2018

**AG Wilson files brief to uphold SCE&G rate cut**

(COLUMBIA, S.C.) – August 22, 2018 – Attorney General Alan Wilson has filed a brief to support dismissing SCE&G’s appeal of a ruling that temporarily cut ratepayers’ bills.

The attorney general’s brief argues that the U.S. Court of Appeals does not have jurisdiction to hear this case because of the Johnson Act, which ensures that federal courts have a “hands-off policy relative to ratemaking.”

The brief says, “The legislative history of the Johnson Act ... makes clear that its purpose was to prevent public utilities from going to federal district court to challenge state administrative orders or to avoid state administrative and judicial proceedings.”

Federal District Judge Michelle Childs ruled recently that a temporary rate cut for SCE&G ratepayers could take effect. SCE&G has appealed that ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit. Lawyers for South Carolina Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman and South Carolina Speaker of the...  


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August 16, 2018

**Attorney General Wilson joins lawmakers asking court to allow SCE&G rate cut to continue**

(COLUMBIA, S.C.) – August 16, 2018 – South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson has filed a brief in support of the state legislature’s effort to bring relief to SCE&G ratepayers and to hold SCE&G accountable for its spending on the V.C. Summer nuclear plant. SCE&G has appealed to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

U.S. District Court Judge Michelle Childs ruled recently that a law passed by the legislature to temporarily cut SCE&G’s rates by 15 percent should be allowed to take effect. That rate cut is now in effect. SCE&G is asking the Court of Appeals to stay Judge Childs’ ruling while the appeal is ongoing. The Attorney General’s Office also filed a 40-page brief before Judge Childs before her ruling.

The brief, written by state Solicitor General Bob Cook, says “The Legislature expressly determined it to be in the ‘public interest’ to reduce rates temporarily.” The...

- Original Press Release: http://www.scag.gov/archives/36219
WASHINGTON

August 27, 2018

Court orders estate-planning company to immediately halt deceptive “trust mill” practices
SEATTLE — Following a lawsuit by Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a King County Superior Court judge issued a preliminary injunction ordering an estate-planning company to immediately halt its deceptive conduct. The lawsuit asserts the Texas-based company operated a “trust mill” scheme targeting hundreds of Washington seniors.

On March 8, Ferguson filed a lawsuit against CLA Estate Services, Inc., CLA USA, Inc., and Mitchell Johnson, a former CLA agent. The suit asserts that CLA held misleading estate-planning seminars and sold financial products to Washington seniors without adequately disclosing that these products could lock up their assets for years and carried hefty penalties for early withdrawal. These products made CLA millions in commissions at substantial cost to consumers.

After Ferguson filed the lawsuit, CLA issued a statement claiming, “CLA customers have the peace of mind knowing that they have a valid, legal estate plan in place to handle their affairs upon incapacitation or death.” ...


August 21, 2018

AG recovers $500K donated by Washingtonians to bankrupt sham charity
OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson joined Washington Secretary of Health John Wiesman today to announce that more than half a million dollars from the recovered assets of a bankrupt sham charity will fund breast cancer screenings for underinsured women, as donors originally intended.

The Attorney General’s Office opened an investigation into the Breast Cancer Prevention Fund (BCPF) in 2011 after receiving nine complaints that the organization was misleading donors. BCPF led donors to believe it would use the vast majority of their donations to provide mammograms for uninsured and underinsured women. Instead, BCPF paid about 80 percent of the money raised to a telemarketing firm owned by the president of the charity’s board. He pocketed nearly half of that money.

The Breast Cancer Prevention Fund declared bankruptcy during the Attorney General’s investigation.

The more than $500,000 announced today is Washington’s share of about a $1.6 million distribution from a settlement approved by the U.S....

WEST VIRGINIA

August 22, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Seeks Information, Shut Down of Used Vehicle Dealership**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey asked the court to shut down a used vehicle dealership after its owner refused to comply with a subpoena.

The Attorney General’s Office subpoenaed Emuil M. Byard, Jr., owner and operator of JB Rebuilt Auto Sales, following a consumer complaint alleging the consumer’s vehicle was repossessed without proper notice.

“Businesses must respect our state’s consumer protection laws and comply with any lawful subpoena,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “A vehicle is one of the largest and most important purchases consumers can make and they should not have their vehicle unlawfully ripped away without notice.“

The petition states the Hancock County car dealer admitted to investigators that he did not give some customers a 10-day notice required by state law. Instead, the petition alleges Byard told investigators he requires “buy here, pay here” consumers to sign an agreement stating his company can repossess a...


August 16, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Reaches Nearly $900K Consumer Protection Settlement**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announced a settlement valued at nearly $900,000 to resolve allegations that a leasing company unlawfully repossessed motor vehicles and made misrepresentations regarding credit repair.

Auto Trakk LLC paid the state $100,000 and ceased any and all efforts to collect $790,000 in consumer debt, in accordance with terms of the settlement. It also agreed to recall any consumer accounts turned over to collections and vacate any judgments related to the accounts.

“Companies doing business in West Virginia must adhere to her laws,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Our office will do everything within its power to ensure that consumers enjoy the protections afforded to them by state law.”

The Attorney General’s lawsuit alleged that Auto Trakk repossessed leased vehicles without written notice. State law requires any business issue a written notice and then wait 10 days before repossession. ...

August 06, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Sues Firewood Equipment Dealer, Manufacturer**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey filed suit alleging that a firewood sales and equipment operation jeopardized the physical safety and financial well-being of consumers.

The lawsuit alleges New River Firewood and Power Trust Equipment, separate companies, through senior management, deceived consumers and breached warranties related to the sale and manufacturing of log splitters that malfunctioned shortly after the initial use.

“Consumer goods sold in West Virginia must be of good working order,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “When items fall short of that standard, business owners must adhere to the implied warranty and provide repairs or refunds as necessary. Any business failing to comply faces potential consequences.”

The Attorney General seeks a temporary court order to prohibit New River Firewood and Power Trust Equipment, both based in central Fayette County, from engaging in the sale of consumer goods in West Virginia during the course of the state’s litigation. ...


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**WYOMING**

August 02, 2018

**Online Wealth Academy, LLC (Docket No. 187-933)**

Online Wealth Academy, LLC was a Wyoming Limited Liability Company with a Cheyenne mailing address that sold “work at home opportunities.” Consumers reported that Online Wealth Academy, its owner Shon Earl, and its sales representative Lindsay Jensen (aka Lindsay Earl) promised substantial monthly income working from home if consumers purchased Online Wealth Academy’s merchandise. Consumers paid thousands of dollars to Online Wealth Academy, hoping the amount would be an investment in their future. In reality, Online Wealth Academy provided only a web-based training program about how to make online sales, through which no consumers made any money.

After conducting an investigation, the Attorney General alleged that Online Wealth Academy, Shon Earl, and Lindsay Earl violated the Consumer Protection Act by: 1) representing that consumers had given positive testimonials, when such testimonials were fabricated; 2) representing that consumers qualified for grants or scholarships, when no such grants or scholarships existed; 3) representing...

➤ **Original Press Release:** http://ag.wyo.gov/cpu/resolved-matters
**Multistate Cases**

**Bayer-Monsanto Consolidation**


**EPA Rollback of Clean Car Rule**


**Proposed Borrower Defense Regulations for Students**


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Transparency of Shell Corporations


4. NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS - (2018-08-05) Attorneys General Calls on Congress to require shell company transparency https://www.cnmioag.org/attorneys-general-calls-on-congress-to-require-shell-company-transparency/


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SEC Proposed Rules for Retail Investors

2. **ILLINOIS** - (2018-08-08) ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN URGES SEC TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTIONS OF RETAIL INVESTORS
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_08/20180808.html
3. **MAINE** - (2018-08-08) Attorney General Mills - Part of Coalition of 17 AGs - Urges SEC to Strengthen Regulations to Protect Best Interest of Investors
4. **NEW YORK** - (2018-08-08) Attorney General Underwood – Leading Coalition Of 17 AGs – Urges SEC To Toughen Protection Of Retail Investors

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**Role of States in Consumer Protection**

1. **NEW YORK** - (2018-08-20) A.G. Underwood – Part Of Bipartisan Coalition Of 29 AGs – Files Comments With FTC On Crucial Role Of States In Consumer Protection
2. **OREGON** - (2018-08-20) AG Rosenblum Leads Group of 29 AG’s to File Comments with Federal Trade Commission
   https://www.doj.state.or.us/media-home/news-media-releases/13335/

