UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN MILWAUKEE DIVISION

GINA ALLENDE,

Plaintiff,

VS.

AD ASTRA RECOVERY SERVICES INC.,

Defendant.

Case No.: 18-cv-1103

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Jury Trial Demanded

INTRODUCTION

1. This class action seeks redress for collection practices that violate the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq*. (the "FDCPA") and the Wisconsin Consumer Act, Chs. 421-427, Wis. Stats. (the "WCA").

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. The court has jurisdiction to grant the relief sought by the Plaintiff pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k, and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337, and 1367. Venue in this District is proper in that Defendant directed its collection efforts into the District.

PARTIES

3. Plaintiff Gina Allende is an individual who resides in the Eastern District of Wisconsin (Milwaukee County).

4. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined in the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3), in that Defendant sought to collect from her a debt allegedly incurred for personal, family or household purposes, namely a personal consumer loan.

5. Plaintiff is also a "customer" as defined in the WCA, Wis. Stat. § 421.301(17), in that the debt Defendant sought to collect from her arose from a consumer transaction or series of consumer transactions with an agreement to defer payment.

Case 2:18-cv-01103 Filed 07/18/18 Page 1 of 18 Document 1

6. Defendant Ad Astra Recovery Services, Inc. ("Ad Astra") is a debt collection agency with its principal offices located at 7330 West 33rd Street N. Ste 118, Wichita, Kansas 67205.

7. Ad Astra is engaged in the business of a collection agency, using the mails and telephone to collect consumer debts originally owed to others.

8. Ad Astra is engaged in the business of collecting debts owed to others and incurred for personal, family or household purposes.

9. Ad Astra is a "debt collector" as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692a and Wis. Stat. § 427.103(3).

FACTS

10. Plaintiff obtained a personal consumer loan from "Speedy Cash" on or about September 3, 2015.

11. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff's personal consumer loan was a "precomputed loan" as that term is defined in Wis. Stat. § 138.09(7)(a)(1).

12. Plaintiff used the proceeds from the Speedy Cash loan only for personal, family, or household purposes, such as paying household bills and other expenses.

13. On or about September 21, 2017, Defendant mailed a debt collection letter to Plaintiff regarding an alleged debt. A copy of this letter is attached to this complaint as <u>Exhibit</u> <u>A</u>.

14. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form letter, generated by computer, and with the information specific to Plaintiff inserted by computer.

15. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form debt collection letter used by Ad Astra to attempt to collect alleged debts.

16. Upon information and belief, as of the date of <u>Exhibit A</u>, the alleged "Speedy Cash" loan debt was owed to the original creditor, and Ad Astra had not purchased the receivables associated with the account.

17. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a response to Plaintiff's prior request for verification of the debt.

18. <u>Exhibit A</u> is misleading and confusing to the unsophisticated consumer because it

does not identify the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed.

19. <u>Exhibit A</u> states:

We are in receipt of your request for validation of the account we are pursuing for collection.

Exhibit A.

20. <u>Exhibit A</u> further states:

Original Creditor:	Speedy Cash
	3527 N. Ridge Road
	WICHITA KS 67205
Type of Loan:	Installment
Date of Loan:	09/03/2015
Loan Number:	3428
Date of Default:	09/16/2015
Assignment Date:	12/16/2015

Exhibit A.

21. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that Ad Astra reviewed Plaintiff's request for verification "with our client and determined that the facts . . . are consistent with the information provided by our client."

- 22. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that "Speedy Cash" is the name of the "Original Creditor."
- 23. Exhibit A states that the debt's "Assignment Date" was December 16, 2015.

We reviewed the supporting documentation you provided and examined the account file with our client and determined that the facts in reference to this debt are consistent with the information provided by our client. Our investigation provided the following additional details concerning the debt:

24. On its face, <u>Exhibit A</u> does not state the name of the "current creditor." *See Janetos v. Fulton Friedman & Gullace, LLP*, 825 F.3d 317, 319 (7th Cir. 2016) ("The letters provided no additional details about the relationship between Asset Acceptance and Fulton. Nowhere did they say who *currently* owned the debt.") (emphasis added).

25. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that Ad Astra reviewed its account information with its "client" but does not identify who Ad Astra's "client" is.

26. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that Speedy Cash is the "Original Creditor" but also states that the debt was assigned on December 16, 2015.

27. A debt collector does not disclose the identity of the creditor by naming an entity without explicitly or implicitly making clear in the letter that the entity is the current creditor to whom the debt is owed. The unsophisticated consumer is aware that most debts are freely assignable and are regularly sold to third party debt buyers.

28. The debt collector may disclose the identity of the creditor to whom the debt is owed by expressly identifying that entity as the "creditor," the "current creditor," or other non-confusing language, but must do so explicitly to ensure the letter is not ambiguous on the question of the current owner of the debt. *Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 322.

