

PRESS RELEASE

# Preliminary Injunction Entered in Justice Department Suit to Stop Fraudulent Debt Collection Scheme that Harmed Veterans

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## For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma has issued a preliminary injunction enjoining three individuals and two companies from continuing their fraudulent debt collection scheme. The order was issued after the department filed a civil complaint against Assured Collections LLC, Assured Financial LLC, Christopher Parks, Christopher Noah Parks and Stephen Miller.

According to the complaint, Christopher Parks, 62, who is currently incarcerated in Cushing, Oklahoma, his son, Christopher Noah Parks, 29, of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and Stephen Miller, 39, also of Broken Arrow, operate Assured Collections LLC and Assured Financial LLC. The defendants, according to the complaint, used those companies to distribute thousands of fraudulent debt collection notices to consumers across the country. These notices falsely stated that consumers owed money, often thousands of dollars, for durable medical equipment. In fact, defendants had no authority to contact consumers to attempt to collect any debt. Many of the notices were sent to older adults and veterans.

"No consumer should have to panic at the thought of needing to pay thousands of dollars they do not in fact need to pay," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian M. Boynton, head of the Justice Department's Civil Division. "The department and its partners remain steadfast in our resolve to protect consumers from companies and individuals responsible for sending fraudulent debt collection notices."

"The defendants in this case victimized individuals who were already traumatized by illness and were struggling emotionally, physically and financially," said U.S. Attorney

Clinton Johnson for the Northern District of Oklahoma. "This fraudulent billing scheme caused additional harm and eroded the public's trust in the medical industry. I'm thankful for the collaborative effort of all the investigative agencies that worked together in pursuit of justice for the victims."

"The Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Inspector General's Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) is committed to protecting the integrity of TRICARE, the healthcare system for our military members," said Special Agent-in-Charge Michael C. Mentavlos of DCIS's Southwest Field Office. "This action is the result of strong partnerships across the law enforcement community, and demonstrates the DCIS's ongoing commitment to investigating and prosecuting companies and individuals that seek to enrich themselves at the expense of our military members, their families and the American taxpayer."

"This action sends a clear message that the VA Office of Inspector General makes it a priority to investigate those who would seek to exploit our nation's most vulnerable veterans," said Special Agent in Charge Kris Raper of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General's (VA-OIG) South Central Field Office. "The VA-OIG is grateful to the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Justice Department's Consumer Protection Branch and our law enforcement partners for their efforts to achieve justice in this case."

According to the complaint, Christopher Parks (who pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit healthcare fraud and was recently sentenced to 18 months in prison), Christopher Noah Parks and Stephen Miller knew that debt notices were fraudulent. Despite that knowledge, defendants continued to contact consumers attempting to collect.

Anyone who believes that they are a victim of the unlawful debt collection activity is encouraged to report to the Federal Trade Commission at [www.reportfraud.ftc.gov/#/](http://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov/#/).

The VA-OIG, DCIS, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, Department of Labor Office of Inspector General and FBI investigated the case.

Senior Litigation Counsel Patrick Runkle of the Civil Division's Consumer Protection Branch and Assistant U.S. Attorney Marianne Hardcastle for the Northern District of Oklahoma filed the case.

Additional information about the Consumer Protection Branch and its enforcement efforts can be found at [www.justice.gov/civil/consumer-protection-branch](http://www.justice.gov/civil/consumer-protection-branch).

Additional information about the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Oklahoma can be found at [www.justice.gov/usao-ndok](http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndok).

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