

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs Reports Strong Year for Consumer/Business Funds Recovery

Columbia, SC – The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) recovered nearly \$2.1 million for South Carolina consumers and saved more than \$130 million for businesses during Fiscal Year 2008-2009, according to end-of-year reports compiled by staff members.

The breakdown by division is as follows:

Consumer Services:	\$ 1,445,105.10
Legal:	\$ 635,328.35
Advocacy:	\$ 6,036.00

Consumer Affairs Administrator Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston credited the Department staff for its ingenuity and diligence in advocating for South Carolinians despite the 15 day voluntary furlough that all staff members carried out. “The State of South Carolina benefits from the Department’s efficient and dedicated employees who provide valuable services and programs for its citizens,” she said. “I am particularly pleased that our staff recognizes that how we do things can be as important as what we do”

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About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit www.sccoconsumer.gov.

SCDCA's Consumer Services Division refunds and adjustments to consumers were in many areas as diverse as: automobile and heavy equipment sales and/or repair, financial institutions, and travel clubs, to magazine subscription companies and unfulfilled rebates.

The Legal Division recoveries were in several general areas, including: criminal investigations – bank/wire/odometer turn backs, compliance review and inspection, credit counseling and debt settlement companies, and physical fitness clubs. The Department's Advocacy Division was responsible for \$6,036 in customer complaint refunds or credits related to discount medical plan organizations.

In addition to the recovery for consumers, the Department's Advocacy Division saved businesses that purchase workers compensation insurance roughly \$ 30.7 million. This savings occurs on an annual basis as a result of the Consumer Advocate's review of loss cost multiplier filings by insurance carriers that sell policies in the voluntary workers' compensation insurance market.

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs continues to build on its record of success on behalf of consumers who have been wronged in the marketplace. In the past Fiscal Year, the Department handled a total of **6,569 written complaints** (as compared to 6,221 in FY 07-08), and provided services (walk-ins, referrals) for 37, 632 consumers (26,448 in FY 07-08).

The Department also started an aggressive social marketing initiative in the past fiscal year that included a strong presence on *YouTube*, *Twitter*, and *Facebook*. The Department has 12 videos currently running on YouTube with viewers statewide, nationally and even internationally. The Department's recent Twitter account already has more than 1,000 followers. Additionally, outreach efforts include satellite locations in nine areas of the state and an average of 30 educational presentations/workshops monthly. The Department's website had 4,420,262 hits in FY 08-09.

For more information on the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs, call the public information division, 803.734.4296 or toll free 800.922.1594, or visit our website:

www.sconsumer.gov.

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