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

RHONDA BOWER, Individually and on Behalf	Case No.: 16-cv-1441
of All Others Similarly Situated,	CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
Plaintiff,	
vs.	
MERCANTILE ADJUSTMENT BUREAU, LLC,	Jury Trial Demanded
Defendant.	

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").

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 and 1337. Venue in this District is proper in that Defendant directed its collection efforts into the District.

PARTIES

- 3. Plaintiff Rhonda Bower 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.
- 5. Defendant Mercantile Adjustment Bureau, LLC ("Mercantile") is a debt collection agency with its principal place of business located at 165 Lawrence Bell Dr., Suite 100, Williamsville, NY 14221.

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

FACTS

- 7. Mercantile mailed a debt collection letter to Plaintiff regarding an alleged debt, allegedly owed to "Bank of America, N.A." ("BOA"). A copy of this letter is attached to this complaint as Exhibit A.
- 8. The alleged debt identified in <u>Exhibit A</u> is an alleged credit card account, alleged owed to BOA, and used only for personal, family or household purposes.
- 9. 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.
- 10. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form debt collection letter used by Mercantile to attempt to collect alleged debts.
- 11. Exhibit A is a "self-mailer." A self-mailer is "a folder that can be sent by mail without enclosure in an envelope by use of a gummed sticker or a precanceled stamp to hold the leaves together."
- 12. Self-mailers are commonly used in the debt collection industry, and by Mercantile.
 - 13. <u>Exhibit A</u> is deceptively designed.
 - 14. Exhibit A states:

Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will obtain verification of the debt or obtain a copy of a judgment and mail you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request of this office in writing within 30 days after receiving this notice this office will provide you with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

- 15. However, the date upon which Mercantile sent Exhibit A is cut off once the consumer opens the self-mailer.
- 16. Upon information and belief, many consumers who attempt to open Exhibit A, open it in a way that makes it impossible to know when the letter was sent.
- 17. The consumer would not know whether the 30-day validation period in which to dispute the alleged debt referred to in the letter has lapsed because the date is unreadable.
- 18. Upon information and belief, Mercantile knew or should have known that a substantial number of consumers receiving Exhibit A would open the letter such that the date the letter was sent would be rendered illegible.
 - 19. Plaintiff was confused by Exhibit A.
- 20. Plaintiff had to spend time and money investigating Exhibit A, and the consequences of any potential responses to Exhibit A.
- 21. 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>.
- 22. The FDCPA creates substantive rights for consumers; violations cause injury to consumers, and such injuries are concrete and particularized. *Quinn v. Specialized Loan Servicing, LLC*, No. 16 C 2021, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 107299 *8-13 (N.D. III. 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. III. 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. Ill. 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).
- 23. 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").
- 24. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e generally prohibits "any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt."
- 25. 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."
- 26. 15 U.S.C. § 1692f generally prohibits "unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt."

COUNT I - FDCPA

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

- 28. Mercantile's self-mailer debt collection letter is deceptively designed to render the date upon which the letter was sent unreadable.
- 29. A significant number of consumers, if not a majority, open Exhibit A in a way that makes it impossible to know when the letter was sent.
- 30. A significant number of consumers determine deadlines to act based upon the dates printed in the collection letters. Exhibit A makes that method impossible.
- 31. The unreadable date, along with the 30-day validation notice, would confuse the unsophisticated consumer. The consumer would not know whether the 30-day validation period in which to dispute the alleged debt referred to in the letter has lapsed because the date is unreadable.
 - 32. The complete and correct date does not appear anywhere in Exhibit A.
 - 33. Mercantile violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10) and 1692f.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- 34. 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 Exhibit A to the complaint in this action, (c) seeking to collect a debt for personal, family or household purposes, (d) on or after October 27, 2015, up to and including October 27, 2016, (e) that was not returned by the postal service.
- 35. The Class is so numerous that joinder is impracticable. On information and belief, there are more than 50 members of the Class.
- 36. There are questions of law and fact common to the members of the class, which common questions predominate over any questions that affect only individual class members. The predominant common question is whether the Defendant complied with 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e and 1692f.

- 37. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members. All are based on the same factual and legal theories.
- 38. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the Class members. Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in consumer credit and debt collection abuse cases.
- 39. A class action is superior to other alternative methods of adjudicating this dispute. Individual cases are not economically feasible.

JURY DEMAND

40. 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: October 27, 2016 ADEMI & O'REILLY, LLP

By: /S/ John D. Blythin

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John D. Blythin (SBN 1046105)
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meldridge@ademilaw.com dmorris@ademilaw.com

EXHIBIT A

Creditor:	Bank of America, N.A.
Account Number:	******7746
Reference Number:	9 B00
Current Balance:	\$2,081.08
Amount Enclosed: \$	



165 Lawrence Bell Drive, Suite 100 Williamsville, NY 14221-7900 1-866-513-9461

Please send payment or correspondence to:

Mercantile Adjustment Bureau, LLC PO Box 9055

Williamsville NY 14231-9055

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR PAYMENT

Date: 08/08/20

Rhonda L Bower,

Bank of America has placed the above account with Mercantile Adjustment Bureau, LLC to initiate collection to recover the total amount due as noted above.

