

Oregon DOJ cracks down on harassing debt collectors

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. -- Attorney General John Kroger praised legislative leaders and Gov. Ted Kulongoski for approving a new law that will allow the Oregon Department of Justice to crack down on debt collectors who illegally harass Oregonians.

"This important legislation will help us crack down on debt collectors who routinely violate state and federal law," Attorney General Kroger said.

Legislation to reign in debt collectors has failed repeatedly in the past, including the last two legislative sessions. Kroger came into office in January vowing to make the bill a top priority.

Kroger held dozens of one-on-one meetings with legislators in order to refute personally the debt collection lobby's campaign of misinformation that has been so successful in the past.

The new law allows the Department of Justice to sue debt collectors who call in the middle of the night, curse and threaten consumers in violation of the law. The law brings debt collectors under the Unlawful Trade Practices Act.

Since 2001, the number of complaints about debt collectors has repeatedly placed the industry on Department of Justice' Top 10 Consumer Complaint List. In 2008, the Department of Justice received 834 written consumer complaints about debt collection agencies.

"Many Oregon families are already struggling with these challenging economic times," said Senator Suzanne Bonamici (D-NE Washington Co. & NW Multnomah Co.), chair of the Senate Consumer Protection Committee. "They need to know that the state is on their side. This legislation provides that reassurance by giving our Attorney General the authority to go after unscrupulous debt collectors who cross the line."

"It's bad enough to get those constant and harassing phone calls. It's much worse when debt collectors use illegal methods to strike fear and intimidate Oregonians. This bill allows the Attorney General to go after companies who use unethical collection practices," added State Rep. Paul Holvey (D-Eugene), the chair of the House Consumer Protection Committee.

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