

# ANNUAL REPORT

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

# 2024 CONSUMER PROTECTION



**DAVE YOST**  
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



The Attorney General's Office  
protects Ohio and its families.

Our actions are driven by their interests,  
guided by the rule of law  
and the relentless pursuit of justice.

We seek to constrain evil and empower good,  
without partisan preference  
or subjective judgment, as defined  
by the law and by the Constitutions  
of the United States and Ohio.



**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



# DAVE YOST

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

Dear Colleagues,

One of the attorney general's foremost responsibilities is protecting Ohio consumers from unfair, deceptive or unconscionable acts or practices. On a daily basis, the Consumer Protection Section of my office protects the unprotected by fighting fraud, advancing fairness in the marketplace and working one-on-one with Ohioans to resolve their complaints.

In 2024, staff members assisted 24,434 consumers who contacted my office for help with identity theft, home-improvement scams, problems obtaining titles to their vehicles and many other issues. On our own and in collaboration with state and federal partners, we won major settlements that yielded real benefits for consumers, and we forced bad actors to comply with the law. Through education and outreach efforts, we taught consumers to protect themselves from scams.

The Robocall Enforcement Unit, which combats fraudsters who bombard Ohioans with illegal calls, hoping to get their hands on unwitting consumers' hard-earned money, elicited more than 8,263 reports of unwanted calls in 2024 — information we're using to stop such fraudulent calls and texts.

Other notable work from the year:

- Our Civil Investigative Unit opened 140 cases, and the Civil Legal Unit filed 33 lawsuits against bad actors, obtaining more than \$50 million in judgments on behalf of the Attorney General's Office.
- Our Economic Crimes Unit identified, investigated and prosecuted scam artists, opening 426 criminal investigative matters. In cooperation with local law enforcement and prosecutors, the unit filed seven indictments and obtained 15 convictions. These cases resulted in more than \$1,131,911 in consumer restitution orders.

We proudly share our accomplishments from 2024 in this annual report, and we pledge to continue doing Big Good on behalf of Ohio consumers.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Yost".

Dave Yost  
Ohio Attorney General

# **REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL UNDER CHAPTER 1345 OF THE OHIO REVISED CODE**

## **A. SCOPE**

Chapter 1345 of the Ohio Revised Code, the Consumer Sales Practices Act (CSPA), gives the state attorney general the duty and enforcement authority to prohibit a supplier from committing an unfair, deceptive or unconscionable act or practice in connection with a consumer transaction. The CSPA is the primary consumer protection statute in Ohio and one of the most comprehensive consumer protection statutes in the nation. Since its adoption in 1972, the law has proved to be a fair and effective regulatory tool, providing protection for consumers and marketplace flexibility for businesses.

Consumer protection in Ohio has expanded through the years, giving the attorney general's Consumer Protection Section the responsibility of enforcing many additional consumer protection laws through civil legal proceedings. The section has concurrent jurisdiction to enforce numerous federal consumer protection statutes. Although no consumer protection statute gives the attorney general original criminal prosecutorial authority, if a local prosecutor declines a referral, the attorney general is authorized to prosecute violations of the Homebuyers' Protection Act, the Telephone Solicitation Sales Act and the Credit Services Organization Act. Additionally, the section's Economic Crimes Unit works proactively with local law enforcement and prosecutors to assist in identifying, investigating and prosecuting consumer fraud of a criminal nature.

To further protect Ohioans from predatory and illegal business practices, the section educates consumers and businesses about Ohio consumer law and offers a complaint resolution process to resolve disputes between consumers and businesses.

The CSPA requires the attorney general to report annually to the governor and the General Assembly about operations related to Chapter 1345 of the Ohio Revised Code and violations of this chapter. Here is a summary of the Consumer Protection Section's 2024 activities.

## **B. ENFORCEMENT**

The attorney general is empowered to investigate CSPA violations and enforce the law. To accomplish this, the Consumer Protection Section has several tools at its disposal. The attorney general may issue a cease-and-desist order to address a supplier's behavior. The attorney general has authority to enter into an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance, a formal out-of-court agreement between the attorney general and the supplier in which the supplier agrees to cease violating the law; to reform business practices; to make appropriate restitution; and, when appropriate, to pay other monetary amounts. Finally, the attorney general can pursue litigation to address possible violations. Some cases are handled as multistate actions in cooperation with other state attorneys general.

The Legal and Investigative Units work together to ensure compliance with Ohio consumer laws. In 2024, the Consumer Protection Section opened 140 civil investigations. It also initiated 33 lawsuits for various unfair, deceptive or unconscionable business practices and obtained 53 judgments and Assurances of Voluntary Compliance totaling more than \$50 million in consumer restitution, civil penalties, costs and other relief.

The following are summaries of the lawsuits, judgments and settlements that occurred in 2024.

## **LAWSUITS**

### **1st Choice Renew, LLC and Aaron Cowans**

*Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24 CV H 09 1000*

Aaron Cowans owns and operates 1st Choice Renew to provide various indoor and outdoor home improvement services, including the repair and replacement of roofs, flooring and decks, and the remodeling of basements, bedrooms and bathrooms. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid the business for services that were either provided in a shoddy, substandard or unworkmanlike manner or not provided at all. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against 1st Choice Renew and Cowans on Sept. 30, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts against both defendants included failure to provide services, performing work in a shoddy and substandard manner, abandoning the worksite after partial performance, and failing to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit included an additional count against Cowans for violation of a prior Consumer Sales Practices Act judgment. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

### **B&L Custom Concrete LLC and Lawrence Hurst**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24 CV 001832*

Lawrence Hurst and his company, B&L Custom Concrete, operate a home improvement business in central Ohio. Consumers reported that Hurst and his company took large deposits from consumers for home improvement projects and failed to deliver the promised work correctly or, in some cases, at all. The Attorney General's Office sued Hurst and his previous company, True 2 Finish, for violations of the Ohio CSPA in 2022. After receiving new consumer complaints that alleged he was again violating Ohio consumer protection laws, the Attorney General's Office filed another lawsuit against Hurst and B&L Custom Concrete on March 4, 2024. The suit alleges violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act, including shoddy workmanship and operating as a supplier without satisfying prior consumer judgments. The case is pending.

### **Barkley Construction LLC and Derek Barkley**

*Marion County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2024CV0070*

Derek Barkley and his business, Barkley Construction, primarily provide home improvement and repair services. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that Barkley and Barkley Construction took money for home improvement goods and services and then failed to deliver the home improvement

goods and services and/or provided shoddy and substandard home improvement services to consumers and then failed to correct such services. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against Barkley and Barkley Construction on Feb. 14, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The complaint requests declaratory and injunctive relief, payment of restitution to consumers, a civil penalty and a prohibition against engaging in consumer transactions. The case is pending.

**Central Tobacco and Stuff, Inc. dba Central Tobacco**

*Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24-CVH-070664*

Central Tobacco and Stuff, Inc. d/b/a Central Tobacco ("Central Tobacco") operates in Delaware, Ohio. After becoming aware that Central Tobacco might be selling unauthorized and illegal vapes, the Attorney General's Office sent Central Tobacco a letter putting it on notice. Further investigation revealed that Central Tobacco continued to offer unauthorized and illegal vapes for sale. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against Central Tobacco on July 9, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, including unfair or deceptive acts and practices, unconscionable acts or practices, exclusions and limitations in advertisements, and unsubstantiated claims in advertising. The lawsuit seeks declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, and civil penalties. The defendant filed a motion to dismiss, which was granted by the court on Oct. 29, 2024. The state appealed the dismissal decision to the Ohio 10<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals, where the appeal is pending.

**Cleveland Custom Homes LLC and Jeffrey Crawford Jr.**

*Lorain County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV211660*

Jeffrey Crawford Jr. owns and operated Cleveland Custom Homes, an Ohio business that primarily provided new home construction additions and remodels. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that they paid the business for services that were not received or that services were performed in a poor or shoddy manner. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against Cleveland Custom Homes and Crawford on Feb. 28, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Construction Service Suppliers Act. The company was not operating at the time of the filing. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, abandoning the worksite after partial performance, failure to pay subcontractors, failure to provide all statutorily-required information in contracts, and requiring excessive down payments in contracts. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Conex Express, LLC, Conex Pro, LLC, and Duane Milby**

*Warren County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV097870*

Duane Milby owns and operated Conex Express and Conex Pro. Milby, through his companies, sold Conex shipping containers. Consumers complained that Milby accepted full payment for the containers, allowed more than eight weeks to elapse, and failed to deliver the paid-for containers. Consumers complained that Milby did not communicate regarding these delays and refused to provide refunds. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against Conex Express, Conex Pro and Duane Milby on Sept. 4, 2024, for unfair and deceptive acts and practices under the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The case seeks declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Curtis Lee Marcum Jr., individually and dba Supreme Home Renovation LLC.**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV0761*

Curtis Lee Marcum Jr. and his business, Supreme Home Renovation, primarily provide home improvement and repair services. Consumers complained to the Attorney General’s Office that Marcum and Supreme Home Renovation took money for home improvement goods and services (the construction of a fence for one consumer and a garage for another consumer) but failed to deliver the goods and services; provided shoddy and substandard home improvement services; and failed to correct such services. The Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against Supreme Home Renovation and Marcum on Jan. 29, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The complaint requests declaratory and injunctive relief, payment of restitution to consumers, a civil penalty and a prohibition against engaging in consumer transactions. The case is pending.

