THE STATE CENTER
CONSUMER
PROTECTION REPORT

November 2018
About the State Center Consumer Protection Report

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

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

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

- For more information on the State AG Consumer Protection Initiative, please visit our website: www.statecenterinc.org/cpi-newsletter.

- If an office would like their consumer protection activity included in subsequent newsletters, please contact us.

- Newsletter sign up: To sign up for the monthly Consumer Protection Report, please sign up here.

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

State Center: http://www.statecenterinc.org

StateAG.org: www.stateag.org
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Consumer Protection Cases

ARIZONA

November 20, 2018

Attorney General Obtains $451,000 Judgment Against “Senior Grad Trips” in Consumer Fraud Lawsuit

TUCSON – Attorney General Mark Brnovich today announced a $451,000 judgment against a Texas-based travel company, EB Worldwide, LLC, and its CEO, George Barragan. The Arizona Attorney General filed a consumer fraud lawsuit back in July after receiving complaints EB Worldwide, operating under the name “Senior Grad Trips,” had accepted thousands of dollars in payments from Arizona consumers for a group vacation that was canceled without notice or refund.

In its lawsuit, the Attorney General’s Office alleged EB Worldwide and Barragan collected $40,000 from Cienega High School students and chaperones for a Disneyland senior class trip. Barragan and EB Worldwide never provided transportation to Disneyland as promised and then refused to refund consumers who paid in advance. Parents of students were not notified of the cancellation until after the scheduled departure date, and dozens of students were left stranded in the Cienega High School parking lot well into the night, waiting...


CALIFORNIA

November 21, 2018

California Department of Justice Conditionally Approves Affiliation of Dignity Health and Catholic Healthcare Initiatives with Strong Community and Patient Protections

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Justice (CA DOJ) today approved the Ministry Alignment Agreement between Dignity Health and Colorado-based Catholic Healthcare Initiatives to join the two systems in California. The review of this transaction included 17 public meetings across the state and over 500 written comments from the public including: various community-based organizations, business associations, governmental entities, locally-elected officials, and religious entities. Taking into consideration all the public comments, health and financial impacts, CA DOJ set a number of strong conditions to protect the people of California. The conditions reflect the largest commitment by a system to serving Medi-Cal beneficiaries and charity care in State history.

“The California Department of Justice is committed to improving the well-being and health of families across the state by increasing accessibility and availability of care in our communities,” said Sean McCluskie, Chief Deputy to the Attorney General. “Our office carefully reviewed this
November 13, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Recovers Nearly $8.8 Million Against Corrupt Operators of Sham Charity for Wounded Veterans
SAN DIEGO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced today a jury verdict in favor of the State against individuals who fraudulently solicited charitable donations under the pretext of assisting wounded veterans and their families and instead illegally enriched themselves with the donated funds. In April 2017, Attorney General Becerra filed a lawsuit alleging that the operators committed fraud against California donors. Following trial, the jury awarded nearly $8.8 million to the state against defendants Matthew G. Gregory and spouse Danella J. Gregory, their adult children Matthew J. Gregory and Gina D. Gregory, and their business Gregory Motorsports.

“These unscrupulous con artists exploited the generosity of Americans by falsely claiming to help our country’s wounded warriors and their families. Instead, they used our charitable donations for personal gain,” said Attorney General Becerra. “A jury of their peers has justly slapped down the Gregory family and their corrupt enterprise. But there...
ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ANNOUNCES HOME REPAIR LAWSUITS
Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced lawsuits against three central Illinois home repair companies that defrauded customers out of thousands of dollars for work that was substandard or never performed.

In three lawsuits filed in central Illinois, Madigan alleged the companies solicited homeowners for repair work and lawn services and required large, upfront payments – sometimes thousands of dollars – to begin the work. The lawsuits allege that the contractors failed to do much work – if any at all – beyond cashing homeowners’ deposits. With the money in hand, the companies stopped responding to homeowners and refused to provide refunds.

“Homeowners hired these companies and paid thousands of dollars for needed improvements and services but received no services or incomplete work that will cost homeowners more money to have repaired,” Madigan said. “These lawsuits seek to provide restitution to impacted homeowners and put an end to these fraudulent practices.”

Original Press Release:

MADIGAN SUES ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE RETAIL ELECTRIC SUPPLIER & REACHES $3 MILLION SETTLEMENT FOR DEFRAUDED CUSTOMERS
Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced she filed a lawsuit against IDT ENERGY INC. (IDT), an alternative retail electric supplier (ARES), for thousands of violations of the state’s consumer fraud laws as a result of a particularly egregious marketing scheme that disproportionately impacted African-American consumers on the South and West sides of Chicago. As a result of Madigan’s investigation, IDT agreed to enter into a consent decree to provide refunds totaling $3 million to more than 176,000 customers. The consent decree also requires IDT to refrain from marketing in Illinois for two years. Madigan was joined by consumer advocates with Citizen Action/Illinois and Illinois PIRG to announce her lawsuit.

Madigan’s lawsuit, filed in Cook County Circuit Court, alleges IDT and its sales representatives aggressively and disproportionately enrolled African-American residents in the ComEd territory using deceptive sales tactics to sign them up for expensive contracts for electricity. IDT sales agents...

Original Press Release:
INDIANA
November 14, 2018
Attorney General Curtis Hill files lawsuit against opioid giant Purdue Pharma
Attorney General Curtis Hill filed a lawsuit today against opioid manufacturer Purdue Pharma Inc., Purdue Pharma, L.P., and The Purdue Frederick Company (collectively “Purdue Pharma”). Purdue Pharma’s opioid products include the drug OxyContin. The lawsuit alleges that Purdue Pharma’s conduct in misrepresenting the risks and benefits of opioids played a key role in the opioid crisis in Indiana.
“Following my office’s thorough investigation of this company’s activity in Indiana, this lawsuit demands Purdue Pharma answer for its violations of Indiana law,” Attorney General Hill said. “This litigation is one additional tool in the state’s arsenal to combat the opioid crisis. My office is committed to holding companies that engage in unfair, abusive, and deceptive practices in Indiana accountable for their misconduct. The lawsuit against Purdue Pharma is the culmination of nearly two years of exhaustive investigation, depositions of former employees, interviews of prescribers across the state, and thorough review of company...


November 05, 2018
AG Curtis Hill and federal authorities announce $5.1 million settlement with dental firms
Attorney General Curtis Hill today announced that his office, working in conjunction with the office of United States Attorney Russell M. Coleman of the Western District of Kentucky, has obtained a $5.1 million settlement with two dental firms. The settlement resolves claims that ImmediaDent of Indiana LLC improperly billed Indiana Medicaid for dental services in its nine dental practices in Indiana. The other firm involved in the settlement, Samson Dental Partners LLC, provides administrative and other support services to ImmediaDent.
The companies are accused of submitting false claims for payment to Indiana’s Medicaid program between Jan. 1, 2009, and Sept. 30, 2013. Samson Dental is accused of violating Indiana’s law prohibiting the corporate practice of dentistry by exerting obtrusive influences over ImmediaDent’s medical professionals and staff in a manner that compromised their clinical judgment. Both companies are alleged to have claimed in billing documentation that simple tooth extractions were surgical extractions, and...

KANSAS

November 30, 2018

AG Derek Schmidt: Pavers banned from doing business in Kansas

TOPEKA – (November 30, 2018) – A group of paving contractors has been banned from doing business in Kansas and ordered to repay six Kansas consumers after being found in violation of Kansas consumer protection laws, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said today. Defendants Steven Bailey, of Carl Junction, Mo., and Charles Smith, of Gainesville, Texas, who did business as Asphalt Paving, Lone Star Paving, Lone Star Asphalt, Bailey Paving, and Carl Bailey Construction, were ordered to repay a total of $33,652 to consumers in Shawnee and Pottawatomie counties. In addition, the two men were permanently banned from operating in Kansas and ordered to pay a civil penalty and reimburse the attorney general’s office for the costs of its investigation. District Judge Teresa L. Watson approved the consent judgement earlier this month in Shawnee County District Court. Schmidt accused the men of engaging in illegal door-to-door sales of home improvement services, including...


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KENTUCKY

November 21, 2018

Beshear Takes Action against Hardin County Wedding Venue Owner for Canceling Weddings, Pocketing Couples’ Money

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 21, 2018) – A Hardin County wedding venue owner is facing legal action from Attorney General Andy Beshear for allegedly conning at least seven couples weeks before their weddings by canceling the events or by not providing contracted services. Eastview-based Gabriella Farm LLC, located at 13943 Leitchfield Road and its sole owner Nicolle Thompson, are being sued in Hardin Circuit Court by Beshear’s office for deceptive business practices under Kentucky’s Consumer Protection Act.

The lawsuit and lien were filed today by Beshear’s Office of Consumer Protection. Beshear said Thompson owes at least seven couples from Bullitt, Hardin, Jefferson and Meade counties nearly $30,000 after taking vendor payments from them, and either canceled their wedding or provided subpar services throughout the wedding planning process or during the ceremony and reception. Beshear is seeking restitution for the couples. “Getting married should be a special day in a couple’s life and it should never...

November 19, 2018

**Beshear Alleges Arizona-based Pharmaceutical Company’s ‘Unrelenting’ Pursuit of Profits Exacerbated Opioid Epidemic in Kentucky**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 19, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear today filed his ninth lawsuit addressing the opioid epidemic.

The lawsuit, against Arizona-based pharmaceutical company Insys Therapeutics, alleges the company exacerbated Kentucky’s opioid epidemic by placing profits over the health of Kentuckians.

The lawsuit, filed in Hardin Circuit Court, claims the company exploited the market by fraudulently persuading physicians to prescribe its drug Subsys, a fentanyl-based opioid mouth spray, to treat chronic pain despite the drug being FDA-approved solely for breakthrough pain in cancer patients.

Despite the limited FDA approval for Subsys, Beshear alleges Insys promoted and marketed its drug for off-label, non-cancer use, and promoted it to non-oncologist doctors in Kentucky. The actions by Insys, Beshear said, helped cause and fuel Kentucky’s opioid epidemic, which is one of the deadliest in the nation.

Beshear alleges the company accomplished its scheme by fraudulently acquiring insurance coverage approvals, giving kickbacks to doctors, and...

➢ **Original Press Release:** https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=673

November 13, 2018

**As Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement Turns 20, Beshear Says Kentucky on Pace to Receive $2.5 billion Payout**

FRANKFORT, KY. (Nov. 13, 2018) – As the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement or MSA turns 20 on Nov. 23, Attorney General Andy Beshear says Kentucky is on pace to collect nearly $2.5 billion.

Since the first payment in 1999, Kentucky has already collected more than $2 billion under the agreement reached by the tobacco industry and state attorneys general in 1998.

“For 20 years the landmark Master Settlement Agreement has made a positive impact on the Commonwealth, supporting early childhood education, health programs, cancer research, and helping to aid our farmers and create sustainable farm-based businesses,” Beshear said. “These funds are critical to our state, and the MSA is a textbook example of the importance of attorneys general to hold any industry accountable that would harm our people.”

Kentucky received $102 million in April and is on pace to collect another $500 million over the next five years, Beshear said, bringing the total...

➢ **Original Press Release:** https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=671
MARYLAND
November 02, 2018
Attorney General Frosh Announces Settlement with Kmart for Failure to Disclose Unit Prices in Stores
BALTIMORE, MD (November 2, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced that his Consumer Protection Division has entered into a settlement with the Kmart Corporation, resolving allegations that Kmart failed to provide consumers with required unit prices in its Maryland stores. The agreement requires Kmart to display unit pricing on consumer goods at all of its Maryland stores, maintain written policies and procedures regarding unit pricing, and pay $105,500 in penalties and costs to the Maryland Office of the Attorney General.
Maryland’s Unit Pricing Act (UPA), requires retailers to display unit prices, or the dollars and cents that the item sells for per each unit in the packaging, for certain retail consumer goods. Kmart stores in Maryland sell many consumer goods that fall under the provisions of the UPA. Failing to provide a unit price for these goods makes it more difficult for consumers to compare the...


MASSACHUSETTS
November 29, 2018
AG Healey Reaches Settlement With Beth Israel, Lahey Health Over Proposed Merger
Boston — Following an extensive investigation of the proposed merger of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Lahey Health System to form the Beth Israel Lahey Health system (BILH), Attorney General Maura Healey today announced a resolution with BILH including an unprecedented seven-year price cap and $71.6 million in financial commitments to support health care services for low-income and underserved communities in Massachusetts. The assurance of discontinuance, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, includes a series of enforceable conditions that also require BILH to strengthen its commitment to MassHealth; engage in joint business planning with its safety net hospital affiliates, including Lawrence General Hospital, Cambridge Health Alliance, and Signature Brockton Hospital; and enhance access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment across the system. The resolution requires BILH to retain a third-party monitor to ensure compliance with the terms.
“Through this settlement, Beth Israel Lahey Health will cap its prices, strengthen safety...
November 20, 2018

**AG Healey Sues Shrewsbury Man for Selling Fatally Ill Puppies Out of His Home**

Boston — A Shrewsbury man has been sued for allegedly operating an unlicensed and unsanitary pet shop in his home and misrepresenting the health and condition of bulldog puppies he sold to Massachusetts consumers for thousands of dollars, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today. Many of the bulldogs he sold to families suffered from serious diseases, or in some cases, died within hours of being purchased.

