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## MADIGAN SUES COMPANY FOR LONG DISTANCE PHONE SCAM

### *Attorney General Says Delaware Company Targeted Spanish Speakers, Added Costly Long-Distance Service Without Authorization*

**Chicago** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit against a telecommunications company alleging it scammed Illinois residents by billing them for costly long-distance service they never authorized.

Madigan filed the lawsuit earlier today in Sangamon County against Optic Internet Protocol, a Delaware corporation, and its president Gregory Allpow, of Georgia.

In her lawsuit, Madigan alleges that the company billed Illinois residents by falsifying their authorization for the long-distance service. Madigan's lawsuit alleges that Optic Internet Protocol targeted Spanish speakers or consumers with names that appeared to be of Hispanic descent. Seventeen consumers throughout Illinois filed complaints with Madigan's office after learning of the scam. Most consumers reported that the first they learned of the unauthorized charges was upon receiving their latest monthly phone bill with a new – and in some cases more expensive – long-distance carrier.

Both state and federal law requires a company to obtain authorization from a consumer before making a switch in service and to verify their authorization of the switch. To further the scam, Madigan alleges the company made fraudulent audio recordings that appear to record a consumer's consent over the phone for the service switch. In some cases, Madigan alleged, the voice on the recording was not the consumer's or the name on the recording did not match the consumer's name.

"Scammers are betting that phone customers won't read their bills," Madigan said. "That's why it's critical that you carefully review your monthly phone bill to avoid falling victim to slamming schemes."

The Attorney General's lawsuit asks the court to pay restitution to consumers targeted by the scam and to ban the defendants from operating in the telecommunications industry in Illinois. The lawsuit also seeks to impose civil penalties on the defendants based on violations of the Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, including violations that occurred against seniors 65 or older.

Assistant Attorney General Philip Heimlich is handling the case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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