29. Where a debt collector identifies an entity as the "original creditor" without otherwise making it clear that the debt collector is collecting the debt on behalf of that same entity, it implies that the current creditor is someone other than the original creditor. *E.g., Bentkowsky v. Benchmark Recovery Inc.*, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 12694, at *1-2 (N.D. Calif. Feb. 2, 2015) ("Although the letter identified the correct creditor, it did not identify it as the current creditor. It instead labeled the creditor as the 'Original Creditor.' The letter therefore was confusing and left the reader unaware of the current creditor, in violation of the FDCPA.").

30. The apparent contradiction between the plain meanings of the terms "creditor" and "original creditor" implies to the unsophisticated consumer that the "original creditor" is not the current creditor. *Bentkowsky*, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 191481, at *2 (N.D. Calif. Oct. 28, 2014) ("If anything, the letter implies that the current creditor is someone different from the 'Original Creditor,' such as, perhaps, [the debt collector] itself."); *see* 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(5) (the consumer may request "the name and address of the *original creditor*, if different from the *current creditor*"); *see also Francisco v. Doctors & Merchants Credit Serv.*, 1998 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 12234, at *20 (N.D. Ill. July 29, 1998) ("*Apparent* contradictions of validation notices are analogous to literally false statements in trademark law, in the limited sense that they are thought to cause confusion by their very nature; in other words, apparent contradictions are thought to evidence per se confusingness, to borrow Judge Posner's phrase.").

31. A debt collection letter that implies that a debt has been assigned must make it clear that the original creditor is the current creditor. *Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 322 ("Defendants do not explain how, in light of this language, an understanding of Asset Acceptance's former role would have shown its current role."); *Gritters v. Ocwen Loan Servicing, LLC*, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 63010, at *23 (N.D. Ill. Apr. 13, 2018) ("knowing the identity of the current creditor 'potentially affects the debtor in the most basic ways."") (quoting *Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 325).

32. <u>Exhibit A</u> exacerbates the confusion by stating that the account's "Assignment Date" was December 16, 2015. The "assignment" of a consumer debt generally refers to the sale of the debt's receivables, though under some circumstances, it can be mere assignment for collection. *See, Dewees v. Legal Servicing, LLC*, 506 F. Supp. 2d 128, 132-33 (E.D.N.Y. June 29, 2007) ("To the least sophisticated consumer, the word 'assigned' may be vague. It could mean (1) that Defendant has purchased and continues to own the debt or (2) an unidentified owner of the debt has retained Defendant for purpose of collecting the debt. The fact that the sentence states that CHASE 'sold' the debt and that the debt was 'assigned' to Defendant lends additional credibility to the latter explanation because it potentially implies that a 'sale' of the debt is different from an 'assignment' of the debt."); *see also, Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 321 (a collection letter that states the debt was "transferred" is ambiguous because "transfer could mean either conveyance of title or assignment for collection[.]").

33. Moreover, <u>Exhibit A</u> also contains the following:

Creditor Balance:	\$889.58
Collection Fees:	\$0.00
Current Balance:	\$889.58

<u>Exhibit A</u>.

34. The oblique reference to collection fees in <u>Exhibit A</u> is deceptive, misleading, and confusing to the unsophisticated consumer.

35. The ambiguous zero itemization of collection fees implies to the unsophisticated

consumer that these fees would be imposed if she does not pay the debt as soon as possible:

There are several possible ways the statement could be interpreted. For example, it is possible that, as the defendant suggests, an "unsophisticated consumer" might understand the statement to be explaining that no part of the debt is a 'collection fee' even though the Verizon agreement allows for one. On the other hand, it is also possible that an "unsophisticated consumer" would interpret the statement to mean that there is no "collection fee" now but that one could be assessed later on.

Tylke v. Diversified Adjustment Serv., 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 153281, at *6-7 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 28, 2014).

36. Had <u>Exhibit A</u> simply stated that interest was not accruing, or stated that the

interest rate was zero, it would not have engendered such gratuitous and unnecessary confusion.

See Duarte v. General Revenue Corp., 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 188441, at *7-9 (N.D. Ill. Nov.

15, 2017) ("Clearly, a statement that the interest rate is zero cannot possibly be a threat to charge

interest. To the contrary, it is more a concession that interest can't and won't be charged. In

contrast, a cost balance of zero could imply future cost charges.").

37. Moreover, neither Ad Astra nor the creditor could impose collection fees on

Plaintiff's precomputed consumer loan account because such fees are prohibited by the WCA.

38. Plaintiff's precomputed consumer loan, which was payable in installments, was a

"consumer credit transaction" under the WCA. Wis. Stat. § 421-427.

39. Wis. Stat. § 421.301(10) defines a "consumer credit transaction":

a consumer transaction between a merchant and a customer in which real or personal property, services or money is acquired on credit and the customer's obligation is payable in installments or for which credit a finance charge is or may be imposed, whether such transaction is pursuant to an open-end credit plan or is a transaction involving other than openend credit. The term includes consumer credit sales, consumer loans, consumer leases and transactions pursuant to open-end credit plans.

