

A Message from
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL
LISA MADIGAN



Every day, small business owners face serious challenges, some of which come as an expected, even welcome part of owning or operating a business. All too often, however, small businesses find themselves the victims of fraud and other bad practices, including telemarketing schemes, office supply scams, and telephone service slamming (the switching of telephone service providers without the customer's knowledge or authorization).

As Attorney General, I have made it a priority to protect businesses from fraud, and to assist Illinoisans in confronting some of the most frustrating and unexpected challenges of running a small business.

I invite businesspeople throughout the state to learn more about the services offered by my office, and to take advantage of our programs, which can provide valuable information and assistance.

Through the cooperation of consumers, businesspeople and governmental agencies, including my office, we can work together to ensure fair treatment of business owners and consumers, and to instill integrity in the marketplace in Illinois.

Lisa Madigan
Illinois Attorney General



LISA MADIGAN
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

For more information or to request assistance, please contact the Office of Attorney General Lisa Madigan.

Consumer Fraud Hotlines

Chicago
1-800-386-5438
TTY: 1-800-964-3013

Springfield
1-800-243-0618
TTY: 1-877-844-5461

Carbondale
1-800-243-0607
TTY: 1-877-675-9339

Franchise Bureau
(217) 782-4465
TTY: (217) 785-2771

Health Care Helpline
1-877-305-5145
TTY: 1-800-964-3013

www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov

Protecting

SMALL BUSINESSES



LISA MADIGAN
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL





Several bureaus within the Attorney General's Office provide services that benefit small businesses in Illinois.

Consumer Fraud Bureau

The Consumer Fraud Bureau seeks to protect Illinois consumers and businesses from victimization by fraud, deception and unfair methods of competition. Through the Attorney General's mediation program, the Bureau facilitates resolutions to disputes in which businesses or consumers feel they have been victimized in the marketplace.

Our goal is to break down the barriers that stand in the way of amicable resolutions. Through the mediation program, the parties to a dispute often avoid spending the significant amounts of time and money associated with litigation. As a result, the Attorney General's Office has saved Illinois businesses hundreds of thousands of dollars. Although the Attorney General's mediators are not judges and cannot make factual determinations with respect to a dispute, both businesses and consumers benefit from the mediation program.

Under Illinois law, small businesses are entitled to the same protections against fraud and deception as consumers. If a pattern of fraud is found, the Attorney General can take legal action against the perpetrators on the businesses' behalf.

Franchise Bureau

The Franchise Bureau registers and monitors franchisors and brokers who seek to sell franchises in Illinois. The goal of the Bureau – and the Franchise Disclosure Act it administers – is to provide pre-sale disclosures and protection for prospective franchisees. The Bureau provides information on the Franchise Disclosure Act, rules applicable to the offering of franchises, and business and financial histories of franchisors.

Health Care Bureau

Through mediation, the Health Care Bureau can help business owners and their employees resolve disputes with health insurance companies and health care providers, ensuring that plan participants receive the coverage to which they are entitled.

Types of Fraud that Commonly Affect Businesses

- Office Supply Scams
- Fraudulent Charitable Solicitations
- Collect Call Scams
- Telephone Service "Slamming"
- Phony Billing Schemes

Tips to Protect Your Business

- Assign one person or department to handle sales calls and to approve all purchases of office supplies.
- Instruct employees not to give out information regarding office machines and copiers, especially when responding to telephone solicitations.
- Check out unfamiliar companies and offers before placing an order.
- Keep a list of regularly used vendors as protection against schemers who claim the order is a "renewal."
- When you place an order, ask for written confirmation with all conditions clearly spelled out.
- Immediately notify the supplier in writing of unauthorized shipments or invoices. Clearly state that you did not place an order and will not accept delivery. If the goods have already been delivered, notify the company that you will not pay and that the goods are available for pick-up. If the company claims to have a tape recording of the order, insist on hearing it. If they claim to have an invoice or other documentation, insist on seeing it.