The complaint, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, alleges that Heath Morse illegally sold puppies out of his home without abiding by the pet shop maintenance or quarantine requirements of the state’s Animal Health Law. The AG’s complaint also alleges Morse failed to obtain the required license to operate a pet shop in the state.

“For many people, getting a dog is like adding a new member of your family – it can be a big financial and emotional investment,” AG Healey said. “We allege this man...


November 13, 2018

**Comcast to Pay $700,000 in Refunds and Cancel Debts for More Than 20,000 Massachusetts Customers to Resolve Allegations of Deceptive Advertising**

Boston — Comcast will pay refunds and cancel debts for more than 20,000 Massachusetts customers as part of a settlement resolving allegations that the company violated state consumer protection laws by using deceptive advertisements to promote its long-term cable contracts, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

The assurance of discontinuance, filed in Suffolk Superior Court, settles allegations that Comcast failed to adequately disclose the actual monthly price and terms of its long-term contracts for cable services, including failing to disclose to customers that the company could increase the price of certain monthly fees at any point during the long-term contracts.

“Comcast stuck too many Massachusetts customers with lengthy, expensive contracts that left many in debt and others with damaged credit,” said AG Healey. “Customers have a right to clear information about the products and services they buy. This settlement should encourage the entire cable and telecommunications industry to take a...


November 01, 2018

**Viridian Energy Customers Begin Receiving Refunds From $5 Million Settlement With AG’s Office Over Deceptive Marketing and Sales Tactics**

BOSTON — On the heels of her lawsuit against another competitive electricity supplier, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today that customers of the competitive electricity...
supplier, Viridian Energy, LLC, (Viridian), are beginning to receive restitution payments as part of a $5 million settlement reached with the AG’s Office over allegations of deceptive marketing and sales tactics that lured residents into costly contracts with high electricity rates. The payments are part of an assurance of discontinuance the AG’s Office negotiated with Viridian and its affiliates in March 2018. The AG’s Office alleged that Viridian, through door-to-door sales, direct mail, and family-and-friend-based “network marketing,” engaged in various deceptive and unfair sales tactics. The AG’s Office also alleged that consumers who switched to Viridian ultimately paid more for electricity than if they had stayed with their utility.

“Competitive electric suppliers like Viridian Energy use aggressive sales tactics and false promises to cheat customers out of...


NEW JERSEY

November 13, 2018

AG Grewal Sues Johnson & Johnson Subsidiary for Deceiving Public About Dangers of Addictive Opioid Products

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal announced today that the State has submitted for filing a five-count lawsuit against Janssen Pharmaceuticals Inc., a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, for deceiving consumers about the dangers of two of the company’s opioid products with high potential for abuse – Nucynta and Nucynta ER. Today’s lawsuit is the third case brought by the Attorney General’s Office against an opioid manufacturer, and the first such case brought by the Office against a pharmaceutical company based in New Jersey.

The State’s 97-page complaint is based in part on internal company documents obtained by the Attorney General’s Office during a lengthy investigation into Janssen’s marketing practices. A redacted complaint has been filed with the court.

The State has submitted for filing a motion seeking to make publicly available the full, unredacted complaint. Janssen will decide whether to consent to that request or try to prevent the release...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases18/pr20181113a.html

November 09, 2018

Division of Consumer Affairs Takes Action Against Dozens of “Notarios” Fraudulently Offering Immigration Services

Newark – The Division of Consumer Affairs today announced that it has issued Notices of Violation against 28 businesses that allegedly defrauded consumers by offering immigration services that they are not legally permitted to provide.

The Notices of Violation, which seek a total of $326,000 in civil penalties, follow a months-long
undercover operation, carried out by the Division’s Office of Consumer Protection (“OCP”). Acting on tips, consumer complaints, and investigative information, investigators visited notary publics, tax preparers, travel agencies, and other businesses suspected of selling immigration assistance services that they cannot legally offer, in violation of the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act and/or the Advertising Regulations. Some of the businesses receiving the Notices of Violation were quoting fees in excess of $1,500 to provide immigration services that, by law, may be rendered only by attorneys or by representatives accredited by the U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and working for DOJ-recognized organizations. These...


November 02, 2018
Defunct Georgia Vendor Responsible for Exposing Virtua Medical Group Patient Files Online Agrees to $200,000 Settlement
NEWARK – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs today announced a $200,000 settlement with a now-defunct Georgia company responsible for a 2016 security lapse that allowed the public to view online patient records belonging to more than 1,650 individuals treated by doctors associated with Virtua Medical Group (“VMG”), a southern New Jersey network of medical and surgical practices. The settlement with ATA Consulting LLC, which did business as Best Medical Transcription, and its owner, Tushar Mathur, resolves allegations that the company violated the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (“HIPAA”) and the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act (“CFA”) in connection with a server misconfiguration that publically exposed the private health information – including the names and medical diagnoses – of up to 1,654 individuals treated at Virtua Surgical Group in Hainesport, Virtua Gynecological Oncology Specialists, and Virtua Pain and Spine Specialists in Voorhees.
In...


NEW YORK
November 29, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Settlements With 7 New York Hospitals To Stop Illegal Billing Of Rape Survivors For Forensic Rape Examinations
NEW YORK—Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced settlements with seven New York hospitals that illegally billed rape survivors for forensic rape examinations (“FREs”). The hospitals include Brookdale University Hospital Medical Center, Columbia University, Montefiore Nyack Hospital, New York Presbyterian/Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, Richmond University Medical Center,
and St. Barnabas Hospital. Under the terms of the agreements, the hospitals will implement written policies to ensure that sexual assault survivors do not receive bills for their rape examinations, provide full restitution to any improperly billed sexual assault survivors, and pay costs.

“Survivors of sexual assault have already gone through unfathomable trauma; to then subject them to illegal bills and collection calls is unconscionable,” said Attorney General Underwood. “Hospitals have a fundamental responsibility to comply with New York law. My office will continue to do everything in our power to protect survivors and their rights.”

The investigation into the hospitals...

November 27, 2018

A.G. Underwood And Comptroller DiNapoli Announce Criminal Conviction And False Claims Act Settlement With Bottini Fuel For Diverting Customers' Credit Balances For Their Own Benefit

HUDSON VALLEY – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood and State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli today announced the criminal conviction of Morgan Fuel & Heating Company, Inc., which conducts business as Bottini Fuel, for falsifying their business records to improperly divert credit balances belonging to individual, business, and government customers – including local school districts, prisons, town governments, and state agencies. Bottini Fuel pleaded guilty today to Falsifying Business Records in the Second Degree in the Village of Wappingers Falls Justice Court. Attorney General Underwood also announced the company’s civil settlement agreement resolving a qui tam action alleging false claims act violations. Bottini Fuel will pay over $3.2 million in criminal restitution and civil damages.

“Bottini Fuel orchestrated a brazen scheme to defraud its customers for the benefit of the company and its owners,” said Attorney General Underwood. “This conduct was longstanding and harmed individual, business, and government customers. We are...

November 23, 2018

A.G. Underwood Statement On NY Supreme Court Decision, Denying Motion To Dismiss AG’s Trump Foundation Suit

NEW YORK — Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood released the following statement in response to a decision by New York Supreme Court Justice Saliann Scarpulla, which denied a motion to dismiss Attorney General Underwood’s lawsuit against the Donald J. Trump Foundation, and its directors, Donald J. Trump, Donald J. Trump, Jr., Ivanka Trump, and Eric Trump:
“As we detailed in our petition earlier this year, the Trump Foundation functioned as little more than a checkbook to serve Mr. Trump’s business and political interests. There are rules that govern private foundations — and we intend to enforce them, no matter who runs the foundation. We welcome Justice Scarpulla’s decision, which allows our suit to move forward.”


November 15, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Arrests Of Clinic Owner, Doctor, And Attorney For No-Fault Medical Insurance Fraud Scheme
BROOKLYN – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a 61-count indictment charging David Safir, 48, of Brooklyn; Dr. Alexander Haselkorn, 78, of Franklin Lakes, NJ; Roberta Haselkorn, 61, of Franklin Lakes, NJ; attorney Nadezdha Ursulova, 63, of Brooklyn; and Theron Grinage, a.k.a. Timothy Russell, 52, of Brooklyn for their alleged participation in an auto insurance fraud scheme that cheated no-fault insurance carriers out of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Code-named “Operation Dr. Know,” a joint investigation by the Attorney General’s Auto Insurance Fraud Unit and the New York City Department of Investigation revealed that Safir, aided by his co-conspirators, allegedly illegally incorporated and operated Brooklyn-based clinic Jamaica Wellness, P.C., encouraged patients to fabricate and exaggerate their injuries, and submitted fraudulent claims to insurance carriers for treatment provided and prescribed by unlicensed individuals.
“As we allege, the defendants illegally operated a medical clinic and took advantage of car accident victims in...


November 13, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Judgment Against Ithaca Auction House For Failing To Pay Over $230K To Consumers
ITHACA – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a judgment obtained against Finger Lakes Estate and Auction, Inc. (“Finger Lakes”) and its owner, Charles Dorsey, for fraudulently inducing consumers into giving up their personal property for auction sales and failing to return the proceeds as promised. The judgment requires Finger Lakes and Dorsey to pay $237,739 in full consumer restitution and $12,000 in civil penalties and costs, and retain a Trustee to handle all of the money from future auction sales to ensure that the proceeds first go to the consigning consumers.
“New York consumers rely on companies to be trustworthy and responsible,” said Attorney General Underwood. “No matter the industry, my office will continue to protect New Yorkers from businesses that defraud their customers.”
November 09, 2018

**A.G. Underwood Announces Settlement With Company Over Misleading Infant-Feeding Surveys**

NEW YORK — Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a settlement resolving an investigation into Illinois-based Abbott Laboratories, maker of Similac infant formula, over misleading marketing surveys the company sent to new parents about their infant-feeding habits. The surveys, sent under the logo of the “National Institute of Infant Nutrition,” sought information about the recipients’ demographics and habits for feeding their babies, including whether their baby had been breast-fed and, if formula-fed, the brand of formula used by the parents. However, there is no entity with the name “National Institute of Infant Nutrition” and Abbott used the survey information for its own marketing purposes.

The settlement requires Abbott to accurately disclose the purpose for which survey information is sought and prohibits Abbott from falsely representing that their surveys are being conducted for scientific study. The settlement also requires Abbott to pay $50,000 in costs.

‘This survey was a formula for deception,”...


November 02, 2018

**A.G. Underwood Announces Court Orders Shutting Down Fraudulent Moving Broker Company**

BUFFALO – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a court order against Goldy Sandhu and his businesses, Pan-American Relocation Services, Inc., AAA Moving Services, Inc., and Mayflower Moving Services, Inc., for illegally operating an online household goods moving broker company and paying for fake positive online reviews. The order permanently bans Sandhu from operating a household goods moving broker or carrier business, requires that all three businesses be dissolved, and imposes up to $65,000 in penalties and costs.

Sandhu has admitted to all of the Attorney General’s allegations.

“My office has zero tolerance for scammers who attempt to defraud and deceive New York consumers,” said Attorney General Underwood. “New York moving brokers and carriers must comply with state and federal law or we will hold them to account.”

Goldy Sandhu paid for at least 60 fake positive online reviews of his businesses to make consumers believe they were dealing with...
November 01, 2018

A.G. Underwood Announces Lawsuit Against Buffalo Debt Collection Operation For Illegal Collection Tactics

BUFFALO – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced a lawsuit jointly filed with the Federal Trade Commission against a Buffalo debt collection operation run by Robert Heidenreich for allegedly engaging in deceptive and abusive debt collection practices. A federal court granted a temporary restraining order freezing the operations’ assets, ordered the defendants to comply with the law, and appointed a receiver to take over the corporate entities at the request of the Attorney General’s office and the FTC.

The defendants in the case are Robert Heidenreich and six corporations he controls: Campbell Capital LLC; Kahl, Heidenreich, and Nemmer, LLC; Urban, Heidenreich, Melendez, and Associates, LLC; J & V Receivables, LLC; Rich Financial, LLC; and BCH & Associates Ltd.

“Using false information and threats to coerce New Yorkers out of money they do not owe is inexcusable – and unlawful,” said Attorney General Underwood. “We’ll continue to work with our partners in...

November 28, 2018

Attorney General Josh Stein Fights Water Rate Increase for Homeowners

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein opposed Carolina Water Service’s proposed water rate increase. In his filing to the North Carolina Utilities Commission, Attorney General Stein argued that the requested rate increase is not fair to North Carolinians.

“Carolina Water Service is proposing a significant increase for North Carolinians’ water rates,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “However, the company has failed to make an adequate and legal case for doing so. I am opposing this rate increase to stand up for North Carolinians – and their wallets.”

In the filing, Attorney General Stein lays out three reasons he opposes the rate increase.

The proposal would allow Carolina Water Service to change rates each year based on changes in average water consumption. These frequent changes in rates are unjust and are not authorized by statute. Carolina Water Service has recently benefitted from significant federal tax savings, which should be passed on to...
November 15, 2018

Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Settlement with Atrium over Healthcare Pricing

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today announced that he has reached a settlement with Atrium Health as a result of the antitrust lawsuit the North Carolina Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Justice filed in 2016.