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**Opioid Crisis**

1. **ALASKA** - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Lindemuth Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
2. **ARKANSAS** - (2018-08-23) Rutledge Encourages Congress to Pass Stronger Punishments for Fentanyl Traffickers
3. **CALIFORNIA** - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Becerra Joins Bipartisan Coalition of 52 Attorneys General Supporting the SOFA Act to Help Fight the Opioid Crisis
4. **FLORIDA** - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Bondi Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
   http://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/8939AC029E01A510852582F2006EBDOE
5. **GEORGIA** - (2018-08-23) Carr Urges Congress to Support Law Enforcement and Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
6. **ILLINOIS** - (2018-08-23) ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN URGES CONGRESS TO CLOSE DEADLY FENTANYL LOOPHOLE
   http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_08/20180823.html
7. **IOWA** - (2018-08-23) Miller urges Congress to close deadly fentanyl loophole
   https://www.iowaattorneygeneral.gov/newsroom/fentanyl-miller-congress-sofa-attorneys-general/
8. KANSAS - (2018-08-23) AG Derek Schmidt urges Congress to strengthen opioid enforcement
9. KENTUCKY - (2018-08-23) Beshear Calls on Congress to Close Loophole Allowing Spread of Deadly Fentanyl
https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=628
10. MASSACHUSETTS - (2018-08-23) AG Healey Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
11. MISSISSIPPI - (2018-08-23) AG Jim Hood Joins 52 Attorneys General Supporting the SOFA Act to Help Fight the Opioid Crisis
12. MISSOURI - (2018-08-23) AG Hawley Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
13. MONTANA - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Fox Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
14. NEBRASKA - (2018-08-24) Attorney General Peterson Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
15. NEW MEXICO - (2018-08-23) AG Balderas Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
16. NORTH CAROLINA - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Josh Stein Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
17. NORTH CAROLINA - (2018-08-08) Attorney General Josh Stein Sues Opioid Manufacturer Insys Over Medicaid Concerns
18. NORTH DAKOTA - (2018-08-29) Volkswagen Settlement Restitution Claims Forms Now Available for 11,000 AZ Consumers
19. OHIO - (2018-08-23) Attorney General DeWine Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
20. RHODE ISLAND - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Kilmartin Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
https://www.ri.gov/press/view/34049
21. SOUTH CAROLINA - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Alan Wilson urges Congress to close deadly fentanyl loophole
http://www.scag.gov/archives/36295
22. SOUTH DAKOTA - (2018-08-23) Attorney General Marty Jackley Urges Congress to Close Deadly Fentanyl Loophole
https://atg.sd.gov/OurOffice/Media/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=2091
23. UTAH - (2018-08-23) ATTORNEY GENERAL SEAN D. REYES URGES CONGRESS TO CLOSE DEADLY FENTANYL LOOPHOLE
https://attorneygeneral.utah.gov/sofa-act/


Net Neutrality

1. ILLINOIS - (2018-08-20) ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN FILES NEW BRIEF IN NET NEUTRALITY LAWSUIT http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_08/20180820b.html


3-D Printed Guns


15. UTAH - (2018-08-17) Merger will enhance the marketplace and help rural America https://attorneygeneral.utah.gov/tmobile-sprint/


Medicaid Fraud

ARKANSAS

August 21, 2018

Rutledge Announces Arrest of Former Director of Billing at Preferred Family Health for Medicaid Fraud

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of the former Director of Billing at Preferred Family Health.

Helen Balding, 47, of New Braunfels, Texas, formerly of Fayetteville, is accused of making false statements knowingly causing the Arkansas Medicaid Program to overpay Preferred Family Health from January 2015 to October 2017, totaling about $2.2 million. Following an investigation by the Attorney General’s Office, Balding turned herself in to the Independence County Sheriff’s Department. She is charged with two counts of Medicaid Fraud, Class A and Class B felonies.

In June, Rutledge announced the arrest of former Preferred Family Health Director of Program Integrity and Director of Operations, Robin Raveendran, of Little Rock, for scamming the Arkansas Medicaid Program of $2.2 million during the same timeframe. Raveendran is also a former Senior Auditor with Arkansas’s Medicaid Program Integrity Unit. Balding is accused of being an accomplice to Raveendran and...


August 10, 2018

Rutledge Announces Arrest of Farmington Woman for Stealing Opioids

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

Ashley Renee Beeks, 26, of Farmington, is accused of stealing oxycodone pills while working at a Fayetteville nursing and rehabilitation facility in December 2017. Following an investigation by the Attorney General’s Office, Beeks turned herself in to the Washington County Sheriff’s Department. She is charged with one count of obtaining a controlled substance by fraud, a Class D felony.

“Arkansas has been devastated by the opioid epidemic,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “I will prosecute people such as Beeks who steal patients’ medications and abuse the system.”

Medicaid fraud occurs when providers use the Medicaid program to obtain money to which they are not entitled. To report Medicaid fraud or abuse or neglect in residential care facilities,
August 02, 2018

**Rutledge Announces Arrest of Clinton Woman for Stealing Opioids**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of a Van Buren County woman.

Bambi Lee Clauer, 37, of Clinton, was arrested by agents with the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and transported to the Cleburne County Sheriff’s Department. She is charged with one count of obtaining a controlled substance by fraud, a Class D felony. She is accused of stealing hydrocodone pills while working at a Heber Springs nursing and rehabilitation facility in November 2017.

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


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**KENTUCKY**

August 28, 2018

**Beshear: Louisville Woman Arraigned on Medicaid Fraud, Theft Charges**


Susan E. Reed, 60, of Louisville, was arraigned in Jefferson Circuit Court Monday following an indictment on one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class D felony, and one count of theft by deception, over $10,000, a Class C felony.

It is alleged that Ms. Reed caused fraudulent documents to be submitted to the Kentucky Medicaid Program resulting in a loss to Medicaid of over $10,000.

“My office takes our role as Medicaid watchdog seriously,” said Beshear. “Those who wrongly take from our state programs that are intended to help our most vulnerable will be convicted and held accountable.”

When Reed worked as an art and behavioral therapist, it is alleged she completed documents
claiming services were provided to Medicaid patients when they were...

August 16, 2018

**Henry County Resident Indicted, Charged with Health Care Fraud**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 16, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of Medicaid Fraud and Abuse today announced the indictment of a Henry County woman on health care fraud involving her son’s care.

Kelley Foree, 40, of Turners Station, has been charged with one count of devising or engaging in a scheme to defraud the Kentucky Medical Assistance Program of $300 or more, a Class D felony.


The charges involve the non-medical care through the Consumer Directed Option (CDO) of Kentucky Medicaid that Foree’s son receives.

The indictment alleges that on or about Aug. 20, 2012, through Oct. 10, 2014, Foree knowingly forged a CDO employee’s signature to timesheets that were submitted for work involving her son’s care that was never performed for the purpose of obtaining payment from the...

August 09, 2018

**Beshear, Federal Authorities Secure Health Care Fraud Pleas in Breathitt County**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 9, 2018) – A Breathitt County ambulance company, its owner and two employees have pleaded guilty to health care fraud in federal court, Attorney General Andy Beshear and his Office of Medicaid Fraud and Abuse announced today.

Hershel Jay “Jay” Arrowood, Lesa Arrowood, Terry Herald and Arrow-Med Ambulance Inc. entered pleas July 31 right before their trial was to begin, according to federal officials.

They entered pleas for falsely billing Medicare and Medicaid to transport patients for non-emergency services who did not qualify for the programs.

A Medicaid fraud investigator in Beshear’s office worked on the Arrow-Med investigation and prosecution with several federal agencies, including the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

According to federal officials, the three individuals and the company all admitted wrongdoing and because of their conduct, defrauded Medicare and Medicaid nearly $250,000. Their
sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 29. ...

➢ Original Press Release: https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=621

MARYLAND

August 17, 2018
Prince George’s County Social Worker Pleads Guilty to Felony Medicaid Fraud
BALTIMORE, MD (August 17, 2018) - Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that Shavon Jones, 42, of Clinton, pleaded guilty to one count of felony Medicaid Fraud for submitting claims that caused the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to reimburse Jones approximately $18,000 for services that she did not provide. Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Yolanda Tanner sentenced Jones to a five-year suspended sentence, five years of unsupervised probation, and ordered her to pay court costs and a fine of $3,000. Judge Tanner also ordered restitution to Medicaid in the amount of $11,834.25. Jones is a licensed clinical social worker-certified who operated a private mental health practice. From November 2013 through June 2016, Jones submitted false claims in connection with her private mental health practice. Specifically, Jones submitted claims to Medicaid and was reimbursed for services that she did not provide to her clients. Attorney General Frosh thanked the...