40. Precomputed consumer loans are, by definition, consumer credit transactions. See,

Wis. Stat. § 421.301(10); see also, Wis. Stat. § 138.09(7)(k).

41. The WCA specifically prohibits the attachment of collection fees and other "default charges" on consumer credit transactions, even if the fee is separately negotiated. Wis. Stat. § 422.413(1) provides:

no term of a writing evidencing a consumer credit transaction may provide for any charges as a result of default by the customer other than reasonable expenses incurred in the disposition of collateral and such other charges as are specifically authorized by chs. 421 to 427.

See also Patzka v. Viterbo College, 917 F. Supp. 654, 659 (W.D. Wis. Feb. 27, 1996).

42. Neither Wis. Stat. § 422.202, entitled "Additional charges," nor any other section

of the WCA, lists collection fees as a permissible fee a creditor may charge in connection with a

consumer credit transaction. Patzka, 917 F. Supp. at 659 ("Wisconsin law prohibits the

attachment of collection fees to consumer debts, even if the fee is separately negotiated, which in

this case it was not."); *see also, Tylke*, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 153281, at *8 ("in order for the addition of a collection fee to be impermissible under Wis. Stat. § 422.202, the agreement must constitute a 'consumer credit transaction,' as defined in Wis. Stat. § 421.301(10).").

43. Because precomputed consumer loans are consumer credit transactions, <u>Exhibit</u> <u>A</u>, with its nebulous statement about "collection fees," falsely states or implies that Ad Astra has a right to add collection fees to the debt.

44. Even if a provision of any agreement between Plaintiffs and the original creditor would purport to permit the creditor or the debt collector to impose a collection fee, the WCA prohibits such fees. Wis. Stat. § 421.106(1) ("Except as otherwise provided in chs. 421 to 427, a customer may not waive or agree to forego rights or benefits under chs. 421 to 427."); *Patzka*, 917 F. Supp. at 659; *see also, Lox v. CDA, Ltd.*, 689 F.3d. 818 (7th Cir. 2012) (false representation that attorney fees would be added when they could not be, violated 1692e).

45. Exacerbating the misleading and confusing effect, alongside the statement that the current amount of the collection fees is zero, <u>Exhibit A</u> states that the "Creditor Balance" and the "Current Balance" are both \$889.58.

46. The purpose of stating the "Creditor Balance" alongside the "Collection Fees" and "Current Balance" is to imply to the unsophisticated consumer that, when collection fees are imposed, the "Current Balance" will exceed the "Creditor Balance."

- 47. Plaintiff was confused by <u>Exhibit A</u>.
- 48. The unsophisticated consumer would be confused by <u>Exhibit A</u>.
- 49. Plaintiff had to spend time and money investigating <u>Exhibit A</u>.

8

50. Plaintiff had to take time to obtain and meet with counsel, including traveling to counsel's office by car and its related expenses, including but not limited to the cost of gasoline and mileage, to advise Plaintiff on the consequences of <u>Exhibit A</u>.

The FDCPA

51. The FDCPA creates substantive rights for consumers; violations cause injury to consumers, and such injuries are concrete and particularized. Derosia v. Credit Corp Solutions, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 50016, at *12 (E.D. Wis. Mar. 27, 2018) ("a plaintiff who receives misinformation form a debt collector has suffered the type of injury the FDCPA was intended to protect against' and 'satisfies the concrete injury in fact requirement of Article III.'") (quoting Pogorzelski v. Patenaude & Felix APC, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 89678, 2017 WL 2539782, at *3 (E.D. Wis. June 12, 2017)); Spuhler v. State Collection Servs., No. 16-CV-1149, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 177631 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 26, 2017) ("As in Pogorzelski, the Spuhlers' allegations that the debt collection letters sent by State Collection contained false representations of the character, amount, or legal status of a debt in violation of their rights under the FDCPA sufficiently pleads a concrete injury-in-fact for purposes of standing."); Lorang v. Ditech Fin. LLC, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 169286, at *6 (W.D. Wis. Oct. 13, 2017) ("the weight of authority in this circuit is that a misrepresentation about a debt is a sufficient injury for standing because a primary purpose of the FDCPA is to protect consumers from receiving false and misleading information."); Neeley v. Portfolio Recovery Assocs., LLC, 268 F. Supp. 3d 978, 982 (S.D. Ind. Aug. 2, 2017) ("[N]othing in Spokeo overruled the Seventh Circuit's decisions that emphasized and affirmed the power of Congress to pass legislation creating new rights, which if violated, would confer standing under Article III.") (alteration in original) (quoting Saenz v. Buckeye Check Cashing, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 127784, at *5 (N.D. Ill. Sep. 20, 2016); Qualls v. T-H Prof'l & Med.

