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3	James M. Treglio (SBN 228077)	08/15/2023 at 11:52:30 PM Clerk of the Superior Court
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8	SUPERIOR COUL	RT OF CALIFORNIA
9	BY AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO	
10	IEEEDEV CHEN on behalf of himself and	LCASE NO 37-2023-00035089-CU-MC-CTL
11	JEFFREY CHEN, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated	CASE NO.
12	Plaintiff,	CLASS COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATIONS OF:
13	V	(1) THE CONSUMER LEGAL
14	BANK OF AMERICA CORPORATION, a	RÉMEDIES ACT (Civil Code § 1750, et seq.,);
15	Delaware corporation; and DOES 1-100, inclusive	(2) THE FALSE ADVERTISING LAW
16	Defendants.	(Business and Professions Code § 17500, et seq.,); and
17		(3) THE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW (Business & Professions Code §
18		17200, et seq.).
19		DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL
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CLASS COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL		

Class Representative Plaintiff Jeffrey Chen ("Plaintiff"), by and through his attorneys, individually and on behalf of others similarly situated, alleges upon information and belief as follows:

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INTRODUCTION

This is a consumer class complaint seeking restitution of all monies unlawfully

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earned by Defendant Bank of America Corporation ("BOA" and/or "Defendants") for the Bill Pay autopay program ("Bill Pay") on their credit cards ("Credit Card"). Defendants have consistently failed to inform the public, including Plaintiff, that Bill Pay will be automatically cancelled after a certain amount of time that a Credit Card is inactive.

- 2. This is a class action alleging violations of the Consumer Legal Remedies Act ("CLRA"), Civil Code § 1750, et seq., the False Advertising Law ("FAL"), Business & Professions Code § 17500, et seq., and the Unfair Competition Law ("UCL"), Business & Professions Code §17200, et seq., that seeks, among other things, injunctive relief, restitution, and disgorgement to remedy Plaintiff, a holder of the Credit Card resulting decades of Defendants' on-going failure to inform their clients that Bill Pay will be automatically cancelled after a certain amount of time that a Credit Card is inactive. This action further seeks to remedy Defendants' unfair, unlawful, and fraudulent business practices, and to ensure that all California consumers are warned that their Bill Pay registration will be automatically cancelled if they do not use their Credit Card for a certain period of time before registering for Bill Pay and/or availing of the Credit Card.
- 3. This class action is brought on behalf of Plaintiff and a putative class defined as all clients of Defendant whose credit cards are enrolled under the Bill Pay autopay program ("the "Class," or the "Class Members").
- Class Representative Plaintiff does not seek any relief greater than or different from 4. the relief sought for the Class of which Plaintiff is a member. The action, if successful, will enforce an important right affecting the public interest and would confer a significant benefit, whether pecuniary or non-pecuniary, for a large class of persons. Private enforcement is necessary and places a disproportionate financial burden on Class Representative Plaintiff in relation to Class Representative Plaintiff's stake in the matter.

PARTIES, VENUE AND JURISDICTION

- 5. This Court has jurisdiction over this action under California Code of Civil Procedure § 410.10. The aggregated amount of damages incurred by Plaintiff and the Class exceeds the \$25,000 jurisdictional minimum of this Court. The amount in controversy as to the Plaintiff individually and each individual Class member does not exceed \$75,000, including interest and any pro rata award of attorneys' fees, costs, and damages. Venue is proper in this Court under California Bus. & Prof. Code § 17203, Code of Civil Procedure §§ 395(a) and 395.5 because Defendant does business in the State of California and in the County of San Diego. Defendant to arise in the County of San Diego, which has caused both obligations and liability of Defendant to arise in the County of San Diego.
- 6. Class Representative Plaintiff Jeffrey Chen is a citizen of the State of California, and a resident of San Diego County. For several years now, Plaintiff is a holder of Defendant's Credit Card and enrolled in the Bill Pay autopay program. In or about June 2023, Plaintiff found out that his autopay registration was automatically cancelled and he was unenrolled from the Bill Pay program since he has not used his Credit Card for about a year now. Plaintiff belatedly found out that his enrolled autopay accounts were no longer being paid, causing them to be overdue and reported to the credit bureaus, thereby impacting Plaintiff's credit rating. Had Plaintiff been aware that Bill Pay would be automatically cancelled due to non-use of the Credit Card, Plaintiff would never have enrolled in the program.
- 7. Defendant Bank of America Corporation is a Delaware corporation that is transacting and conducting substantial business within the State of California. Bank of America is one of the world's largest financial institutions, serving individuals, small- and middle-market businesses and large corporations with a full range of banking, investing, asset management and other financial and risk management products and services. The company serves approximately 56 million U.S. consumer and small business relationships. It is among the world's leading wealth management companies and is a global leader in corporate and investment banking and trading. Among the products Defendants offer is a Credit Card that can be enrolled in a Bill Pay autopay program.

