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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

More Than \$11 Million in Refunds Secured for Consumers Affected by Credit Card Scam

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced millions of dollars secured as a result of a joint action brought by Attorney General Moody’s Office and the Federal Trade Commission in refunds for consumers affected by a credit card interest rate reduction scam. In response to a bogus credit card interest rate reduction scheme operated by E.M. Systems & Services, refunds totaling more than \$11 million are being distributed to consumers who lost money in the scam—including hundreds of Floridians victimized by the scheme.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “These fraudsters knowingly exploited the trust of Florida consumers in order to earn a dishonest dollar—through deceptive telemarketing on false promises of debt reduction. I’m proud to work with the Federal Trade Commission to return lost money to hundreds of Floridians victimized by this deceptive telemarketing scam.”

The Florida Attorney General’s Office and the FTC litigated an [action](#) against E.M. Systems and its owners, Steven D. Short and Karissa L. Dyar, among other defendants, alleging that the companies used a variety of phony business names with associated websites, cold-called consumers with credit card debt and falsely promised to save consumers thousands of dollars by reducing credit card interest rates. The defendants charged an up-front fee between \$695 and \$1,495, falsely promising to provide refunds to consumers if interest rates were not lowered.

According to the complaint, the telemarketers identified themselves as card services, credit services, and card member services, or used one of the defendants’ phony business names when contacting consumers. To win consumers’ trust, the defendants claimed to know the amount of consumers’ credit card debt, provided a license or badge number to create a false impression of authority, mentioned the internet domain name of the phony business, and falsely claimed to have a business relationship with consumers’ lenders.

More than 11,000 consumers are receiving full refunds, averaging \$995 each and approximately 812 Florida consumers will receive refund checks totaling more than \$800,000 in refunds to Floridians. Consumers who receive checks should deposit or cash the checks within 90 days, as indicated on the check. Neither the FTC nor the Florida Attorney General's Office ever requires people to pay money or provide account information to cash a refund check.

Consumers who have questions about the redress payments, or who did not receive a payment but believe they are eligible, should contact the refund administrator, Epiq, at (800) 239-6082.

The funds for this refund program come from the FTC’s case against First Data Merchant Services, the company that processed credit card payments for the defendants in this case.

According to the FTC, First Data allegedly ignored repeated warnings from banks, employees and others that the payments processed through this scheme were illegal. First Data agreed to pay \$40 million to settle the FTC's charges. The FTC plans to use the remaining money to provide additional refunds to consumers in two other related cases.

The FTC's [interactive dashboards for refund data](#) provide a state-by-state breakdown of FTC refunds.