“As a result of this settlement, people will be able to purchase lower cost, high quality healthcare and gain transparency of healthcare pricing,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “We can’t allow Atrium to use its size and market dominance to the detriment of healthcare consumers.”

The settlement prohibits Atrium Health from entering into contracts with insurers that would:

- prevent them from disclosing healthcare prices to consumers or punish them for providing price transparency;
- restrict them from offering consumers financial incentives to use lower cost, high quality providers;
- require Atrium’s prior approval for insurers to introduce new, lower cost benefit plans; or
- require that Atrium be included in the most-preferred tier of benefit...

November 29, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Action Against Bridal Store for Failing to Deliver Dresses

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against the operator of Elegant Bride, a bridal store accused of failing to deliver wedding gowns and accessories to dozens of customers.

The lawsuit accuses the business and its owner, Frances Murphy, of violating state consumer protection laws by failing to deliver bridal gowns, accessories, and alterations to consumers and failing to provide refunds.

Elegant Bride had a principal place of business in Dublin, Ohio, but it closed abruptly in March without advance notice to consumers, according to the lawsuit. As a result, consumers were left without knowing if they would receive their dresses in time for their weddings.

“Brides and their families paid this store hundreds or thousands of dollars for wedding dresses they never received,” Attorney General DeWine said. “Some people had to pay for their dress twice — first to Elegant Bride and then to someone else. We...
November 20, 2018

**Attorney General DeWine Files Consumer Protection Lawsuit Against Energy Wise Home Improvements**

(YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today filed a consumer protection lawsuit against Energy Wise Home Improvements, a Mahoning County company that has generated more than 180 complaints since mid-October.

The lawsuit accuses the company of violating Ohio’s Consumer Sales Practices Act by failing to deliver promised services, performing substandard work, and failing to honor warranties.

“Complaints about Energy Wise have been pouring into my office, and we’re taking this action to hold the company accountable,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We believe the evidence will show that Energy Wise failed to live up to its obligations to consumers and violated state consumer protection laws.”

Energy Wise had a principal place of business at 5164 Youngstown-Poland Road, but it closed abruptly in October.

Consumers from the Mahoning Valley and other parts of northeast Ohio and western Pennsylvania filed complaints about the company.

In their complaints, many consumers said they had signed contracts with Energy Wise a...
November 16, 2018

**Martins Ferry Used Car Seller Accused of Failing to Deliver Vehicle Titles to Consumers**

(ST. CLAIRSVILLE, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against a Martins Ferry used car seller accused of failing to deliver vehicle titles to consumers.

The lawsuit accuses Liberty Automotive Group LLC and its owners, Jeff Wojcik and Sheree L. Thompson-Wojcik, of violating Ohio consumer protection laws.

More than 40 consumer complaints have been filed against Liberty Automotive Group, which last operated at 109 Hanover Street in Martins Ferry. In most cases, consumers complained that after they bought a vehicle from the dealership, they did not receive the title to the vehicle.

The Ohio Attorney General’s Office worked to assist consumers, in some cases making payments from the Title Defect Recision Fund, which helps resolve certain title problems. Payments from the fund have totaled over $24,000 so far in the case.

“Our goal is to protect consumers,” Attorney General DeWine said. “When consumers buy a car, they expect to receive...

November 02, 2018

**Columbus Used Car Seller Accused of Failing to Deliver Vehicle Titles to Consumers**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today announced a consumer protection lawsuit against Ideal Motorcars LLC and its operators for failing to deliver vehicle titles to consumers as required by law.

More than 80 consumers have filed title-related complaints against Ideal Motorcars, which operated at two Columbus locations: one at 3613 Indianola Ave. and one at 6400 Huntley Road. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Section worked to assist consumers, in some cases making payments from the Title Defect Recision Fund, which helps used car buyers resolve certain title problems. Consumer claims totaling more than $145,800 have been paid from the fund thus far.

The Attorney General’s lawsuit, filed in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, accuses the dealership and its owners of selling vehicles despite knowing they would not be able to secure titles to the vehicles and failing to provide promised services to consumers.

In the lawsuit, the Attorney General seeks reimbursement...
PENNSYLVANIA

November 15, 2018

Attorney General Shapiro Cracks Down on Car Dealers Falsely Advertising as Individual Sellers Online

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced 20 legal actions have been filed against auto dealers and salespeople in eleven counties in Pennsylvania for violating consumer protection laws and deceptively advertising motor vehicles.

The actions were part of an advertising sweep that targeted auto dealers and their salespeople who advertised vehicles for sale without disclosing that the sale was being conducted by a dealer, as is required under Pennsylvania law. All auto dealers in this sweep advertised on Craigslist as individual sellers, rather than as dealers, providing insufficient information to consumers viewing their postings.

“These car dealerships used deceptive advertising and were dishonest with Pennsylvania consumers,” Attorney General Josh Shapiro said. “Car buyers are making a significant investment, and they need to have full knowledge of whom they are buying from. When businesses skirt that process and violate the law, we will hold them accountable and force change in behavior.”

Specifically, the...


TEXAS

November 30, 2018

AG Paxton Begins Investigation Into Marriott Data Breach Affecting 500 Million Customers Worldwide

AUSTIN – Attorney General Ken Paxton today announced that his office served an investigative subpoena – also known as a Civil Investigative Demand – on Marriott International, the world’s largest hotel chain. Marriott, which operates nearly 7,000 properties, revealed that its Starwood reservation system was hacked, potentially compromising the personal information of up to 500 million guests.

“The Marriott data breach has the potential of leaving hundreds of thousands of Texans vulnerable to the nightmare of identity theft,” Attorney General Paxton said. “My office is taking immediate action to seek documents and other information from Marriott to examine the nature and extent of this data breach, including how and why this massive hack occurred.”

Marriott disclosed that the unauthorized access started in 2014 and may affect those who made reservations from that time until September 10, 2018. Hackers obtained a wealth of
personal information on the hotel’s guests – including potentially names,...


UTAH
November 16, 2018
CFTC and State of Utah Charge Salt Lake City Precious Metals Dealer and His Company with Engaging in $170 Million Precious Metals Ponzi Scheme
Washington, DC — The Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and the Utah Department of Commerce, Division of Securities, through its Attorney General, jointly filed a civil enforcement action in the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, Central Division, against Defendants Gaylen Dean Rust (Rust) and Rust Rare Coin, Inc. (RRC) of Layton, Utah and Salt Lake City, Utah, respectively. The Complaint charges Rust and his company RRC with defrauding at least 200 individuals — from Utah and at least 16 other states — and fraudulently obtaining more than $170 million from investors since May 2013 in a precious metals Ponzi scheme.
According to the complaint, the Defendants’ fraud, as alleged, is ongoing. In the first eight months of 2018, the Defendants received at least $42 million from investors in a pool that purportedly bought and sold silver. The Defendants also attempted to solicit new investors in this pool...


VERMONT
November 30, 2018
Volkswagen Settlement Restitution Claims Forms Available For Vermont Consumers
MONTPELIER – In May, the Vermont Attorney General’s Office reached a settlement with Volkswagen to resolve violations of the Vermont Consumer Protection Act involving VW’s well-publicized diesel engine scandal. Under the settlement, VW agreed to pay Vermont consumers $2.9 million, up to $1,000 for every qualifying vehicle.
A third-party administrator identified more than 3,000 Vermont consumers who are eligible to receive payment under the settlement. Claims forms will be mailed to those individuals on December 14th, 2018. To be eligible to receive payment, consumers must return their completed claim forms to the Claims Administrator within 90 days. The 90 day claims period does not begin to run until the claims administrator sends out notices and claims forms. Consumers will have 180 days to cash their checks.
Eligible Vermonters who return claims forms will receive payments from this settlement regardless of whether they have received money from other VW related settlements.
Consumers can contact...


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**VIRGINIA**

November 15, 2018

**HERRING WINS $50 MILLION IN PENALTIES AND DEBT RELIEF FOR RETIRED VETERANS AND CIVIL SERVANTS TARGETED BY ILLEGAL LOANS**

RICHMOND (November 15, 2018) – Attorney General Mark R. Herring today announced that he has secured more than $50 million in debt relief and ordered civil penalties as a result of his lawsuit against Future Income Payments, LLC; FIP, LLC; and their owner, Scott Kohn (collectively, “FIP”) for making illegal, high-interest loans to more than 1,000 Virginia veterans and retirees in violation of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act. The Court also found that FIP’s agreements were “usurious,” meaning they carried illegally high interest rates, and issued an injunction preventing further violations of the Consumer Protection Act. Following Attorney General Herring’s lawsuit, FIP shut down its predatory lending operations in Virginia and around the country.

“This is a really satisfying result because it represents the intersection of two of our biggest consumer protection priorities: combatting predatory lending and protecting our veterans and military families,” said Attorney General Herring. “This ruling...


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**WASHINGTON**

November 30, 2018

**Court rules Washington family broke law by using charities to deceive donors**

SEATTLE — A King County Superior Court judge today ruled that the Haueter family used their four charities as an elaborate, deceptive scheme to solicit donations from Washingtonians for seemingly worthy causes, while pocketing much of the money for themselves. Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a lawsuit in December 2017 asserting that the Haueters’ charities were a sham that the family used to enrich themselves by more than $1 million.

“Instead of helping cancer patients and vulnerable children, this family took advantage of the generosity of Washingtonians,” said Ferguson. “That is wrong – and illegal.”

The family operated four charities, most recently named Children’s Hunger Relief Aid, Children’s Safety Society, Emergency Relief Network and Search and Rescue Charities. After Ferguson filed his lawsuit, the Haueters dissolved two of these, but continued to operate the
remaining two using the same deceptive tactics. In a motion for partial summary judgment filed in November, Ferguson...


November 27, 2018

AG Ferguson files lawsuit against Holiday Treasure Chest, founder

OLYMPIA — Attorney General Bob Ferguson has filed a lawsuit in King County Superior Court against the Holiday Treasure Chest Charity Foundation and its founder, Mark Bergeson, accusing him of using the charity for his own personal gain.

In addition to civil penalties and cost and fees, Ferguson’s lawsuit asks the court to dissolve the organization and bar Bergeson, also known as Mark Jensen, from operating any nonprofit or charitable organization in the future.

“Charities exist to help those in need, not to enrich the people running them,” Ferguson said. “Washingtonians thought their donations were helping kids during the holidays, not lining the pockets of those who run this so-called charity.”

Holiday Treasure Chest was created in 2008 as the charity arm of the Seattle Seafair Pirates, though the organizations parted ways in 2013. At that time, a dispute led to litigation between the two organizations, which resulted in a settlement that prohibited...


November 16, 2018

Pierce County judge grants injunction against Fallen Hero Bracelets

TACOMA — Today, Pierce County Superior Court Judge Kathryn Nelson granted Attorney General Bob Ferguson’s motion for a preliminary injunction against Spanaway-based Fallen Hero Bracelets, the Benjamin Foundation and other organizations run by Michael Friedmann. The injunction forces the organizations to cease operations until they register with the Secretary of State and provide financial reports for each year of their existence.

It also bars them from engaging in abusive conduct toward any past or present customers. The companies also must notify all customers who have been sued, threatened with collections or sent to collections that these efforts against them will cease, and provide those communications to the Attorney General’s Office.

“Not only did Fallen Hero Bracelets deceive consumers into thinking their purchases benefited veterans, it made verbal and legal attacks on customers who complained," said Ferguson. "Despite a lawsuit from my office and numerous complaints from duped consumers, the organization continued to...
Multistate Cases

ARKANSAS

November 21, 2018

Rutledge Reaches Settlement $625 Million with AmerisourceBergen

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced Arkansas has joined with 42 other states and the federal government to reach an agreement with the pharmaceutical distributor, AmerisourceBergen Corporation (ABC) to settle allegations that the company introduced adulterated drugs into interstate commerce. As a result, ABC will pay the states and the federal government $625 million dollars, of which $99,863,569.00 will go to the Medicaid programs. Additionally, ABC subsidiary, AmerisourceBergen Specialty Group (“ABSG”), pleaded guilty to illegally distributing misbranded drugs in September 2017. ABSG is the parent entity for companies in the specialty pharmaceutical market, including biotechnology and oncology, in addition to pharmaceutical manufacturers and providers. ABSG agreed to pay $260 million in criminal fines and forfeitures. As part of the settlement Arkansas will receive $2,813,129.97 in restitution and other recoveries.

“Protecting the consumers includes ensuring pharmaceutical manufacturers and providers are following approved methods for manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing...

CALIFORNIA

November 21, 2018

Attorney General Becerra Leads Bipartisan Coalition in Defending States’ Rights to Regulate the Rising Cost of Prescription Drugs

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, leading a bipartisan coalition of 32 Attorneys General, filed an amicus brief in the United States Supreme Court supporting states’ rights to regulate and address the rising cost of prescription drugs. In Rutledge v. Pharmaceutical Care Management Association, the Attorneys General argue that in order to protect the well-being of consumers, States must regulate pharmacy benefit managers, also known as PBMs. PBMs act as gatekeepers between pharmacies, drug manufacturers, health insurance plans, and consumers for access to prescription drugs. The brief filed today argues that regulation of the prescription drug market, including PBMs, is a critical tool for States to address access and affordability of prescription drugs and protect residents.
“At the California Department of Justice, we’re fighting so all Californians can access lifesaving healthcare - that means ensuring that the prescription drugs they rely on are affordable and accessible,” said Attorney General Becerra.


