

STATE OF MICHIGAN



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 2, 2015

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Schuette Releases Top Ten Michigan Consumer Complaints List

Highlights AG Consumer Protection Team's Multimillion Recovery for Taxpayers, Outlines Emerging Threats to Consumers in 2015

LANSING – Attorney General Bill Schuette today marked National Consumer Protection week by releasing his annual list of the Top Ten Consumer Complaints in Michigan and highlighting his Department's free educational resources. Schuette's Top Ten List is compiled by analyzing the more than 10,500 written complaints filed with the Attorney General's Consumer Protection team in 2014. Schuette's Consumer Protection team also recovered nearly \$2 million in consumer refunds and forgiven debts and more than \$4.2 million in State recoveries in 2014.

"Consumer protection isn't just one program," said Schuette. "It's a philosophy that guides everything we do. We emphasize safe social media use for students and fight to protect seniors from scams and fraud. We also defend consumers by exposing insurance fraud and price fixing, guarding against bogus charities, and prosecuting home foreclosure scams."

Credit and Financial Concerns Top Complaint List

In 2014, Credit and Financial Concerns once again topped the list with the Consumer Protection team receiving 865 complaints on debt collection and credit reporting. Consumers often voice concerns regarding aggressive debt collection tactics used by debt collection agencies. Debt collection scams, or phony debt collectors trying to scare consumers into giving money to pay off fraudulent debts, continues to remain common.

"While debt collectors have the right to contact you on legitimate debts, they never have the right to threaten, intimidate, or harass you," said Schuette.

Schuette's Consumer Alert on [Debt Collection and Debt Collection Scams](#) details prohibited debt collector practices and provides tips on avoiding common debt collection scams and disputing bogus debts.

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Consumer Education Key to Prevention

During National Consumer Protection Week, Schuette's office joins consumer advocacy groups and governmental agencies from across the nation to highlight how individuals and families can protect themselves from abusive practices and scams.

Schuette noted one of the best ways to safeguard citizens from commercial exploitation is by equipping them with the information necessary to avoid becoming the target of a scam. The Top Ten Complaint List is one useful component of this information-sharing effort. By highlighting the most problematic product and service categories, the List encourages consumers to engage in commercial transactions with a heightened level of caution.

Top 10 Consumer Complaint Categories of 2014

1. **Credit and Financial Concerns:** The top complaint category for 2014 held on to the spot that it has had since 2006 generating almost 1,700 complaints in a variety of areas including debt collection, credit repair, payday lending, and mortgage brokering.
2. **Gasoline, Fuel, and Energy:** Rising all the way from number 8 in 2013, propane complaints dominated this category last year. In 2014, Attorney General Schuette secured agreements with two companies relating to their propane prices and helped more than 6,200 customers obtain more than \$600,000 in relief.
3. **Telecommunications, Cable, and Satellite TV:** Maintaining the third spot from the previous year, this category includes complaints involving issues like robocalls, telemarketing, and cable and satellite TV services. These categories made up almost 1,000 of the complaints in 2014.
4. **Retail:** This category also ranked fourth for the second year in a row includes complaints about merchandise quality, warranty, and pricing disputes.
5. **Motor Vehicle and Automobiles:** Rising back to number 5, disputes with used car dealers, automotive repair service complaints, and lemon law violations are included in this category.
6. **Personal Service Providers:** Falling back to number 6, complaints in this category range from dating services and beauty shops to home security and health and fitness organizations.
7. **Internet:** Complaints in this computer-based category numbered more than 600. Included are issues with internet service providers, online auction disputes, and fraudulent e-mail solicitations.
8. **Landlord and Tenant:** Rising one spot to number 8 in 2014, this category made up nearly 500 complaints. A majority of the complaints in this category involved apartment owners and managers.

9. **Health Service Providers:** Also rising one spot from 2013, this category involves complaints about different health service providers like doctors, dentists, and hospitals.
10. **Contractors:** Absent from last year's list and rounding out the top ten are complaints about landscaping services, special trade contractors, and residential building construction services.

Emerging Consumer Threats in 2015

Consistent with the theme that it is important to *prevent* victimization, Schuette takes this opportunity to look ahead and warn consumers about what many predict will be increasing threats in 2015.

Ransomware has been identified as an emerging threat to Michigan consumers in 2015. Ransomware is a type of malware that restricts access to the computer system that it infects, and demands a ransom paid to the creator of the malware in order for the restriction to be removed. For more information, see Attorney General Schuette's [Consumer Alert on Ransomware](#).

The next biggest scam is expected to be through the use of **mobile payment systems**. Mobile payment systems are a relatively new field for both consumers and thieves. The most likely way consumers will be taken advantage of will be by downloading what looks like payment apps to their phones, and ending up with a virus that steals money instead. To protect yourself, only download payment apps that you know are from a trusted source, and remember to know where your phone is, set up strong passwords, and always protect your financial information.

Schuette also advises consumers to be wary of how they use technology when providing personal information. Information can be stolen when provided over unsecured public wireless networks. Never log into your bank or other financial accounts over a public network and never provide personal information in response to unsolicited requests of any kind. Monitor your financial accounts and if you see suspicious transactions, contact your provider. If you feel you have been a victim of a scam, file a complaint with the consumer protection division.

How to File Complaints

Schuette encourages any residents with questions or concerns to contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division toll-free by calling 1-877-765-8388. To file a consumer complaint, Michigan residents can submit an [online complaint](#) through the Attorney General's website or mail a letter explaining the problem and desired resolution to:

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