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Prepared remarks of CFPB Director Richard Cordray at the SDNY enforcement press conference

BY [RICHARD CORDRAY](#)

Prepared Remarks of Richard Cordray Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau SDNY Enforcement Press Conference May 7, 2013

Thank you. It is great to be in this city, which is so central to our consumer-financial markets and, indeed, to the broader global-financial system. This city, perhaps more than any other city in America, saw and felt the far-reaching effects of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. That crisis ultimately resulted in the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Our mission is to ensure that consumer financial markets actually work for people, so that they get the information they need to make responsible financial decisions. We are working to make prices clear up front and to ensure that risks are visible rather than buried in fine print.

The financial reform law that created the Bureau also directed us to root out unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or practices in connection with consumer financial products or services. More generally, we are charged with the duty of ensuring fair, transparent, and competitive markets. We recognize that we can only fulfill this duty by strong and vigilant enforcement.

Today, we are here to announce that through the joint efforts of the Consumer Bureau and the Department of Justice, we are putting an end to unfair and deceptive practices by certain players in the market for debt-relief services. Our actions will also help ensure competitive markets that give honest businesses a fair shot at financial success.

Mission Settlement Agency purported to provide debt-relief services to consumers, but in reality we believe it provided little or no debt relief to the consumers it charged. We also believe that Mission impersonated a government agency and charged unlawful advance fees to consumers, all at the direction of its principal, Michael Levitis. We believe that Mr. Levitis told employees to sign up consumers by any means, including lies about the cost and timing of fees. Our complaint, filed in federal court today, alleges that once consumers were enrolled, Mission charged them unlawful advance fees, but provided few actual debt-relief services.

Like Mission, we believe that Premier Consultant Group, the Law Office of Michael Levitis, and the Law Office of Michael Lupolover also charged illegal up-front fees that made it difficult and, in some cases, impossible for consumers to settle their debts.

These wolves in sheep's clothing take money from consumers who are already struggling to pay their bills, falsely promising them help while really making their problems worse. Consumers deserve better, and we are proud of this joint effort to crack down on unscrupulous behavior.

During our investigation, we found evidence of criminal conduct and, accordingly, we referred this information to the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York while we continued to pursue the civil law violations. Partnerships like the one between the Consumer Bureau and the Department of Justice are integral to our success and mission. From my experience in state and local government, I have found that strong partnerships can be hard to build, but very often are the best way to get things done. We are especially pleased to be working alongside the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Preet Bharara, to clean up the misconduct charged in these matters.

We will be looking for more such occasions to coordinate and collaborate. By working in close partnership, we can better protect our citizens. Unquestionably, they deserve to have us standing on their side.

Thank you.



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