Collections, Ltd., 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 113037, at *8 (C.D. Ill. July 20, 2017) ("Courts in this Circuit, both before and after Spokeo, have rejected similar challenges to standing in FDCPA cases.") (citing "Haves v. Convergent Healthcare Recoveries, Inc., 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 139743 (C.D. Ill. 2016)); Bock v. Pressler & Pressler, LLP, No. 11-7593, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 81058 *21 (D.N.J. May 25, 2017) ("through [s]ection 1692e of the FDCPA, Congress established 'an enforceable right to truthful information concerning' debt collection practices, a decision that 'was undoubtedly influenced by congressional awareness that the intentional provision of misinformation' related to such practices, 'contribute[s] to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy,"); Quinn v. Specialized Loan Servicing, LLC, No. 16 C 2021, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 107299 *8-13 (N.D. Ill. Aug. 11, 2016) (rejecting challenge to Plaintiff's standing based upon alleged FDCPA statutory violation); Lane v. Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC, No. 15 C 10446, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 89258 *9-10 (N.D. Ill. July 11, 2016) ("When a federal statute is violated, and especially when Congress has created a cause of action for its violation, by definition Congress has created a legally protected interest that it deems important enough for a lawsuit."); Church v. Accretive Health, Inc., No. 15-15708, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 12414 *7-11 (11th Cir. July 6, 2016) (same); see also Mogg v. Jacobs, No. 15-CV-1142-JPG-DGW, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33229, 2016 WL 1029396, at *5 (S.D. III. Mar. 15, 2016) ("Congress does have the power to enact statutes creating legal rights, the invasion of which creates standing, even though no injury would exist without the statute," (quoting Sterk v. Redbox Automated Retail, LLC, 770 F.3d 618, 623 (7th Cir. 2014)). For this reason, and to encourage consumers to bring FDCPA actions, Congress authorized an award of statutory damages for violations. 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a).

52. Moreover, Congress has explicitly described the FDCPA as regulating "abusive practices" in debt collection. 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(a) - 1692(e). Any person who receives a debt collection letter containing a violation of the FDCPA is a victim of abusive practices. *See* 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(e) ("It is the purpose of this subchapter to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses").

53. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e generally prohibits "any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt."

54. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A) specifically prohibits the "false representation of the character, amount, or legal status" of an alleged debt.

55. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A) specifically prohibits the "false representation of the character, amount, or legal status" of an alleged debt.

56. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(B) specifically prohibits the "false representation of any services rendered or compensation which may be lawfully received by any debt collector for the collection of a debt."

57. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(5) specifically prohibits "the threat to take any action that cannot legally be taken or that is not intended to be taken."

58. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10) specifically prohibits the "use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt."

59. 15 U.S.C. 1692g(a) states, in part:

(a) Notice of debt; contents

Within five days after the initial communication with a consumer in connection with the collection of any debt, a debt collector shall, unless

the following information is contained in the initial communication or the consumer has paid the debt, send the consumer a written notice containing—

(2) the name of the creditor to whom the debt is owed;

15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a)(2).

60. To satisfy § 1692g(a)(2), the debt collector must state the name of the creditor in a non-confusing manner:

The recipients of these letters would therefore find themselves obliged to guess who currently owned the debts in question. Since the name was on the letters, some might correctly guess that Asset Acceptance was the current creditor, but a lucky guess would have nothing to do with any disclosure the letters provided. Compliance with the clear requirements of \S 1692g(a)(2) demands more.

Janetos, 825 F.3d at 323.

61. Failure to provide the required disclosures within five days of the initial communication with Plaintiff and the class is a *per se* violation of the FDCPA. *Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 324 ("we have not extended the implicit materiality requirement of § 1692e to reach claims under § 1692g(a)."); *see also, e.g., Walls*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 68079, at *5 ("We reject defendants' contention in their reply brief that what plaintiff is complaining of is 'immaterial' information. The statute expressly requires identification of the creditor to whom the debt is owed").

62. For purposes of Plaintiff's claim under 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(A) and 1692e(10), Defendants' omission is a material violation of the FDCPA.

63. Misrepresentation of the creditor's identity is a misrepresentation of the character and legal status of the debt. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A). *Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 324 ("Knowing the current creditor 'potentially affects the debtor in the most basic ways, such as what the debtor

should write after 'pay to the order of' on the payment check to ensure that the debt is satisfied.") (quoting *Eun Joo Lee v. Forster & Garbus LLP*, 926 F. Supp. 2d 482, 488 (E.D.N.Y. Mar. 1, 2013).

64. Plaintiff does not bring any claims under 15 U.S.C. § 1692g. However, with respect to identification of the creditor, a debt collector cannot use ambiguous or confusing language about the name of the creditor in any communication, whether or not the initial communication adequately discloses the identity of the creditor. *See, Janetos*, 825 F.3d at 322 ("It is true that for claims under § 1692e[], *or at least those based on its general prohibitions* against false, deceptive, or misleading statements and practices, we have sorted cases into three categories.") (emphasis added).

