



For Immediate Release
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MADIGAN SUES KANKAKEE AUTO REPAIR BUSINESS FOR DECEPTIVE PRACTICES

Business Goes Under Leaving Car Owners Without Vehicles

Chicago - Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit in Kankakee County Circuit Court alleging that the owners and operators of a Kankakee auto repair business shut down operations and failed to complete repairs on numerous cars, leaving customers wondering what happened.

“Consumers should be able to rely on the fact that businesses operating in Illinois will fulfill their promises,” Madigan said. “My office works hard to enforce the laws to protect consumers from unscrupulous business people.”

Madigan’s office has received at least 30 consumer complaints alleging that Sterling Automotive Group, also known as Engine Transplant Center, located at 609 E. Court Street, accepted money from consumers but failed to complete the repair work or release vehicles back to consumers in the same or working condition. Sterling provided written estimates of charges for the repairs, but customers alleged the company failed to provide customers a required statement of their rights and options; and more importantly, failed to provide in the contracts and estimates the time necessary to complete the work.

Consumers who complained to Madigan’s office alleged that Sterling failed to return phone calls seeking information about the status of repairs. Consumers also said that when Sterling did return phone calls, the company often allegedly advised consumers of additional charges ranging from \$600 to \$6,000 to complete the work. If consumers refused to pay the additional charges, Sterling allegedly charged a daily storage fee until consumers picked up the vehicles. In many cases, consumers were unable to contact Sterling for several weeks to discuss the additional repairs, and the company added daily storage fees for this time period. When consumers asked Sterling to view the old parts that the company allegedly repaired or replaced, the company refused.

Sterling ceased operations in the fall of 2007 and, according to Madigan’s suit, the business has refused to issue refunds to consumers. Consumers have had their cars towed from the facility, often with the engine and various parts disassembled.

Madigan said that Sterling also failed to comply with a subpoena issued by her office requiring the business to produce relevant documents.

In addition to the business itself, Madigan's suit also names as defendants Jacqueline Keturoskey, individually and in her capacity as company president, Bonnie S. Orellana, individually and in her capacity as company secretary, and Mike Szafranec, individually and in his capacity as general manager of the business.

Madigan's suit alleges violations of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act and the Automotive Repair Act. The suit also alleges that the business failed to comply with an administrative subpoena. The suit seeks to prohibit the defendants from committing future acts in violation of Illinois' consumer protection laws and asks the court to assess civil penalties of \$50,000 per violation and an additional \$50,000 for each violation found to have been committed with the intent to defraud. Madigan's suit also seeks restitution for the defrauded consumers.

Assistant Attorney General Sarah Alipourian is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

Consumers who believe they have been the victim of consumer fraud can download a complaint form at www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov/consumers or call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline at one of the following numbers:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438
Springfield 1-800-243-0618
Carbondale 1-800-243-0607
Spanish-language Hotline: 1-866-310-8398

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