- 8. At all pertinent times, Defendants were engaged in the business of marketing, promoting, selling, and/or distributing the Credit Card. At all pertinent times, Defendants regularly transacted, solicited, and conducted business in all States of the United States, including the State of California.
- 9. Defendants have derived substantial revenue from goods and products purchased and used in the State of California. Defendants expected or should have expected its acts to have consequences within the State of California, and derived substantial revenue from interstate commerce.
- 10. Defendants DOES 1-100 are the fictitious names of corporations, partnerships or other business entities or organizations whose identities are not presently known and that participated in a conspiracy with other corporations, partnerships or other business entities or organizations, including the named Defendants herein, and/or marketed, supplied, distributed, and/or otherwise placed in the stream of commerce the Credit Card with the Bill Pay autopay program without warnings to which Plaintiff and the consuming public in this State about the automatic cancellation of the Bill Pay registration for non-use of the Credit Card.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

- 11. Defendants offer the Credit Card to consumers and promotes their Bill Pay autopay program where clients can enroll their bills for payment with a BOA checking and/or savings account, including BOA credit cards, while BOA credit cards can be paid with a BOA or external bank account. Plaintiff and the Class Members are made to sign Credit Card Agreements and other documents upon enrollment in the Bill Pay program. However, none of these documents mention that the Bill Pay enrollment will be automatically cancelled if the Credit Card is not used for a certain period of time.
- program likewise do not mention that clients are required to use their Credit Card on a regular basis to keep their Bill Pay registrations active. For instance, in the Mobile and Online Bill Pay section of their website, Defendants only talk about the steps on how to pay a bill using Bill Pay, without mentioning any conditions to maintain the Bill Pay enrollment.

¹ https://promotions.bankofamerica.com/digitalbanking/mobilebanking/billpay, last visited on 6/11/2023.

- 13. Defendants' more detailed section on their website on the Bill Pay program contained in the How Online Bill Pay Works² section provides demos on how to use Bill Pay. Unfortunately, it is utterly lacking in providing warnings of how non-use of the Credit Card could lead to the automatic cancellation of the Bill Pay registration, non-payment of the enrolled bills causing them to be overdue, reported to the credit bureaus, and thereby affecting Plaintiff and the Class' credit standings.
- 14. Finally, Defendants provide a more detailed explanation on the features of Bill Pay and how it works in the Bill Pay and eBills FAQs³ section of their website. While Defendants could have used this space and opportunity to discuss the requirement of continued use of the Credit Card to keep the Bill Pay registration active, they negligently failed to do so.
- 15. Defendants made false statements to Plaintiff, the Class Members, the general public, news media and government agencies regarding the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program, which, in turn, proximately caused Plaintiff's and the Class Members' harm through intentional efforts to deceive the general public and regulatory authorities as to the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program.
- 16. Because of Defendants' false statements and lack of disclosure, Plaintiff and the Class Members were erroneously assured that their bills were being paid continuously even if they were not using the Credit Card, only to find out later on that their registration to the Bill Pay program has been automatically cancelled, their bills were now overdue, and their credit ratings affected because these overdue accounts were reported to the credit bureaus.
- 17. To this day, many Class Members and consumers remain unaware of Defendants' practice of automatically cancelling Bill Pay registrations when a Credit Card has not been used for a certain period of time.
- 18. Defendants have always failed to disclose in their marketing materials and Credit Card Agreement that Bill Pay registrations will be automatically cancelled due to Credit Card inactivity.
- 19. Defendants, collectively and through explicit agreement and consciously parallel behavior, controlled the level of knowledge and information available to the public, including

² https://promotions.bankofamerica.com/digitalbanking/mobilebanking/billpay, last visited 6/11/2023.

³ https://www.bankofamerica.com/online-banking/ebills-faqs/, last visited 6/11/2023.

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Plaintiff and the Class, regarding the automatic cancellation of Bill Pay registrations for non-use of a Credit Card.

