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February 8, 2011

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN SUES COOK COUNTY HOME REPAIR CONTRACTORS OVER PHONY REPAIR GUARANTEES

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit against two Chicago area home repair contractors who solicited thousands of dollars in work under the false promise that repair service was guaranteed for a lifetime.

Madigan's lawsuit, filed in Cook County Circuit Court, alleges Frank E. Edelman and Lee Sobczak, both of La Grange Park, solicited consumers through deceptive advertisements in newspapers and on company websites that mislead consumers into believing they guaranteed certain repairs for life.

The lawsuit alleges the defendants operated Concrete Charlie Inc., Concrete Repair Center, Inc., and Ostarr Corporation of America, based in LaGrange, and lured consumers into contracts under this false premise violating the state's Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act and the Home Repair and Remodeling Act. Lifetime guarantees were made verbally or included in written work orders signed by the defendants and consumers.

Edelman and Sobczak even gave consumers certificates to give the appearance their work was guaranteed, but the defendants never honored them and regularly avoided consumers who requested repairs through the lifetime guarantee. Consumers in Cook, DuPage and Iroquois counties reported to Madigan's office losses totaling more than \$27,700 due to fraudulent contracts with the defendants.

"Home repair fraud is consistently among the top complaints my office receives each year. Time and again, we hear from consumers who were scammed out of thousands of dollars by an unscrupulous contractor trying to make a quick profit without completing the work they promised," Attorney General Madigan said. "This lawsuit should serve as a reminder to homeowners that they should be extremely cautious when hiring a repair service. Ask for estimates from several companies, and always check their references."

Madigan's lawsuit asks the court to prohibit the defendants from working in the home repair trade in Illinois. The suit seeks to cancel all pending contracts with the defendants and obtain restitution for affected consumers. The lawsuit also seeks to impose on Edelman and Sobczak a civil penalty of \$50,000, additional penalties of \$50,000 for each violation found to be committed with the intent to defraud, as well as \$10,000 per violation found to be committed against a person 65 years or older.

Tips for finding a reputable contractor are available at the Attorney General's website, www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov, or by calling the Madigan's Consumer Fraud Hotline:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438
Springfield 1-800-243-0618
Carbondale 1-800-243-0607

Assistant Attorney General Vivian Velasco Paz is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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