65. Plaintiff's claims as to Defendant's confusing representations about the identity of the creditor are not "based on [§ 1692e's] general prohibitions" but are rather specifically addressed in the FDCPA. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(A).

66. Likewise, Plaintiff's claims as to Defendant's confusing representations about whether Defendant may impose collection fees are not "based on [§ 1692e's] general prohibitions" but are rather specifically addressed in the FDCPA. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(2)(B).

The WCA

67. The Wisconsin Consumer Act ("WCA") was enacted to protect consumers against unfair, deceptive, and unconscionable business practices and to encourage development of fair and economically sound practices in consumer transactions. Wis. Stat. § 421.102(2).

68. The Wisconsin Supreme Court has favorably cited authority finding that the WCA "goes further to protect consumer interests than any other such legislation in the country," and is "probably the most sweeping consumer credit legislation yet enacted in any state." *Kett* v.

Community Credit Plan, Inc., 228 Wis. 2d 1, 18 n.15, 596 N.W.2d 786 (1999) (citations omitted).

69. To further these goals, the Act's protections must be "liberally construed and applied." Wis. Stat. § 421.102(1); *see also* § 425.301.

70. To carry out this intent, the WCA provides Wisconsin consumers with an array of protections and legal remedies, including punitive damages. The Act contains significant and sweeping restrictions on the activities of those attempting to collect debts. *See* Wis. Stats. § 427.104.

71. The Act limits the amounts and types of additional fees that may be charged to consumers in conjunction with transactions. Wis. Stats. § 422.202(1). The Act also provides injured consumers with causes of action for class-wide statutory and actual damages and injunctive remedies against defendants on behalf of all customers who suffer similar injuries. *See* Wis. Stats. §§ 426.110(1); § 426.110(4)(e). Finally, "a customer may not waive or agree to forego rights or benefits under [the Act]." Wis. Stat. § 421.106(1).

72. Consumers' WCA claims under Wis. Stat. § 427.104(1) are analyzed using the same methods as claims under the FDCPA. Indeed, the WCA itself requires that the court analyze the WCA "in accordance with the policies underlying a federal consumer credit protection act," including the FDCPA. Wis. Stat. § 421.102(1).

73. Further, the Wisconsin Supreme Court has held that WCA claims relating to debt collection are to be analyzed under the "unsophisticated consumer" standard. *Brunton v. Nuvell Credit Corp.*, 785 N.W.2d 302, 314-15. In *Brunton*, the Wisconsin Supreme Court explicitly adopted and followed the "unsophisticated consumer" standard, citing and discussing *Gammon v. GC Servs. Ltd. P'ship*, 27 F.3d 1254, 1257 (7th Cir. 1994). *Id.*

74. Wis. Stat. § 427.104(1)(j) states that a debt collector may not: "Claim, or attempt or threaten to enforce a right with knowledge or reason to know that the right does not exist."

75. Wis. Stat. § 427.104(1)(L) states that a debt collector may not: "Threaten action against the customer unless like action is taken in regular course or is intended with respect to the particular debt."

<u>COUNT I – FDCPA</u>

76. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.

77. Exhibit A states that Ad Astra "examined the account file with our client."

78. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that the "Original Creditor" is Speedy Cash.

79. <u>Exhibit A</u> does not state the name of the current creditor.

80. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that the debt's "Assignment Date" was December 16, 2015.

81. <u>Exhibit A represents to the consumer that Speedy Cash had assigned the debts in</u>

question to some undisclosed third party, or potentially to Ad Astra itself.

82. Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(A), and 1692e(10).

<u>COUNT II – FDCPA</u>

83. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.

84. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that Ad Astra is collecting "Collection Fees" in an amount of "\$0.00."

85. <u>Exhibit A</u> implies to the unsophisticated consumer that Ad Astra may add collection fees to the "Current Balance" of Plaintiff's precomputed consumer loan debt in the future.

86. <u>Exhibit A</u> threatens the unsophisticated consumer with the prospect that Ad Astra can, and intends to, add collection fees to Plaintiff's precomputed consumer loan debt.

87. Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(2)(B), 1692e(5), and 1692e(10).

COUNT III – WCA

88. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.

89. <u>Exhibit A</u> states that Ad Astra is collecting "Collection Fees" in an amount of "\$0.00."

90. <u>Exhibit A</u> implies to the unsophisticated consumer that Ad Astra may add collection fees to the "Current Balance" of Plaintiff's precomputed consumer loan debt in the future.

91. <u>Exhibit A</u> threatens the unsophisticated consumer with the prospect that Ad Astra can, and intends to, add collection fees to Plaintiff's precomputed consumer loan debt.