**Decks and Beyond, LLC and Russell Miller**

*Miami County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24-292*

Russel Miller and his business Decks and Beyond, LLC operate a home improvement business. Consumers complained to the Attorney General’s Office that Miller and Decks and Beyond provided shoddy work on their outdoor projects and failed to deliver promised goods and services. The Attorney General’s Office filed suit on July 12, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include unfair or deceptive acts and practices, including performing unworkmanlike services and failing to deliver services. The lawsuit seeks declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Elevate Smoke, LLC dba Elev8 Smoke Shop**

*Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. A2403034*

Elevate Smoke, LLC dba Elev8 Smoke Shop (“Elev8”) has its principal place of business in Cincinnati. After becoming aware that Elev8 may be selling unauthorized and illegal vapes, the Attorney General’s Office sent Elev8 a letter putting it on notice. Further investigation revealed that Elev8 continued to offer unauthorized and illegal vapes for sale. The Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against Elev8 on July 9, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include unfair or deceptive acts and practices, unconscionable acts or practices, exclusions and limitations in advertisements, and unsubstantiated claims in advertising. The lawsuit seeks declaratory judgment, injunctive relief and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Everyday Paving & Sealcoating LLC and Justin Lovell**

*Marion County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2024 CV 099*

Justin Lovell offered home improvement services, specifically driveway repair and paving, in central Ohio through his company Everyday Paving & Sealcoating. Consumers complained to the Attorney General’s Office that Lovell and his company took up-front payments from them for driveway paving projects and then either left the project incomplete or performed the work in a shoddy manner. The Attorney General’s Office filed suit against Lovell and Everyday Paving on March 4, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act, including

performing shoddy and incomplete work and representing that the work carried a warranty that he failed to honor. The case was resolved with a default judgment entry and order on Sept. 3, 2024. The order included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, \$17,954.00 in consumer restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty.

**Exquisite Exteriors, LLC and Zachary Hale**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV007563*

Zachary T. Hale is the sole owner and operator of Exquisite Exteriors, which has been incorporated in Ohio since 2020. Exquisite Exteriors provides general home improvement services — often roof and siding replacements. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid the business for services that were not received or that services were performed in a shoddy and unworkmanlike manner. The Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against Exquisite Exteriors and Hale on Oct. 2, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties.

**First Premier Home Warranty Corp. and Albert Sayegh**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV006513*

First Premier Home Warranty and its owner, Albert Sayegh, market and sell home “warranties” that purport to provide coverage on home systems and appliances. Consumers complained that when a “covered” appliance or system broke down, consumers — following the procedures outlined — would contact the defendants to send a technician to diagnose the problem. Oftentimes, defendants would take days or even weeks to send a technician. Consumers also complained that the coverage was not as represented and that the companies denied coverage based on fine print or only pay a small amount of the cost of the repair or replacement. It was discovered that the defendants were manipulating online reviews and creating false reviews, acting as product users when such was not the case. Additionally, First Premier Home Warranty is not registered to telemarket in Ohio. The Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against First Premier Home Warranty and Sayegh on Aug. 22, 2024, for unfair, deceptive, and unconscionable acts and practices under the Consumer Sales Practices Act and violations of the Telephone Solicitation Sales Act. The case seeks declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Roger G. Gray dba All Around Concrete**

*Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. A2401014*

Roger Gray and his business, All Around Concrete, solicit consumers in southwest Ohio for residential concrete services. In addition to using the name All Round Concrete, Gray also is believed to do business using the names CIN-Concrete or Cincinnati Concrete Company. Consumers reported that Gray persuaded them to pay an initial deposit for their project and then never returned to do the work, giving them the runaround when they followed-up to ask when he would be returning. On March 4, 2024, the Attorney General’s Office filed suit against Gray, individually and doing business as All

Around Concrete. The attorney general’s lawsuit alleges that Gray violated the Consumer Sales Practices Act and its Failure to Deliver Rule. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**In and Out Creations, LLC and Jeffrey Grimes**

*Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24 CV 00587*

Jeffrey Grimes owns and operates In and Out Creations, which does residential home improvements. Consumers complained that they paid for outdoor projects that were never done or only partly done. On July 24, 2024, the Attorney General’s Office filed suit against Grimes and his business, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act for failure to deliver and shoddy workmanship, and violations of the Home Solicitation Sales Act for failing to provide consumers with notice of their right to cancel in three days. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunctions, consumer damages and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Jarrett Enterprises Ltd., Classicmovies.org LLC, and Heather Jarrett, dba Loving the Classics**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV004717*

Heather Jarrett of Westerville operates an online business called Loving the Classics, which sells DVDs of “classic” movies. In 2018, the Attorney General’s Office entered into an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance with the defendants to resolve allegations that they delayed shipments, failed to deliver goods and sold poor quality DVDs. Loving the Classics was allowed to continue operating but allegations of similar activity persisted. The Attorney General’s Office filed a complaint against the defendants on June 14, 2024; at the same time, the office submitted a consent judgment for the court’s consideration. The court entered the consent judgment on June 24, 2024, enjoining the defendants from violating various provisions of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Defendants also agreed to pay \$947.91 in restitution to 10 consumer victims and \$6,000 in civil penalties, with \$3,000.00 suspended.

**Johnson & Johnson**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV004543*

Since 2019, Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Arizona, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Oregon and Washington led a multistate investigation of Johnson & Johnson for marketing practices related to its talc products. Specifically, the states investigated whether J&J misrepresented the safety of its talc products, failed to disclose that asbestos was present in the talc, and failed to disclose that the asbestos in the talc is harmful and may lead to cancer. J&J’s talc products, including Johnson’s Baby Powder and Shower to Shower, were popular for decades. J&J sold more than 600 million units nationwide since 1992, and many millions more in prior decades. These products were marketed primarily to women as a means of absorbing moisture, preventing chafing, and/or preventing odor in the genital region. They were marketed as “safe” and “pure”—despite J&J knowing that it could not ensure the talc mined and used in its powders was free of asbestos. The attorney general and 42 other attorneys general filed a lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson on June 11, 2024, and immediately submitted a negotiated agreed entry and final judgment order to the court, which was entered the same day. The order prohibits the promotion, marketing, manufacture, sale and distribution of talc powder products, such as any talc-

containing baby or body powder products by J&J and its current subsidiaries. J&J stopped selling these products in the United States and Canada in 2020 and globally in 2023, and the injunction will prohibit them from starting again. In addition, under the terms of the order, J&J has agreed to pay a total of \$700 million to the multistate settling states in four payments over three years, with Ohio's share of the payment set at \$27,731,714.51.

**Josh Powers Design and Remodel, LLC and Josh Powers**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24 CV 001826*

Josh Powers owned and operated a high-end design and remodel business known as Josh Powers Design and Remodel. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that they paid for services that were not delivered or were delivered in a shoddy manner, and that the supplier left the project site littered with debris. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on March 4, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, including failure to deliver and shoddy workmanship, and violations of the Home Solicitation Sales Act for failing to give consumers appropriate notice of cancellation. On Aug. 29, 2024, the court granted default judgment and ordered a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, consumer restitution of \$138,117.93 and \$75,000.00 in civil penalties.

**Knight Restorations, LLC and Jeffrey C. Gibson**

*Clark County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24 CV 517*

Jeffrey C. Gibson is the sole owner and operator of Knight Restorations, which has been incorporated in Ohio since 2012. Knight Restorations provides general home improvement services — often roof, siding and window replacements. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid the business for services that were not received or that services were performed in a shoddy and unworkmanlike manner. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on July 9, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Liberty Exterior Design, LLC, Liberty Restoration LLC, and Joshua Basinger**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV006423*

Joshua Basinger owns and operates Liberty Restoration and Liberty Exterior Design, which typically work with insurance companies to complete roofing, gutter and siding work that is subject to consumers' insurance claims. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that they paid the business for services that were not received or performed improperly. The suppliers indicated to consumers that they would refund deposits but never did. The attorney general filed suit against Liberty Restoration, Liberty Exterior Design and Joshua Basinger on Aug. 20, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, misrepresentation as to the status of refunds, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Magic Touch Exteriors, LLC, Joseph Slye and David Harvey**  
*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV006861*

Joseph Slye and David Harvey operate Magic Touch Exteriors, which typically works with insurance companies to complete roofing, gutter and siding work that is subject to consumers' insurance claims. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for services that were not received and that the business never refunded their money. The attorney general filed suit on Sept. 5, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in an incomplete manner and abandoning the worksite, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Marriott International, Inc.**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV007563*

Marriott International is a worldwide hotel company. In 2016, Marriott acquired Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, LLC. During this acquisition, Starwood (unknowingly) had threat actors in its reservation database that exposed the personal information of 131.5 million U.S. hotel guests. Marriott did not discover this until two years after the acquisition. Following this, Marriott also noticed anomalies in its network and, in 2022, confirmed that it also had suffered a data breach — mostly involving the guest loyalty information of 1.8 million U.S. consumers. Both companies had represented to consumers that they employed staunch cybersecurity. The Attorney General's Office filed suit in the Franklin County Common Pleas Court on Oct. 9, 2024, citing violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act centering around the misrepresentations made to consumers regarding Starwood and Marriott's cybersecurity practices; 48 other attorneys general filed similar lawsuits. The parties immediately submitted a consent judgment, which was approved by the court and entered on Oct. 11, 2024. Under the agreement, Marriott agreed to strengthen its data-security practices, provide certain consumer protections, and pay \$52 million to the 49 participating states, including more than \$1.5 million to Ohio.

