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Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Crackdown on Illegal Robocalls

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced today that his office has stopped a Huntsville real-estate-investment company from soliciting business through improper and misleading robocalls. This announcement comes as part of Operation Call It Quits, a federal-state coordinated effort to stop illegal robocalls through 87 separate enforcement actions in 17 states, including Alabama.

On May 28, Attorney General Marshall’s Consumer Interest Division sent a notice of intent to file a lawsuit against King’s Property Solutions LLC for civil violations of the Alabama Telemarketing Act, the Alabama Deceptive Trade Practices Act and the federal Telemarketing Sales Rule. Rather than fighting the Attorney General’s civil enforcement, the company agreed to stop the robocalls and reform its business practices. On June 16, the company signed an Assurance of Discontinuance with the Attorney General’s Office, setting out the terms by which it is to comply with state and federal laws regarding telephone solicitations.

Unlike many robocalls, these came from an actual company conducting business in Alabama, rather than unknown scammers trying to trick consumers out of money or personal information. The Attorney General’s Office alleged that these robocalls were in violation of federal and state law because many of the recipients were on the National Do Not Call Registry, the company had failed to get a license from the State for commercial telephone solicitations, and the messages contained misleading elements.

More than 80 Alabama consumers filed complaints that they had received one of three recorded messages offering to buy their homes. The calls had a tone of familiarity and implied that they were meant for the particular consumers or the consumers’ particular neighborhoods, when in fact they were random robocalls made statewide. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) was notified because many of the consumers had registered their numbers with the Do Not Call List. The FTC shared the information with the Attorney General’s Office, which investigated the alleged violations, traced the calls to King’s Property Solutions, and acted to stop the robocalls.

Consumers often face more menacing robocalls in other situations from scammers who have spoofed their numbers to make it appear the calls are local, attempting to steal money or personal information that can be sold on the illegal market. Attorney General Marshall urged the public to exercise vigilance and caution.

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“These days it is almost impossible to escape persistent and annoying robocalls that interrupt our lives, but there are important precautions you should take to protect yourselves,” said Attorney General Marshall. “A first step is to register for the Do Not Call List, but this only stops legitimate telemarketers who are following the law. If you receive a robocall, do not speak or push any buttons that may let the caller know they have reached a live person and received a response. Instead, hang up and report the call.”

The FTC’s one-stop location for information about robocalls is <http://www.ftc.gov/calls>. The public may sign up for the National Do Not Call Registry and make complaints through its website <http://www.donotcall.gov> or by calling 1-888-382-1222 (TTY: 1-866-290-4236). To make a complaint about a violation of the Do Not Call List, the date of the phone call and the company’s name or phone number must be included.

In addition to the Alabama Attorney General’s Office, agencies participating in Operation Call It Quits include the Federal Trade Commission, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and numerous state attorneys general and various other state agencies.

Attorney General Marshall is also working with a bipartisan group of 39 Attorneys General to stop or reduce annoying and harmful robocalls. This coalition is focused on the technology that major telecommunications companies are pursuing to combat illegal robocalls.