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ILLINOIS

November 21, 2018

MADIGAN URGES SUPREME COURT TO PRESERVE STATES’ ABILITY TO SUE PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURERS TO PROTECT CONSUMERS

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan, as part of a bipartisan group of 23 state attorneys general, today urged the Supreme Court to uphold states’ ability to sue pharmaceutical manufacturers when they mislead consumers about the potential side effects of their products. In an amicus brief filed in the United States Supreme Court, Madigan and the coalition argue that the pharmaceutical company Merck can be held liable under state law for misleading and misrepresenting the side effects of their drug Fosamax®.

Madigan and the coalition filed an amicus brief today in Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp. v. Albrecht, No. 17-290, arguing that if the court sides with Merck, it will hinder states’ ability to take legal action against a pharmaceutical manufacturer for misleading and misrepresenting its products. Additionally, the attorneys general argued that Merck may be held liable under state law even if it is not liable under federal law.

“People have...

Original Press Release:

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INDIANA

November 30, 2018

AG Hill urges U.S. Supreme Court to preserve states’ ability to sue pharmaceutical manufacturers

Attorney General Curtis Hill this month joined a bipartisan group of 23 state attorneys general in urging the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold states’ ability to sue pharmaceutical manufacturers when they mislead consumers about the potential side effects of their products.

In an amicus brief filed Nov. 21 in the U.S. Supreme Court, Attorney General Hill and his counterparts argue that Merck, a pharmaceutical company, can be held liable under state law for misleading and misrepresenting the side effects of their drug Fosamax.

“Protecting Hoosier consumers is a major focal point of our office,” General Hill said. “We trust and expect that the highest court in the land will uphold the constitutional authority of Indiana
and other states in this regard.”
The 14-state coalition filed an amicus brief in Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp. v. Albrecht, No. 17-290, arguing that if the Supreme Court sides with Merck, it will hinder states’ ability to...


November 29, 2018
AG Hill defends states’ rights to regulate rising costs of prescription drugs
Attorney General Curtis Hill this month joined a bipartisan coalition of 32 attorneys general in filing an amicus brief in the U.S. Supreme Court supporting states’ rights to regulate and address the rising cost of prescription drugs.

In Rutledge v. Pharmaceutical Care Management Association, the attorneys general argue that in order to protect the well-being of consumers, states must retain the right to regulate pharmacy benefit managers, also known as PBMs. PBMs act as gatekeepers among pharmacies, drug manufacturers, health insurance plans and consumers for access to prescription drugs. The brief filed this month argues that regulation of the prescription drug market, including PBMs, is a critical tool for states to address access and affordability of prescription drugs and protect residents.

In 2015, the state of Arkansas implemented a law that regulated PBMs by setting standards for generic drug prices. Under the law, PBMs must raise their reimbursement rate for a drug...


KANSAS
November 29, 2018
AG Derek Schmidt asks U.S. Supreme Court to preserve state authority to regulate pharmacy benefit managers
TOPEKA – (November 29, 2018) – Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a lower court’s ruling that state laws regulating pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) had been preempted by the federal government.

In a brief filed last week in support of an Arkansas case, Schmidt, as part of a bipartisan group of attorneys general of 32 states and the District of Columbia, argued that a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit applied an overly broad interpretation of federal law to reach the conclusion that state-level regulations are preempted. The attorneys general asked the Supreme Court to take up the case and reverse the lower court’s decision.

“States have sought to employ their traditional police and regulatory powers to improve the transparency and operation of prescription drug markets,” the attorneys general wrote. “At least 38 States have enacted laws regulating the conduct...
Beshear Joins Bipartisan Coalition to Protect States’ Ability to Sue Pharmaceutical Companies over Potential Drug Side Effects

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 28, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear has joined with a bipartisan group of attorneys general in asking the nation’s highest court to uphold the ability of states, like Kentucky, to hold pharmaceutical companies accountable when they mislead the public on the potential side effects of their drugs.

Beshear has signed on to an amicus or “friend of the court” brief filed in the United States Supreme Court case Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp. v. Albrecht.

The AGs argue that pharmaceutical company Merck can be held liable under state law for misleading and misrepresenting the side effects of its osteoporosis preventive drug Fosamax even if the company is not liable under federal law.

Beshear said he is hopeful the justices will reaffirm the vital role states play in protecting citizens from disingenuous pharmaceutical companies.

Beshear has filed nine opioid related lawsuit against pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors for violating state...
pharmaceutical manufacturers, especially when consumers are harmed by their actions, or in this case, inaction.”

The coalition’s amicus brief in Merck Sharp &...
is a matter for state authority in protecting the access to and affordability of prescription drugs. “Patients deserve access to affordable, quality prescription drugs,” said Attorney General DeWine. “While our office continues to work with outside counsel to aggressively investigate and...


UTAH

November 19, 2018

Battling illegal robocalls & spoofing

Illegal robocalls and spoofing have cost Americans billions of dollars in fraudulent claims. According to a study by Truecaller, Americans lost $9.5 billion in 2017 to robocall and spoofing scams, and it’s only expected to increase.

Utah Attorney General Sean D. Reyes joined 34 other state AGs urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to adopt rules that would require service providers to block illegally spoofed calls or help identify a potential scam for consumers. In the letter, the state AGs reaffirmed their commitment to providing public education, responding to consumer complaints, and taking appropriate action when needed – but it’s not enough. The AGs strongly recommended the FCC explore ways to identify technology that could combat fraudulent calls and utilize every tool available to help protect Americans.

You can read the letter from the AGs here: A Letter to the FCC About Robocalls.

Deputy Attorney General David Sonnenreich had the opportunity...


VIRGINIA

November 21, 2018

ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING FIGHTS TO PROTECT STATES’ ABILITY TO HOLD PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE

RICHMOND (November 21, 2018) – Attorney General Mark R. Herring today led a bipartisan group of 22 state attorneys general in urging the Supreme Court to uphold states’ ability to sue pharmaceutical manufacturers when they mislead consumers about the potential side effects of their products. In an amicus brief filed today in the United States Supreme Court, Attorney General Herring and his counterparts argue that Merck, a pharmaceutical company, should be held liable under state law for misleading and misrepresenting the side effects of their drug Fosamax®.

“Having the ability for states to sue pharmaceutical and opioid manufacturers when they have misrepresented their products or misled consumers is crucial,” said Attorney General Mark
Herring. “We cannot let these companies take advantage of folks, or get away with hurting people. Just this past June, I filed a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma for its role in creating and prolonging the opioid...


**Medicaid Fraud**

**ARKANSAS**

November 20, 2018

**Rutledge Announces Arrest of Hot Springs Employee for Billing Medicaid for Family**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of a Garland County woman for Medicaid fraud.

Tonashae Echols, 33, of Hot Springs, is the Therapy Manager of Little Bitty City Therapeutic Services in Hot Springs and is accused of making false statements regarding her family’s income in order to receive Medicaid benefits for her children and billing Medicaid through the business for services provided to the children from November 2015 through July 2017. Following an investigation by the Attorney General’s Office, Echols was arrested. She is charged with one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class B felony.

“Echols is accused of lying to collect benefits she was not entitled to receive,” said Attorney General Rutledge. “When people cheat Medicaid, they steal from taxpayers and hurt a system designed to help the most vulnerable. I will not tolerate this behavior as the Attorney General.” An attorney with the Attorney General’s...


**ARKANSAS**

November 13, 2018

**Rutledge Announces Medicaid Fraud Arrests Involving Falsified Documents and Stolen Hydrocodone**

LITTLE ROCK – Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge today announced the arrest of a Cross County woman for Medicaid fraud and a Pulaski County woman for fraudulently obtaining a controlled substance.

Tamika Rucker, 35, of Wynne, is accused of charging for services not rendered and falsifying timesheets from February through May 2016. Following an investigation by the Attorney General’s Office, Rucker was arrested. She is charged with one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class
C felony. This case was referred to the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit by the Office of Medicaid Inspector General.

Jill Riley, 55, of Sherwood, is accused of stealing hydrocodone pills while working at a North Little Rock facility in July 2018. Following an investigation by the Attorney General’s Office, Riley was arrested. She is charged with one count of obtaining a controlled substance by fraud, a Class C felony.

“Medicaid is an important safety net for many Arkansans,” said Attorney...


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COLORADO

November 29, 2018

Attorney General Coffman Announces Conviction and Sentencing of Speech Pathologist who Fraudulently Billed Medicaid for over $1.2M

DENVER—Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman today announced that Tara L. Rose a Speech Language Pathologist in El Paso County, has pled guilty to one count of Class 3 felony theft and one count of Class 4 felony theft. The charges stemmed from $1.2 million in fraudulent billing that Rose and her company, Beyond Words LLC, submitted to the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF). The court accepted her plea and the parties argued sentencing before the Court. Rose was sentenced to a term of eight years in Colorado Community Corrections on the first charged count and to a ten year term of probation on the second count that is to run consecutive to the first. Rose was also ordered to pay $1.28 million in restitution to HCPF.

An investigation by the Colorado Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (COMFCU) and HCPF determined $1.28 million, or 64% of the $1.9...


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GEORGIA

November 20, 2018

Carr: Georgia Residents Plead Guilty to Medicaid Fraud in Augusta

ATLANTA, GA – The Office of the Attorney General today announced that defendants Luvinia Nipple and Margaret Rivers pled guilty to one count of Medicaid Fraud on November 16. A Richmond County judge sentenced Luvinia Nipple to serve 10 years of probation and pay restitution in the amount of $112,532.38. Margaret Rivers, for her part in the scheme, was sentenced to three years of probation.

“I’m proud of our Medicaid Fraud Control Division for investigating and successfully prosecuting
this case.” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “This is one of many cases we have prosecuted recently that involves a parent undermining the integrity of our Medicaid program and neglecting their responsibility to devote these funds to support their child. This trend is unacceptable.”

The defendants in this case took unlawful advantage of a Medicaid program designed to assist Ms. Nipple’s disabled daughter, Bodicia Nipple, in the home. In this program, known as patient...


November 02, 2018
Carr: Georgia Resident Indicted for Medicaid Fraud in Hall County
ATLANTA, GA—The Office of the Attorney General today announced that Adrian Mance entered a guilty plea to one count of Medicaid Fraud on October 30. A Hall County Judge sentenced Ms. Mance to serve 10 years of probation and pay restitution in the amount of $11,255.15.

“The public relies upon the honesty and integrity of individuals who participate in the Georgia Medicaid program,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “Those who violate that trust must be held accountable, and I applaud the efforts of our Medicaid Fraud Division for investigating and prosecuting this case.”

Beginning in 2012, Ms. Mance utilized the “New Options Waiver Program” (NOW), a Medicaid waiver program, to employ a caretaker to provide personal support services to her sister. Ms. Mance, acting as her sister’s representative, enrolled in the Participant-Directed Services option of the program, which allowed her to pay the caretaker with funds obtained from Georgia Medicaid. In order...


KANSAS

November 08, 2018
Dickinson County woman ordered to repay more than $2,500 for Medicaid fraud
ABILENE – (November 8, 2018) – A Dickinson County woman was ordered yesterday to repay more than $2,500 to the Kansas Medicaid Program after pleading guilty to Medicaid fraud-related charges, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said.
Dawn Penrod, 47, pleaded no contest in September in Dickinson County District Court to one felony count of making a false claim to the Medicaid program, one felony count of unlawful acts concerning computers, and one felony count of conspiracy to commit making a false claim to the Medicaid program. Yesterday, Judge Benjamin J. Sexton ordered Penrod to repay $2,531.85
to the Kansas Medicaid Program. Judge Sexton also sentenced Penrod to 16 months of probability with an underlying prison sentence of 12 months. Convictions such as this one may also result in a period during which the defendant is prohibited from being paid wages through a government health care program.
An investigation revealed that Penrod billed...


November 01, 2018
Wichita woman pleads guilty to Medicaid fraud, drug charges
WICHITA – (November 1, 2018) – A Wichita woman this week pleaded guilty to Medicaid fraud and related charges, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said. Brittany Michelle Jackson, 28, pleaded guilty in Sedgwick County District Court to one count of Medicaid fraud, two counts of possession of a controlled substance and two counts of making a false information. The charges stemmed from an investigation by the attorney general’s Medicaid Fraud and Abuse Division which revealed that Jackson stole prescription medications while working as a Certified Medication Aide and Certified Nurse Aide in a Sedgwick County nursing facility. The medications, Oxycodone and Hydrocodone, are opioids classified by Kansas law as a Schedule II Controlled Substance. The crimes occurred in November 2017. As a condition of the plea, Jackson has agreed to voluntarily surrender her certification with the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services. District Judge Christopher M. Magana accepted the plea and...