**MBR, LLC, Ransom Kulasa and Maggie Kulasa**

*Union County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV0227*

Ransom and Maggie Kulasa own and operated MBR, which offered repair and installation services for windows and doors in central Ohio. On Oct. 17, 2024, the Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against the Kulasas and their business, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act for failure to deliver and for performing shoddy, substandard or incomplete work. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunctions, consumer damages and civil penalties. The case is pending.

**Musisca Custom Construction Co., Musisca & Sons Construction Co., LLC, and Augustine A. Musisca**

*Carroll County Court of Common Pleas Case No. 2024 CVH30603*

Augustine A. Musisca owns and operates Musisca Custom Construction and Musisca & Sons Construction in Carroll County, Ohio. The home improvement services he contracts for include home additions/remodels, landscaping, outdoor shed construction, etc. Consumers complained to the Attorney

General's Office that they paid for services that were not fully provided and that the work that was done was substandard. At least one consumer was told that no permit or registration was required for the project, which was false; the supplier, in turn, began work on the property without obtaining the required permits. The Attorney General's Office filed suit against on Oct. 30, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, commencing work without first obtaining a permit, failing to obtain contractor registration, and making false/misleading statements to consumers to their detriment. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The matter is pending.

### **Orrville Tobacco and Vape Shop LLC**

*Wayne County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2024 CVC-H 000327*

After becoming aware that Orrville Tobacco and Vape Shop might be selling unauthorized and illegal vapes, the Attorney General's Office sent the business a letter putting it on notice. Further investigation revealed that Orrville Tobacco continued to offer unauthorized and illegal vapes for sale. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on July 9, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include unfair or deceptive acts and practices, unconscionable acts or practices, exclusions and limitations in advertisements, and unsubstantiated claims in advertising. The lawsuit seeks declaratory judgment, injunctive relief and civil penalties. The case is pending.

### **Publicis Health, LLC**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV000951*

Publicis is a global marketing company headquartered in New York owned by a French parent company, Publicis Groupe S.A. Publicis was Purdue Pharma's primary marketing firm for OxyContin from 2010 to 2018. A multistate investigation determined that Publicis participated in deceptive marketing designed to get patients on higher doses of opioids, including having employees ride along on sales calls, provide sales call training, and critique sales pitches. Publicis helped Purdue develop templates for patient-physician conversations in exam rooms and hospitals and worked with Purdue to illegally market opioids inside Practice Fusion's electronic health records software. Publicis also worked on opioid projects for Johnson & Johnson, McKesson, and Teva Pharmaceuticals. Ohio, as part of the multistate lawsuit, filed suit against Publicis on Feb. 1, 2024. A settlement was negotiated and filed by each participating state, with Ohio's order filed on Feb. 13, 2024. Under the settlement, Publicis has agreed to injunctive terms that includes including the following, 1) not accepting any engagement related to the marketing, promotion, advertising, sale, prescribing, or use of any opioid or other opioid-based Schedule II or Schedule III controlled substance; and 2) producing and providing its opioid related documents to a public document repository. Publicis agreed to pay a total settlement of \$350 million. Of this amount, \$7 million will pay the expenses of the investigation. The remaining balance of the settlement, \$343 million, is allocated to the states using a formula used in other opioid matters. Ohio will receive \$5,000 to reimburse fees and costs incurred in the investigation and \$14,943,498.63 which is to be directed toward remediation of the impact of the opioid epidemic.

**SJ Motorworks LLC and Shane Beers**

*Summit County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV 2024 02 0928*

SJ Motorworks was a used car dealership in Akron owned and operated by Shane Beers. The defendants sold used cars but failed to transfer titles to consumers; this resulted in \$71,687.58 being paid out to consumers through Ohio’s Title Defect Recision (TDR) Fund. The Attorney General’s Office filed suit on Feb. 28, 2024, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and Motor Vehicle Title Act and requesting injunctive relief, declaratory relief, and payment to the TDR fund. The defendants maintained a surety bond in the amount of \$34,317.25, which was awarded to the TDR Fund. On April 22, 2024, the court entered a consent judgment with Beers, which provides for declaratory and injunctive relief and \$37,370.33 to the TDR Fund (the amount owed minus the surety recovery). A \$25,000 civil penalty was suspended provided Beers remains in compliance with the terms of the consent judgment. Under a default judgment on Nov. 7, 2024, SJ Motorworks was ordered to pay the TDR Fund \$40,220.33 and a \$50,000 civil penalty. Both defendants are prohibited from applying for or obtaining an auto dealer or salesperson’s license.

**Stafford Group-3D Technologies LLC dba Premier Turf & Construction and Steve Matheny**

*Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24 CV H 02 0211*

Steve Matheny owned and operated Premier Turf & Construction, which provided interior and exterior home improvement and renovation services. Consumer complained to the Attorney General’s Office that the company failed to deliver any goods or services in some cases, and performed shoddy and minimal work in others. The Attorney General’s Office filed suit on Feb. 23, 2024, alleging deceptive and unfair acts and practices under the Consumer Sales Practices Act, failure to deliver, performing shoddy work, and abandoning the worksite after minimal work, and failing to give consumers appropriate cancellation notices under the Home Solicitation Sales Act. On Sept. 17, 2024 the Court granted Default Judgment and the Order included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, consumer restitution of \$73,810.90 and \$75,000 in civil penalties.

**Storm Pro Elite LLC, James R. Harper and Aaron M. Jones**

*Perry County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24-CV-00082*

Aaron Jones and James Harper operate Storm Pro Elite, a Georgia home improvement company that mainly provides roof and siding replacements. The defendants drove to Ohio from Georgia after a significant storm and solicited consumers at their residences for their insurance proceeds. On May 6, 2024, the Attorney General’s Office filed a lawsuit against Jones, Harper and Storm Pro Elite. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, abandoning the worksite after partial performance, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. Jones was dismissed from the case because he could not be located to be served with the lawsuit. The court granted default judgment on Sept. 11, 2024, which included a declaratory judgment and a permanent injunction. Following a damages hearing, the court entered the final judgment against Storm Pro Elite and Harper on Nov. 7, 2024, where in addition to the previously granted relief, it ordered \$63,449.60 in consumer damages, and a \$25,000 civil penalty.

### **Superior Auto Mart, LLC and Tareq Daoud**

*Clermont County Court of Common Pleas, Case 2024 CVH 1647*

Superior Auto Mart is a used car dealership in Amelia, Ohio, owned by Tareq Daoud. Superior and its owner sold used cars but did not transfer the titles to the consumers; this resulted in \$14,227.30 in payouts from Ohio's Title Defect Recision (TDR) Fund to resolve their complaints. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Nov. 18, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Certificate of Motor Vehicle Title Act. The complaint requests declaratory and injunctive relief, payment to the TDR fund, civil penalties, a prohibition to operate, and court costs. The matter is pending.

### **Superior Concrete & Hardscape Design LLC and Justin Cole Hensley**

*Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV 2024 10 2022*

Justin Cole Hensley operated Superior Concrete & Hardscape Design, a landscaping company based in Independence, Ky., that also did business in southern Ohio. Defendants accepted money from consumers to perform home improvements — mainly asphalt and concrete repair, replacement and installation — but did not carry out the work. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Oct. 10, 2024, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and its Failure to Deliver Rule and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

### **Sylvania Handyman , LLC, and Robert Hoffman**

*Lucas County Court of Common Pleas, Case No.04386*

Robert Hoffman is owner and operator of Sylvania Handyman, a home remodeling and repair company. Sylvania Handyman operates out of Hoffman's residence and primarily conducts sales at consumers' homes. Consumers complained that they paid a 50% deposit in each transaction for the purpose of buying materials, but no materials were ordered and Hoffman never returned to perform the work. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Nov. 6, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include failure to deliver and failure to offer a three day right to cancel. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. The case is pending.