92. Defendant violated Wis. Stat. §§ 427.104(1)(j) and 427.104(1)(L).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

93. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of a Class consisting of:

(a) All natural persons in the State of Wisconsin (b) who were sent a collection letter in the form represented by <u>Exhibit A</u> to the complaint in this action, (c) where the debt was incurred for personal, family or household purposes, (d) and the letter in the form of <u>Exhibit A</u> was mailed between July 18, 2017 and July 18, 2018, inclusive, (e) and was not returned by the postal service.

94. The Class is so numerous that joinder is impracticable. Upon information and

belief, there are more than 50 members of the Class.

95. There are questions of law and fact common to the members of each Class, which

common questions predominate over any questions that affect only individual class members.

The predominant common question is whether the Defendant complied with the FDCPA and WCA.

96. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of each Class. All are based on the same factual and legal theories.

97. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the members of each Class. Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in consumer credit and debt collection abuse cases.

98. A class action is superior to other alternative methods of adjudicating this dispute. Individual cases are not economically feasible.

JURY DEMAND

99. Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that the Court enter judgment in favor of Plaintiff and the Class and against Defendant for:

- (a) actual damages;
- (b) statutory damages;
- (c) attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs of suit; and
- (d) such other or further relief as the Court deems proper.

Dated: July 18, 2018

ADEMI & O'REILLY, LLP

By: /s/ Mark A. Eldridge John D. Blythin (SBN 1046105) Mark A. Eldridge (SBN 1089944) Jesse Fruchter (SBN 1097673) Ben J. Slatky (SBN 1106892)

3620 East Layton Avenue Cudahy, WI 53110 (414) 482-8000 (414) 482-8001 (fax) jblythin@ademilaw.com meldridge@ademilaw.com jfruchter@ademilaw.com bslatky@ademilaw.com

EXHIBIT A

Case 2:18-cv-01103 Filed 07/18/18 Page 1 of 4 Document 1-1



09/21/2017

4361

File #:

Dear Gina Allende,

We are in receipt of your request for validation of the account we are pursuing for collection.

We reviewed the supporting documentation you provided and examined the account file with our client and determined that the facts in reference to this debt are consistent with the information provided by our client. Our investigation provided the following additional details concerning the debt:

Original Creditor:	Speedy Cash	Creditor Balance:	\$889.58
	3527 N. Ridge Road	Collection Fees:	\$0.00
	WICHITA KS 67205	Current Balance:	\$889.58
Type of Loan:	Installment		
Date of Loan:	<u>09/03/2015</u>		
Loan Number:	3428	DrLic on Application:	
Date of Default:	09/16/2015	SSN on Application:	
Assignment Date:	12/16/2015	DOB on Application:	

We have notified the credit reporting agencies we subscribe to that this account is disputed by the consumer.

If you have any additional supporting documentation concerning your dispute, please provide us with such additional information. We will not investigate disputes that are irrelevant, frivolous, or disputes that have previously been investigated, unless we are provided with additional relevant documentation.

If your identity has been assumed and you wish to file an ID theft affidavit, please log on to www.identitytheft.gov. Complete the affidavit and sign it. You may send the completed affidavit to:

Ad Astra Recovery Services, Inc. 8918 W. 21 Street N., Suite 200, PMB 303 Wichita, KS 67205	Or	Fax to 316-771-8880

Sincerely,

Ad Astra Recovery Services Inc.

This communication is from a debt collector, this is an attempt to collect a debt and any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

8918 W. 21st Street N. Suite 200 PMB 303 Wichita, KS 67205. To speak with a recovery Specialist please call our toll free number -866-398-2089

		Please de	tach and return this portion	on with your payment.
PO Box 101928 Birmingham, A	•		07813	Pay your bill on line at http://adastra.statementmanagement.c Visa [] MasterCard [] Name:
Please call 1-866-2	398-2089			\$\$
69140-21A*38* Gina Allende 822 W Scott St Milwaukee, W	*	Ավլլիուկթիով	1111111	Ad Astra Recovery Services Inc. 8918 W 21 Street N, Suite 200, PMB 303 Wichita, KS 67205-1880
AA 030 0908	Case 2:1	.8-cv-01103	Filed 07/18/18	Page 2 of 4 Document 1-1 File #: 4361 Total Due: \$889.58

Suite 118 7330 W. 33rd Street N. Wichita, KS 67205 Telephone 866-398-2089 Fax 316-771-8880

