



**For Immediate Release**

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### **MADIGAN FILES LAWSUIT ALLEGING COMPANY IMPERSONATES COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE TO COLLECT DONATIONS**

Chicago – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that a lawsuit has been filed against an Illinois for-profit business corporation, its owner and two professional solicitors for allegedly collecting money from Illinois residents by falsely representing to prospective donors that they were Cook County deputy sheriffs and soliciting funds for a non-existent program to fund an anti-drug book to help keep kids off drugs. Madigan's office today obtained an order to freeze the bank accounts where the funds were deposited.

Madigan's lawsuit, filed yesterday, March 28, in Cook County Circuit Court, names as defendants County Police Bulletins Incorporated (CPB), a Downers Grove corporation doing business as Cook County Police Bulletin, the company's owner, Alen A. Lebedev, and its two professional solicitors, Steven J. Burt and Dustin G. Johnson. Madigan's lawsuit charges the defendants with multiple violations of the Illinois Solicitation for Charity Act.

“As a result of the scam perpetrated by County Police Bulletins, Illinois residents generously donated money to what they believed to be a charitable organization working to educate local children and improve their neighborhoods,” Madigan said. “The defendants were not registered with the state to collect charitable donations and falsely represented themselves as members of the Cook County Sheriff's Office to dupe compassionate individuals into handing over their money.”

“Telemarketing con artists often prey on the good will of their victims by claiming to represent charities and crime fighting organizations,” Cook County Sheriff Michael F. Sheahan said. “We hope that the action taken today by the Attorney General will send a clear signal to the public that the ‘Cook County Police Bulletin’ has nothing to do with the Sheriff's Office or any other police agency.”

Madigan yesterday also filed a motion for a Temporary Restraining Order, seeking to freeze the bank accounts where Lebedev deposited contributions. Cook County Circuit Court Judge Bernetta D. Bush today granted the motion. According to records obtained by Madigan's office, between January 1 and February 10, 2006, Lebedev deposited several thousand dollars of donation checks into the accounts and wrote \$8,100 of checks made payable to himself, Burt and Johnson.

According to Madigan's lawsuit, beginning in at least January 2006, CPB conducted a telephone campaign to solicit charitable contributions from people and businesses in Illinois. Using the name Cook County Police Bulletin, the defendants represented that they were law enforcement personnel from the Cook County Sheriff's Office, that the Bulletin was an effort by the Sheriff's Office to create an anti-drug book aimed at keeping neighborhood children off drugs, that the contributions would help support the Sheriff's efforts to create and publish this book, and that in return for a contribution an advertisement from the donor's business would be placed in the book.

Based on the representations made by CPB solicitors, numerous donors contributed money in amounts ranging from \$100 to \$275 or more.

Madigan's lawsuit alleges the defendants violated Illinois law by misrepresenting that they were law enforcement personnel, using the name "Cook County Sheriff" without authorization and making representations meant to mislead or confuse the public as to who actually solicited them. In addition, CPB and the solicitors allegedly failed to register with the Office of the Attorney General as a charitable organization, professional fundraiser and professional solicitors.

The lawsuit seeks a permanent injunction, which would prohibit the defendants from soliciting charitable donations in Illinois. The lawsuit also asks the court (1) to order CPB and Lebedev to give an accounting to the Office of the Attorney General for its use of charitable assets and (2) to the extent that CPB and Lebedev cannot account for those assets or are found to have misused charitable assets, to hold them liable for the misused or unaccounted assets and appoint a receiver to run the charity properly.

Assistant Attorneys General Barry Goldberg and Joyce Ku are handling the case for Madigan's Charitable Trusts Bureau.

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