August 03, 2018
Dr. Kofi Shaw-Taylor Sentenced to Five Years Incarceration for Operating Pill Mill Disguised as Wellness Center
BALTIMORE, MD (August 3, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced that Anne Arundel County Circuit Court Judge Michael Wachs sentenced Dr. Kofi Shaw-Taylor to two, five-year concurrent sentences after pleading guilty to a charge of Medicaid fraud and another for conspiracy to commit Medicaid fraud. Judge Wachs also ordered $118,077 in restitution to the Maryland Medicaid Program and the forfeiture of certain seized assets for Shaw-Taylor’s role in a scheme to operate two pill mills in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County. Shaw-Taylor’s sentencing brings to a close a multi-jurisdiction, multi-agency investigation of illegal opioid distribution that resulted in the conviction of 10 defendants. “Maryland is in the midst of an opioid epidemic, with lives being lost every day,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Dr. Shaw-Taylor defrauded the state and helped spread the disease of addiction. Today, with our federal and state partners, we shut him down and...

MASSACHUSETTS

August 21, 2018

Massachusetts Pharmacy to Pay $340,000 Over Claims of Operating Unauthorized Automatic Refill Program

Boston — A pharmacy based in Bristol County has agreed to pay over $340,000 to settle allegations that it improperly billed and received payments from the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth), Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Under the terms of the settlement, PharmaHealth Long Term Care Inc., PharmaHealth Specialty Long Term Care Inc., and PharmaHealth Hawthorne (collectively known as “PharmaHealth”), will pay over $340,000 to MassHealth to resolve allegations that it automatically refilled prescription medications that were not explicitly requested by MassHealth recipients.

“We allege that this company’s billing and refill practices were wasteful, unnecessary, and in violation of the law,” said AG Healey. “This settlement provides a payment back to MassHealth and is another example of our efforts to recover funds to the state and taxpayers.”

Current regulations prohibit pharmacies in Massachusetts from automatically refilling prescriptions that were not explicitly requested by a MassHealth patient or caregiver at the time of each...


August 20, 2018

Three Indicted for Alleged Scheme to Defraud MassHealth

Fall River — Three people were indicted in connection with a scheme to fraudulently bill the state’s Medicaid Program (MassHealth) for personal care attendant (PCA) services that were not provided, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Kerry Quinn, age 25, of Fall River, Mark Ferreira, age 31, of New Bedford, and Kariann Tomer, age 23, of Mashpee, were indicted today by a Bristol County Grand Jury on charges of Medicaid False Claims (1 count) and Larceny over $1,200 (2 counts). All three individuals will be arraigned in Bristol Superior Court on Monday, September 27.

The AG’s Office alleges that between March 2017 and May 2018, Quinn, who MassHealth has recognized as eligible for the PCA Program, knowingly submitted false claims to MassHealth for services in excess of $40,000. PCAs are paid by MassHealth to help provide basic health services and assist disabled beneficiaries with activities of daily living. Quinn named Ferreira, and...

August 13, 2018

**Boston Home-Health Agency Owner Sentenced to State Prison for Medicaid Fraud and Larceny**

Boston — The owner of a Boston-based home health agency has been sentenced to two to three years in state prison for stealing millions of dollars from the state’s Medicaid Program (MassHealth), Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

On Friday, Suffolk Superior Court Judge Douglas Wilkins sentenced Elena Kurbatzky, age 45, of Boston to two to three years in state prison, with three years of probation to serve upon her release. Kurbatzky must also provide restitution up to $1.8 million and is forbidden from contracting with federal and state health care programs while on probation.

Kurbatzky was convicted after a nine-day jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court on charges of Medicaid False Claims (3 counts), Larceny over $250 by False Pretenses (3 counts), and Medicaid Member Eligibility Fraud (1 count).

“The defendant stole millions from MassHealth and took advantage of patients and taxpayers,” said AG Healey. “We will continue to investigate and take...”


August 09, 2018

**In Settlement With AG, North Andover-Based Treatment Center to Pay $600,000 for Illegally Charging Patients Cash for Suboxone**

Boston — The owners of the North Andover-based Center for Psychiatric Medicine (CPM) will pay $612,000 for charging cash for opioid addiction treatment already covered by the state’s Medicaid Program (MassHealth), Attorney General Healey announced today.

The court found on summary judgment that from October 2010 to November 2015, CPM and its owners, Joseph Campione and Thomas J. McLaughlin, charged its patients cash fees to receive Suboxone treatment. Suboxone and other formulations of buprenorphine are used for the treatment of opioid use disorder by suppressing withdrawal and cravings for opioids.

“This center stole from its own patients seeking treatment for opioid addiction and put up barriers that could have had fatal consequences,” said AG Healey.

Prosecutors allege that patients were told that CPM did not accept MassHealth, despite the fact that CPM was a MassHealth provider. CPM also told patients that they could avoid required weekly therapy sessions and monthly physician visits by...


August 07, 2018

**Quincy-Based Dentist Indicted for Allegedly Defrauding MassHealth**

Boston — A Quincy-based dentist who was banned from the state’s Medicaid program has
been indicted in connection with an alleged scheme to fraudulently bill MassHealth under another dentist’s name, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Dr. Shahrzad Haghayegh-Askarian, age 43, of Norwell, was indicted by a Statewide Grand Jury on charges of Medicaid False Claims (2 counts) and Larceny over $1,200 (2 counts). Haghayegh-Askarian’s company, Dazzling Smile Care PC, located in Quincy, was also indicted on the same charges.

An audit by the State Auditor’s Office uncovered Medicaid fraud committed by Dr. Haghayegh-Askarian. Following that audit, Dr. Haghayegh-Askarian agreed to a $300,000 settlement with the AG’s Office in 2015 and was terminated from participating in the MassHealth program. The settlement stipulated that she could only re-enroll with MassHealth if she met standards of compliance and instituted a monitoring program mutually agreed upon by Dr. Haghayegh-Askarian and the AG’s Medicaid Fraud Division. ...


August 03, 2018

Jury Convicts Home Health Agency Owner on All Charges for Stealing Millions from MassHealth

Boston — After a nine-day jury trial, the owner of a Boston-based home health agency has been convicted on seven charges of Medicaid Fraud and Larceny for stealing millions from the State’s Medicaid Program (MassHealth), Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Elena Kurbatzky, age 45, of Boston, was convicted after a jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court on charges of Medicaid False Claims (3 counts), Larceny over $250 by False Pretenses (3 counts), and Medicaid Member Eligibility Fraud (1 count). Kurbatzky is scheduled to be sentenced on August 7 at 2 p.m. in Suffolk Superior Court.

Kurbatzky was indicted in 2017 after an investigation by the AG’s Office. That investigation found that between February 2015 and October 2016, Kurbatzky’s company, Harmony Home Health Care, LLC (Harmony), billed MassHealth for in-home services allegedly provided to 38 patients, most of which were not provided and/or not authorized. Some of those services were billed while...


MISSOURI

August 20, 2018

AG Hawley Announces Medicaid Investigation Leads to Guilty Plea in DeBrodie Case

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley today announced that a joint-state and federal investigation led to the guilty plea of Melissa Denise DeLap, 49, of Columbia,
Mo. DeLap plead guilty in federal court to health care fraud.
As a community registered nurse, DeLap was contracted to provide services to four beneficiaries at a residence operated by Second Chance Homes in Fulton, Mo. Second Chance Homes submitted monthly claims to Medicaid for these services. Her duties included face-to-face evaluations, reviewing physicians’ orders, monitoring medications, and reviewing records. Carl DeBrodie, who died in September 2016, but was not reported missing until April 2017, was among the beneficiaries. From at least September 2016 through March 2017, DeLap completed and signed DeBrodie’s Community RN Monthly Health Summary, falsely stating that she had performed a face-to-face assessment of DeBrodie. She did not provide the services, for which she received payment from...


NEW YORK
August 29, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Prison Sentence Of Patient Recruiter Who Bribed Medicaid Recipients To Undergo Unnecessary Medical Tests
QUEENS — Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced the sentencing of Alex Adderly, also known as Uruhu Adderley, 45 of Manhattan, for defrauding Medicaid by soliciting and bribing Medicaid recipients in order to persuade them to undergo a battery of unnecessary and improperly administered medical tests at a Queens clinic. Adderly was sentenced today in Queens County Criminal Court before Judge Suzanne Melendez to 1 ½ to 3 years in state prison. “My office will continue to hold individuals accountable who exploit the state Medicaid program for their own personal gain,” said Attorney General Underwood. “Disregarding the wellbeing of our most vulnerable New Yorkers will not be tolerated.” Following complaints, undercover agents observed Adderly recruiting Medicaid recipients outside of a soup kitchen in Manhattan on multiple dates in 2016 and 2017. On each occasion, Adderly approached the undercover agents and offered them cash if they underwent a “physical” and had active...


