

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

BELA AVEZBADALOV, on behalf of
herself and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

PORTFOLIO RECOVERY ASSOCIATES,
LLC

Defendants.

CIVIL ACTION

**CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
AND
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff BELA AVEZBADALOV (hereinafter, “Plaintiff”), a New York resident, brings this class action complaint by and through her attorney, Daniel Cohen, PLLC, against Defendant PORTFOLIO RECOVERY ASSOCIATES, LLC (hereinafter “Defendant”), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff’s counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff’s personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Congress enacted the FDCPA in 1977 in response to the “abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors.” 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a). At that time, Congress was concerned that “abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy.” *Id.* Congress concluded that “existing laws . . . [we]re inadequate to protect consumers,” and that “the effective collection of debts” does not require “misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices.” 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).
2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt

collection practices, but also to “insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged.” *Id.* § 1692(e). After determining that the existing consumer protection laws were inadequate, *id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.* and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. If applicable, the Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the state law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2).

NATURE OF THE ACTION

5. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of New York consumers seeking redress for Defendant’s actions of using an unfair and unconscionable means to collect a debt.
6. Defendant's actions violated § 1692 *et seq.* of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act (“FDCPA”) which prohibits debt collectors from engaging in abusive, deceptive and unfair practices.
7. Plaintiff is seeking damages, and declaratory and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

8. Plaintiff is a natural person and a resident of the State of New York, and is a “Consumer” as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)(3).
9. Defendant is a collection agency with its principal office located at 120 Corporate Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23502.
10. Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.

11. Defendant is a “debt collector,” as defined under the FDCPA under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

12. Plaintiff brings claims, pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (hereinafter “FRCP”)

Rule 23, individually and on behalf of the following consumer class (the “Class”):

- All New York consumers who received a collection Letter from Defendant attempting to collect an obligation owed to or allegedly owed to Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC, that contains the alleged violation arising from Defendant's failure to adequately advise the consumer of their right to dispute the debt in violation of 15 U.S.C. §1692e, *et seq.*
- The Class period begins one year to the filing of this Action.

13. The Class satisfies all the requirements of Rule 23 of the FRCP for maintaining a class action:

- Upon information and belief, the Class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable because there are hundreds and/or thousands of persons who have received debt collection Letter and/or notices from Defendant that fail to adequately advise the consumer of their right to dispute the debt in violation of the FDCPA. Plaintiff is complaining of a standard form Letter and/or notice that is sent to hundreds of persons (*See Exhibit A*, except that the undersigned attorney has, in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 partially redacted the financial account numbers in an effort to protect Plaintiff's privacy);
- There are questions of law and fact which are common to the Class and which predominate over questions affecting any individual Class member. These common questions of law and fact include, without limitation:
 - a. Whether Defendant violated various provisions of the FDCPA;
 - b. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have been injured by Defendant's

conduct;

c. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have sustained damages and are entitled to restitution as a result of Defendant's wrongdoing and if so, what is the proper measure and appropriate statutory formula to be applied in determining such damages and restitution; and

d. Whether Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to declaratory and/or injunctive relief.

- Plaintiff's claims are typical of the Class, which all arise from the same operative facts and are based on the same legal theories.
- Plaintiff has no interest adverse or antagonistic to the interest of the other members of the Class.
- Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interest of the Class and has retained experienced and competent attorneys to represent the Class.
- A Class Action is superior to other methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the claims herein asserted. Plaintiff anticipates that no unusual difficulties are likely to be encountered in the management of this class action.
- A Class Action will permit large numbers of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum simultaneously and without the duplication of effort and expense that numerous individual actions would engender. Class treatment will also permit the adjudication of relatively small claims by many Class members who could not otherwise afford to seek legal redress for the wrongs complained of herein. Absent a Class Action, class members will continue to suffer losses of statutory protected rights as well as monetary damages. If

Defendant's conduct is allowed to proceed without remedy they will continue to reap and retain the proceeds of their ill-gotten gains.

- Defendant has acted on grounds generally applicable to the entire Class, thereby making appropriate final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief with respect to the Class as a whole.

ALLEGATIONS OF FACT PARTICULAR TO BELA AVEZBADALOV

14. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "13" herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
15. Defendant collects and attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and Internet.
16. Upon information and belief, within the last year Defendant commenced efforts to collect an alleged consumer "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C. 1692a(5), when it mailed a Collection Letter to Plaintiff seeking to collect on an unpaid account originally owed to Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC.
17. On or around July 20, 2016, Defendant sent Plaintiff a collection letter (the "Letter"). *See* Exhibit A.
18. The Letter was sent or caused to be sent by persons employed by Defendant, as "any person that uses any instrumentality of interstate commerce or the mails in any business the principal purpose of which is the collection of any debts..." as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(6).
19. The Letter is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2).
20. As a result of the following Counts Defendant violated the FDCPA.

