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**MADIGAN SUES CHICAGO RENTAL LISTING SERVICE
FOR FRAUDULENT PRACTICES**

Firm Charges Membership Fee for Access to Database Containing Fake, Expired Listings

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court against a Chicago-based rental property listing service for allegedly charging consumers a membership fee for access to a property database populated largely with fraudulent or outdated rental listings.

"This company takes advantage of people who are looking for a place to live," Attorney General Madigan said. "Apartment hunters need to be wary of services that ask for fees in exchange for information that may be readily available at other online sites and in local publications."

Madigan's lawsuit alleges that Chicagoland Publishing and its owner, David L. Werner, are violating the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act. The defendants charge \$85-90 for access to their searchable rental property database, chicagolandpublishing.com, but consumers have discovered that the database contains outdated and fraudulent listings - many with disconnected phone numbers or listed without the owners' consent. Some of the listed properties were never actually available for rent in the first place. In addition, according to the complaint, the Web site is periodically inaccessible, and consumers are rarely able to obtain refunds.

According to the complaint, Chicagoland Publishing publishes ads for rental properties in Chicago area newspapers. When consumers call the phone number posted in the rental listing, they reach the Chicagoland offices, instead of an actual rental property owner. Chicagoland allegedly convinces the callers to visit the company's offices at 11702 S. Western Ave. and persuades them to pay the "membership fee" for 90-day access to the company database. Chicagoland promises that it updates its listings seven days a week and guarantees members they will find a new home within 90 days.

Madigan's suit asks the court to enter a permanent injunction barring the defendants from doing business in Illinois. The lawsuit also asks the court to order the defendants to pay restitution for consumers, civil penalties of \$50,000 for violating the Consumer Fraud Act, and an additional \$50,000 for each violation committed with the intent to defraud.

Assistant Attorney General Joshua Orenstein is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

To file a complaint with Madigan's office, consumers can download a consumer complaint form from the Attorney General's Web site at www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov or call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Hotline at:

Chicago Consumer Fraud Hotline: 1-800-386-5438

Springfield Consumer Fraud Hotline: 1-800-243-0618

Carbondale Consumer Fraud Hotline: 1-800-243-0607

Spanish Language Hotline: 1-866-310-8398

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