We are available to work with you to help you satisfy the debt in a manner that is fair and equitable to all parties. Our account representatives are ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

Joe Cavalieri

Phone Number: 1-866-513-9461

Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt or any portion thereof, this office will obtain verification of the debt or obtain a copy of a judgment and mail you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request of this office in writing within 30 days after receiving this notice this office will provide you with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

Calls to or from this company may be monitored or recorded.

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

To Open This Side - Slide Finger Under This Edge

35A RUST LANE BOERNE, TX 78006-8202



FIRST CLASS MAIL AUTO US POSTAGE PAID NIAGARA FALLS, NY PERMIT NO. 1

1 MB *A-01-1FE-BM-27178-95

BOWER, RHONDA L
4537 W RAMSEY AVE APT 96
GREENDALE WI 53129-2041



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 dealers sheet.

Place an X in the appropriate H		Bay Division	<u> </u>	Milwaukee Division			
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS				
Rhonda Bower				Mercantile Adjustment Bureau, LLC			
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Milwaukee (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)			NOTE: IN LANI	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.			
Ademi & O'Reilly, LLP, 3	, Address, and Telephone Numbe 3620 E. Layton Ave., Cudahy, WI e (414) 482-8001-Facsimile		Attorneys (If Known)				
II. BASIS OF JURISD 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	PICTION (Place an "X" i 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government N	,	(For Diversity Cases Only)	RINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant) PTF DEF rincipal Place 4 4		
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship	p of Parties in Item III)	_	of Business In Thi 2 Incorporated and I of Business In A	Principal Place 5 5 Another State		
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3 Soreign Nation	6 6		
IV. NATURE OF SUIT	Γ (Place an "X" in One Box Or		FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES		
196 Franchise REAL PROPERTY 210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability	PERSONAL INJURY 310 Airplane 315 Airplane Product Liability 320 Assault, Libel & Slander 330 Federal Employers' Liability 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury CIVIL RIGHTS 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations 444 Welfare 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other 440 Other Civil Rights	PERSONAL INJURY 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY 370 Other Fraud 371 Truth in Lending 380 Other Personal Property Damage Product Liability PRISONER PETITIONS 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence Habeas Corpus: 530 General 535 Death Penalty 540 Mandamus & Other 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition	610 Agriculture 620 Other Food & Drug 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 630 Liquor Laws 640 R.R. & Truck 650 Airline Regs. 660 Occupational Safety/Health 690 Other LABOR 710 Fair Labor Standards Act 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations 730 Labor/Mgmt. Reporting & Disclosure Act 740 Railway Labor Act 790 Other Labor Litigation 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act IMMIGRATION 462 Naturalization Application 463 Habeas Corpus - Alien Detainee 465 Other Immigration Actions	422 Appeal 28 USC 158 423 Withdrawal	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 893 Environmental Matters 894 Energy Allocation Act 895 Freedom of Information Act 900Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes		
☑ 1 Original ☐ 2 Re	ON Cite the U.S. Civil Sta 15 U.S.C. 1692 et seq Brief description of ca Violation of Fair Debt C	Appellate Court utute under which you are finalse: Collection Practices Act IS A CLASS ACTION		nal statutes unless diversity):	Judgment rif demanded in complaint:		
VIII. RELATED CASI	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER			
DATE		SIGNATURE OF ATTOR	NEY OF RECORD	_			
October 27, 2016	3	s/ John D. Bl	ythin				

- Case 2:16-cy-01441 Filed 10/27/16 Page 1 of 2 Document 1-2

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

	Lastem Distri	et or wisconsin	
Rhonda Boy	ver)	
Plaintiff)	
v.) Civil Action No	o. 16-cv-1441
Marcantila Adjustment	Ruran IIC)	
Mercantile Adjustment Bureau, LLC Defendant)	
Bejonauni			
	SUMMONS IN	A CIVIL ACTION	
To: (Defendant's name and address)	Mercantile Adjustment Burea c/o NATIONAL REGISTER 8020 Excelsior Dr. Ste. 200 Madison , WI 53717		
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: John D. Blythin Ademi & O'Reilly, LLP 3620 East Layton Avenue Cudahy, WI 53110 (414) 482-8000-Telephone			
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.			
		CLERK OF	COURT
Date:			ignature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk
		.5	ishmare of Clerk of Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 16-cv-1441

PROOF OF SERVICE

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

	This summons for (nar	ne of individual and title, if any)					
was re	ceived 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 summo	ons on (name of individual)			, who is		
	designated by law to a	accept service of process on bel	nalf of (name of organization)		_		
			on (date)	; or			
	☐ I returned the sumr	mons 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				
			20.000				
			Printed name and title				
			Server's address				

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:

Save As...

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: Mercantile Adjustment Bureau Hit with FDCPA Class Action