### **Timber Creek Structures and Tim Dotson**

*Trumbull County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2024 CV 01673*

Timber Creek Structures, owned by Tim Dotson, is a northeast-Ohio business that builds custom sheds. Numerous consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that they paid deposits but did not receive the sheds they ordered. Consumers who requested refunds were told that a restocking fee and/or liquidated damages would be assessed, drastically reducing their refunds. When the Attorney General's Office began its investigation, the supplier was behind on more than 100 ordered sheds and blamed the delays on supply chain issues and difficulty in finding workers to build the sheds. Through the course of the investigation the supplier updated the office on a weekly basis about the status of back-ordered sheds and resolved complaints: More than \$500,000 worth of sheds were delivered and none of the consumers had complaints about their quality. Dotson eventually reduced the number of complaints to one or two consumers and promptly communicated when new complaints arrived. On Feb. 7, 2024, the Attorney

General's Office entered into an Assurance of Voluntary Compliance requiring compliance with the Failure to Deliver Rule, prohibiting restocking fees that are unrelated to the actual cost of restocking buildings and sheds, and prohibiting restocking fees when a consumer requests cancellation because of the failure to deliver a shed within eight weeks. The assurance also required reimbursement of investigative and administrative fees to the Attorney General's Office in the amount of \$15,000 over the course of 12 months. While Timber Creek was current on payments, they continued to garner significant consumer complaints for failure to deliver. As a result, on Oct. 1, 2024, the Attorney General's Office filed suit against Timber Creek and Tim Dotson alleging failure to deliver, unfair contract language, unfair restocking fees, poor customer service, failure to provide refunds in a timely manner, and violating the Assurance of Voluntary Compliance. The Attorney General's Office requested that the court appoint a receiver to bring the business into compliance and that the court issue a declaratory judgment, issue a permanent injunction, impose civil penalties for each violation of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and order the defendants to reimburse all consumers found to have been damaged by unlawful violations, along with paying plaintiffs' costs and court costs. The case is pending.

**Veritas Home Refinishing LLC and Charles Jones**

*Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV24 993771*

Charles Jones and his business, Veritas Home Refinishing, primarily provide home improvement and repair services, including disaster recovery repairs, additions and home remodeling. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that Jones and Veritas took money but failed to deliver the goods and services or, in some cases, performed shoddy and substandard work and then failed to correct such services. The Attorney General's Office filed suit against Jones and Veritas Home Refinishing on March 4, 2024, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The complaint requests declaratory and injunctive relief, payment of restitution to consumers, a civil penalty and a prohibition against engaging in consumer transactions. A default judgment was obtained on Oct. 18, 2024, ordering the defendants to pay \$187,351.91 for consumer restitution and \$125,000 in civil penalties. The default judgment also included a declaratory judgment and injunctive relief.

**Tennielle Young, dba Tracy's Collections LLC**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CV008572*

Tennielle Young ran an online clothing sales company called Tracy's Collections. She took orders from consumers but failed to deliver their purchases, resulting in at least \$2,980 in damages. Young has repeatedly violated Ohio's consumer protection laws; she has continuously run her business under different names since the Attorney General's Office first took action against her a few years ago for committing similar violations while running the company B Younique Boutique. The office filed a new lawsuit against her on Nov. 7, 2024, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, including failing to deliver promised goods, misrepresenting the status of consumers' orders and refunds, providing consumers with inadequate and unfair customer service, and violating a previous court injunction against violating the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The suit seeks injunctive relief, restitution for the consumers she harmed, and civil penalties. The case is pending.

## **OTHER JUDGMENTS OR SETTLEMENTS**

### **614 Custom Homes, Inc. and Mark Koval**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CV002330*

Mark Koval owned and operated 614 Custom Homes, an Ohio corporation that primarily provided home construction additions and remodels. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for services that were not received or that services were performed in a poor or shoddy manner. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on April 4, 2023, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, the Home Solicitation Sales Act and the Home Construction Service Suppliers Act. Counts included failure to deliver, performing work in a shoddy manner, abandoning the worksite after partial performance, failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights, failure to provide all statutorily-required information in contracts, and requiring excessive down payments in contracts. A default judgment was entered on Dec. 15, 2023. The entry, though, reserved ruling on monetary damages until a live damages hearing was held. A consent judgment on damages with Koval was entered on May 10, 2024. The settlement included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, \$334,373.45 in consumer restitution, and a \$150,000 civil penalty. On May 29, 2024, the court entered a damages order holding 614 Custom Homes jointly and severally liable for the same amounts agreed to by Koval.

### **Affordable Monuments LLC dba Dixon Family Monuments dba Dixon Family Affordable Monuments, Amanda Carl, and Marquan Ivory**

*Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2023CV04631*

Affordable Monuments and its owners Amada Carl and Marquan Ivory operated under the name Dixon Family Monuments and Dixon Family Affordable Monuments and sold cemetery monuments. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for monuments that were never delivered. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Aug. 31, 2023, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts included failure to deliver and failure to register a fictitious business name. On May 17, 2024, the court issued a final judgment entry and order against the defendants, granting all the relief requested by the attorney general. The court also ordered the declaratory and injunctive relief requested by the attorney general and ordered the defendants to pay, jointly and severally, \$15,000 in civil penalties and \$12,272.84 in consumer restitution.

### **B&R Fence & More, LLC and Robert Wood**

*Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2022 CV 05767*

Robert Wood owned and operated B&R Fence & More, a company that repaired, removed and installed fences in Montgomery County. Consumers complained that they paid the business for services that were not completed or not received at all. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Dec. 27, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. On Nov. 22, 2024, after previously granting a default judgment against the defendants on liability only, the court entered a consent judgment with certain declaratory relief, a permanent injunction, \$14,165 in consumer damages, \$10,000 in civil penalties (suspended on conditions), and costs.

**BuySmart Home Improvements, LLC and Christopher Sullivan**

*Lake County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CV001471*

Christopher Sullivan owned and operated BuySmart Home Improvements, a business that primarily replaced roofs. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for roof replacements that were not received. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Oct. 26, 2023, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. On July 3, 2024, the court entered a final judgment ordering the defendants to pay \$6,500 in consumer restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty.

**Clear View Construction, LLC/Ryan Needels**

*Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 22CVH100518*

Ryan Needels owned and operated Clear View Construction, which offered to provide home remodeling and repair services, and build pole barns. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid the business for services that were not provided or that services were performed in a substandard manner. The attorney general's office sued Needels and his company on Oct. 11, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, the Home Construction Service Suppliers Act, and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. The court issued an initial default judgment entry on Feb. 23, 2024, which included a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, \$78,285.15 in consumer restitution, a \$125,000 civil penalty and costs. The court issued a final judgment on April 30, 2024, which included an additional \$477,900.00 in consumer restitution. In total, the court found the defendants jointly and severally liable for a total of \$556,185.15 in consumer restitution and \$125,000 in civil penalties.

**CLE Door Co., LLC, Joshua Robertson, Matthew Petroff and Thomas DiNardi**

*Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV-22-967092*

Joshua Robertson, Matthew Petroff, and Thomas DiNardi owned and operated CLE Door, which installed and repaired garage doors. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office that they paid for new garage doors and installation services that were not provided. The office sued on Aug. 8, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, misrepresentation, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. This case was resolved against CLE Door and Joshua Robertson with a default judgment on Apr. 6, 2023. The order included a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, \$102,843 in consumer restitution, and a \$75,000 civil penalty for which the defendants are jointly and severally liable. The case against DiNardi was resolved with a consent judgment on Feb. 13, 2024. The settlement included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, and a \$5,000 civil penalty suspended on the condition of full compliance with the terms of the settlement. The case against Petroff was resolved on April 2, 2024, with the filing of a consent judgment. The settlement included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, and a \$30,000 civil penalty with \$15,000 suspended on the condition of full compliance with the terms of the settlement and payment plan.

**CLE Masonry LLC, Ohio City Contractors, and Joseph R. Vega**

*Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV 23 987946*

Joseph Vega operated a masonry business in northeast Ohio and used various business names, including CLE Masonry and, more recently, Ohio City Masonry. Consumers complained that they paid for work that was not completed or not even started, or for work that was done in a shoddy manner. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Nov. 2, 2023, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. On July 31, 2024, the court entered a final judgment ordering CLE Masonry to pay \$50,734.44 in consumer restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty, and Ohio City Contractors to pay \$31,228.00 in consumer restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty. The case against Vega is pending.

**CrownMe Coil Care LLC dba Arcani Coil Care and Jerricha Richardson dba CrownMe Coil Care LLC dba Arcani Coil Care**

*Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2023 CV 05859*

Jerricha Richardson and her business, CrownMe Coil Care dba Arcani Coil Care formulated, made, and sold hair care products to consumers, mainly via the internet. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for hair care products that were not delivered or that they received inaccurate or mislabeled or spoiled products — and that their money was not refunded. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Nov. 1, 2023, for failure to deliver or provide refunds and for misrepresentations regarding the quality of the product, in violation of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. On May 31, 2024, the court entered a final judgment ordering the defendants to pay \$7,311.53 in consumer restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty. The order also prohibits the defendants from acting as suppliers until the judgment has been satisfied.

**Dad's Home Repair and Bobby Dappert**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 19 CV 003019*

Bobby Dappert operated a home improvement business through his company Dad's Home Repair & Excavation. In 2019, the Attorney General's Office sued for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, including failing to deliver promised services to consumers and performing incomplete or shoddy work. The case was resolved with a consent judgment wherein the defendants would repay \$46,549.54 in restitution to the consumers, pay a civil penalty to the state of \$40,000 (\$30,000 of which was suspended), and refrain from further violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. If the defendants failed to make payments as agreed, they were to stop operating as suppliers until they satisfied the judgment. The defendants ceased making payments in 2020 and continued to work despite the outstanding judgment. The Attorney General's Office filed a motion with the court to enforce the suspended civil penalty included in the consent judgment, as well to declare that the entire monetary amount was immediately due. In 2023, the attorney general filed a motion for contempt against the defendants. On April 22, 2024, the parties entered into an agreed order resolving the issue of contempt. The defendants were declared to be in contempt of the original consent judgment and required to pay the balance due on the original judgment, \$92,811.43 with collection costs and interest included. The agreed order also provides restitution for a new consumer in the amount of \$18,375.89, a new civil penalty of \$5,000, and a \$250 fine to the court. These amounts will be paid via payment plan.