MPayHistory.xnt	26 Sep 2015 *LM90 Loan Due Date Payment Past Due 04:15:50 \$156.50 Due Date 25 Sep	10 Oct 2015 *LM90 Loan Due Date Payment Past Due 03:08:02 \$234.75 Due Date 09 Oct	24 Oct 2015 *LM90 Loan Due Date Payment Past Due 03:50:46 \$313.00 Due Date 23 Oct	07 Nov 2015 *LM90 Loan Due Date Payment Past Due 03:58:00 \$391.25 Due Date 06 Nov	21 Nov 2015 *LM90 Loan Due Date Payment Past Due 03:58:26 \$469.50 Due Date 20 Nov	21 Nov 2015 *LM90 Suspend Interest Resume on payment 03:58:26	05 Dec 2015 *LM90 Loan Due Date Payment Past Due 04:03:24 \$547.75 Due Date 04 Dec	16 Dec 2015 *** 99 Loan Inactive 03:00:58	02 Jan 2017 ZZZ90 Acctg Loan Loss Accounting record for 23:10:00 Loan Loss Project - No Customer Impact 3538	TIr Loc	Pending ACH Amt \$0.00 ACH Date	Total \$889.58	\$0.00	Loan Date 03 Sep 2015 Loan # 3428 In Collection As Of 16 Sep 2015 APR 359.009% Past Due Amount S889 58 Past Due Since 18 Dec 2015	Customer Name ALLENDE, GINA Customer Number	Print Date 21 Sep 2017 07:33:34 Printed By *LU - Automated LetterUpload Location 99, ICTEXTAPPS	
	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Chrg			Pay By 18 Dec 2015	3428 .009% 8 Dec 2015	Address		Š
	\$613,42	\$682.46	\$751.50	\$820.54	\$889.58	\$889.58	\$889.58	\$889,58	\$689.00	Pmt Bal Stat		Loan Amount	Insurance Pmt	Cash Amount Prepaid Fin Charge Discount Lien Fees	822 W SCOTT ST MILWAUKEE WI 53204	Sorted By Query Sho Chr	Multi-pay Loan History
	\$500,00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500,00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	Principal Paid/Bal		\$500.00	<u>00.08</u>	\$500.00 \$0.00 \$0.00		w: New/Inaci anges, Pay In	istory
	\$113.4246	\$182.4657	\$251.5068	\$320.5479	\$389.5890	\$389.5890	\$389.5890	\$389.5890	\$389,5890	interest Paid/Bal				Collect In		tive, Fees, P ı Full.	
×	\$0,00	00.02	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	00.02	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0.00	Coll Fees Lo Paid/Bal P			Current Balance	Collection Fees Balance Interest Balance Principal Balance Insurance Balance		ayments, Cre	
Page 1 of 2	\$0.00	S0.00	\$0.00	00 0\$	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	S0,00	Loan Fees CAP Paid/Bal Paic			ance \$88	6 6		Show: New/Inactive, Fees, Payments, Credits, Due Date Changes, Pay In Full.	
of 2	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	CAB Int Insurance Paid/Bal Paid/Bal			\$889.58	\$0.00 \$389.58 \$500.00 \$0.00		Û	

Case 2:18-cv-01103 Filed 07/18/18 Page 3 of 4 Document 1-1

0007823

03 Sep 2015 WEB90 13:36:17	03 Sep 2015 WEB90 13:36:17	03 Sep 2015 *EC 90 20:23:06	11 Sep 2015 *El 90 19:42:02	12 Sep 2015 *LM90 04:18:44	Date Tir Lc 16 Sep 2015 *ER90 12:36:29
0 New Loan (ACH) #25833428	0 Loan Approved	Ľ	0 Scheduled ACH Sent \$78.25 Result R02. Account Closed SCM 3780 ID	0 Loan Due Date Due Date 11 Sep Payment Past Due \$78.25	Tir Loc Description ER90 Scheduled ACH Not Paid Result R02, Account Closed SCM 3780 78.2500 Result R02, Account Closed 9523
\$500,00	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0.00	<u>Chra</u> \$0.00
					Pmt
\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$539.45	\$544.38	Bal \$564.10
					Coll Stat Added To
(\$500.00) \$500.00	\$500,00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	Principal Paid/Bal \$500.00
\$0 0000	\$0,0000	\$0,0000	\$39.4520	\$44.3835	Interest Paid/Bal \$64.1095
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0.00	Coll Fees Paid/Bal \$0.00
30.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Loan Fees Paid/Bal \$0.00
					CAB Int Paid/Bai
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0,00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Insurance Paid/Bal \$0.00

/PeyHistory.xod

Case 2:18-cv-01103 Filed 07/18/18 Page 4 of 4 Document 1-1

Page 2 of 2

00007824

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The IS 44 civil cover sheet and the informat	ion contained herein neither replace nor suppl	lement the filing and service of pleadings or other pape	rs as required by law except as provided
by local rules of court. This form, approved	d by the Judicial Conference of the United Star	lement the filing and service of pleadings or other paper tes in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clo	erk of Court for the purpose of initiating
the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTION	IS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)	1 / 1	1 1 2
Place on V in the enprepriete Per:	Croop Pay Division	Milwaukaa Division	