MARYLAND
November 16, 2018
AmerisourceBergen Corporation to Pay $1.8 Million to Settle Allegations of Distributing Unapproved and Adulterated Drugs
BALTIMORE, MD (November 16, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that the Maryland Medicaid program will receive $1.8 million from the AmerisourceBergen Corporation (ABC) to settle allegations that the company fraudulently marketed adulterated drugs to vulnerable cancer patients. The payment is part of a national settlement in which ABC will pay $625 million to federal and state health care programs in order to resolve a series of whistleblower lawsuits pursued by numerous states and the federal government. ABC is one of the nation’s largest wholesale drug companies and ranked number 11 on the Fortune 500 list. In addition to the civil settlement, the ABC subsidiary that engaged in the conduct, AmerisourceBergen Specialty Group (ABSG),
pleaded guilty to illegally distributing misbranded drugs and will pay $260 million in criminal fines and forfeitures. The case arose from an investigation into the practices of an ABSG pharmacy in Alabama...


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**MASSACHUSETTS**

November 26, 2018

**Adult Day Health Care Facilities to Pay More than $500,000 over Allegations of False Claims and Improper Billing**

Boston — Three adult day health facilities have agreed to pay more than $500,000 to settle allegations that they improperly billed the state’s Medicaid Program (MassHealth), Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Under the terms of these settlements, Otrada Adult Day Health Care Ctr., Inc., of Needham, North Shore Adult Day Health Care Center, Inc., of Revere, and Revere Adult Day Health Care Center, LLC of Revere have resolved allegations that they billed for full-day adult day health services for MassHealth members who did not attend full day programs.

“These companies allegedly billed for services not provided, taking away critical funds from seniors who need access to adult day care services,” AG Healey said. “We will continue to protect MassHealth and the essential health coverage it provides for so many across Massachusetts.”

The AG’s Office alleges that from 2011 through 2018, the three facilities failed to comply with MassHealth regulations that...


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November 09, 2018

**AmerisourceBergen to Pay More than $490,000 to MassHealth over Allegations of Distributing Contaminated Drugs**

Boston — One of the largest drug wholesalers in the country will pay the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth) more than $490,000 to resolve allegations that the company sold misbranded and adulterated drugs in Massachusetts, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

The federal and multi-state settlement with AmerisourceBergen Corporation (ABC) will provide more than $99 million to Medicaid programs across the country.

“This national drug company put lives at risk by selling tainted drugs and misleading doctors and patients about its products,” said AG Healey. “Pharmaceutical companies must comply with the laws in place to protect the health and safety of our residents.”

The settlement resolves allegations concerning the conduct of Medical Initiatives, Inc. (MII), an
Alabama-based pharmacy unit of ABC’s subsidiary, AmerisourceBergen Specialty Group (ABSG). MII, which closed in 2014, broke the seal of FDA-approved drug vials of oncology supportive care drugs used during chemotherapy, pooled the drug product, and created pre-filled syringes...


November 09, 2018

Dorchester Man and Woman Plead Guilty to Fraudulently Billing MassHealth for Services Provided after Patient’s Death

Boston — A divorced man and woman from Dorchester have pleaded guilty to defrauding the state’s Medicaid program (MassHealth) by falsely billing for services not rendered for a patient while she was hospitalized and after she was deceased, Attorney General Maura Healey announced today.

Theodore Gilbert, age 54, pleaded guilty in October to one count of Medicaid False Claims and one count of Larceny over $250. Madeline Garcia Gilbert, age 51, pleaded guilty on Monday to one count of Medicaid False Claims.

Judge Peter Krupp sentenced Theodore Gilbert to two years in the House of Correction, suspended for a period of three years, and was ordered not to work as a personal care attendant (PCA).

Madeleine Garcia Gilbert was sentenced by Judge Christine Roach to one year in the House of Correction, suspended for a period of three years, and was ordered not to bill for services provided to MassHealth members. A restitution...


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MICHIGAN

November 02, 2018

Schuette Charges Autism Services Provider Over Claims of False Billings

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today announced his Healthcare Fraud Division has charged Christine Leonard, 52, of Swartz Creek, with two felony counts of Medicaid False Claim. Leonard, a former employee of Centria Healthcare, the largest provider of autism services in Michigan, is alleged to have billed for services that she never performed.

“Billing for services not rendered is fraud, pure and simple. Billing for therapy not provided to an autistic child is particularly intolerable,” said Schuette. Leonard was charged on Friday, November 2, 2018 in the 54-B District Court in East Lansing before Judge Andrea Larkin. Personal recognizance bond was set at $100,000. The next court date is a pre-exam conference scheduled for November 16, 2018.
The criminal charge of Medicaid False Claim carries a maximum punishment of up to 4 years in prison and/or a $50,000.00 fine.

Case Background
The investigation conducted by Schuette’s Health Care Fraud Division revealed allegations...

- Original Press Release: https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-482411--,00.html

NEW HAMPSHIRE

November 02, 2018
James and Karen Folley Convicted of Theft and Financial Exploitation
Concord, NH – Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald announces that a Hillsborough County Superior Court (Northern District) jury convicted James Folley, age 69, and his wife Karen Folley, age 62, both of Bennington, of six felony charges Thursday, November 1, 2018. The Follies were convicted after a jury trial that began on Monday, October 29, 2018 and concluded Thursday.
Mr. Folley was convicted of three counts of class A felony theft by unauthorized taking, in violation of RSA 637:3, and one class B felony offense of financial exploitation of an elderly adult, in violation of RSA 631:9, I(a)(2). Mrs. Folley was convicted of two counts of class A felony theft by unauthorized taking, in violation of RSA 637:3.
In March 2016, the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services (BEAS) referred allegations to the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) that Mr. and Mrs. Folley exploited his sister by unlawfully taking and...


NEW YORK

November 08, 2018
A.G. Underwood Announces Arrests Of Niagara Falls Taxi Company Owner And Employees For Allegedly Defrauding Medicaid
NIAGARA FALLS – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood today announced the arrests of Sadat Khan, 29, Kashif Pervez, 36, Marcus Mathis, 41, Chester Haugenbook, 48, and William Medina, 35, all of Niagara Falls, for their roles in an alleged scheme to steal over $50,000 from Medicaid by paying off Medicaid recipients in order to fraudulently bill for transport rides. The Attorney General’s ongoing investigation into Medicaid transit scams – dubbed “Operation Ghost Ride” – revealed that Wego Taxi Tours, Inc. submitted claims and received payment from Medicaid for rides that were not provided as claimed.
“When taxi companies falsely report medical transports, New York taxpayers end up footing the bill,” said Attorney General Underwood. “My office will not tolerate fraudulent practices that
steal Medicaid resources from vulnerable New Yorkers – and we will continue to bring
scammers to justice.”
According to the felony complaint, owner of Wego Taxi Tours, Inc. Sadat Khan...

niagara-falls-taxi-company-owner-and-employees

NORTH CAROLINA
November 08, 2018
Attorney General Josh Stein Announces Medicaid Fraudster Sentenced
(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today announced that Renee Christine Borunda of
Greensboro was sentenced to 37 months in federal prison following her guilty plea to
Conspiracy to Commit Health Care Fraud and Aggravated Identity Theft. Borunda will also make
restitution of $225,399.08 to the North Carolina Medicaid Program.
“People who cheat Medicaid are cheating taxpayers,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “My
office will continue our work to protect taxpayers’ wallets and hold these fraudsters
accountable.”
According to the case, Borunda managed a company that offered behavioral health services to
Medicaid recipients in Wilson, North Carolina. In 2013 and 2014, Borunda used one of the
company’s therapist’s personal information to submit fraudulent electronic claims. The claims
falsely represented that the therapist had provided $225,339.08 worth of behavioral services to
over 200 different Medicaid recipients who lived in Beaufort, Edgecombe, Greene, Guilford,
Lenoir, Mecklenburg, Pitt, and Wilson Counties. No such services...

Advisories/Attorney-General-Josh-Stein-Announces-Medicaid-Fra.aspx

OKLAHOMA
November 28, 2018
Behavioral Health Counselor Sentenced to Prison in Fraud Case
OKLAHOMA CITY – A former behavioral health counselor has been sentenced to a year in prison
for Medicaid fraud, after a collaborative effort between Attorney General Mike Hunter’s
Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma’s
office, led by Robert J. Troester.
In addition to his prison sentence, Senior U.S. District Judge Stephen P. Friot ordered Samuel
Okere, 61, of Oklahoma City, to serve three years of supervision after his release and pay a
$10,000 fine.
“Samuel Okere took advantage of the system that some of the most vulnerable in our society
rely on for health care services,” Attorney General Hunter said. “I applaud the attorneys in my
office, as well as Mr. Troester for working together across agency lines to hold this individual accountable. My office remains dedicated to partnering with local, state and federal agencies to combat this kind of fraud.”

In April, Okere pleaded...


SOUTH CAROLINA

November 09, 2018
Attorney General Alan Wilson announces Medicaid provider sentenced to prison for fraud
(COLUMBIA, S.C.) – Nov. 9, 2018 – South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson announces that the owner of a counseling service has been sentenced to five years in prison for Medicaid fraud. Idris L. Talib, 38, owner of New Dominion Community Services, had offices in Anderson, Greenville, and Richland counties and was a provider under the South Carolina Medicaid Program. From September 2015 through December 2017, he submitted false claims to the Medicaid Program for counseling services that were not provided as claimed. Based on those false claims, Talib was paid $400,000 in Medicaid reimbursements. Talib pleaded guilty on April 26, 2018 to Obtaining Property Under False Pretenses. That crime is a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Sentencing was deferred until November 7, 2018. At the conclusion of the sentencing hearing, Judge Casey L. Manning sentenced Talib to five years in prison. “Cheating the taxpayers means paying the price for... ➢ Original Press Release: http://www.scag.gov/archives/36919

TEXAS

November 02, 2018
Investigation by AG Paxton’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit Helps Feds Convict Four Individuals in $3.7 Million Garland Health Care Fraud Scheme
AUSTIN – A joint investigation by the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Texas attorney general’s office and others helped federal prosecutors obtain a jury conviction of two home health owners and two employees who ran a scheme to steal over $3.7 million from Medicare and Medicaid. Following a six-day trial, Celestine “Tony” Okwilagwe, Tutu Kudiaratu Etti, Loveth Isidaehomen and Paul Emordi were each convicted of one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. Okwilagwe and Etti were found guilty on two counts of false statements in connection with a health care benefit program.
According to the investigation, Okwilagwe and Emordi owned and operated Elder Care, a Garland-based Medicare and Medicaid provider, even though both had been previously barred from participating in federal health care benefit programs. Etti, the administrator of Elder Care, and Isidaehomen, Okwilagwe’s wife, signed various false documents to conceal the identity of the owners. The four defendants...


November 01, 2018
AG Paxton’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit Assists Feds in Obtaining Health Care Fraud Convictions of Two Austin Psychologists
Investigative work by the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Texas Attorney General’s office and the F.B.I. helped federal prosecutors obtain convictions in a health care fraud case against the two owners and operators of Austin-based Psychological A.R.T.S., P.C.
Following a trial that lasted three weeks, jurors found 73-year-old Dr. William Dubin guilty of paying illegal kickbacks and two other charges. His 33-year-old son, Dr. David Dubin, was convicted of three charges, including health care fraud and aggravated identity theft.
Previously, a third defendant in the case, Glen McKenzie, Jr., pleaded guilty to charges involving illegal kickbacks. McKenzie used his position at an emergency shelter outside Austin to refer children to Psychological A.R.T.S. for mental health services billed to Medicaid. In return, Dr. William Dubin gave McKenzie a 10-percent kickback for each patient referral.
During the trial, evidence revealed that Dr. David Dubin facilitated at least one fraudulent billing to Medicaid and unlawfully...


Consumer Advocacy
ARIZONA
November 26, 2018
Attorney General Mark Brnovich Warns About Deceptive “Solar Initiative” Flyers
PHOENIX – Attorney General Mark Brnovich issued a warning today about deceptive flyers appearing on residences in the Phoenix area that promote a solar energy effort.
The flyers claim to be a “Public Notice” from the “Maricopa County Solar Initiative,” and claim that “Arizona and the Federal Government ITC (26 USC § 25D) are paying to have solar energy systems installed on qualified homes in this neighborhood.” The flyers tell consumers to call to schedule their “site audits.” Consumers who call are subjected to a solar sales pitch by a private company. In addition, the Maricopa County Solar Initiative’s website improperly uses a
modified version of the county seal, but the “Solar Initiative” is linked to a private business and is not associated with the county. The “Solar Initiative” is also not registered to do business in Arizona.

Similar flyers previously appeared in Clark County, Nevada, this summer, and law enforcement officials...


November 19, 2018

**Attorney General Mark Brnovich Sharing Holiday Shopping Safety Tips**

PHOENIX – The holidays are just around the corner and consumers are looking for deals in stores and online. To ensure safe shopping, Attorney General Mark Brnovich is offering the following tips for consumers to consider this season.

“As Arizonans look for the perfect gift for family and friends, we want to ensure they don’t overlook simple ways to keep their purchases and their personal information safe,” said Attorney General Mark Brnovich. “By researching purchases ahead of time, shopping in a secure manner and ensuring safe delivery of gifts, the holiday season can be filled with joyous moments instead of fraudulent experiences.”