**Cole M. Dockery, dba National Anglers Association and Jakob P. Schoenauer, dba National Anglers Association and Alexandria L. McGlaughlin, dba National Anglers Association and Wyatt R. Puffinberger, dba National Anglers Association**

*Defiance County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 22-CV-45813*

Cole M. Dockery dba National Anglers Association sold fishing lures that he failed to deliver and enrolled customers in a monthly fee-based subscription service that they never agreed to join. When Dockery and the National Anglers Association were removed from payment platforms, the other named defendants opened accounts to accept payments when Dockery could not. Consumers also complained that the defendants failed to provide refunds when requested. The Attorney General's Office sued Dockery, Schoenauer, McGlaughlin and Puffinberger, all dba National Anglers Association, on June 30, 2022, for failure to deliver, unfair and deceptive acts and practices, and unconscionable acts and practices, in violation of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The case was resolved with a consent judgment and final agreed order and entry on Jan. 24, 2024. The settlement included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, \$4,579.37 in consumer restitution, and a \$3,500 civil penalty.

**Bethrand Ekeanyanwu dba Uncle B Auto**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23 CV 5613*

Bethrand Ekeanyanwu does business as Uncle B Auto, a central Ohio used motor vehicle dealership. Consumers complained to the Attorney General's Office about misrepresentations in the sale of motor vehicles, including failure to deliver title, failure to disclose the salvage status of vehicles, and odometer discrepancies. The Attorney General's Office sued Ekeanyanwu on Aug. 8, 2023, for violations under the Consumer Sales Practices Act, Certificate of Motor Vehicles Title Act, and Odometer Rollback and Disclosure Act. A default judgment was obtained against him on Jan. 24, 2024. Ekeanyanwu then appeared and an agreed judgment on damages and civil penalties was filed on Oct. 22, 2024; it included restitution to 91 consumers totaling \$77,198 and \$100,000 in civil penalties, \$50,000 of which were suspended upon full compliance with the agreed judgment.

**Energy Wise Home Improvements, Inc. and Anthony Porrazzo and Scott Cross**

*Mahoning County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2019-CV-02780*

Energy Wise Home Improvements was a Mahoning County home improvement business that operated more than 17 years before abruptly closing in 2018. Complaints flooded into the Attorney General's Office that paid-for services were not delivered, and that work done in some cases was incomplete and shoddy. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Nov. 20, 2018. During the course of this case the matter was stayed by the court during the long pendency of each of the three defendants' Chapter 7 bankruptcies. On Sept. 26, 2024, two separate consent judgments were finalized — one with the Energy Wise Home Improvements and Porrazzo, and one with Cross, in which \$25,000 in civil penalties were imposed upon the defendants and suspended in each of the consent judgments, so long as they comply with the terms of the judgments.

**Family Dollar Stores of Ohio, LLC dba Family Dollar and Dollar Tree, Inc. dba Family Dollar**  
*Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV 2022 11 1851*

The Family Dollar chain is headquartered in Virginia and operates hundreds of stores selling household goods throughout Ohio. Consumers complained that Family Dollar advertises goods for a marked price on shelves and signs in their stores but charges another price (usually higher) at the register. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against Family Dollar and Dollar Tree on Nov. 7, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts include unfair and deceptive acts and practices by representing that a specific price advantage exists when it does not, and bait advertising. The case was resolved with Family Dollar Stores of Ohio with a consent judgment on Feb. 16, 2024. The settlement included compliance provisions such as mandatory training, price checks, and records keeping, declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, \$250,000 to be distributed to foodbanks throughout Ohio, a \$50,000 civil penalty, and \$100,000 for the attorney general's investigative costs.

**Grizzly Buildings, LLC and Jerry Weeks**

*Auglaize County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2023CV20048*

Jerry Weeks owned and operated Grizzly Buildings, which provided home improvement repairs and services, including the installation of pole barns. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for services that were not provided or that services were performed in a substandard manner. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on March 30, 2023, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, the Home Construction Service Suppliers Act, and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. At the time, the Economic Crimes Unit was simultaneously pursuing Weeks on criminal charges. Seven of the eight consumers involved in the civil suit were made whole through restitution of more than \$150,000 in the criminal case, which has been paid in full. The consent judgment filed on Oct. 2, 2024, resolves the allegations involving the only consumer not included in the criminal case, and orders the defendants to pay \$8,868 in restitution. Because Weeks is out of business and already paid all the other consumers in full, civil penalties were not ordered. The consent judgment also included a declaratory judgment, and a permanent injunction.

**Brian Hamilton dba Hamilton Construction**

*Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. A2304047*

Brian Hamilton owned and operated Hamilton Construction, a home improvement contractor in Hamilton County. Consumers complained that the business failed to complete work, did substandard or shoddy work, and refused to provide a refund. The Attorney General's Office sued Sept. 21, 2023, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts include failure to deliver or provide a refund, shoddy work, operating under an unregistered business name, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The lawsuit seeks a declaratory judgment, permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties. Hamilton failed to defend the lawsuit, and on May 14, 2024, the court granted a default judgment. The final judgment grants all relief requested in the complaint, including a declaratory judgment and permanent injunctions. Further, the court found Hamilton liable for \$47,507.50 in consumer damages and \$50,000 in civil penalties.

**Terry D. Haynes dba Queen City Appliance, A Plus Appliance Repair, and Certified Appliance Repair and Amy N. Garcia dba Queen City Appliance, A Plus Appliance Repair, and Certified Appliance Repair**

*Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. A2204687*

Terry D. Haynes and Amy N. Garcia dba Queen City Appliance, A Plus Appliance Repair, and Certified Appliance Repair are home appliance repair suppliers in Hamilton County. None of the names are registered with the Secretary of State's Office. Consumers complained that they paid Haynes and Garcia for goods and services that were not received or for services that turned out to be shoddy or incomplete. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Dec. 22, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts included failure to deliver, shoddy/incomplete work, failure to register with the secretary of state, and engaging in consumer transactions after failing to pay judgment (against defendant Haynes only). On March 25, 2024, the court entered a final judgment that permanently enjoins the defendants from violating the Consumer Sales Practices Act and from engaging in consumer transactions in Ohio until all monetary obligations ordered in this case and prior judgments are satisfied — \$5,474.05 in consumer restitution, and \$25,000 in civil penalties for Haynes, and \$15,000 in civil penalties for Garcia.

**Lonnell Jackson dba Royalty Automotive Group and Melchizedek Dubose dba Royalty Automotive Group**

*Clermont County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 2023CVH846*

Lonnell Jackson and Melchizedek Dubose sold motor vehicles under the name Royalty Automotive Group. Consumers complained that the defendants did not transfer titles to the used cars they bought, resulting in the state's Title Defect Recision (TDR) Fund paying a total of \$34,160.42 to these consumers. The Attorney General's Office sued Jackson and Dubose on Aug. 15, 2023, for unfair and deceptive acts under the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the TDR Law. On Jan. 25, 2024, the court entered a default judgment against Jackson that specified a declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, repayment to the TDR fund in the amount of \$34,175.42 and a civil penalty of \$30,000. Based on evidence obtained during the litigation, Dubose was dismissed from the case.

**Lancaster Auto Sales LLC dba Route 33 Auto Sales and Travis J. Turner**

*Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CV00839*

Travis Turner and his used car dealership, Lancaster Auto Sales LLC dba Route 33 Auto Sales, sold used motor vehicles to consumers but failed to timely transfer titles. The Attorney General's Office paid a \$61,900 claim from the Title Defect Recision (TDR) Fund to resolve four consumers' title issues. The AGO filed suit on Dec. 20, 2023, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Certificate of Motor Vehicle Title Act. The case was resolved with a judgment on the pleadings against both defendants, entered by the court on June 24, 2024. The judgment provided for a declaratory judgment, injunctive relief, repayment to the TDR Fund in the amount of \$80,920, and a civil penalty of \$75,000.

**Joseph Merrill dba Merrill Complete Construction LLC**

*Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. A2203554*

Joseph Merrill owned and operated Merrill Complete Construction, a business soliciting and selling home improvement services, including concrete pouring. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid for services that were performed in a substandard manner. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Sept. 30, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included shoddy work and failure to provide a proper three-day right of rescission. On Feb. 26, 2024 the court granted default judgment and awarded \$45,570 in restitution to four consumers, granted civil penalties in the amount of \$50,000, and permanently enjoined the defendants from further violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and its substantive rules, and enjoined them from engaging in consumer transactions as suppliers in Ohio until all monetary portions of the judgment have been satisfied.