Firsts Count
15 U.S.C. §1692e
Falsely Suggesting a Dispute Must be Made in Writing

21. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “20” herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
22. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e prohibits a debt collector from using any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt.
23. While § 1692e specifically prohibits certain practices, the list is non-exhaustive, and does not preclude a claim of falsity or deception based on non-enumerated practice.
24. For purposes of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e, the failure to clearly provide the consumer with complete and accurate information notifying them of their rights and obligations is unfair and deceptive to the least sophisticated consumer.
25. Collection notices are deceptive if they can be reasonably read to have two or more different meanings, one of which is inaccurate.
26. The question of whether a collection Letter is deceptive is determined from the perspective of the “least sophisticated consumer.”
27. Because the collection Letter in the instant case was reasonably susceptible to an inaccurate reading concerning Plaintiff’s right to dispute the debt by something other than in writing, it is deceptive within the meaning of the FDCPA.
28. It is a violation of the FDCPA to include language in the Letter that, when examined from the perspective of the least sophisticated consumer, leads the least sophisticated consumer to believe that her dispute must be communicated in writing.
29. Defendant’s July 20, 2016 communication provides, on the back thereof, in bold type-face:

DISPUTES CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS: Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC,
Disputes Department 140 Corporate Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23502

Disputes Dept. E-Mail Address: PRA_Disputes@portfoliorecovery.com

30. Disputes need not be in writing. *Hooks v. Forman, Holt, Eliades & Ravin, LLC*, 717 F.3d 282 (2d Cir. 2013).
31. When confronted with Defendant's Letter which states, "**DISPUTES CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:**" it is reasonable for the least sophisticated consumer to believe that all disputes would be needed in writing. That is inaccurate since you can also call to orally dispute the debt.
32. When confronted with Defendant's Letter which states, "**DISPUTES CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:**" it would be reasonable for the least sophisticated consumer to understand that statement to mean that in order to dispute the debt she must send it in writing. That would be inaccurate since she can dispute the debt verbally.
33. The least sophisticated consumer would be unsure as to whether a writing or oral communication is necessary to dispute the underlying debt.
34. The least sophisticated consumer would likely be deceived in a material way by Defendant's conduct.
35. Because the Letter, for the reasons described above, could be read by the least sophisticated consumer to have two or more meanings, one of which is inaccurate, it violates 15 U.S.C. § 1692e. *See Balke v. Alliance One Receivables Management, Inc.*, No. 16-CV 5624(ADS)(AKT), 2017 WL 2634653 (E.D.N.Y. June 19, 2017).

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants as follows:

- (a) Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative and Daniel Cohen, PLLC, as Class Counsel;
- (b) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;
- (c) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;

- (d) Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;
- (e) Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
- (f) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Daniel Cohen
Daniel Cohen, Esq.
Daniel Cohen, PLLC
300 Cadman Plaza W, 12th floor
Brooklyn, New York 11201
Phone: (646) 645-8482
Fax: (347) 665-1545
Email: Dan@dccohen.com
Attorney for Plaintiff

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

/s/ Daniel Cohen
Daniel Cohen, Esq.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York
July 19, 2017

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings 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. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

BELA AVEZBADALOV, on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

DANIEL COHEN, PLLC, 300 Cadman Plaza West, 12th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201, (646) 645-8482

DEFENDANTS

PORTFOLIO RECOVERY ASSOCIATES, LLC

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff, 2 U.S. Government Defendant, 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party), 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

- Citizen of This State, Citizen of Another State, Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country, PTF DEF, Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State, Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State, Foreign Nation

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Table with 5 columns: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, TORTS, CIVIL RIGHTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES. Includes various legal categories and checkboxes.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding, 2 Removed from State Court, 3 Remanded from Appellate Court, 4 Reinstated or Reopened, 5 Transferred from Another District (specify), 6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer, 8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): 15 USC 1692

Brief description of cause: Defendant violated the FDCPA

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P. DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions): JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE 07/19/2017 SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD /s/ Daniel Cohen

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

CERTIFICATION OF ARBITRATION ELIGIBILITY

Local Arbitration Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a certification to the contrary is filed.

I, DANIEL COHEN, counsel for PLAINTIFF, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):

- monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason: Questions of law rather than questions of fact predominate

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1

Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more of its stocks:

NONE

RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form)

Please list all cases that are arguably related pursuant to Division of Business Rule 50.3.1 in Section VIII on the front of this form. Rule 50.3.1 (a) provides that "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or because the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the same judge and magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that " A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil case: (A) involves identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power of a judge to determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the court."

NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)

- 1.) Is the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk County? NO
2.) If you answered "no" above:
a) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk County? NO
b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? YES

If your answer to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County?

(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant contacts).

BAR ADMISSION

I am currently admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.

- Yes No

Are you currently the subject of any disciplinary action (s) in this or any other state or federal court?

- Yes (If yes, please explain) No

I certify the accuracy of all information provided above.

Signature: /s/ Daniel Cohen

AO 440 (Rev. 06/12) Summons in a Civil Action

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of New York

BELA AVEZBADALOV, on behalf of herself and all others
similarly situated

Plaintiff(s)

v.