Holiday Shopping Tips:

Research:

Before making a purchase, ask what the return policy is, as return policies vary from store to store and website to website. Also ask if the store charges a restocking fee, and, if so, how much.

Read reviews, watch product videos on third-party sites,...


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**CALIFORNIA**

November 26, 2018

**Attorney General Becerra Provides Donation Tips to Avoid Scams in Preparation for Giving Tuesday**

SACRAMENTO — Ahead of Giving Tuesday, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today provided tips to Californians on how to avoid becoming the victim of charity scams. Attorney General Becerra has the primary responsibility for supervising charities and the professional fundraisers who solicit on their behalf in California. Under Government Code section 12598, the Attorney General may investigate and bring legal actions against charities that misuse charitable assets or engage in fraudulent fundraising practices.

“As Californians support one another and give back to our communities this holiday season, it’s...
important to make sure the charities we support are the real deal,” said Attorney General Becerra. “I urge all Californians to be vigilant and do a little research to ensure that their charitable giving goes directly to those who need the help, and not to unscrupulous scam artists. If you have information about a charity operating outside the law, please let us know....


November 20, 2018
California Department of Justice Issues Consumer Alert on the Use of “Federal Limits Apply” Driver Licenses and IDs to Purchase Firearms
SACRAMENTO – Today, the California Department of Justice issued a consumer alert to Californians and a notice to firearms dealers regarding identification requirements for the purchase of firearms in California. Recent changes to California driver licenses and identification cards may result in firearms dealers requiring that holders of a driver license or identification card with the words “Federal Limits Apply” on it provide documentary proof that they are lawfully present in the United States in order to purchase a firearm. This is because federal law prohibits anyone who is not lawfully present in the United States from receiving or possessing a firearm or ammunition.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) currently issues two types of California driver licenses and identification cards: “REAL ID” and “Federal Limits Apply.” Applicants for a “Federal Limits Apply” driver license or identification card are not necessarily required to provide proof of lawful presence to DMV,...


November 19, 2018
Attorney General Becerra Leads Multistate Coalition to Fight for Rules Protecting Underserved Populations from Banking Discrimination
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Becerra, leading a coalition of 14 attorneys general, urged the Trump Administration to maintain rules requiring banks to take steps to serve low- and moderate-income communities and protect against lending discrimination. The comment letter responds to the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency’s (OCC) efforts to weaken oversight of bank compliance under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). The CRA encourages banks to help meet credit needs of all segments of the population. The OCC’s proposal would undermine the CRA, resulting in less access to banking service, loans, and investment for disadvantaged populations.

“Access to banking services is essential in all our communities. However, the Trump Administration’s proposal would cut necessary oversight that protects against lending discrimination,” said Attorney General Becerra. “All Californians deserve equal opportunity to
buy homes and open businesses. Modernization of regulations and oversight shouldn’t come at
the expense of providing robust and...


November 09, 2018
Attorney General Becerra Issues Consumer Alert on Price Gouging Following State of
Emergency in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today issued a consumer alert
following the Acting Governor’s declaration of a state of emergency in Los Angeles and Ventura
Counties due to widespread wildfires. Attorney General Becerra reminds all Californians that
price gouging during a state of emergency is illegal under Penal Code Section 396.
“Families in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties are in the midst of dealing with devastating
wildfires. They should not have to worry about whether they’re being illegally cheated out of
fair prices,” 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...


November 08, 2018
Attorney General Becerra Issues Consumer Alert on Price Gouging Following State of
Emergency in Butte County
SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today issued a consumer alert
following the Acting Governor’s declaration of a state of emergency in Butte County due to a
widespread wildfire. Attorney General Becerra reminds all Californians that price gouging
during a state of emergency is illegal under Penal Code Section 396.
“Families in Butte County are in the midst of dealing with the devastating Camp Fire. They
should not have to worry about whether they’re being illegally cheated out of fair prices,” 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.”
COLORADO

November 01, 2018

Attorney General Coffman Kicks off Colorado Consumer Protection Month Encouraging Everyone to Become Informed and Empowered Fraud Fighters

DENVER—Today Colorado Attorney General Cynthia H. Coffman kicked off the second annual Colorado Consumer Protection Month (CCPM). This statewide initiative focuses on raising awareness and providing education about consumer fraud issues including common scams, financial abuses, and fraud affecting Coloradans across the state.

The Colorado Attorney General’s Office is partnering with law enforcement, regulatory entities, and non-profit programs statewide to help Coloradans learn how to identify, prevent, and report fraudulent activity. A proclamation supporting and declaring November as Colorado Consumer Protection Month was signed by the Governor.

“We want to empower all Coloradans to become informed consumers,” said Attorney General Coffman. “Knowledgeable consumers are the first line of defense against scammers and fraudsters, and Colorado Consumer Protection Month is a great opportunity for Coloradans to access resources so they can make informed financial decisions, spot and avoid scams, and safeguard their identities.”

The upcoming holiday season should be a time to celebrate with...

GEORGIA

November 27, 2018

CONSUMER ALERT: Carr Warns Georgians to Lookout for Ticket Scams Ahead of Big Sporting Events in Atlanta

ATLANTA, GA – Atlanta will soon host a number of big sporting events, including the SEC Championship game, Chick-Fil-A Peach Bowl, Super Bowl LIII, and a potential Atlanta United championship match. All of these events are likely to sellout, providing an opportunity for scammers to exploit consumers through the sale of fake, void or stolen tickets on the secondary market. Not only can consumers lose money in these scams, they may also become victims of identity theft if they give a scammer their personal or financial information.

Attorney General Chris Carr is urging all who are planning to attend one or more of these events in person to remain cautious when purchasing tickets.

“I share the excitement of all fans who will be coming to Atlanta for these exciting events and
want to ensure that all ticketholders have a positive experience,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “If you are buying tickets to...


November 19, 2018
Carr Encourages Consumers to Spend Wisely and Protect Themselves this Holiday Season
ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is providing the following tips for holiday shoppers. “The way we are making holiday purchases is changing with more sales being made and processed on our phones, tablets and laptops,” said Attorney General Chris Carr. “As our consumer landscape shifts, it is more important than ever to protect your wallet and your identity, and we are offering the following tips to remember while shopping this holiday season. After all, we want Georgians to be able to focus on what is truly important this holiday season, spending time with loved ones.”

Tips for shopping and avoiding scams during the Holidays:
Know who you’re dealing with
Research a company before doing business with them. You can check out a company’s reputation through the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org. In addition, you can do an Internet search by typing in the company name, along with the word “complaint,” “review” or...


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ILLINOIS
November 20, 2018
ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN RELEASES ANNUAL HOLIDAY SAFE SHOPPING GUIDE
Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today released her 11th Annual Safe Shopping Guide highlighting hazardous toys, children’s products and household items that have been recalled over the past year to help Illinois families ensure a safe holiday shopping season.

Madigan’s 2018 Safe Shopping Guide includes detailed descriptions and photographs of children’s products recalled in the last year – from popular children’s toys and games that pose choking hazards to children’s furniture and playsets that pose entrapment or falling risks. Since January, there have been 41 recalls of children’s products by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. This easy-to-use resource can help families avoid purchasing recalled products on the second-hand market and deal with items that may already be in their homes.

“The Safe Shopping Guide has proven to be a valuable resource for countless Illinois parents and caregivers to make sure their homes are free of unsafe toys and products,” Madigan...

INDIANA

November 28, 2018

AG Hill cautions fans considering buying event tickets through secondhand transactions
As fans prepare to descend on Indianapolis this weekend for the Big Ten championship football game between Northwestern and Ohio State universities, Attorney General Curtis Hill today warned consumers of the dangers of buying tickets to spectator events through secondhand person-to-person transactions.
Person-to-person buying typically involves a cash transaction for tickets without documentation proving tickets are authentic. Buyers involved in these deals typically have no means of getting their money refunded if they learn their tickets are fake, lost or stolen.
The safest course remains purchasing tickets during initial offerings from the originating venues and their associated ticket vendors. Barring that option, buyers are advised to seek safer options on the secondary market such as trusted resale websites requiring debit or credit cards. Anyone planning to engage in person-to-person buying should at least take steps to minimize risks of fraudulent transactions. Consumers should:
  - Double check to make sure tickets have correct times and...


KENTUCKY

November 08, 2018

Beshear, U.S. Postal Inspection Service Working to ‘Stamp Out’ Mail Scams
LEXINGTON, Ky. (Nov. 8, 2018) – Attorney General Andy Beshear and the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) are working to help Kentuckians avoid mail scams that could be hiding in their mailboxes.
The Stamp Out Mail Scams awareness campaign, which was unveiled Thursday at Lexington’s Nandino Post Office, provides posters on how to identify, avoid and report common mail scams in 700 post offices across the state.
Beshear said the awareness campaign will help Kentuckians combat the Federal Trade Commission’s findings that fraud losses in 2017 reached nearly $905 million across the nation. “The Office of the Attorney General and USPIS are united in our fight to stop con artists who misuse the postal system to defraud Kentuckians,” Beshear said. “Thanks to Stamp Out Mail Scams Kentuckian families can learn how to avoid mail scams at the same time they are buying stamps or mailing Christmas packages at their local post office.”
Kathy...

November 01, 2018

**Beshear: Grandparent Scammers Threatening Seniors**

FRANKFORT, KY. (Nov. 1, 2018) – Three Kentucky grandparents were robbed of nearly $18,000 recently after falling victim to a “grandparent scam,” according to Attorney General Andy Beshear who issued a statewide scam alert today.

Six grandparents in Boyle, Butler, Fayette, Jefferson, Meade and Pulaski counties have reported the scam phone call.

The victims say they received a phone call from someone claiming to be their grandchild who is in an out-of-state jail and injured after driving under the influence and wrecking. A second scammer joins the call pretending to be an attorney or law enforcement officer who confirms the story and requests the grandparent immediately wire money or send cash to pay the bail bond.

Beshear said the fake grandchild then pleads with the grandparent to not tell his or her parents or anyone else.

“Threatening and stealing from grandparents by exploiting the love they have for their grandchildren is a despicable crime,”...

➤ **Original Press Release:** https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=AttorneyGeneral&prId=666

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**LOUISIANA**

November 09, 2018

**Veterans Day: Time for Appreciation and Education**

BATON ROUGE, LA – As Louisiana citizens prepare to celebrate Veterans Day, Attorney General Jeff Landry – a veteran of Desert Storm – is sharing his gratitude and offering consumer tips for his fellow veterans.

“Veterans Day is a celebration of the brave men and women who have given of themselves to protect our freedoms and God-given rights. It is also a time to remind these heroes that programs are available to help them and that despicable con artists may be targeting them,” said General Landry. “So as we thank veterans for their selfless service, we also encourage them to check out our resource guide for service members and veterans and to take part in free educational opportunities across Louisiana.”

General Landry said scams targeting veterans can take many forms – including promises for quick and easy credit and car title loans, sky-high returns on bogus investment deals, hopes for online romance,...

➤ **Original Press Release:** https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/9614?TypId=1&CatId=3
November 01, 2018

Attorney General Jeff Landry Informs Consumers of Several Child Products Recently Recalled

BATON ROUGE, LA – Attorney General Jeff Landry is advising Louisiana consumers to be mindful of various child products that have been recently recalled.

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

Attorney General Jeff Landry listed the following recalled products:
- Allura Children’s Sleepwear
- Manhattan Toy’s Toy Planes
- JCPenney Okie Dokie Denim Patches Shortie Shorts
- BSN Sports Rubber Critter Toys
- Boy Story Action Dolls
- Weeplay Kids Children’s Coveralls
- Boy Scouts of America Neckerchief Slides

For more information on the recalled products and remedies, view the Fall 2018 Safety Box at http://www.agjefflandry.com/safetybox.

➤ Original Press Release: https://www.ag.state.la.us/Article.aspx/9611?TypeId=1&CatId=3

MARYLAND

November 30, 2018

Attorney General Frosh Advises Consumers to Take Steps to Protect Personal Information Following Marriott Data Breach

BALTIMORE, MD (November 30, 2018) – Bethesda-based Marriott has announced that the personal information of as many as 500 million customers may have been accessed via its Starwood guest reservation database on or before September 8, 2018. The company’s investigation found that there had been unauthorized access to the Starwood database since 2014.

“The Marriott data breach is one of the largest and most alarming we’ve seen. My office will be taking a hard look at Marriott’s actions to understand the circumstances that led to the breach,” said Attorney General Frosh. “We will also be working with the company to make sure all customers who may have been impacted are notified and provided the resources to protect their personal information. We will be closely monitoring the company’s response to ensure that consumers are protected while we continue to investigate the data breach. I strongly urge consumers to take active and necessary...

November 20, 2018

**Attorney General Frosh: Avoid Shopping Pitfalls in Post-Thanksgiving Retail Rush**

BALTIMORE, MD (November 20, 2018) – The upcoming Thanksgiving holiday weekend, including Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday, marks the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season. Attorney General Frosh is urging consumers to know their rights, educate themselves, and to be extra vigilant as consumer spending online and in stores sharply increases. Consumers in the U.S. are expected to spend more than $700 billion on holiday shopping, much of which will take place this weekend. November also marks the start of a sharp increase in charitable giving.