August 14, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Guilty Plea Of Patient Recruiter Who Bribed Medicaid Recipients To Undergo Unnecessary Medical Tests
QUEENS — Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced the guilty plea of Alex Adderly, also known as Uruhu Adderley, 45 of Manhattan, for defrauding Medicaid by soliciting and bribing Medicaid recipients in order to persuade them to undergo a battery of unnecessary
and improperly administered medical tests at a Queens clinic. Adderly pleaded guilty before the Honorable Toko Serita in Queen County Criminal Court to Health Care Fraud in the Fourth Degree, Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, and Prohibited Practices for Persons Acting in Concert with a Medical Assistance Provider, all class E felonies.

“My office will not allow criminals to use Medicaid as personal bank accounts and disregard the wellbeing of our most vulnerable New Yorkers,” said Attorney General Underwood. “We will continue to hold fraudsters accountable.”

Following complaints, undercover agents observed Adderly recruiting Medicaid recipients outside of a soup kitchen in Manhattan on multiple dates in 2016 and...


August 01, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Arrest Of Monroe County Nurse Aide For Alleged Patient Abuse
ROCHESTER – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood announced the arrest and arraignment of Jerry Clarke, 57, of Rochester, a Certified Nurse Aide, for allegedly striking a nursing home patient. Clarke is charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Willful Violation of Health Laws, in the Town Justice Court of Gates in Monroe County.

“My office will continue to prosecute those who endanger our most vulnerable residents,” said Attorney General Underwood. “New Yorkers deserve assurance that their loved ones will be appropriately cared for in skilled nursing facilities.”

The felony complaint alleges that in February 2018, Jerry Clarke was employed at the Creekview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center to work as a certified nurse aide. On or about February 14, 2018, Clarke allegedly wrestled and punched a 64 year-old patient who was known to be unable to take care of himself due to mental...


TEXAS

August 07, 2018
AG Paxton Recovers $110 Million for Texas in Medicaid Fraud Settlements
Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced that pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca agreed to pay $110 million to the state of Texas to settle lawsuits alleging that the company falsely and misleadingly marketed two of its drugs in violation of the Texas Medicaid Fraud Prevention Act.

AstraZeneca was accused of engaging in false and misleading marketing schemes at a time when the company was under the strict obligations of a 2010 federal “corporate integrity
“agreement” resulting from prior allegations of Medicaid fraud. The federal agreement prohibited Astra Zeneca from promoting its antipsychotic medication Seroquel and cholesterol-lowering statin drug Crestor for uses not approved by the FDA, but Texas alleged the company continued to do so anyway. Such illegal pharmaceutical promotion is commonly referred to as “off-label marketing.”

AstraZeneca allegedly promoted its powerful and potentially dangerous antipsychotic drug to Texas Medicaid providers, who primarily treated children and adolescents when those drugs were not approved...


Consumer Advocacy
Affordable Care Act Consumer Protections


ARIZONA

August 21, 2018
AG Brnovich Warns About Falsely Advertised Women’s Conference

PHOENIX – Attorney General Mark Brnovich is warning consumers that they should beware of false and misleading advertising relating to the “2018 Women EmpoweredUp Conference,” which supposedly will take place in late September at an unspecified location in Phoenix. Online advertising, including the ticket sales page, promises consumers that the conference will have First Lady Michelle Obama as a guest. Other advertising suggests that Cece Peniston and First Lady Angela Ducey will be at the conference as well. In response to inquiries from the AG’s office, Michelle Obama’s representatives have confirmed she will not be at the conference. In addition, the conference’s organizer, Kimberly Shedrick, recently posted to her Facebook page that with every ticket purchased for the conference attendees would receive one entry to win a Maserati Quarttroporte. The pictured Maserati does not belong to Ms. Shedrick, and she deleted the post after being confronted about this fact...

AG Brnovich: 30 Days Left to File Claims in the ABC Nissan Settlement

PHOENIX – Attorney General Mark Brnovich today announced there are still restitution funds available for certain Arizonans who purchased cars from Phoenix auto dealer ABC Nissan. The unclaimed funds are the result of a consumer settlement with the Arizona Attorney General’s Office.

Brnovich is asking for assistance from the media and the public to help get the message out that $130,000 in funds are available to compensate Arizona consumers as part of a June 2018 settlement between the Attorney General’s Office and ABC Nissan.

Under the settlement resolving the complaint, ABC Nissan will pay Arizona consumers a total of up to $130,000 in restitution. The settlement notes that the auto dealer reformed its practices after becoming aware of the Attorney General’s investigation.

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...


Volkswagen Settlement Restitution Claims Forms Now Available for 11,000 AZ Consumers

PHOENIX – Thousands of Arizona consumers will soon be receiving restitution claims forms for settlement money obtained by the Arizona Attorney General’s Office from resolving its lawsuit against Volkswagen (VW) over its so-called “Clean Diesel” cars.

In May 2018, the Arizona Attorney General’s Office reached a settlement with VW to resolve consumer fraud claims involving VW’s well-publicized diesel engine scandal. Under the deal, VW agreed to pay Arizona consumers more than $10 million, up to $1,000 for every qualifying vehicle sold and leased in the state between 2008 and 2015.

A third-party claims administrator identified more than 11,000 eligible Arizona consumers. Claims forms were mailed and emailed to those individuals over the last several days. To be eligible for restitution, consumers must return their completed forms to the claims administrator within 90 days. Restitution checks are expected to be distributed in November. Consumers will have 180 days to cash their checks. ...

ARKANSAS

August 15, 2018

Rutledge Praises FDA for Action Against Unwashed Poppy Seeds

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge released the statement below following the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) issuance of a warning letter to one online poppy seed seller.

“I am pleased the FDA is taking steps to protect consumers from the hidden dangers of unwashed poppy seeds,” said Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge. “Its letter identifies one company’s continued claims that unwashed poppy seeds provide similar benefits to pharmaceutical drugs, without any approval from the FDA, which is a violation of the law. This is an important first step to protecting consumers from reckless business practices, by addressing a company that markets washed, unwashed and unprocessed poppy seeds for medicinal uses not approved by the FDA.”

Earlier this month, Rutledge sent a letter to the FDA requesting clear label standards for unwashed poppy seeds. In early July, Rutledge sent a letter to a number of online retailers requesting the removal...


August 06, 2018

Rutledge Asks FDA to Prohibit the Sale of Unwashed Poppy Seeds

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced she has sent a letter to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requesting washed and unwashed poppy seeds be clearly labeled to increase transparency and protect consumers from accidental overdose.

In July, at the urging of Attorney General Rutledge, Bonanza, eBay and Etsy removed labeled unwashed poppy seeds from their online catalogs. Walmart had previously removed their supply. Today's letter to the FDA focuses on the misleading labels of poppy seed packaging, which could simply say “raw” or “organic” instead of unwashed. Without an “unwashed” label or the disclosure that contents are potentially lethal, retailers are unable to fully remove such items from their sales offerings. The comments and product feedback sections on online sales catalogs are often the guiding source for consumers to determine how to make “tea” with the unwashed seeds to settle their nerves or misuse as a...

CALIFORNIA

August 10, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Issues Consumer Alert on Price Gouging Following State of Emergency in Orange and Riverside Counties

SACRAMENTO — California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today issued a consumer alert following the Governor’s declaration of a state of emergency in Orange and Riverside Counties due to the effects of the Holy Fire. Attorney General Becerra reminds all Californians that 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. “Our State’s price gouging law protects people impacted by an emergency from illegal price gouging on housing, gas, food, and other essential supplies. I encourage anyone who has been the victim of price gouging, or who has information regarding potential price gouging, to immediately file a complaint through my Office’s website or call (800) 952-5225, or to contact their local police department or sheriff’s office.”

California law...


August 02, 2018

Attorney General Becerra to President Trump: You’re on Notice: Give Away the Protections Against the 3D Printing of Untraceable “Ghost” Guns and Your Fingerprints Will Be All Over those 3D Weapons

SACRAMENTO — California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today joined a bipartisan coalition of 20 states seeking to block the Trump Administration’s reckless actions to allow downloadable and untraceable (so-called “ghost”) guns to become available without restriction. Along with today’s action, Attorney General Becerra issued a consumer alert informing Californians of state laws on self-manufactured guns.

