



For Immediate Release
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MADIGAN SUES MULTIPLE COMPANIES FOR DECEPTIVELY SOLICITING DONATIONS TO HIGH SCHOOL TEAMS

Chicago – Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed four separate lawsuits in central Illinois courts alleging that companies in Peoria and Tazewell Counties deceptively solicited small businesses nationwide to purchase advertising space on posters featuring game schedules of high school sports teams.

Madigan filed suit in Peoria County Circuit Court against:

- Kelly Publishing, Inc, at 1625 Candletree Drive in Peoria, and its owners, Thomas Alksnis, also known as Tom Kelly, and Danny Crew. Madigan's office has received seven consumer complaints, including three from Peoria and Will Counties and four from out-of-state, relating to this company since March 2006.
- Loyalty Publishing, Inc, doing business as All-Star Publishing, at 1227 West Glen Avenue, Suite D, in Peoria. Since March 2006, the Attorney General's office has received eight consumer complaints concerning this company from out-of-state and one from Peoria County.

In Tazewell County Circuit Court, Madigan filed suit against:

- Community Athletics Publishing, Inc., with Pekin addresses of 22101½ Court Street, 15 S. Capital Street, Suite 211, and a Pekin Post Office box. Since December 2005, Madigan's office has received five consumer complaints regarding this company from Peoria, Franklin, Jefferson, Kane and Will Counties, along with 12 complaints from out-of-state consumers.
- Liberty Publishing, Inc., doing business as Booster Club Productions and U.S. County Map Services, both operating from 616 Abingdon, Suite A, in Peoria and a Post Office box in Pekin. The suit also names as a defendant the owner of Liberty Publishing, Michael Efting of East Peoria. In all, since summer 2004, the Attorney General's office has received 21 consumer complaints concerning this company: five from consumers in Peoria, Tazewell, Jackson, Saline and Williamson Counties, and 16 from consumers outside of Illinois, including one referral from the Idaho Attorney General's office.

Madigan's office began investigating the companies after receiving complaints from high school principals and athletic directors in Illinois and other states,

alleging that the defendants, purporting to be affiliated with their schools, had called small businesses in the schools' communities to purchase advertising space on game schedules. According to the complaints, in some instances, company telemarketers told prospective customers that the proceeds from the ad sales would be contributed to the schools' athletic teams.

Madigan's investigation not only revealed that there was no affiliation or relationship between the defendants and the schools, but that, in most cases, the defendant companies never contributed money to the schools. In a few instances in which the defendants sent checks of \$50 or \$100 to a school district, the districts often returned the money to the defendants to show their disapproval of the manner in which the defendants had obtained the money.

"My office will never tolerate illegal profiteering by companies that divert money away from high school sports teams by deceiving local businesses in this cruel manner," Madigan said.

In addition to complaints from school districts, Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau received complaints from businesses solicited by the defendants, claiming that they would not have purchased ad space if they had known that the defendants were not affiliated with area high schools thus diverting money away from genuine booster club fundraising.

Madigan's four lawsuits allege violations of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act and the Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices Act. In addition, the lawsuits charge Kelly Publishing, Inc., Thomas Alksnis, Danny Crew, Loyalty Publishing, Inc., Liberty Publishing, Inc., and Michael Efting with violating Illinois' Solicitation for Charity Act because these companies allegedly used the high schools' names, without permission, as part of their telemarketing calls. The complaints further allege that all of the defendants violated the Solicitation for Charity Act due to their failure to register as professional fundraisers, as required by the Act.

The lawsuits ask the circuit courts in Peoria and Tazewell Counties to prohibit the defendants from offering for sale and selling advertising opportunities in violation of state consumer protection, trade practice and charitable solicitation laws. In addition, the lawsuits ask the courts to assess a civil penalty for each violation of the consumer protection and trade practice statutes and an additional penalty for each violation found to have been committed with the intent to defraud. The lawsuits against the defendants also seek remedies for violations of the Solicitation for Charity Act, including a court order requiring the defendants to make an accounting of any assets received as a result of any solicitation activity in violation of the Act; an injunction against further illegal solicitation activity; civil punitive damages; civil penalties of \$2,000 for each violation of the prohibition against soliciting without the consent of the schools; and civil penalties of \$5,000 for the defendants' failure to register as professional fundraisers.

Assistant Attorneys General Louis J. Gale, Cassandra Karimi, William Reif and Avonne M. Seals are handling the cases for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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