“Being a savvy shopper begins with educating yourself about retail policies and pitfalls,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Sometimes that ‘great deal’ isn’t such a bargain if you’re left with a broken or unwanted gift that you cannot return.”

In an effort to help consumers avoid falling victim to holiday season traps, Attorney General Frosh issued the following tips for consumers:

Make sure...


November 09, 2018

**Report: Health Education Advocacy Unit Saves $2.8 Million for Patients, Maryland Consumers**

BALTIMORE, MD (November 9, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh announced today that the Health Education Advocacy Unit (HEAU) within the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General closed 2,290 cases in Fiscal Year 2018, assisting patients in saving or recovering over $2.8 million. The information was included as a part of the comprehensive Annual Report on the Health Insurance Carrier Appeals and Grievances Process that must be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly each year.

The HEAU offers mediation services to consumers who have billing or other business-related disputes with their healthcare providers or coverage disputes with their health benefit plans. The Unit also helps consumers who have been denied enrollment in a Qualified Health Plan or denied Advanced Premium Tax Credits or Cost-Sharing Reductions by Maryland Health Connection, Maryland’s health insurance marketplace.

“Health carriers that inappropriately deny claims cause emotional and financial...”


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**MASSACHUSETTS**

November 26, 2018

**AG Healey Offers Guidance on Donating to Charities Ahead of Giving Tuesday**

Boston — In anticipation of “Giving Tuesday” and the upcoming holiday season, Attorney General Maura Healey advises residents to make informed decisions when donating to
charities. The AG’s Office also released a new bulletin showing that only 41 percent of the funds that professional solicitors raised on behalf of charities were transferred to charitable organizations in 2017.

“We are fortunate that our state has some of the strongest, most innovative charities in the world,” said AG Healey. “There are many reputable and worthy charities to support, but people should make sure to do research, make informed decisions, and understand how much of a donation will actually go to the charity before they give.”

Charitable organizations sometimes pay professional solicitors to solicit donations from the public, and solicitors are required by statute to register with the AG’s Office. Conventional professional solicitors fundraise through phone, mail and door-to-door campaigns. The 2017 Professional Solicitor Bulletin...


November 05, 2018

AG Healey Issues Guidance for Merrimack Valley Tenants and Landlords Affected by Columbia Gas Explosions

Boston — Attorney General Maura Healey issued guidance today outlining the rights and duties of tenants and landlords impacted by the Columbia Gas explosions in September that devastated the Merrimack Valley and have left thousands of residents without heat and hot water.

“Nearly two months after the Columbia Gas explosions, thousands of homes in the Merrimack Valley still have no heat or hot water,” said AG Healey. “My office is issuing this guidance to ensure that both tenants and landlords are able to make the appropriate claims from Columbia Gas and do not suffer financial losses.”

In addition to today’s guidance, the AG’s Office previously announced a new hotline and resources for Merrimack Valley residents, and demanded answers from Columbia Gas about the company’s plans for the expeditious restoration of gas and compensation for impacted residents.

The AG’s guidance is available for residents in English and Spanish. It encourages landlords and tenants to...


November 01, 2018

AG’s Office Awards $1.6 Million in Grant Funding to Help Residents Pay Their Heating Bills

BOSTON — With winter approaching, Attorney General Maura Healey announced that her office has awarded $1.6 million in grant funding to seven organizations across the state to help Massachusetts consumers pay or lower their monthly heating bills.
“Each winter, thousands of families across Massachusetts struggle to come up with the money to heat their homes,” AG Healey said. “This new grant program allows us to reach residents who aren’t already receiving assistance and provide them with financial support to stay warm during these cold months.”

Today’s grantee announcement comes in the wake of the Sept. 13 gas explosions in the Merrimack Valley that left thousands of residents and businesses without gas service for heating, hot water and cooking. The Greater Lawrence Community Action Council is one of the seven organization receiving funding from the new grant program and will use the funds to assist residents in recovery.

“We are grateful on behalf of...


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MICHIGAN

November 21, 2018

Schuette Releases Annual Giving Wisely Brochure, Encourages Michigan Residents to Give Wisely During the Holiday Season


“As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, many of us are thinking about what we are grateful for and what we can do to help others this holiday season,” said Schuette. “Many residents choose the holiday season to give to charity and that is why we publish Giving Wisely each year. It is a way to give donors peace of mind and ensures that their donations reach worthwhile organizations.”

Charitable giving increases during the holiday season and many charities begin their end of the year fundraising appeals. Giving Wisely is a free handout that provides timely and critical advice to anyone considering a donation. The...

➢ Original Press Release: https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-82916_81983_47203-483861--,00.html

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NEW YORK

November 27, 2018

A.G. Underwood Issues Charitable Giving Tips On Giving Tuesday

NEW YORK – Today, on Giving Tuesday – which encourages charitable donations as families focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood issued
charitable giving tips for New Yorkers.

“Giving Tuesday is an opportunity for New Yorkers to give back this holiday season,” Attorney General Underwood said. “If you plan on making a charitable donation to those in need, follow my office’s tips to ensure they’re going to reputable organizations.”

The Attorney General’s guidance includes:

Take Time To Research The Organization. Make sure you are familiar with the organization, its mission, and its effectiveness before giving. Always ask for information in writing – and be wary if an organization will not provide information about its charitable programs and finances upon request. Any legitimate organization will be happy to send you information.

Consult charitiesnys.com to make sure that the organization is registered, and to...


November 26, 2018

Attorney General Underwood Report Finds That Professional Fundraisers Retain Nearly One-Third Of Charitable Campaign Donations; Some Retain More Than Half

NEW YORK – Ahead of Giving Tuesday and holiday season charitable giving, Attorney General Underwood today released the annual “Pennies for Charity: Where Your Money Goes; Fundraising by Professional Fundraisers” report, which found that nearly one-third of charitable donations ended up in the pockets of professional fundraisers. This year’s report looks at fundraising trends such as online crowdfunding as well as the percentage of funds raised that went to charities.

New York has a robust charitable sector, supported by generous giving by New Yorkers. In 2017, more than $1.18 billion was raised in New York State through 964 fundraising campaigns conducted by professional fundraisers on behalf of charities. These campaigns, which are the focus of the report, used a range of methods including special events, direct mail, and telemarketing. The report and the searchable Pennies for Charity database containing the underlying data is posted at Attorney General’s Charities Bureau

Of the more...


November 20, 2018

Attorney General Underwood – Part Of Coalition Of 14 AGs – Fights For Rules Protecting Vulnerable Populations From Banking Discrimination

NEW YORK – Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood – part of a coalition of 14 Attorneys General – filed a comment letter urging the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) to maintain rules requiring banks to take steps to serve low- and moderate-income communities and protect against lending discrimination. The comment responds to the OCC’s efforts to
weaken oversight of bank compliance with the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). The CRA encourages banks to help meet credit needs of all segments of their communities. The law was enacted in 1977 in response to banks persistent and systematic denial of access to credit for historically disadvantaged communities, often communities of color, known as redlining. The OCC’s proposal would undermine the purpose of the CRA and result in less access to banking service, loans, and investment for vulnerable populations.

“All New Yorkers deserve equal access to banking, loans, and investment services. Yet...


November 20, 2018
Attorney General Underwood Announces Nationwide Policy Changes By National Retailers, Part Of AG Initiative To Combat Gift Card Fraud
NEW YORK – As the holiday season begins, Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood announced an ongoing initiative to protect consumers from gift card fraud. Prompted by a sharp increase in reports of scam artists demanding payment from consumers in the form of gift cards, the Attorney General’s office has been working with three major retailers—Best Buy, Walmart, and Target—on reforms to their nationwide policies and practices to help protect consumers from being victimized. All three retailers have already made significant changes as part of this initiative, which is a joint effort of Attorney General Underwood and Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro.
Gift card scams have rapidly increased in recent years. The Federal Trade Commission recently found that 26% of scam victims paid with a gift card between January and September 2018, compared to only 7% in 2015 – marking a 270% increase.

“With gift card scams on the rise, these...


November 20, 2018
A.G. Underwood Issues Consumer Alert For Black Friday And Cyber Monday
NEW YORK – As New Yorkers prepare for the holiday shopping season, Attorney General Barbara D. Underwood issued tips to help consumers protect themselves on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

“As holiday shopping season begins, New Yorkers should be on alert that sometimes bargains may not be as good as they seem,” said Attorney General Underwood. “When purchasing gifts for family and friends, we encourage consumers to use our tips to protect themselves against fraudsters and scams.”

Attorney General Underwood issued the following tips for consumers shopping on Black Friday and Cyber Monday:
Beware of misleading bargains and added fees. The “sale” price may have been marked up before it was marked down – nullifying the impact of the sale. Often, the touted “sale” price may, in fact, be significantly higher than the price for that same item later in the season. Additionally, delivery charges and/or other added costs such as...


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**NORTH CAROLINA**

November 20, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Stein Fights to Protect Underprivileged Populations from Banking Discrimination**

(RALEIGH) Attorney General Josh Stein today urged the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) to maintain rules requiring banks to take steps to serve low- and moderate-income communities and protect against lending discrimination. The OCC’s proposed changes to the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) would weaken oversight of bank compliance with the CRA and result in less access to banking services, loans, and investment for disadvantaged populations.

“Discrimination in banking can make a huge difference in holding people back,” said Attorney General Josh Stein. “The CRA helps protect minorities and people with lower incomes. These safeguards can make a huge difference in families’ lives as they work to achieve homeownership, save for college, or start new businesses. I urge the OCC not to weaken these protections.”

The CRA was enacted in 1977 in response to banks’ persistent and systematic denial of access to credit for historically disadvantaged communities, often communities...


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**NORTH DAKOTA**

November 14, 2018

**CONSUMERS WARNED TO BEWARE OF FAKE CHARITIES**

BISMARCK, ND – In the wake of recent national disasters, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem warns consumers to be aware of phony “look alike” charities. The Consumer Protection division recently received a judgment against several phony charities operating in North Dakota. Ian Hosang, Rhett McIntosh, and Judith Culzac, of New York, formed nonprofit corporations called American Cancer Society of North Dakota, American Cancer Society of Bismarck, and American Cancer Society for Children of North Dakota. These supposed charities are not affiliated with the actual American Cancer Society, which filed a complaint with the Consumer
Protection division.
The Court found that these fake charities engaged in consumer fraud by using names deceptively similar to the real American Cancer Society and that they engaged in solicitation of charitable contributions while unregistered. Donations given to these phony charities did not benefit any charitable purpose connected with the actual American Cancer Society. In addition to ordering the...


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**OHIO**

December 30, 2018

**Attorney General DeWine Offers Consumer Tips Following Marriott Starwood Hotels Breach**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today offered tips for consumers following Marriott’s recent announcement of a data breach affecting as many as 500 million guests who made a reservation at a Starwood brand hotel, which includes Sheraton Hotels & Resorts and Westin Hotels & Resorts, among others.

Marriott has reported it believes hackers gained unauthorized access to the Starwood guest reservation database in 2014 and that people who made a reservation on or before Sept. 10, 2018, at a Starwood property may have been affected.

The company has reported that for approximately 327 million guests, the information breached included some combination of name, mailing address, phone number, email address, passport number, Starwood Preferred Guest account information, date of birth, gender, arrival and departure information, reservation date, and communication preference. It also said some payment card numbers and expiration dates may have been affected.

“Any time there is a breach that has gone...


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November 26, 2018

**Attorney General DeWine Offers Charitable Giving Tips Ahead of Giving Tuesday**

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today offered charitable giving tips ahead of Giving Tuesday, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, when donors are encouraged to make charitable contributions amid the holiday shopping season.

“There are many worthwhile causes to support, but unfortunately, there are also some con artists who take advantage of the generosity of others,” Attorney General DeWine said. “We want to help people ensure that their donations go to the right place.”

Charities throughout the country use the last month of the year to seek support from donors. At the same time, scammers also compete for these contributions. Con artists may pose as
reputable charity representatives and collect donations by phone, online, or outside stores. They may claim to support a charitable cause but ultimately keep the money for themselves. Signs of a potential charity scam include:

- High-pressure tactics.
- No details about how your donation will be used.
- Refusal to provide written...


November 16, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Offers Holiday Shopping Tips for Consumers

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today offered consumer protection tips for the holiday shopping season. Consumers are expected to spend an average of about $1,000 during this year’s holiday season, according to the National Retail Federation, and complaints about shopping (both in stores and online) are one of the most common types of complaints filed with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office. Commonly reported problems include refund issues, complaints about products not being delivered, and billing disputes.

“We’re reminding people to take some common-sense steps to avoid problems when they’re doing their holiday shopping,” Attorney General DeWine said. “A little bit of effort up front can help prevent headaches later.”

Tips for consumers include:
- Beware of scams. Watch for phony “Black Friday” coupons, such as those offering hundreds of dollars to spend at a store, and other claims that sound too good to be true. Be wary if someone asks you to pay...


November 01, 2018

Attorney General DeWine Recognized for Efforts to Advance Cybersecurity

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine this week was named a Symantec Cyber Award winner for his leadership in protecting critical data and systems.

“I am honored that our office and our CyberOhio initiative has been recognized for our innovative efforts to encourage data protection and fight back against cyber threats,” said Attorney General DeWine. “Working together to create a secure cyber environment benefits not just Ohio’s businesses, but it helps keep Ohioans' personal data safe.”

