



News Release

Attorney General Robert E. Cooper, Jr.

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ATTORNEY GENERAL AND DCA CONTINUE TO COMBAT UNLAWFUL "NOTARIO PUBLICO" ADVERTISEMENTS

Attorney General Bob Cooper, on behalf of Mary Clement, director of the Division of Consumer Affairs filed an agreement and a lawsuit today involving two companies allegedly using misleading advertisements promoting themselves as a "notario publico" in Tennessee.

The Spanish translation of "notary public" is "notario publico," or in the plural "notarios publicos." In many Spanish-speaking countries, a notario publico is a civil-law notary, or an attorney who has been specially appointed to oversee certain common, everyday transactions. As a result, consumers often believe these individuals and the related transactions involve a higher level of trust and accuracy.

Unfortunately, some businesses are targeting Spanish-speaking consumers by advertising themselves as "notarios publicos," when they are merely offering notary public services. A notary public who is not licensed to practice law in Tennessee and advertises services as a notary public are legally required to include in all advertisements the following disclaimer in English and the language used in the ad: "I AM NOT AN ATTORNEY LICENSED TO PRACTICE LAW IN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, AND I MAY NOT GIVE LEGAL ADVICE OR ACCEPT FEES FOR LEGAL ADVICE."

"My office continues to be concerned about misleading advertisements and will remain diligent in our enforcement of the Notaries Public law," Attorney General Cooper said.

The State has entered an agreement with Visa and Immigration Services Assistances, Inc., based in Memphis at 1341 Sycamore View, Suite 404. The business, which advertised in Tennessee without the required disclaimer, has agreed to modify its advertisements to comply with state law and to pay civil penalties and attorneys' fees.

The State additionally filed a lawsuit against Gelsy Cordero, individually and doing business as ABC Linguistics, a sole proprietorship owned and operated by Gelsy Cordero at 118 S. Dixie Avenue #2, Cookeville, Tennessee. The State's lawsuit alleges violations of the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act for advertising as a "notaria publica" and "notario" without the required disclaimer.

Director Clement urges Tennesseans in need of an attorney to confirm the attorney is in good standing and licensed to practice law in the state of Tennessee. "Consumers can contact the Board of Professional Responsibility at (615) 361-7500 or go to the website at <http://www.tbpr.org/> to ensure they are hiring a licensed professional," she said.

To see a copy of the State's filings, go to www.attorneygeneral.state.tn.us and then click on Office Information and Cases of Interest at <http://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/cases/cases.htm>.

Consumers who have complaints about any of the companies sued by the State or other individuals or businesses advertising as a “notario publico” without the required disclaimer or otherwise engaged in unfair or deceptive trade practices should contact the Division of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-342-8385 (toll-free inside Tennessee) or (615) 741-4737. You may also file a complaint on line at <http://tn.gov/consumer/consCompFrm.shtml>.

If you know of an individual or company that may be practicing law without a license, please file a complaint with this Office by downloading a complaint form from <http://www.attorneygeneral.state.tn.us/cpro/upl.htm> and mailing it back to this Office at:

Tennessee Attorney General's Office
Consumer Advocate and Protection Division
Attn: UPL Complaint
P.O. Box 20207
Nashville, TN 37202-0207