



# CONSUMER ADVOCATE

*A publication from the Consumer Protection Section of the Office of Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray*

## OHIO BREAKS GROUND WITH SERVICER LAWSUITS

Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray has filed two lawsuits against mortgage servicing companies, making Ohio the first state to sue a mortgage servicer (a company that processes mortgage payments).

The lawsuits charge Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC (Carrington) and American Home Mortgage Servicing, Inc. (AHMS) with committing unfair and deceptive acts or practices in connection with their servicing of Ohio mortgage loans.

Attorney General Cordray said: “The acts of some mortgage servicers have gone

beyond the point of being negligent—they have become predatory financial practices and in Ohio, they won’t be tolerated.”

Both cases are pending. To learn more about the Carrington case or the AHMS case, visit [www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov).

If you believe you have been treated unfairly by a mortgage servicer, file a complaint with the Ohio Attorney General’s Office at [www.SpeakOutOhio.gov](http://www.SpeakOutOhio.gov) or call (800) 282-0515.

## ONLINE SELLERS BEWARE: FAKE CHECK SCAMS ABOUND

About one-third of adults have been targeted by a fake check scam, according to the Consumer Federation of America.

If you sell items online, you could be next.

Scammers are posing as potential buyers on sites like eBay, Craigslist and Facebook. They send sellers checks for more than the agreed-upon price, and then ask the sellers to cash the check and wire-transfer the difference.

After sellers send the money, the check is returned as counterfeit, and the sellers lose any money they wire-transferred.

To protect yourself, never agree to accept a check for more than the agreed-upon price, and don’t wire transfer money to someone you don’t know.

To read more about fake checks, visit [www.fakechecks.org](http://www.fakechecks.org). To report a fake check scam, visit [www.SpeakOutOhio.gov](http://www.SpeakOutOhio.gov) or call (800) 282-0515.

## HOLIDAY SHOPPING SURVIVAL GUIDE

To protect yourself and your pocketbook this holiday season, follow these tips:

*Put safety first.* Never leave your purse or wallet unattended.

*Be careful buying gift cards.* If a store goes out of business, you may not be able to recover money from unused gift cards.

*Understand rain checks.* Your right to a rain check does not apply if the ad says “supplies are limited” or “seasonal merchandise only.”

*Look for refund policies.* Under Ohio law, a store must post its refund policy.

*Keep your receipts.* Keep receipts in case you need to make a return. Also compare receipts with charges on your credit card statements.

*Read the fine print.* Carefully review ads so you understand the terms and conditions *before* you enter the store. An ad must list any material exclusions or limitations of an offer.

## FINDING GOOD DEALS IN TODAY’S ECONOMY

With the economy still in recovery mode, many retailers are offering excellent holiday deals. To make the most of your holiday shopping, we’ve identified some

current trends and what they mean for you.

**Black Friday:** Experts say Black Friday

(the day after Thanksgiving) is still one of the best times to find the deepest discounts. Before you head out into the

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## FINDING GOOD DEALS IN TODAY'S ECONOMY, CONTINUED

crowds, plan your day. Determine when stores open and the times certain deals will be valid.

**Increased competition:** As retailers compete for your business, you may be able to find especially good deals in stores and online—just be sure to read the fine print to make sure the deal really is as good as it seems.

**Return of layaway:** With credit card markets tightening, some retailers, such as Sears and K-Mart, are bringing back layaway, a payment plan that allows you to pay in increments until you've paid the full price. *Layaway can be risky*—if you don't keep up with the payments, you may risk losing money. Before entering into this kind of plan, make sure you understand all the terms and conditions.

**Online shopping:** Doing research on the Internet can help you comparison shop and find deeper discounts. If you make a purchase online, be sure to use a secure connection (look for the “s” in https of the Internet address.) Also consider paying with a credit card, for added protection if something goes wrong.



### DATES TO REMEMBER

- December 2, 2009, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.  
Better Business Bureau Financial Health Fair  
Charles R. Drew Community Health Center  
1323 W. Third St., Dayton Ohio
- December 6, 2009, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
WOSU @ COSI Community Day  
333 W. Broad St., Columbus Ohio

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- Visit [www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov) for more information.