



RICHARD CORDRAY OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



SUPPORTING OHIO SMALL BUSINESSES

Just like consumers, small businesses can fall prey to scams and deceptive behavior in the marketplace. The Ohio Attorney General's Office is working to level the playing field for small business by cracking down on fraudulent, unfair and deceptive practices that hold back Ohio's economy.

Some examples of complaints that can prompt the Attorney General's involvement:

- Scams
- Products that are paid for but never delivered
- Shoddy workmanship or services
- Phony invoices
- Misclassification of competitors' workers as contractors rather than employees
- Monopolies or boycotting by competitors
- Illegal conduct by business competitors

If you have problems like these, we want to help you solve them so that you can get back to the business of growing Ohio's economy. Your call will help us ensure a fair marketplace that rewards honest businesses and holds wrongdoers accountable.

*Contact the Office of Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray
with information or questions:*

Call the Help Center at **(800) 282-0515**
E-mail **Business@OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov** or
Visit **www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/Business**



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FAQs about complaints from businesses

Q: What issues can the Attorney General's Office help me resolve?

A: The Attorney General's Office accepts complaints from businesses that have been victims of unfair, deceptive or fraudulent business transactions. A business transaction occurs when you purchase — or are solicited to purchase — goods or services from another business. This can include buying office supplies, hiring a locksmith, securing advertising, having a Web site built or any number of other things.

These transactions can go wrong at various junctures: when you order a product that's not delivered, you are charged for a purchase you didn't authorize, the quality of the product is poor, you were overcharged, etc. If you are the victim of an unfair or deceptive business transaction, you should file a complaint with the Attorney General.

File a complaint at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/ConsumerComplaint or by calling (800) 282-0515.

Q: What issues can the Attorney General's Office *not* help me with?

A: Because the office only handles complaints about the solicitation or purchase of goods or services, we cannot help if your business has not been paid for goods or services that you provided to another business. For example, if you own a landscaping company and perform a service for a business or residential client who then refuses to pay you, the Attorney General's Office cannot intervene. If you have a complaint of this nature with another business, you should contact your local Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) or seek private counsel from an attorney. If you do not have an attorney, your local bar association can make a referral.

Also, the Attorney General's Office cannot resolve situations in which an employee or business partner defrauds your business. In this case, you should contact local law enforcement and seek private counsel.

Q: How can the Attorney General's Office resolve my issue?

A: The Attorney General works to resolve problems through informal dispute resolution. We contact the supplier with whom you have an issue and ask them to offer a solution that is agreeable to you. Because small businesses may not have the time and resources to take on others that have wronged them, the Attorney General's Office stands up for small business that have been treated unfairly and attempts to resolve such problems.

The Attorney General's Office also may take legal action against suppliers that exhibit a pattern of unfair and deceptive transactions. If we do take legal action against suppliers,

your complaint may serve as the basis for that action and be used as evidence against them.

While it isn't practical to take legal action in all disputes reported to our office, we work to bring the supplier into compliance if we observe an actionable pattern of legal violations. This sometimes includes filing suit. We do not represent individual consumers or businesses, but rather act on behalf of the public in representing the state of Ohio.

Q: Our business provided repairs to an individual who didn't pay or paid with a bad check. Can the Attorney General collect on our behalf?

A: No, the Attorney General cannot pursue collection on behalf of a business or individual. If the complaint is against another business, please contact your local Better Business Bureau. You also may seek private counsel from an attorney. If you do not have an attorney, your local bar association can make a referral.

Q: My business received an invoice for copier toner. This purchase was not recorded or approved. How can the Attorney General assist?

A: The Attorney General can provide informal dispute resolution for this matter on your business's behalf. File a complaint with the Attorney General at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/ConsumerComplaint or by calling (800) 282-0515.

Q: My business entered into a contract to provide another company with certain goods or services. The company accepted the goods or services, but has failed to pay the associated charges. What recourse do we have?

A: Because this involves a breach of contract, you should contact private legal counsel. If you do not have an attorney, your local bar association can make a referral.

Q: A product my business purchased was not of the quality advertised, and the seller has refused to allow us to return the product. Now we are out the money and stuck with the useless item. Can the Attorney General get my money back?