“The Trump Administration should focus on reducing gun violence, not putting untraceable 3D printed ‘ghost’ guns in the hands of dangerous criminals both at home and abroad. Why would anyone increase the burden on law enforcement and sabotage its ability to keep American communities safe?” said Attorney General Becerra. “The Administration’s latest move opens the door to an alarming increase in illegal firearms and displays a menacing disregard for public safety and national security. President Trump, you’re on notice: give away the protections against the 3D printing of untraceable ‘ghost’ guns and your fingerprints will...

Governor Dannel P. Malloy, Attorney General George Jepsen, and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Commissioner Robert Klee today blasted the Trump administration’s proposal to roll back federal greenhouse gas emissions standards for new light duty cars and trucks vehicles.

“Climate change is real and it is here,” Governor Malloy said. “Rather than acknowledging the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community, President Trump’s administration continues to ignore their warnings and recommendations. This president seems intent on leaving an environmental legacy that is aimed at doing irreparable harm our planet, rather than protecting it. We will do everything in our power to defend Connecticut’s right to set appropriate vehicle emissions standards and to protect the air our residents breathe.”

“The Trump administration is determined to roll back protections, like these auto emissions standards, that are critical to the health, safety and well-being of Connecticut residents,” Attorney General Jepsen said. “As a downwind...


TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Today is National Senior Citizens Day and Attorney General Pam Bondi is offering tips for senior citizens to avoid falling victim to scams. Many Florida residents and visitors are senior citizens and there are several scams that specifically exploit seniors. Common scams targeting older Floridians include imposter scams, such as scams targeting grandparents or older utility customers, contractor and home repair scams, computer repair scams and other identity theft-related scams. Imposter scams vary but all involve scammers who remain anonymous and alter the caller identification to pose as other individuals, agencies or companies. For example, in grandparents scams, imposters pose as law enforcement officers or attorneys and call grandparents claiming a grandchild is in jail, then demand immediate payment to bail the grandchild out of jail. In utility scams, imposters claim to be from a utility company and threaten to turn off the power, gas or water unless immediate payment...

GEORGIA
August 06, 2018
SCAM ALERT: Carr Warns of Fake Phone Calls and Letters from Scammers Posing as Government Officials
ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is warning the public about a new scam where con artists pose as government officials in an attempt to add credibility to their schemes. Specifically, citizens are reporting that the names and titles of Attorney General Chris Carr and Chief Deputy Dennis Dunn are being used illegitimately.
“We are hoping this alert serves as a warning that no one is immune from scammers who are now using intricate schemes in order to gain the confidence of their victims,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “The best way to fight back against them is to understand their methods and spot the warning signs before it is too late. Our Consumer Protection Unit will remain vigilant in rooting out these con artists, and we urge you to sign up for our alerts and encourage friends and family to do the same.”
In one instance, a consumer was contacted...


IDAHO
August 02, 2018
Attorney General Releases Consumer Protection Division’s FY 2018 Report
(Boise) – Attorney General Lawrence Wasden has released the latest annual report from his office’s Consumer Protection Division (CPD). The summary represents a detailed look at the division’s work between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018.
The division recorded more than 13,000 contacts with consumers, mediated 883 complaints, recovered more than $7.6 million in consumer restitution and deposited more than $1.78 million in civil penalties, fees and costs into the state’s consumer protection account. In addition, the division completed 12 enforcement actions concerning unfair competition, false advertising, charitable solicitations and other consumer-related issues. The CPD also facilitated the transfer of $23 million in charitable trust funds from Ascension Health to the newly-established Lewis-Clark Valley Healthcare Foundation in Lewiston.
“Enforcing consumer protection law is an important responsibility,” Wasden said. “The Consumer Protection Division’s annual report is an opportunity for my office to inform Idahoans about the specifics of this vital work.” ...

ILLINOIS

August 15, 2018

**MADIGAN: NEW LAW PREVENTS STUDENT LOAN BORROWERS FROM LOSING PROFESSIONAL LICENSES**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that a new law will prevent a student loan borrower’s professional license from being suspended if they are behind on their payments.

Madigan initiated Senate Bill 2439, the Career Preservation and Student Loan Repayment Act, to prevent the state from suspending or terminating professional licenses of student loan borrowers who are behind on their monthly payments. SB 2439 was sponsored by Sen. Scott Bennett and Rep. Carol Ammons and becomes effective immediately.

Previously in Illinois, the law allowed the state to revoke or suspend a person’s professional license in dozens of occupations for being behind on student loan payments, including teachers, engineers, veterinarians, dieticians, marriage and family therapists, and occupational therapists.

“With millions of Americans dealing with more than $1 trillion of student loan debt, we need to focus on enacting policies that help student loan borrowers repay their debt – not punish them when...

➢ **Original Press Release:**
  http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2018_08/20180815.html

INDIANA

August 08, 2018

**AG Curtis Hill warns of credit card scam**

Attorney General Curtis Hill is warning Hoosiers to beware of scams in which companies send consumers unsolicited credit cards, often touting high credit limits. Consumers should never activate cards they have not requested nor provide personal information to entities sending such cards.

This warning comes after an Indianapolis man recently filed a consumer complaint with the Office of the Attorney General reporting that employees of his business received unsolicited credit cards from an entity calling itself Connector Capital, purportedly based in Los Angeles. The information on the credit cards included the name of the business for which the recipients worked. The entity that sent the card has an “F” rating with the Better Business Bureau.

“Hoosiers need to know that, under the federal Truth in Lending Act, it is illegal to send unsolicited credit cards to consumers,” Attorney General Hill said. “If you receive a credit card you have not requested, first...

➢ **Original Press Release:** https://calendar.in.gov/site/oag/event/ag-curtis-hill-warns-of-credit-card-scam/
IOWA
August 02, 2018
Miller urges FDA to act to reduce smoking rates below 10% in three years
Attorney General Tom Miller outlined a plan to FDA officials and other public health experts: drive the adult smoking rate in the United States below 10 percent by 2021. “This would be an amazing public health accomplishment,” Miller wrote in a policy paper. “This should be our goal and it can be done.”
The adult smoking rate for 2017 was 13.9 percent, down from 16.8 percent three years ago. The rapidly falling rate, combined with the growing popularity of JUUL e-cigarettes and other alternatives, puts the U.S. “on the precipice of a major public health breakthrough,” Miller wrote.
The introduction of heat-not-burn products, which heats tobacco without creating the chemicals in traditional cigarettes, would further drive down combustible smoking rates, as it has in markets such as Japan.
Miller offered this checklist for the Federal Drug Administration as part of the plan to drive the adult smoking rate below 10 percent by...


KANSAS
August 31, 2018
Attorney General’s office, KBI to provide consumer protection, personal safety information at Kansas State Fair
TOPEKA – (August 31, 2018) – The Kansas Attorney General’s office and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) will provide Kansans with consumer protection and public safety information at the Kansas State Fair, which opens next weekend, Attorney General Derek Schmidt announced today.
“Providing Kansans information to help avoid scams and rip-offs and to improve the safety of their families is key to our mission,” Schmidt said. “We will once again share this important information at our fair booth.”
The booth will be in the Meadowlark Building on the fairgrounds in Hutchinson. Staff from the attorney general’s office and the KBI will be available throughout the fair to answer questions. Attorney General Schmidt will be at the fair on Saturday, September 15, and available at the booth from 10 a.m. to noon to answer questions and listen to Kansans’ concerns.
The Kansas State Fair opens Friday, September 7, and runs through Sunday, September 16....

Beshear: Tax Fraud Scammers Targeting Kentucky Business Owners

FRANKFORT, KY. (Aug. 17, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear is warning business owners to be wary of websites that charge for services that are provided for free by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Beshear said an aspiring Kentucky business owner has reported a suspicious website, which mimics IRS.gov, but advertises services to help business owners obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for a $250 to $300 fee, when it is free through IRS.gov.

Beshear said these types of websites are typically a guise to steal money and personal information from those starting a business, which can lead to tax fraud.

“Protecting our hard working families from con artists is one of my top priorities,” said Beshear. “Losing even a few hundred dollars to a scammer can be detrimental to a new business, and the most cost-effective way we can protect business owners is to make sure they know how to avoid scams...


Beshear: Don’t Let Rental Scams Ruin Your Big Move

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 2, 2018) – According to Attorney General Andy Beshear, renting a luxury log cabin on 10 acres in Fayette County for less than $750 a month is likely too good to be true.