Civil Action No.

PORTFOLIO RECOVERY ASSOCIATES, LLC

Defendant(s)

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address)

PORTFOLIO RECOVERY ASSOCIATES, LLC
C/O CORPORATION SERVICE COMPANY
80 STATE STREET
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207

A lawsuit has been filed against you.

Within 21 days after service of this summons on you (not counting the day you received 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 plaintiff's attorney, whose name and address are:

DANIEL COHEN, PLLC
300 CADMAN PLAZA WEST
12TH FLOOR
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201

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.

DOUGLAS C. PALMER
CLERK OF COURT

Date:

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. _____

PROOF OF SERVICE

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

This summons for *(name of individual and title, if any)* _____
was received by me on *(date)* _____.

I personally served the summons on the individual at *(place)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____; or

I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with *(name)* _____
_____, a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,
on *(date)* _____, and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or

I served the summons on *(name of individual)* _____, who is
designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of *(name of organization)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____; or

I returned the summons unexecuted because _____; or

Other *(specify)*:

My fees are \$ _____ for travel and \$ _____ for services, for a total of \$ _____ 0.00 _____.

I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.

Date: _____

Server's signature

Printed name and title

Server's address

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC



Account Details

July 20, 2016

Account Number [REDACTED] 6878
 SELLER: CAPITAL ONE BANK (USA) N.A.
 ORIGINAL CREDITOR: CAPITAL ONE BANK (USA) N.A.
 Original Account Number [REDACTED] 6878
 Last Payment Date or Default Date: 06/06/2013
 Creditor to Whom Debt is Owed: Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC.
 Current Balance Due: \$1,707.57

Dear BELA AVEZBADALOV,

Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC ("PRA, LLC") is contacting you to collect the balance owed on your account.

Life happens and at times customers may fall behind on financial commitments. We understand. We are committed to working with you to design a plan that fits your budget.

Our account representatives are waiting. Call us today.

Sincerely,
PRA, LLC

Customer Service

Paying your bill is easy with any of these options:

-  **Pay by phone**
Call Diann R Artis at 1-800-772-1413 to make payment arrangements.
-  **Pay online** - anytime by visiting:
www.portfoliorecovery.com
-  **Pay by mail** - checks and payments to:
Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC, P.O. Box 12914,
Norfolk, VA 23541

Account Offers



Savings Plan
 Pay \$227.68 for
 6 consecutive months and
SAVE \$341.49



Savings Plan
 Pay \$120.95 for
 12 consecutive months and
SAVE \$256.17



Savings Plan
 Pay \$85.38 for
 18 consecutive months and
SAVE \$170.73

Your first payment must be received NO LATER than: 08/26/2016

The savings will be applied to the balance and your account will be considered "Settled in Full" after your final payment is successfully posted.
*We are not obligated to renew this offer.

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

NOTICE: SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION

DEPT 922 4307750516072
PO BOX 4115
CONCORD CA 94524

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

#BWNFTZF #9224307750516072#



BELA AVEZBADALOV



Account Number: [REDACTED] 6878

Payment Amount: _____

51C2
PORTFOLIO RECOVERY ASSOCIATES LLC.
P.O. Box 12914
Norfolk VA 23541

HOURS OF OPERATION (EST): 8 AM to 11 PM Mon.-Fri., 8 AM to 8 PM Sat., 11 AM to 10 PM Sun.

COMPANY ADDRESS: Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC, 120 Corporate Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23502

MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO: Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC

SEND ALL PAYMENTS TO: Portfolio Recovery Associates, LLC, P.O. Box 12914, Norfolk, VA 23541

DISPUTES CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS: 140 Corporate Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23502

Disputes Dept. E-Mail Address: PRA_Disputes@portfoliorecovery.com

Quality Service Specialists Available Mon. - Fri. 8 AM TO 5 PM (EST)

Not happy with the way you were treated? Our company strives to provide professional and courteous service to all our customers. Contact one of our staff to discuss issues related to our quality of service to you by phone at (866) 925-7109 or by e-mail at qualityservice@portfoliorecovery.com.

PRIVACY NOTICE: We collect certain personal information about you from the following sources: (a) information we received from you; (b) information about your transactions with our affiliates, others, or us; (c) information we receive from consumer reporting agencies. We do not disclose any nonpublic personal information about our customers or former customers to anyone, except as permitted by law. We restrict access to nonpublic information about you to those employees and entities that need to know that information in order to collect your account. We maintain physical, electronic and procedural safeguards that comply with federal regulations to guard your nonpublic personal information.

NOTICE: We are required under state law to notify consumers of the following rights. This list does not include a complete list of rights consumers have under state and federal laws:

NEW YORK CITY: City of New York License Numbers 1096994, 1394695, 1394697, 1394696, 1394698, 1394700, 1394699, 1394694.

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Portfolio Recovery Associates Allegedly Rejects Verbal Disputes, Suit Says](#)