**Midwest Roof Renovation LLC, NewFace Exteriors LLC, and Thomas Grubb**

*Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23 CV 148*

Thomas Grubb operated two home improvement companies, Midwest Roof Renovation and NewFace Exteriors. Consumers complained that the defendants would take deposits from consumers and never deliver the promised work. On March 8, 2023, the Attorney General's Office filed suit alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, shoddy work, operating while having outstanding consumer protection judgments, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. On Jan. 2, 2024, the court granted a default judgment ordering declaratory and injunctive relief, \$83,904.50 in consumer restitution and a \$75,000 civil penalty.

**Modern Smart Home Inc., Select Source Group LLC, Jeffery Asherbranner, and The Independent Savings Plan Company**

*Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CV 22 973217*

Jeffrey Asherbranner operated Modern Smart Home and Select Source Group, Alabama companies that used door-to-door sales representatives to market and sell home security systems under the Modern Smart Home name. Consumers complained that Modern Smart Home ceased monitoring their security systems but were still collecting payments. Nearly all the consumers financed their purchase with a Florida corporation called The Independent Savings Plan Company. The Attorney General's Office filed a lawsuit against Asherbranner and his companies on Dec. 30, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and Home Solicitation Sales Act, including failing to deliver, using a fictitious name not registered in Ohio, failing to remit consumer payments to the alarm monitoring company, failing to include notice of the FTC preservation of consumers' claims and defenses in a consumer credit contract, and failing to provide proper cancellation. The lawsuit also included allegations against The Independent Savings Plan Company for suing a consumer in a distant forum, and an action for declaratory injunction cancelling the finance contracts between consumers and ISPC. On Nov. 7, 2024, the court entered a consent judgment and final agreed order as to Asherbranner, Select Source Group and Modern Smart Home. The judgment requires the defendants to pay seven consumers \$140,000 in restitution and a \$85,000 civil penalty, along with declaratory and injunctive relief; \$75,000 of the civil penalty is

suspended upon compliance with the consent judgment. On Dec. 10, 2024, Independent Savings Plan Company was dismissed in a judgment; however, the dismissal required confirmation from ISPC that certain consumers' accounts were terminated and credit reporting was deleted or updated accordingly.

**Pave Tech Asphalt Services, LLC**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 22CV009080*

Pave Tech Asphalt Services offers driveway repair and installation services in Franklin County. Consumers complained that the business failed to complete work or provide a refund, failed to honor warranties, left work incomplete, and produced shoddy work. The Attorney General's Office sued Pave Tech on Dec. 29, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, shoddy work, abandoning the worksite, failure to honor warranties, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. On June 20, 2024, the court entered a consent judgment and agreed final entry and order. The judgment requires the defendant to pay seven consumers \$49,450 in restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty, along with declaratory and injunctive relief.

**Pelican Investment Holdings, LLC, Dimension Service Corporation, Joseph E. Hill Jr., Ronald D. Eddington Jr., Stacey E. Yim, Vajira Samararatne, MB Holdings Group, Gustav C. Renny, Falcon Endeavors, National Administrative Service Co., LLC., AutoGuard Advantage Corporation, and Haytham H. Elzayn**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CV000047*

Defendants conducted outbound telephone solicitations by contracting with leads generators that initiated calls to telephone lines using artificial or prerecorded voices to deliver a message. The prerecorded voice message failed to properly identify the calling party and deceptively represented that the call was concerning extending the consumer's auto warranty and was affiliated with auto manufacturers when the call was actually about the sale of vehicle service contracts (VSCs). For the phone calls that resulted in the sale of service contracts, the defendants failed to secure a signed written confirmation of a verbal agreement that included all the required information to obtain copies of signed contracts. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Jan. 4, 2023, for violations of the Telephone Solicitation Sales Act and the Consumer Sales Practices Act. The case was resolved against Pelican Holdings, LLC, Gustav Renny, Vajira Samararatne, Ronald Eddington Jr., Joseph Hill Jr., Falcon Endeavors and MB Holdings Group with four separate consent judgments spanning the seven defendants on Oct. 9, 2023. The four settlements included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, and a \$200,000 civil penalty with \$100,000 suspended on the condition of full compliance with the terms of the settlement. The case was resolved against Haytham Elzayn, Dimension Service Corporation, Autoguard Advantage Corporation, and National Administrative Service Co. with four separate consent judgments on Feb. 28, 2024. The settlement included a declaratory judgment, a permanent injunction, and a \$50,000 civil penalty with \$30,000 suspended on the condition of full compliance with the terms of the settlement. On May 22, 2024, the court award granted a default judgment against the remaining defendant, Stacey Yim, ordering declaratory and injunctive relief and a civil penalty to be determined at a damages hearing. On July 10, 2024, the court entered its final judgment, ordering Yim to pay a \$50,000 civil penalty.

**Peter Ristich dba Central One Paving and Teneilla Stults dba Central One Paving**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CV000997*

Peter Ristich and Teneilla Stults dba Central One Paving offer driveway repair and installation services in Franklin County. Consumers complained that the business failed to complete work or provide a refund, left work incomplete, and produced shoddy work. The Attorney General’s Office filed suit on Feb. 14, 2023, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, shoddy work, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The defendants failed to answer the lawsuit and the court granted a default judgment. On Aug. 9, 2024, the court entered a final judgment entry and order against both defendants, which included a declaratory judgment and a permanent injunction. Additionally, the defendants were ordered to pay \$69,550 in consumer damages (jointly and severally) and \$100,000 in civil penalties (\$50,000 per defendant).

**Rite-On Roofing and Siding LLC and Michael Windle**

*Lucas County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. G-4801-CI-020230 1547-000*

Michael Windle owned and operated Rite-On Roofing and Siding. The Attorney General’s Office received numerous complaints from consumers who paid deposits to Rite-On but received no goods or services. The AGO filed suit on Feb. 13, 2023, for failure to deliver in violation of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. On Jan. 25, 2024, the court granted default judgment and awarded \$137,175 in restitution to 23 consumers, granted civil penalties in the amount of \$150,000, and permanently enjoined the defendants from further violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and from engaging in consumer transactions as suppliers in Ohio until all monetary portions of the judgment have been satisfied. While the civil case was active, Windle also was criminally charged with and convicted of multiple counts of felony theft in three separate cases. He was sentenced to a total of 99 months in prison.

**Anthony Ryan, individually, dba Ryan Roofing & Home Improvements, Ltd. and Ryan Roofing & Home Improvements, Ltd.**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CV008028*

Anthony Ryan operated his business under the name Ryan Roofing & Home Improvements — a registered business in Ohio since May 31, 2012. Consumers complained that they paid Ryan and his business to carry out the contracted roofing jobs but that the work was never done. The Attorney General’s Office filed suit on Nov. 9, 2023, alleging violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. On April 19, 2024, the court granted default judgment and awarded \$60,011.96 in restitution to five consumers, granted civil penalties in the amount of \$50,000, and permanently enjoined the defendants from further violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act, and from engaging in consumer transactions as suppliers in Ohio until all monetary portions of the judgment have been satisfied.

**S Automotive Ltd. and Simon Nwaru Jr.**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23 CV 0951*

Simon Nwaru Jr. owns and operates S Automotive, a central Ohio used motor vehicle dealership. Consumers complained to the attorney general about failure to deliver title, misrepresentation and odometer discrepancies. The Attorney General's Office sued on Feb. 13, 2023, for violations under the Consumer Sales Practices Act, Title Defect Recision (TDR) Fund, and Odometer Rollback and Disclosure Act. A default judgment was granted April 28, 2023. The final entry was filed on Sept. 11, 2024. The final entry included injunctive and declaratory relief, restitution totaling \$545,314.86 to 335 consumers who were victims of odometer fraud, restitution totaling \$8,299.50 to 11 consumers who were not notified that they had purchased rebuilt salvage vehicles, payment of \$17,603 to reimburse the TDR Fund and \$250,000 in civil penalties for a total judgment award of \$821,217.36. Defendants were also prohibited from operating as a motor vehicle dealer or salesperson.

**Tasteful Occasion, LLC, Kool Daddy's BBQ, LLC, and Michael Morales**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 22 CV 009010*

Michael Morales owned and operated Tasteful Occasion and Kool Daddy's BBQ. Both operated out of Franklin County to provide catering services. Consumers complained to the attorney general that they paid the businesses for services that were either provided in an inadequate manner or not provided at all. The Attorney General's Office filed suit on Dec. 27, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act. Counts included failure to provide services, inadequate services, and failure to provide refunds. On May 1, 2024, the court granted default judgment and awarded \$10,470.63 in restitution to four consumers, granted civil penalties in the amount of \$20,000, and permanently enjoined defendants from further violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act.

**Tri County Asphalt, LLC**

*Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 22CV009081*

Tri County Asphalt is a limited liability company registered in Ohio offering driveway repair and installation services in Franklin County. Consumers complained that Tri County failed to complete work or provide a refund, failed to honor warranties, left work incomplete, and produced shoddy work. The Attorney General's Office sued on Dec. 29, 2022, for violations of the Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. Counts included failure to deliver, shoddy work, abandoning the worksite, failure to honor warranties, and failure to provide proper notice of cancellation rights. The court entered a consent judgment between the parties on Sept. 23, 2024, requiring the defendant to pay \$47,329.25 in consumer restitution and a \$25,000 civil penalty, along with declaratory and injunctive relief.