A new scam alert was issued Thursday after Beshear’s Office of Consumer Protection became involved in efforts to stop an online Craigslist’s rental scam.

Beshear said a Fayette County couple working with a reputable real estate broker to list their home for sale online had their home’s images stolen and used by a scammer who posted a fraudulent rental ad on Craigslist.

According to the victim, the fraud has left her family anxious because renters have been invading her property for weeks after being told by the scammer to send him rent and a security deposit.

“My office refuses to let con artists steal from Kentucky families who are working hard to make ends meet and pay the...

Original Press Release: https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=615
AG Healey Applauds Legislation That Prohibits Drug Makers From Offering Opioid Coupons

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey today applauded the signing of a bill, H. 4866, Prevention and Access to Appropriate Care and Treatment of Addiction, into law that expands tools, treatment, and education to combat the opioid crisis in Massachusetts, and includes a provision proposed by the AG’s Office that prohibits opioid manufacturers from using coupons to market brand-name opioids to Massachusetts patients.

For years, coupons have been used as a marketing tool by drug manufacturers to increase the number of new patients using their drugs and to incentivize use for longer periods of time. The coupons typically lower or eliminate insurance co-payments for prescription medications and drive patients toward specific branded drugs.

“The use of coupons as a marketing tool for opioids is inappropriate and deadly,” said AG Healey. “I am grateful to the legislature for passing a comprehensive opioid bill that includes this key provision and thank the Governor...

AG Healey, Law Enforcement Partners: Printing Guns is Illegal and a Serious Public Safety Risk

Boston — After winning a federal court order blocking the Trump Administration from allowing the publication of plans for downloadable 3D-printed weapons, Attorney General Maura Healey today joined with her law enforcement partners in issuing a public safety notice that details the serious violations of state law arising from the creation of these undetectable guns.

The notice, issued jointly with the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Massachusetts Major City Chiefs of Police, and Massachusetts District Attorneys Association, is in response to a recent U.S. Department of State settlement, challenged by AG Healey, that would allow the company Defense Distributed to post files online that enable individuals to print firearms using 3D printers.

The public safety notice serves as a reminder that the creation, transfer, or possession of a weapon made with a 3D printer can subject an individual to serious criminal or civil liability under...


Price at the Pump: Ahead of Labor Day Weekend, Schuette Warns Gas Stations Against Gouging

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today cautions Michigan drivers heading into Labor Day Weekend to be savvy consumers and be aware of potential fluctuating gas prices, noting that consumers can save money by shopping for the best prices. Retailers are also warned against any attempt at taking advantage of Michigan consumers by gas gouging. “Michigan consumers should not be taken advantage of during any time of year, but especially not during their last unofficial weekend of summer,” said Schuette. “I will not tolerate price gouging at the pump, we are watching and will not hesitate to take the appropriate steps of action if retailers break the law.”

Attorney General Bill Schuette’s Corporate Oversight Division works year-round to monitor the balance of wholesale and retail prices in Michigan. The Attorney General also receives and monitors complaints of this nature through Consumer Complaints filed with the office. Under Michigan’s Consumer Protection Act, a...

Schuette Reminds Residents about September Consumer Education Programs

LANSING – Attorney General Bill Schuette is encouraging Michigan residents to learn more about the consumer education programs offered through his office in the month of September. The Department of Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division offers a variety of programs throughout the month aimed at keeping Michigan consumers safe and up-to-date on the latest scams.

THE SEPTEMBER PROGRAMS INCLUDE:
- Home Repair & Improvement – Learn the telltale signs of home repair scams, unscrupulous contractors, and how to navigate the home improvement process.
- Phone, Mail, & e-Scams – Learn the signs of scams prevalent in phone calls, mail, email, and texts, along with steps to take to minimize your risk of being victimized.
- Identity Theft – Learn about the signs of identity theft, how to protect your personal information online and off, and what to do if you become an identity theft victim
- Online Safety – Learn how to protect your devices...

Original Press Release: https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-476408--,00.html

Original Press Release: https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-476073--,00.html
August 03, 2018

**Schuette Issues New Consumer Alert Warning Michigan Businesses of Potential Sales Tax License Application Scam**

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today released a new consumer alert to warn Michigan business owners of a potential sales tax application scam. An online company called Sales Tax Application Organization claims that business owners can apply for a license to collect state sales tax through a portal on its website. The company charges a fee and asks for personal information. However, in Michigan this can be done through the state, for free, in as little as seven days.

While Michigan has not yet seen this scam, Schuette and his Consumer Protection Team have released a new alert to prevent Michigan business owners from falling victim to this scam. A source from outside Michigan reports that no service is actually provided, and the money paid disappeared.

“Consumer Protection is one of the fundamental roles of the Michigan Attorney General,” said Schuette. “The team works diligently to warn residents of scams...

- **Original Press Release**: [https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-474426--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-474426--,00.html)

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August 02, 2018

**Schuette: Beware of Buying a Flood-Damaged Vehicle**

DETROIT – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today warns metro Detroit residents about buying flood damaged vehicles after flooding in southeast Michigan. Recent flood warnings due to heavy rains mean there is a greater chance vehicles could have suffered flood damage. Vehicles with flood damage can appear for sale on the internet or in the used car market far away from the storm area, without any mention of flood damage or obvious signs of damage.

While most auto retailers would never sell a flood damaged vehicle, it is still important to know the potential scams.

“It is always important to do research before making a big purchase and that includes cars,” said Schuette. “While the majority of individuals would not sell a flood damaged vehicle unfortunately there are some that take advantage in order to make a buck.”

**PROTECT YOURSELF BEFORE PURCHASING**

Have the vehicle inspected by an independent, competent automotive technician who...

- **Original Press Release**: [https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-474290--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-474290--,00.html)
MISSOURI

August 24, 2018

AG Hawley Urges Public Service Commission to Increase Privacy Protections for Missouri Consumers

Jefferson City, Mo. – Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley today submitted a regulatory filing urging the Public Service Commission to adopt more stringent privacy protections for Missouri consumers. The Public Service Commission, which regulates Missouri utilities, is considering rules governing how companies use and share customer information.

Attorney General Hawley argued that the Commission should implement a variety of additional requirements, including requiring more detailed disclosures to ensure that consumers can make informed decisions about whether to authorize the sharing of their personal information to third parties; requiring utilities to ensure that their third-party contractors employ adequate cybersecurity measures to protect consumer information; and requiring utilities to notify consumers in the event of a data breach or other unauthorized disclosures of consumer information.

“My Office has made protecting consumer privacy and data security a top priority,” Hawley said. “From investigating the privacy practices of tech giants like Google, to prosecuting data...


NEW JERSEY

August 20, 2018

Proposed Regulation – Limitations on and Obligations Associated with Acceptance of Compensation from Pharmaceutical Manufacturers by Prescribers

NEWARK – The Attorney General is proposing amendments to N.J.A.C. 13:45J, concerning limitations on, and obligations associated with, the acceptance of compensation from pharmaceutical manufacturers.

The Attorney General proposes to amend the modest meal limitation to distinguish between the amount allowable for breakfast and lunch, and the amount allowable for dinner; provide a mechanism for adjusting these amounts; specify that the limitation does not include the cost of standard delivery, service, or facility rental fee charges, or tax; and to specify that meals associated with education events are not subject to the modest meal limitation.

The Attorney General recognizes the educational value of learning about disease states and treatment options, and believes that the proposed amendments will enhance the rules to further the educational exchange between practitioners and pharmaceutical manufacturers for the benefit of patient care.

The proposed regulations, and information on how to submit a comment by October 5, 2018,
August 17, 2018

**Attorney General, Division of Consumer Affairs Warn Flood Victims to Beware of Price Gouging and Other Disaster-Related Fraud During State of Emergency**

NEWARK – The Office of the Attorney General and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today warned residents in flood-ravaged New Jersey communities in Bergen, Essex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Passaic counties to beware of price gouging and other disaster-related consumer fraud in the aftermath of this week’s torrential rains.

“The majority of merchants and businesses in New Jersey would never take advantage of consumers during a State of Emergency, but we’re asking residents to immediately report anyone seeking to illegally profit from this natural disaster,” said Attorney General Grewal. “The state’s price gouging laws and other consumer protections will be strictly enforced to protect residents from being victimized at a time when they’re at their most vulnerable.”

New Jersey's price gouging law prohibits excessive price increases within 30 days after a declared state of emergency, unless the time has been extended by the Governor. On Tuesday August 14th, Governor Phil Murphy...

