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April 19 , 2006

MADIGAN FILES THIRD LAWSUIT ALLEGING DATA BROKERAGE COMPANIES ILLEGALLY OBTAINED AND SOLD CONSUMERS' TELEPHONE RECORDS

Chicago – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit alleging two out-of-state companies obtained and sold the phone records of Illinois residents without their knowledge or consent. The companies both advertise their services using the Web site advsearch.com.

Madigan's suit, filed today in Sangamon County Court, names as defendants Advanced Research, Inc., a New Jersey corporation, ARI-Advanced Research, LLC, an Oregon limited liability company, Rolf Michael Martin, president of Advanced Research, and Bruce T. Martin, vice president and general manager of Advanced Research and an officer of ARI-Advanced Research. The defendants are not licensed to do business in Illinois.

On their Web site, advsearch.com, the defendants advertise that for a fee they can obtain call records for any telephone number. The defendants charge \$65 for landline call records, \$125 for cellular outgoing calls and \$145 for cellular incoming calls. For an additional \$30 to \$50, the defendants also will provide information regarding call times and duration of calls.

The lawsuit alleges that in order to access consumers' wireless and landline telephone records, the defendants' agents falsely represented themselves as account holders or as agents or employees of a cell phone company. Additionally, they allegedly tried to gain unauthorized computer access to records.

In January and March of this year, Madigan filed two lawsuits against other companies that allegedly used similar, illegal means to access phone records.

“Without the consent of account holders, these telephone data brokers allegedly invaded consumers' privacy and recklessly sold their private call logs in order to turn a profit,” Madigan said.

Madigan launched an investigation into the defendants' practices after a complaint was received by her Consumer Protection Division. The investigation revealed that on at least four occasions the defendants provided an Illinois investigation firm with phone records for Illinois consumers. Those consumers reside in Jackson and Williamson Counties.

On one occasion, the Illinois investigation firm allegedly used Advance Research's services to obtain the telephone records for an Illinois resident. The records were obtained at the request of another Illinois resident who was contemplating legal action against the account holder. The account holder did not authorize the release of her cell phone records, Madigan's lawsuit alleges.

The defendants are charged with multiple violations of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act.

Madigan's lawsuit asks the court to prohibit the defendants from advertising, offering for sale and selling telephone records or other private records and from further violating Illinois' consumer protection laws. The lawsuit seeks a civil penalty of \$50,000 and additional penalties of \$50,000 for each violation found to have been committed with the intent to defraud. Finally, Madigan's lawsuit asks the court to order the defendants to pay for all costs for the investigation and prosecution of this case.

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