## **ASSURANCES OF VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE**

### **Baron App, Inc., dba Cameo**

On July 18, 2024, Ohio entered into a 30-state settlement with Baron App, dba Cameo. Cameo offers a platform for celebrities to create personalized video “shoutouts” — such as birthday or congratulatory messages — for fees that range from \$50 to \$2,500, depending on the celebrity. The settlement resolves a multistate investigation relating to scams and unscrupulous businesses that were using these celebrity “shoutout” videos to serve as endorsements of a business, with no indication that the videos were paid advertisements and without the appropriate legal disclosures. As part of the settlement, Cameo agreed to establish and maintain programs and policies to help ensure that its users comply with all applicable state and federal laws, including the Federal Trade Commission’s Endorsement Guides. It also provided for a \$600,000 payment, with \$500,000 suspended, based on Cameo’s current financial status; the unsuspended \$100,000 was split among the executive committee states, which does not include Ohio. The effective date for the settlement was Aug. 1, 2024.

### **Cellco Partnership dba Verizon Wireless/TracFone Wireless, Inc.**

#### **AT&T Mobility, LLC/Cricket Wireless, LLC**

#### **T-Mobile USA, Inc.**

The Attorney General’s Office entered in three separate assurances of voluntary compliance on May 6 and 7, 2024 to resolve investigations into the deceptive and misleading advertising practices of AT&T Mobility, LLC, Cricket Wireless, LLC, T-Mobile USA, Inc., Cellco Partnership, dba Verizon Wireless, and TracFone Wireless, Inc. (collectively, the “wireless carriers”), which resolves the state attorneys general investigations into the wireless carriers’ deceptive and misleading advertising practices. The assurance terms are a key component of the settlements, which address the common misleading advertising practices of the wireless carriers, including misrepresentations concerning: (1) “unlimited” data advertisements, which failed to clearly and conspicuously disclose material limitations; (2) “free” phone offers, which failed to clearly and conspicuously disclose material conditions; (3) monetary incentives to “switch” wireless networks, which failed to clearly and conspicuously disclose how the monetary incentives would be provided; and (4) wireless carrier plan comparisons, which failed to disclose material differences. The settlements were the resolution of a multistate lawsuit and were joined by 49 other jurisdictions. The wireless carriers will pay \$10,250,000 to the settling jurisdictions, with Ohio receiving just over \$478,000.

### **Champion Opco, LLC dba Champion Windows**

Ohio entered into a settlement with Champion Opco, LLC dba Champion Windows. Champion Windows offers the design, installation, and replacement of windows, sunrooms, vinyl siding and doors. Ohio received consumer complaints regarding the following: significant delays in delivery of promised goods, requiring consumers to pay a one-sided liquidated damages clause even when the delays were solely the fault of supplier, delays in responding to consumers, and failure to accurately measure window and door openings. As part of the settlement, Champion Windows agreed to only include a liquidated damages clause in its consumer contracts that directly relate to actual costs or expenses incurred by supplier and to continue to update its training program for employees and contractors so they can accurately measure window and door openings. Champion Windows agreed to pay \$25,000 to the state as reimbursement for investigative and administrative costs. The effective date of this assurance of voluntary compliance was Nov. 19, 2024.

### **Safe Home Security, Inc.**

Safe Home Security is a Connecticut-based home alarm company. The Attorney General's Office investigated Safe Home Security's door-to-door sales and customer service practices in Ohio. To resolve the attorney general's concern, the parties entered into an assurance of voluntary compliance effective on July 8, 2024; it included a number of injunctive terms designed to bring Safe Home Security's practices into compliance with the Ohio Consumer Sales Practices Act and the Home Solicitation Sales Act. As part of the settlement, Safe Home Security paid \$45,000 to the attorney general's Consumer Protection Section for costs and was required to resolve any future consumer complaints filed with the Attorney General's Office.

### **Tiffany Caudill Creative Studios, LLC and Tiffany Caudill**

Tiffany Caudill operated a photography business called Tiffany Caudill Creative Studio, LLC, where she offered photography services to clients, including wedding photography. In September 2022, Caudill posted to social media that she would no longer be able to provide photography services because her photography equipment had been stolen. Consumers who had contracted and paid for future photography services requested refunds, which Caudill did not provide. On May 6, 2024, the Attorney General's Office entered into an assurance of voluntary compliance with Caudill and her company wherein they would comply with the Consumer Sales Practices Act in any future businesses and repay the \$11,674 in outstanding refunds to the consumers.

### **Timber Creek Structures and Timber Creek Structures OH WV PA LLC**

Timber Creek Structures is an Ohio business that builds custom sheds. The Attorney General's Office received numerous complaints from consumers that they paid deposits but did not receive the sheds they ordered. Consumers who requested refunds were told that a restocking fee and/or liquidated damages would be assessed, drastically reducing their anticipated refunds. When the AGO investigation began, the supplier was behind on more than 100 ordered sheds and blamed the delays on supply chain issues and difficulty in finding workers to build the sheds. Through the course of the investigation, the supplier consistently maintained communication with the AGO, providing weekly updates about the status of the back-ordered sheds and resolved complaints; more than \$500,000 worth of sheds were delivered during the investigation and none of the consumers had complaints about their quality. The supplier eventually reduced the number of complaints to one or two consumers and has been in prompt communication when a new complaint arrives. On Feb. 7, 2024, the Attorney General's Office entered into an assurance of voluntary compliance that required compliance with the Failure to Deliver Rule, prohibits the supplier from asserting restocking fees that are unrelated to the actual cost of restocking buildings and sheds, and prohibits the charging of restocking fees when a consumer requests cancellation because of the supplier's failure to deliver a shed within eight weeks. The assurance of voluntary compliance also required reimbursement of investigative and administrative fees in the amount of \$15,000 over the course of 12 months. Timber Creek Structures failed to comply with this Assurance of Voluntary Compliance, which resulted in the Attorney General's Office filing a lawsuit against Timber Creek Structures and its owner, Tim Dotson (see page 11).

## **C. ECONOMIC CRIMES UNIT**

The Consumer Protection Section's Economic Crimes Unit works with county prosecutors and local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute economic crime. Thanks to that extensive cooperation, the unit has successfully indicted large- and small-scale criminals. In 2024, the unit and local partners obtained seven indictments and 15 convictions.

The following are cases that the Economic Crimes Unit (ECU) assisted with in 2024.

### ***State of Ohio v. Anthony Ryan, Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CRI090524***

Anthony Ryan, doing business as Ryan Roofing and Home Improvements, accepted approximately \$70,300 from seven Ohio customers for home improvement services. The investigation determined that Ryan failed to perform the agreed upon work or issue any refunds. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor, and in September 2024, Ryan was indicted by a Delaware County grand jury on felony counts of engaging in a pattern of corrupt activities and theft. The case is pending.

### ***State of Ohio v. Anthony Lange, Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. B2405621***

Anthony Lange, owner of Street Food Ventures, LLC, operated a business specializing in customizing trucks and trailers. Lange was paid approximately \$264,000 by seven Ohio customers, failed to provide the agreed upon services and failed to offer refunds. The ECU assisted local law enforcement with the investigation. Lange was indicted on 15 felony counts. The Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office is handling the prosecution. The case is pending.

### ***State of Ohio v. Roger Gray, Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. B2403256***

Roger Gray, doing business as All Around Concrete, allegedly accepted more than \$56,000 from 10 Hamilton County customers for concrete and home improvement projects. The investigation determined that Gray failed to perform the agreed upon services and failed to offer any refunds. The ECU investigated the matter and was appointed special prosecutor. A Hamilton County grand jury indicted Gray on three felony counts. The case is pending.

### ***State of Ohio v. Brenda Free, Ross County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 24CR000271***

Brenda Free was the executive officer for the Scioto Valley Association of Realtors. Free allegedly embezzled more than \$50,000 of the association's funds. A Ross County grand jury indicted her on two felony counts. ECU was appointed special prosecutor. The case is pending.

### ***State of Ohio v. Clifford Newman, Richland County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CR20240834***

Clifford Newman, a self-employed handyman, allegedly accepted \$5,000 from an Ohio client for roof repairs and failed to provide any services. The ECU investigated the matter and was appointed special prosecutor. In January 2024, Newman was indicted for theft. He subsequently pleaded guilty to misdemeanor theft and was ordered to pay \$5,000 in restitution and fined \$1,000.

***State of Ohio v. Ming Xue, Coshocton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No.23CR0100***

In January 2024, Ming Xue was indicted on 309 felony counts for his role in a major gift-card counterfeiting operation that targeted Coshocton-area consumers. Ming was arrested at a Walmart in Coshocton after deputies apprehended him for hiding unloaded gift cards on his body. Further investigation uncovered hundreds of other gift cards in Xue's vehicle, which eventually revealed a broader scheme. Xue was found to have stolen unloaded gift cards, altered them, and then returned them to the display racks at various stores in the area. When consumers bought the altered gift cards and money was loaded on them, Xue and his associates stole the money. The case was prosecuted by the Coshocton County Prosecutor's Office with assistance from the ECU. In May 2024, Ming pleaded guilty to engaging in a pattern of corrupt activities and was sentenced to six years in prison.