Attorney General DeWine created the CyberOhio initiative in 2016 to help Ohio’s businesses fight back against cyber-attacks. Led by an advisory board of cyber professionals, the goals of CyberOhio are simple, to provide the best legal, technical, and collaborative cybersecurity...
environment possible to help Ohio’s businesses thrive and keep Ohioans’ data and personal information more secure.
Based on the advisory board’s recommendations, Attorney General DeWine lead the effort to encourage the enactment of the Data Protection Act...


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**PENNSYLVANIA**

November 21, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Issues Warning of Holiday Shopping Scams**

As the holiday season arrives, Attorney General Josh Shapiro is warning Pennsylvanians to beware of scams and deceptive advertising while shopping at stores or online this year. Attorney General Shapiro warned Pennsylvania consumers to be on the lookout for:

- **The Bait and Switch:** Take retailers’ advertisements to the store with you. Unscrupulous retailers may advertise goods at low prices, but when you get to the store the price may be higher than advertised or the product might not be there at all.
- **Skimming Devices:** During the holidays last year, police were called to a retailer at the King of Prussia mall to remove a skimming device from one store’s register. Sometimes skimming devices are placed on gas pumps or ATMs to capture data from the magnetic stripe on the back of credit and debit cards. If something looks out of place or easily wiggles, use a different ATM, gas pump or...


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November 20, 2018

**Statement of Attorney General Josh Shapiro on Federal Audit of Navient Student Loan Practices**

HARRISBURG – Attorney General Josh Shapiro issued a statement in response to an article noting that the United States Department of Education had found deficiencies in Navient’s handling of student loan inquiries:

“Today’s news of a federal audit of Navient’s student loan practices supports what we’ve alleged all along: that Navient steered student borrowers into repayment options that cost them more in interest than they would have paid had Navient advised the student of all their repayment options.”

“The Education Department performed this review, but never shared it with the public. I sued Navient last year to address Navient’s failures in its loan servicing practices. Our case is live, active and ongoing. I’ll hold Navient accountable and stand up for Pennsylvania’s students.”

In October 2017, Attorney General Shapiro sued Navient for engaging in unfair and deceptive
lending and failing to offer proper repayment plans to students. Pennsylvania has the second highest average for...


November 20, 2018

**Attorney General Josh Shapiro Announces Nationwide Gift Card Policy Changes from Walmart, Target, and Best Buy to Protect Consumers from Scams**

PITTSBURGH – With the holiday shopping season officially beginning this week, Attorney General Josh Shapiro today announced a major victory in his continuing effort to prevent gift card scams targeting consumers.

Following more than a year of collaboration with the Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection and the New York Attorney General Barbara Underwood’s Bureau of Consumer Frauds & Protection, three national retailers have agreed to make major changes to their gift card policies, which are intended to prevent gift cards sold in their stores from being used for payment by victims of scams. Walmart, Target, and Best Buy made these changes voluntarily thanks to the joint initiative of Pennsylvania and New York.

“I am proud to announce this victory for Pennsylvania consumers and consumers across the nation as we gear up for the biggest retail shopping day of the year,” said Attorney General Shapiro. “This level of change in corporate behavior...


November 09, 2018

**Attorney General Shapiro Increases Awareness of Consumer Resources Available to Hispanic and Latino Communities**

HARRISBURG — Following the observance of Hispanic Heritage Month, Attorney General Josh Shapiro is advising Pennsylvanians of his Office’s priority to increase awareness of consumer protection resources for the Latino community in Pennsylvania.

Today in Philadelphia, the Attorney General hosted an educational event to appreciate the cultural contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans and their impact on American history. The event was developed by staffers within the Office of Attorney General’s Bureau of Consumer Protection and Office of Public Engagement.

“As Pennsylvania’s chief law enforcement officer, my duty is to protect all Pennsylvanians from scams and lawless behavior, and I am committed to ensuring that members of the Latino community know what resources are available to them,” Attorney General Shapiro said. “With 837,000 individuals living in Pennsylvania who primarily Spanish, we saw the need to expand our consumer resources. Every day, my Office is working to break down barriers and better
RHODE ISLAND

November 30, 2018

Attorney General Kilmartin Offers Consumer Information on Marriott Data Breach

With the news breaking early this morning that up to 500 million Marriott customers have been victim of a data breach at the hotel giant's Starwood-brand properties going back as early as 2014, Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin is sharing information on the breach and the steps Rhode Island consumers should take if they believe their information was compromised in the breach.

According to the company, for approximately 327 million of the 500 million customers, the data hacked included passport numbers, emails and mailing addresses. In addition, some credit card details may also have been taken.

Under Rhode Island's data breach statute (RIGL 11-49.3-4), companies that experience a data breach must take certain steps to notify affected consumers and must notify the Attorney General's Office should more than 500 Rhode Island resident be impacted.

Specifically, the statute reads:

In the event that more than five hundred (500) Rhode Island residents are to be notified,...

SOUTH DAKOTA

November 21, 2018

Attorney General Jackley Provides Holiday Shopping Tips

PIERRE, S.D. – With the holiday shopping season already underway, Attorney General Jackley urges consumers to shop with care this holiday season.

“Consumers are already getting inundated with pre-black Friday deals and this will only amp up as we head into the holiday weekend. We just encourage consumers to be cautious when doing holiday shopping and just remember if it sounds too good to be true, it is,” said Jackley.

Below are some important holiday shopping tips:

Tips on Holiday Shopping:

• Check the refund and return policies for restrictions and exceptions
• When buying gift cards, check for fees and expiration dates that apply
• Read the fine print
• Double check delivery dates
• Keep your receipts to make returns and exchanges easier
• Review warranties
• Compare prices
• Check shipping and handling fees

Along with those traditional shopping methods consumers also need to proceed with caution when dealing with online retailers.

Online Shopping...


November 02, 2018

Attorney General Jackley Warns Consumers of Fictitious Shipping Company

PIERRE, S.D.- Attorney General Marty Jackley is warning consumers to be aware of a fictitious shipping company by the name Sioux Falls Vehicle Carriers that claims to be physically located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“Consumers are being targeted after they purchase a vehicle from Craigslist. The “seller” then directs the buyer to their shipping company to facilitate the transaction. The Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Office has received several calls from individuals inquiring about the legitimacy of this shipping company and we can confirm that Sioux Falls Vehicle Carriers has no physical presence in Sioux Falls and the purported address is that of a legitimate business that is in no way associated with this scam,” said Jackley.

This fictitious shipping company website is https://siouxfalls-vehicle-carriers.com.

Earlier this spring the South Dakota Department of Revenue’s motor vehicle division shared another scam business by the name of South Dakota Trucks conducting a similar scam. The...


TENNESSEE

November 30, 2018

Statement from the Office of the Attorney General regarding the Marriott data breach

We actively enforce state law that protects Tennesseans from data breaches. We are very concerned about the major breach announced by Marriott this morning: the hundreds of millions affected, the nature of the information potentially accessed, and the time that passed since the first breach. We are gathering additional information and looking at what went wrong.

TEXAS
November 26, 2018
Consumer Alert: IRS Impersonation and Email Scam
Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton today warned Texans that fraudulent emails are being sent from people impersonating the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) targeting users with fake tax documents. These emails often use the subject line “tax transcripts” in an attempt to bait people into opening links and documents that contain destructive malware specifically designed to steal sensitive financial data.
These new attacks come as consumers face IRS impersonation fraud on other platforms as well. The IRS will never call or email citizens to demand repayment for penalties. If consumers receive a fraudulent call or email, but believe they may have penalties, they are advised to call the IRS directly at 800-829-1040.
“All Texans should be aware of unsolicited phone calls or emails from scammers impersonating the IRS. This is a nefarious attempt to trick taxpayers into downloading malware and divulging sensitive financial information,” Attorney General Paxton said. “My office stands ready to...


UTAH
November 06, 2018
Recognize & avoid financial fraud
What exactly is financial fraud?
It is any attempt to deceive another for financial gain. Seems fairly straightforward, right? Therefore, it should be easy to prevent. Unfortunately, there are numerous ways to take advantage of the average Utahn and many are falling for these ploys.
What’s the best way to protect yourself?
EDUCATION.
In a measure designed to protect Utah Consumers, federal, state, and local officials established Stop Fraud Utah to educate consumers about the many aspects of financial fraud and how to avoid it. Twice a year, Stop Fraud Utah hosts the Financial Fraud Institute to help Utahns recognize and protect themselves against Financial Fraud.
Join us for this fall’s seminar in Weber County.
Registration is free, but required since space is limited. For more information and to RSVP, go to www.utfraud.com.

VERMONT

November 20, 2018

Attorney General, Secretary of State Announce Public Meetings on Proposals to Regulate Home Improvement Contractors

The Attorney General’s Office and the Secretary of State’s Office announced a series of joint public meetings to hear feedback and ideas from the public on the home improvement industry.

In January 2018, the Secretary of State’s Office of Professional Regulation produced a Preliminary Sunrise Assessment, evaluating possible means of regulating the home improvement industry to achieve public protection with minimal intrusion into the marketplace. Public hearings in Burlington, Newport, and Springfield will include a presentation on the report’s findings and an opportunity for public questions and answers. The Assessment was made at the request of the Vermont Senate Committee on Government Operations. The Attorney General’s Office’s involvement in these public meetings stems from its enforcement authority.

Hearings will be held at the following times and locations:
Burlington, Nov. 27th, 5 – 6:30 p.m.: Burlington City Arts (Lorraine B. Good Room, 2nd Floor)
135 Church Street, Burlington
Springfield, Dec. 4th, 5 – 6:30 p.m.;


November 13, 2018

Beware of Student Loan Scams

WINOOSKI – Attorney General T.J. Donovan joined Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) to warn Vermonters about scams involving student loans. Scammers pose as student loan servicers, debt relief companies, document preparation companies or say that you may be eligible for a student loan forgiveness program.

“My office has received dozens of complaints about these types of scams,” Attorney General Donovan said. “Recent graduates, who are starting to repay their student loans this fall, should be especially wary of potential student loan scams.”

Some scammers will ask for your FSA ID, which is the login and password to federal loan information, and say they can help you for a fee. But student loan help is free for Vermonters. VSAC, a public nonprofit agency of the State, provides advice about student loans for free. “VSAC wants student loan borrowers to know that we are here to provide expert financial aid assistance to any of their...

VIRGINIA

November 30, 2018
ATTORNEY GENERAL HERRING WARNS VIRGINIANS TO REMAIN VIGILANT AFTER MARRIOTT DATA BREACH

RICHMOND (November 30, 2018) - Attorney General Mark R. Herring is warning Virginia consumers who could be affected by Marriott’s massive data breach to remain vigilant. According to a data breach notification from Marriott received today by Attorney General Herring, the Starwood guest reservation system, which includes hotels under the Marriott umbrella, had been hacked in a data breach going back to 2014. According to Marriott, nearly 327 million people could have had their personal information exposed including names, phone numbers, email addresses, mailing addresses and passport numbers.

“Massive data breaches, like the one Marriott announced today, are becoming more and more frequent,” said Attorney General Herring. “Millions of Virginians could have been impacted by Marriott’s data breach, and all consumers should exercise caution in the coming weeks and months to protect their personal information. I urge any Virginian who believes they have been impacted by this breach to...


November 09, 2018
CLAIM FORMS GOING TO PHH BORROWERS WHO MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR PAYMENT

RICHMOND (November 9, 2018) – Attorney General Mark R. Herring today announced that claim forms are going out to PHH Mortgage Corporation (PHH) borrowers in Virginia who lost, or almost lost, their homes to foreclosure between January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2012. Over 1,000 Virginia borrowers may be eligible for payment under the $30.4 million PHH national mortgage foreclosure settlement. Qualified borrowers will receive a bilingual English/Spanish packet containing a letter from Attorney General Herring, instructions, answers to frequently asked questions, and a claim form that must be returned by January 28, 2019.

“The improper mortgage servicing that PHH conducted helped to create the mortgage and foreclosure crisis that continues to affect our communities,” said Attorney General Herring. “These payments are intended as compensation for PHH’s illegal conduct and servicing abuses, and the terms of the settlement ensure that the company will adhere to rigorous standards in the...

November 21, 2018

Attorney General Morrisey Offers Tips For Safe Holiday Shopping

HARLESTON — West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey urges consumers to be cautious as the holiday shopping season begins with Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber Monday. “It is important for consumers to stay vigilant as the holiday shopping season kicks off,” Attorney General Morrisey said. “Consumers must be aware of potential scams and keep personal information protected as they purchase gifts for loved ones.”

The Attorney General recommends that consumers limit their use of debit cards, pay close attention to holiday credit card offers and be aware of fraudulent websites or coupons that resemble the real thing.

Credit cards, whether shopping online or in store, provide the best protection to dispute charges when goods or services do not arrive as promised. Debit cards, in contrast, are no different than cash and come with no special protection.

Holiday credit card offers require a close reading of the contract. Deferred interest promotions...

- Original Press Release: https://mailchi.mp/wvago/wva-ag-offers-tips-for-safe-holiday-shopping-cdc4t0zc1h?e=5699e8e411