NEW MEXICO

August 21, 2018

**AG Balderas Warns Consumers to Avoid Fraudulent “Storm Chaser” or Mobile Car Hail Damage Repairers**

Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas issued a scam alert, warning consumers that “storm chasers,” or mobile car repairers are showing up on street corners or at New Mexicans’ front doors, trying to get consumers to pay for hail damage repair, and scamming them out of their hard-earned dollars.

“Occasional hail storms and hail damage to cars are part of living life here in New Mexico,” Attorney General Hector Balderas said. “Unfortunately, these scammers are taking advantage of New Mexicans in need. I hope that consumers will protect themselves against financial injury as they try to repair hail damage. Using a scammer rather than a real repair person or shop can cause more damage than the hail did.”

The Attorney General advised that door-to-door sales people asking to repair hail damage on residences should never be allowed to climb onto the roof, as doing so increases the
homeowner’s liability and...

- **Original Press Release:**
  https://www.nmag.gov/uploads/PressRelease/48737699ae174b30ac51a7eb286e661f/AG_Bald
  eras_Warns_Consumers_to_Avoid_Fraudulent_%E2%80%9CStorm_Chaser%E2%80%9D_or_Mo
  bile_Car_Hail_Damage_Repairers.pdf

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**NEW YORK**

August 15, 2018

**A.G. Underwood Issues Consumer Tips For New Yorkers Impacted By Flood Damage To Avoid Scams When Hiring Contractors**

FINGER LAKES – In light of yesterday’s flooding around Seneca Lake and throughout the Finger Lakes region, which left many property owners with extensive damage, Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today released a list of tips for consumers to avoid being scammed. As property owners begin to hire contractors to repair the damage, Attorney General Underwood is reminding New Yorkers to be vigilant when selecting a contractor and to insist that all contracts contain terms and conditions required by law to protect them from unscrupulous contractors.

“New Yorkers across the Finger Lakes are grappling with the aftermath of these floods. It’s vital that New Yorkers proceed with caution when hiring contractors to repair the damages,” said Attorney General Underwood. “When homeowners are pushed to hire contractors without signed documents, they run the risk of receiving much larger bills than expected or projects that are never started or completed. New York homeowners...

  new-yorkers-impacted-flood-damage-avoid-scams-when

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August 10, 2018

**A.G. Underwood Statement On Devos Proposal To Rescind Gainful Employment Rule**

NEW YORK — Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood released the following statement in response to the Trump administration’s announcement that it will rescind the Gainful Employment Rule, a federal regulation designed to protect students and taxpayers from predatory for-profit schools:

“With today’s announcement, the Department of Education is yet again putting the interests of predatory for-profit schools ahead of the interests of students and taxpayers.

"The Gainful Employment Rule protected students and taxpayers by requiring for-profit schools to meet student outcome benchmarks in order to qualify for federal funds. The Department’s plan to rescind the Gainful Employment Rule removes this important accountability standard, easing the way for unscrupulous for-profit schools to rake in billions of dollars in federal funding, while providing poor-quality programs that leave graduates with insurmountable debt."
"Rescinding the rule is a derogation of the Department’s duty to protect students from exploitation and taxpayers from the waste of federal...


**OHIO**

August 16, 2018

**Statement by Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine on President Trump’s Statement on Potential Lawsuit Against Opioid Manufacturers**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine issued the following statement on President Trump’s statement on a potential lawsuit against opioid manufacturers:

“It is great news that President Trump said today he would support filing a lawsuit against the opioid manufacturers. In May of 2017, Ohio was the second state to file a lawsuit against the major opioid manufacturers and since then more than half of the states and many local governments have done so as well. With the addition of the federal government, I believe that this would only accelerate the momentum and add to the pressure for these companies to finally take responsibility for marketing these addictive drugs.

“In Ohio we are fighting a drug epidemic that traces its roots to the overprescribing of opiates that has affected every area of the state – from rural communities to suburbs to our big cities. “We will not rest until justice is done,...


August 03, 2018

**Bill Launched by Attorney General’s CyberOhio Initiative Signed into Law**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today released the following statement regarding Senate Bill 220, the Data Protection Act sponsored by State Senators Bob Hackett (R-London) and Kevin Bacon (R-Westerville) being signed into law:

“I congratulate Senator Hackett and Senator Bacon for working with their Senate and House colleagues to pass this important bill and send it to the governor’s desk and commend the governor for signing it into law,” said Attorney General DeWine. “By encouraging Ohio business owners to take appropriate and proven steps to enhance their cybersecurity, Ohioans can be confident that their personal information will be better protected. Companies have even more incentive to invest in strong cyber security controls.”

The Data Protection Act is the first piece of legislation introduced as a result of Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine’s CyberOhio Initiative. The measure encourages businesses to voluntarily
adopt strong cybersecurity controls to protect consumer data. The legislation...


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**OKLAHOMA**

August 01, 2018

**Attorney General Hunter Lauds Corporation Commission’s Decision to Return PSO Tax Savings to Customers**

OKLAHOMA CITY – Attorney General Mike Hunter today applauded the Oklahoma Corporation’s Commission (OCC) for voting unanimously to require Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO) to return tax savings to customers. The vote to refund tax savings to customers is the result of a case filed by the Attorney General’s Office in December, after enactment of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, requesting that the OCC ensure the windfall utility companies received from the federal income tax cut be returned to customers. At the time, commissioners asked utility companies to track the savings from the tax cuts.

“We are gratified by the corporation commissioners, who voted unanimously on our request to return the tax savings to PSO customers,” Attorney General Hunter said. “I appreciate the commissioners for studying this issue and doing what is in the best interest of rate payers.”


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**PENNSYLVANIA**

August 10, 2018

**Statement of Attorney General Josh Shapiro on Department of Education’s and Secretary DeVos’ Proposed Repeal of the Gainful Employment Rule**

HARRISBURG — “The Department of Education’s move today to obliterate the Gainful Employment Rule is another move by Secretary Devos to prioritize deceptive for-profit colleges over students working to earn an education,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “This rule shields students against fraudulent education programs that leave them buried under debt they are unable to repay, and its repeal is an attack on consumers. If this proposal is enacted, I will take legal action against Secretary Devos and the Department to fight for these protections and defend Pennsylvania’s students.”

August 09, 2018

Attorney General Josh Shapiro Launches New Text Alert System to Protect Pennsylvania Seniors, Consumers from Scams

Attorney General’s Text Alerts Will Warn Subscribers about New Scams and Offer Updates on Consumer Protection Issues

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today encouraged Pennsylvania consumers to sign up for a new text alert system through his Bureau of Consumer Protection to raise their awareness about how to avoid becoming a victim of scams.

The text alerts – which will be sent at least twice a month – will offer tips for consumers to avoid becoming a victim of a scam, warn about new scams or update subscribers on consumer protection issues. Consumers can sign up by visiting https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/consumer-alerts/ and opt out via text after they receive a text alert. There is no fee to sign up. Mobile carrier rates may apply. ...


August 02, 2018

Pennsylvania Formally Opposes Trump Administration’s Attempt to Impose Gag Rule on PA Healthcare Providers

HARRISBURG, PA — On behalf of all Pennsylvanians, Attorney General Josh Shapiro and Governor Tom Wolf have filed formal, legal comments opposing a proposed rule issued by the Trump Administration’s Department of Health and Human Services, which would deny women, men and families across Pennsylvania and the country access to comprehensive family planning services in direct conflict with guidance from their doctors.

The Health and Human Services proposal would eliminate the Title X requirement that pregnant women have an opportunity to receive information and counseling on all available health care options.

Instead of providing neutral information and referrals for reproductive health services when requested, Title X providers would be barred under the proposed rule from offering women affirmative support or assistance in seeking an abortion, even when requested.

“President Trump is not a doctor, but with this proposed rule his administration is putting the federal government between women and their health care professionals,” ...