A: The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Section can assist by providing informal dispute resolution. Although we cannot guarantee a favorable outcome, the office is very successful in resolving matters through this process. File a complaint with the Attorney General at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/ConsumerComplaint or by calling (800) 282-0515.

Q: We have taken a company to court because of shoddy workmanship. The judge ruled in our favor and awarded a judgment against the company. Even with the judgment in place, the company has not returned our money. Can the Attorney General help us collect this judgment?

A: The Attorney General cannot assist in a matter of this nature. We suggest you contact the court in which the judgment was awarded for information on how to collect.

Q: My company is facing a lawsuit for breach of contract. Can the Attorney General provide legal assistance with this matter?

A: No, the Attorney General cannot act as private legal counsel for individuals or businesses. If you do not have an attorney, your local bar association can make a referral.



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BUSINESS/NON-PROFIT COMPLAINT FORM

Office Use Only:
Complaint #:

The Ohio Attorney General's Consumer Protection Section provides a complaint resolution process to resolve disputes involving the purchase of goods or services between businesses and non-profit organizations. If you have a complaint regarding a product or service used for your business or organization, you may file a complaint with our office.

YOU MAY FILE A COMPLAINT ONE OF THREE WAYS:

<p>By mail: Complete this form in dark ink and mail to: Consumer Protection Section 30 E. Broad St., 14th floor Columbus, OH 43215-3400</p>	<p>By phone: Call 1-800-282-0515 Our help center associates will assist you in filing your complaint.</p>	<p>Online: Visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov On our Web site, you can file a complaint, sign up for our e-newsletter and learn about your consumer rights.</p>
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PRE - COMPLAINT QUESTIONS

- Have you contacted the company about your complaint? Yes___ No___
- Have you hired an attorney to represent you in this matter? Yes___ No___
If yes, provide: Attorney's name: _____ Attorney's phone number: (____) _____
- Are you involved in a lawsuit regarding this issue? Yes___ No___
- Have you contacted any other agencies regarding this issue? Yes___ No___
If yes, please list the agencies: _____

PLEASE NOTE: Any information you submit with your complaint is considered public and may be released as part of a public records request. Remove Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, debit card numbers and other bank account numbers from any documents you submit with your complaint.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Name of your business or organization: _____

Number of employees: _____ Non-profit? Yes___ No___

Contact person: _____ Title: _____

Business address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____ Country: _____

Daytime phone: (____) _____ Alternate phone: (____) _____

E-mail address: _____ Fax: (____) _____

SUBJECT OF THE COMPLAINT – BUSINESS INFORMATION

Name of business you're complaining about: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____ Country: _____

Telephone: (____) _____ Toll-free: (____) _____ Fax: (____) _____

E-mail address: _____ Web address: _____

Name of business owner/salesperson: _____

ABOUT THE TRANSACTION

Product/service involved: _____

Date of purchase: ____ / ____ / ____ (mm/dd/yyyy)

Did you sign a contract? Yes ____ No ____

Are you making payments? Yes ____ No ____

Total cost of product/service: \$ _____

Method of payment: _____

Amount paid so far: \$ _____ Disputed amount: \$ _____

Is the product/service under warranty? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, warranty company name : _____

How did the first contact with the company occur?

- E-mail
- Fax
- Home visit
- Infomercial
- Internet auction
- Internet banner/Web site
- Magazine/Newspaper
- Mail
- Radio
- Store visit
- Telephone call
- Television
- Word of mouth
- Other: _____

Describe the transaction and your complaint. _____

Briefly describe what you would consider a reasonable resolution to your complaint: _____

MOTOR VEHICLE COMPLAINTS ONLY:

Complete this section only if your complaint regards a motor vehicle:

Make: _____ Model: _____ Purchase / Lease (*circle one*)

Vehicle Identification Number (VIN—*not your license plate number*): _____

Year of vehicle: _____ New / Used (*circle one*) Under warranty / "AS IS" (*circle one*)

Mileage at purchase or lease: _____ Current mileage: _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

By checking this box I acknowledge that the information given above is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I understand that any information I submit to the Ohio Attorney General's Office is considered public information and may be released in a public records request. I understand a copy of this form and all documents relating to my complaint will be forwarded to the company that is the subject of my complaint. I understand that the Ohio Attorney General cannot serve as my private attorney.

Date submitted: ____ / ____ / ____ (mm/dd/yyyy)