***U.S. v. Knipp Builders, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Case No. 1:24-CR-0067***

Knipp Builders was developed as a suspect stemming from a 2020 fraud investigation into the former executive director of the Clermont Metropolitan Housing Authority (CHMA). The investigation determined that Knipp Builders improperly provided \$18,746 in home improvement to the personal residence of the CHMA executive director. ECU investigated the case along with the Office of the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio prosecuted the case. In November 2024, Knipp Builders was charged, convicted, and sentenced on one misdemeanor count of making a false report or statement to HUD. Knipp Builders was placed on probation for two years. As part of the sentence, the defendant was ordered to pay \$18,746 in restitution and pay a \$20,000 fine.

***State of Ohio v. Samuel Zawosky, Warren County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CR040824***

In July 2023, Samuel Zawosky, owner of Equality Contractors 1, was indicted by a Warren County grand jury on six felony counts. The indictment alleged that three homeowners who contracted with Zawosky for home-improvement services paid him roughly \$71,000. After receiving the money, Zawosky never delivered any materials or did any of the work, nor did he provide refunds. Zawosky pleaded guilty to felony theft and was subsequently sentenced in June 2024 to five years of community control and ordered to pay \$42,621 in restitution. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor.

***State of Ohio v. Michael Foster, Clinton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CRI20235045***

A Clinton County grand jury indicted Michael Foster on three felony charges stemming from a scheme to defraud an elderly couple of more than \$50,500. Foster was charged with two counts of theft from a person in a protected class and one count of telecommunications fraud. Through his business, 513 Properties, Foster accepted the down payment to build a house for the couple but did not perform any work, deliver any materials or refund any money. The ECU investigated the matter and was appointed special prosecutor. In October 2023, Foster pleaded guilty to theft charges; he was sentenced in January 2024 to two years in prison.

***State of Ohio v. Ryan Needels, Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CRI080488***

In August 2023, Ryan Needels was indicted by a Delaware County grand jury on 51 felony counts, including charges of theft, money laundering, telecommunications fraud and engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity. From June 2021 through October 2022, Needels allegedly received more than \$500,000 from 21 people in nine Ohio counties. Needels, operating under his business Clear View Construction LLC, is accused of luring dozens of victims over social media into paying thousands of dollars from their savings, retirement accounts and small businesses with promises to build pole barns and garages and other home additions. Needels pleaded guilty to 23 felonies and in November 2024 was sentenced to seven-and-a-half years in prison. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor.

***State of Ohio v. Angel Mollett, Ross County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CR000522***

A Ross County woman, Angel L. Mollett, allegedly stole \$2,300 in cash and lottery tickets from her Chillicothe employer. The ECU investigated and reviewed supporting documents and text messages. In November 2023, Mollett was indicted on multiple counts of theft and forgery. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor. In May 2024, Mollett pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years of community control and ordered to pay restitution.

***State of Ohio v. Kodie St. Cin, Ross County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CR2023-000526***

Ross County resident Kodie St. Cin allegedly embezzled \$13,000 from her former employer. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor, and in November 2023 St. Cin was indicted on theft and forgery charges. In May 2024, the defendant pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years of community control. St. Cin was ordered to pay \$9,592 in restitution.

***State of Ohio v. Sharri Holbrook, Ross County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CR2023-000517***

In November 2023, Sharri Holbrook was indicted on charges of identity fraud, theft, tampering with evidence and telecommunications fraud. After befriending an elderly Ross County woman, Holbrook allegedly stole more than \$40,000 from her. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor. Holbrook pleaded guilty and, was sentenced in July 2024 to four years in prison and ordered to pay \$46,980 in restitution.

***State of Ohio v. Tracy Bettendorf, Ross County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 20CR000279***

***State of Ohio v. Carey Ackley, Ross County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 20CR000282***

Tracy Bettendorf and Carey Ackley operated a business in Chillicothe called Midwest Motoplex specializing in the sale and service of motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and off-road utility vehicles. Midwest Motoplex sold fraudulent warranties to its customers, failed to provide titles for vehicles that it sold, intentionally sold used vehicles as new, and failed to remit \$649,369 in collected sales tax to the state of Ohio. Ackley also intentionally defrauded lenders in obtaining \$402,951 in business loans by submitting fraudulent documents. Ackley and Bettendorf were indicted in July 2020 and pleaded guilty to charges in December 2023. In January 2024, Bettendorf was sentenced to 59 months in prison and ordered to pay \$402,951 in restitution. In February 2024, Ackley was sentenced to 59 months in prison and ordered to pay \$402,951 in restitution. The ECU investigated the case, which was prosecuted by the attorney general's Special Prosecutions Section.

***United States of America v. Timothy Holland, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Case No. 1:23-cr-104***

Clermont Metropolitan Housing Authority received more than \$5.9 million in annual federal funds in both 2018 and 2019 to operate and maintain public housing units as well as provide housing assistance to low-income families and individuals. In November 2023, Timothy Holland, executive director of the Clermont Metropolitan Housing Authority from 2012 to 2019, was indicted for allegedly stealing tens of thousands of dollars intended to assist low-income residents of Clermont County. Holland allegedly stole at least \$70,440 from the agency for his personal use during those years. He is charged with two counts of federal program theft, punishable by up to 10 years in prison. The ECU investigated the case along with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Ohio is prosecuting the case. Holland pleaded guilty in 2024 and is awaiting sentencing.

***State of Ohio v. Johnathon Conwell, Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23CR253***

Johnathon Conwell, doing business as J&J Asphalt & Sealcoating, was suspected of accepting a total of \$15,200 from four Ohio customers and failing to provide services. The ECU conducted interviews, requested a cellphone forensic exam, and issued multiple subpoenas. In May 2023, Conwell was indicted on numerous felony theft and telecommunications fraud charges. In April 2024, Conwell pleaded guilty and was sentenced to five years of community control and ordered to pay \$15,250 in restitution. The Fairfield County Prosecutor's Office prosecuted the case.

***State of Ohio v. Gillian Pace, Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. B2204182***

In October 2022, a Hamilton County grand jury indicted business owner Gillian Pace. Pace collected payments for flowers and other event materials for weddings and then failed to deliver any goods or services, failed to reserve rentals for weddings as promised, and failed to refund any money. From August 2019 through July 2021, Pace allegedly accepted more than \$30,400 from 27 customers. Pace's charges include engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, theft and telecommunications fraud. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor. In March 2024, Pace pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to engage in a pattern of corrupt activity. She was sentenced to five years of community control.

***State of Ohio v. David Hurst, Clinton County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. CR20235145***

David Hurst, doing business as Dave Hurst Electric Services, accepted approximately \$10,200 from two Ohio consumers for home improvement services. Hurst failed to provide the agreed upon services or issue any refunds. The ECU was appointed special prosecutor. In June 2024, Hurst pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor theft charges. He was ordered to pay \$10,200 in restitution and allowed to enter the diversion program.

## **D. CONSUMER ASSISTANCE UNIT**

The Consumer Assistance Unit includes complaint specialists, the Identity Theft Unit, and Title Defect Recision (TDR) Fund personnel. The staff serves consumers, small businesses and nonprofits that file complaints against various businesses or who believe they have been the victims of identity theft.

Complaint specialists contact the businesses to provide informal dispute resolution and, if necessary, to bring the businesses into compliance with Ohio law. The specialists have concentrated areas of expertise. For instance, TDR staff members administer the TDR Fund and help motor vehicle purchasers obtain automobile titles and temporary tags.

In 2024, the Consumer Assistance Unit continued to help small businesses and nonprofits resolve their consumer-related disputes and enhance the office's ability to monitor the marketplace for unfair and deceptive practices.

Complaint specialists are trained to identify problems, and the consumer complaint information they gather may be referred for further investigation. Specialists make these referrals based on consumer complaint volume, monetary loss, egregiousness, patterns of abuse and other factors. The ability to identify potential violations is vital to the Consumer Protection Section's efforts to protect consumers. Many complaint referrals have led to successful litigation.

In 2024, the Identity Theft Unit received 431 complaints. Because children in the foster-care system may be especially vulnerable to identity theft, Attorney General Dave Yost has maintained a relationship with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to correct errors that are discovered on the credit reports of foster youth. In 2024, the Identity Theft Unit assisted with 44 complaints for minors in foster care.

## **TOP CONSUMER COMPLAINTS REPORTED TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE**

Every year, the Attorney General's Office compiles a list of areas that generate the most consumer complaints. In 2024, the Consumer Protection Section received nearly 24,434 complaints. The top areas were:

1. Motor vehicles
2. Professional services
3. Shopping, food or beverages
4. Home improvement
5. Collections, credit reporting or financial services
6. Utilities, phone, internet or TV service

## **F. EDUCATION UNIT**

The goal of the Education Unit is to inform Ohioans about their rights as consumers and to warn them about scams. The Education Unit conducts consumer protection presentations throughout the state to build collaboration and awareness in the fight against fraud and to help protect Ohioans. In 2024, the Education Unit conducted 252 educational events, reaching 9,756 attendees.



**DAVE YOST**

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

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# CONSUMER PROTECTION

## ANNUAL REPORT

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