Place an X in the appropriate	Box: Green	Bay Division		Ŀ	Milwaukee Division	
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS				DEFENDANTS		
GINA ALLE	NDE			AD ASTRA I	RECOVERY SERV	ICES INC
(E (c) Attorney's (Firm Name	c of First Listed Plaintiff XCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CA , Address, and Telephone Numb 3620 E. Layton Ave., Cudahy, WI	21)		NOTE: IN LANI	of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES (D CONDEMNATION CASES, US INVOLVED.	
	ne (414) 482-8001-Facsimile					
II. BASIS OF JURISE	DICTION (Place an "X"	n One Box Only)		(For Diversity Cases Only)	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	✓ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government)	Not a Party)		P	PTF DEF 1 1 Incorporated or Pr of Business In This	PTF DEF
2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenshi	p of Parties in Item III)	Citize	en of Another State	2 2 Incorporated and I of Business In A	
				en or Subject of a reign Country	3 3 Foreign Nation	6 6
IV. NATURE OF SUI	T (Place an "X" in One Box O		FO	ORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
 110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise REAL PROPERTY 210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 245 Tort Product Liability 290 All Other Real Property 	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel &	PERSONAL INJURY 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal 1njury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERT 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage 385 Property Damage PRISONER PETITION 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence Habcas Corpus: 530 General 535 Death Penalty 540 Mandamus & Othe 555 Prison Condition	Image: filler	0 Agriculture 0 Other Food & Drug 5 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 0 Liquor Laws 0 R.R. & Truck 0 Airline Regs. 0 Occupational Safety/Health 0 Other LABOR 0 Fair Labor Standards Act 0 Labor/Mgmt. Relations 0 Labor/Mgmt. Reporting & Disclosure Act 10 Caliway Labor Act 10 Other Labor Litigation 1 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act IMMIGRATION 2 Naturalization Application 3 Habeas Corpus - Alien Detainee 5 Other Immigration Actions	422 Appeal 28 USC 158 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS 820 Copyrights 830 Patent 840 Trademark SOCIAL SECURITY 861 H1A (1395ff) 862 Black Lung (923) 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) 864 SSID Title XVI 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit 490 Cable/Sat TV 810 Selective Service 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410 890 Other Statutory Actions 891 Agricultural Acts 892 Economic Stabilization Act 895 Freedom of Information Act 900 Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
☑ 1 Original □ 2 R	tate Court	Appellate Court	Reop	pened (speci		Judgment
VI. CAUSE OF ACTI	ON 15 U.S.C. 1692 et seq Brief description of ca	-	-		nal statutes unless diversity):	
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:		IS A CLASS ACTION		EMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	if demanded in complaint: : ☑ Yes ☐ No
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKET NUMBER	
DATE July 18, 2018		signature of att /s/ Mark A				
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY RECEIPT #A	Case 2:18-cv-	01103 Filed 0	7/18/ :	18 P age ^{JUDGE}	2 Document 1-2	DGE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

I. (a) Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.

(b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)

(c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".

II. Jurisdiction. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.C.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.)

III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.

IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerks in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.

V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.

Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment. (7) Check this box for an appeal from a magistrate judge's decision.

 VI.
 Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes

 unless diversity.
 Example:
 U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553 Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service

VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.

Demand. In this space enter the dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded or indicate other demand such as a preliminary injunction.

Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.

VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the Eastern District of Wisconsin

GINA ALLENDE, Plaintiff(s) V.)))))	Civil Action No.	18-cv-1103
AD ASTRA RECOVERY SERVICES INC, Defendant(s))))		

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address)

AD ASTRA RECOVERY SERVICES INC c/o NATIONAL REGISTERED AGENTS, INC. 301 S. Bedford St, Suite 1 Madison, Wisconsin 53703

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you receive it) – or 60 days if you are the United States or a United States agency, or an officer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(a)(2) or (3) – you must serve on the plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The answer or motion must be served on the plaintiff or the plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are: John D. Blythin Ademi & O'Beilly, LLP

Ademi & O'Reilly, LLP 3620 East Layton Avenue Cudahy, WI 53110

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

STEPHEN C. DRIES, CLERK OF COURT

Date:

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 18-cv-1103

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(l))

This summons and the attached complaint for (name of individual and title, if any):

□ I personally served	the summons and the attached con	iplaint on the individual at (place):	
		On (date)	; or
\Box I left the summons	and the attached complaint at the in	ndividual's residence or usual place of a	abode with (nan
	, a p	erson of suitable age and discretion wh	o resides there,
on (date)	, and mailed a copy	to the individual's last known address;	or
\Box I served the summer	ons and the attached complaint on (name of individual)	
who is designated by la	aw to accept service of process on l	ehalf of (name of organization)	
		on (date)	; or
☐ I returned the sum	nons unexecuted because		
			,
Other (<i>specify</i>):			
My fees are \$	for travel and \$	for services, for a total of \$	0.00
I declare under penalty	of perjury that this information is	rue.	
		Server's signature	
		server's signature	
		Printed name and title	

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc.:

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Ad Astra Recovery Services Sued Over Collection Letter's Allegedly False Implications</u>