VIRGIN ISLANDS
August 02, 2018

AG meets with AIG on fixing Bellevue; discussed selling units to tenants
ST. THOMAS, V.I. – Attorney General Claude Earl Walker traveled to St. John Thursday morning to meet with the management of American Insurance Group, Affordable Housing (AIG), owners of Bellevue Village, an apartment complex on St. John. AG Walker’s meeting with Thomas Musante, AIG president, comes more than a month after AG Walker strongly urged AIG to “take immediate action to rehabilitate its property.” In his June 23 letter, which he wrote after residents complained of having to live in units severely destroyed in last September’s hurricanes, AG Walker directed AIG to “immediately take action to rehabilitate these units to meet standards of habitability.” At AG Walker’s request, Musante flew in from Los Angeles and the two men, along with AIG contractors and several Bellevue residents, including president of the tenant association, Kenesha Small, toured the property to see firsthand the devastation to some of the units. “We discussed the…


VIRGINIA
August 09, 2018

HERRING WELCOMES TERMINATION OF SINCLAIR/TRIBUNE MERGER
RICHMOND (August 9, 2018)—Attorney General Mark R. Herring issued the following statement on the announcement that Tribune Media Company would abandon its proposed merger with Sinclair Broadcast Group. If finalized the merger would have given Sinclair control of more than 200 stations reaching nearly 75% of all households in America.

“This proposed merger would have given a single entity unprecedented control over the news, entertainment, and information received by millions of Americans. Its demise is good news for American consumers and for the health of our democracy,” said Attorney General Herring. “My team and I had been investigating the merger for months and were prepared to force significant concessions from the company or take legal action to block the merger. Thankfully, that will no longer be necessary.”

Attorney General Herring previously opposed the proposed Sinclair/Tribune merger by asking the Federal Communications Commission not to change its rules in a…

WASHINGTON

August 16, 2018

3D-printed guns: AG Ferguson statement on federal government opposition to extending court order

SEATTLE — Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson offered the following statement in response to the Trump Administration’s opposition to a preliminary injunction in Ferguson’s multistate, bipartisan lawsuit opposing the deregulation of 3D-printed “ghost guns.”

“President Trump says he objects to making 3D-printed guns widely available to anyone, regardless of whether they’re a felon or a terrorist. Then why is his administration still moving forward to pursue that very policy? Somebody should ask the president who’s really in charge.”

After the states won a temporary restraining order in the case, barring the federal government from lifting regulations on the printable files, President Donald Trump tweeted: “I am looking into 3-D Plastic Guns being sold to the public. Already spoke to NRA, doesn’t seem to make much sense!”

The White House further stated that “the Justice Department made a deal without the President’s approval” and “the President is glad this effort was delayed.”

A hearing...


WEST VIRGINIA

August 17, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Warns College Students Of Employment and Internship Scams

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds college students to avoid fake employment and internship ads when looking to jump-start postgraduate career goals or earn extra money.

Many college students use internships to build up work experience, while employment helps bring in some extra money.

“It’s very smart for college students to get a head start on careers as it is admirable to work and study at the same time,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “However, it’s very important that a student’s enthusiasm not cloud their judgment or make them gloss over potential red flags.”

Students must be cautious with unsolicited emails. These emails may contain links to application websites that claim bank accounts and other personal information is necessary to receive payment from an employer. Others may ask to transfer money to a third account.

Legitimate employers will not ask for financial account information online or on application...

August 16, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Urges College Students to Be Careful When Using Public Wi-Fi**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges college students to be careful when using public Wi-Fi to avoid jeopardizing personal or sensitive information. Many college students opt for a change of scenery and frequent coffee houses, libraries or bookstores to complete coursework.

“Many college students enjoy getting away from campus and completing coursework in a relaxing environment,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Most of the time that means public Wi-Fi and a greater chance of jeopardizing information if one isn’t careful.” Students should always remember to make sure any web address starts with https://, which verifies a secure connection. Consumers should also avoid clicking on unfamiliar links. Such links could contain malware that infect the device. Additionally, students should avoid accessing banking records or conducting any financial transactions on public Wi-Fi networks.

The Attorney General’s Office issues this advice as part of the fifth annual Off to College Consumer...


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August 15, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Warns Students of Potential Scholarship and Financial Aid Scams**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey reminds students and parents to be careful about sharing personal information when applying for student aid and scholarship opportunities.

Many high school seniors and college students rely on some form of financial aid to assist with the ever-increasing cost of tuition and other college-related financial obligations, making them a potential target for those looking to take advantage.

“It’s not surprising that so many students seek financial assistance in order to accrue as little student debt as possible,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Parents and students need to be mindful of who is receiving personal information and should always be on the lookout for red flags.”

A popular scam involves websites charging a fee while claiming or guaranteeing to find scholarships. However, free websites and online databases do exist. Students should go directly to legitimate websites and be cautious of links from advertisements, which...

August 14, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Urges College Students to Use Caution When Renting or Leasing**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges students to use caution when looking for off campus housing accommodations during the collegiate years. Many college students take the opportunity to live off campus for at least one year in an apartment, house or condo.

“Living off campus for a while is usually part of the college experience and often the first taste a student has of living completely on their own,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “It’s important to know what you’re getting in terms of housing accommodations and guaranteed protections.”

Students should be on the lookout for fake rental or leasing advertisements that appear on Craigslist or other classified websites.

In some cases, phony landlords will ask for rent to be paid in advance with a promise to mail the key upon receipt. Some advertised housing accommodations may not even actually exist.

Students who rent should remember these...


August 13, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Educates College Students on Identity Theft Dangers**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges college students to use caution as another school year begins and sensitive information is shared. Identity thieves may take advantage of students’ newfound freedom to try and access personal and sensitive information.

“It can be pretty easy for college students to get caught up in the excitement of the college experience and forget how important it is to safeguard personal information,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Not doing so can cause a lot of unwanted issues and headaches down the road.”

College is the first time many young adults are in charge of their own personal affairs, which makes them susceptible to scammers.

Students should use strong passwords to protect access to devices and never share or leave personal information on display.

Billing statements and other sensitive information should be shredded or kept secure rather than carried in a purse or backpack. ...

August 10, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Announces Off to College Consumer Protection Week**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey announces the office’s fifth annual Off to College Consumer Protection Week will begin Monday, Aug. 13. The weeklong series is designed to raise awareness of consumer protection issues facing students. The series will touch upon identity theft, scholarships/financial aid and using secure Wi-Fi connections, as well as watching out for housing and internship/employment scams. The initiative aims to equip parents and students with information and resources needed to recognize scams, fraudulent activity and their rights as a consumer.

“College is a time for students to experience new things and life away from home,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “We want to make sure they are equipped to spot scams and fraudulent activity to avoid becoming victims themselves.”

The office will provide daily news releases and other tips via Facebook and Twitter to support the week’s objective.

To learn about consumer protection efforts in...


August 08, 2018

**Attorney General Morrisey Warns of Fake Check Scams**

CHARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey issued a warning about a scam in which consumers receive fake checks in the mail and are later required to repay the bank once the check bounces.

The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division has received recent reports of consumers getting letters in the mail or emails from scammers claiming to represent various sweepstakes, shopping programs or employers.

“It is of utmost importance that consumers do not accept checks from unknown sources in order to protect their finances,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Consumers should consult with their bank if they are unsure if a check is legitimate before depositing.”

These letters include a check, which the consumer then deposits at the bank. The scammers request that the targeted individuals return a portion of the check via money orders or cash through the mail. They claim that these reimbursed funds are to cover taxes...

WISCONSIN

August 14, 2018

AG Schimel Partners with Wisconsin Banks and Credit Unions to Curtail Elder Financial Abuse

MILWAUKEE, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel today released a new training video aimed at educating tellers and other banking professionals on how to spot financial elder abuse and report it, alongside the Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Credit Union League, and Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI).

“Elder financial abuse is growing rapidly in Wisconsin; from 2016 to 2017, it increased 17.5 percent,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “Tellers at financial institutions are at the frontlines of financial scams. By offering this free training on how to spot financial exploitation at the teller window, we can create an easy defense that will protect consumers.”

The Department of Justice (DOJ) produced the ten-minute training video with assistance from the Wisconsin Bankers Association, Wisconsin Credit Union League, and members of the Attorney General’s Task Force on Elder Abuse. The video details common red-flags that tellers in financial institutions should watch for when...


August 02, 2018

AG Schimel Takes Action with Task Force on Elder Abuse

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel today held the fourth meeting of the Attorney General’s Task Force on Elder Abuse, and is continuing to take action on elder abuse as elder abuse in Wisconsin grows. According to data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), from 2001 to 2017, reported allegations of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation and requests for information about elder abuse increased 160% in Wisconsin.

“The latest data on elder abuse is sobering, and it could only get worse if we don’t act now,” said Attorney General Schimel. “Wisconsin’s elderly population will increase 72% in the next two decades; we cannot wait to do better for our elderly loved ones. We have to raise awareness, increase access to support for victims, and strengthen our response to this abuse. When this task force’s work is complete, we will have a more coordinated response to elder...