- 20. Defendants, through agreement and consciously parallel behavior, knowingly and intentionally withheld this information on Bill Pay automatic cancellation, released, published and disseminated inaccurate and misleading data, containing misinformation and false statements regarding the need for Credit Card use to maintain a Bill Pay registration.
- 21. Defendants, deliberately chose to ignore the impact of this non-disclosure on the credit standings of Plaintiff and the Class Members and embarked upon a plan of deception intended to deprive the public at large in this State and elsewhere, including Plaintiff and the Class, of the effect of non-use of a Credit Card on the Bill Pay registration, which information remained in Defendants' exclusive possession and under their exclusive control.
- 22. Defendants conspired and/or acted in concert with each other and/or with other entities through agreement and consciously parallel behavior to falsely represent and withhold from consumers including Plaintiff and the Class Members information that a Bill Pay registration will be automatically cancelled if the Credit Card is not used for a certain period of time, which would lead to the bills linked to that registration to be overdue, reported to the credit bureaus, and thereby affecting their credit standings.
- 23. Plaintiff and the Class reasonably, and in good faith, relied upon the false and fraudulent representations made by Defendants regarding the Bill Pay program and were, therefore, deprived of an opportunity to make informed decisions concerning enrolling their Credit Card in the Bill Pay program.
- 24. Government regulatory bodies, and ultimately Plaintiff, the Class, and the general consuming public of this State, directly and/or indirectly relied upon Defendants' false representations regarding the Bill Pay program.
- 25. Defendants, through agreement and consciously-parallel-behavior, intentionally-failed to warn consumers, including Plaintiff, the Class, and the general consuming public in this State, of the serious effect that non-use of the Credit Card can have on their Bill Pay enrollment and their credit standing.

- 26. It should be further noted that BOA charges numerous fees if a Credit Card is past due such as a late fee of \$19 if the balance is \$100 or less, and up to a maximum of \$49 on a balance of \$5,000 or more; plus a penalty APR of 29.99% may apply to the current balance (not just the past-due balance, but everything posted to the credit card account).
- 27. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have knowingly exposed California consumers to risks of having negative and/or lower credit standings without clear and reasonable warning to such individuals.
- 28. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have failed to warn California consumers, including Plaintiff and the Class, on the effect of the non-use of a Credit Card on one's Bill Pay registration.
- 29. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have failed to place a clear and reasonable warning regarding the Bill Pay registration on their marketing materials.
- 30. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have failed to place a clear and reasonable warning regarding the Bill Pay registration on their branches.
- 31. At all times relevant to this action, Defendants have failed to place a clear and reasonable warning regarding the Bill Pay registration on their website and other social media accounts.
- 32. Further, by failing to place a clear and reasonable warning on their websites, products, or advertising, Defendants both actively and passively asserted to Plaintiff, the Class, and the general consuming public, that their bills will be automatically paid once they are enrolled in the Bill Pay program, when, as alleged above, they were not if the Credit Card was not used for a certain amount of time.
- 33. For several years now, Plaintiff is a holder of Defendant's Credit Card and enrolled in the Bill Pay autopay program. In or about June 2023, Plaintiff found out that his autopay registration was automatically cancelled and he was unenrolled from the Bill Pay program since he has not used his Credit Card for about a year now. Plaintiff belatedly found out that his enrolled autopay accounts were no longer being paid, causing them to be overdue and reported to the credit bureaus, thereby impacting Plaintiff's credit rating.

34. Upon further research, Plaintiff learned that this issue has impacted a lot of Defendants' clients, who, like Plaintiff, were unaware that because of the non-use of their Credit Card, their Bill Pay registrations were cancelled, their bills were left unpaid and overdue and reported to the credit bureaus, negatively affecting their credit ratings.

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

35. Class Representative Plaintiff brings this action on his own behalf and on behalf of all other persons similarly situated. The putative class that Class Representative Plaintiff seeks to represent is composed of:

All clients of Defendant whose credit cards are enrolled under the Bill Pay autopay program (hereinafter the "Class").

Excluded from the Class are the natural persons who are directors, and officers, of the Defendant. Class Representative Plaintiff expressly disclaims that he is seeking a class-wide recovery for personal injuries attributable to Defendant's conduct.

- 36. Plaintiff is informed and believes that the members of the Class are so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable. While the exact number of the Class members is unknown to Class Representative Plaintiff at this time, such information can be ascertained through appropriate discovery, from records maintained by Defendant.
- 37. There is a well-defined community of interest among the members of the Class because common questions of law and fact predominate, Class Representative Plaintiff's claims are typical of the members of the class, and Class Representative Plaintiff can fairly and adequately represent the interests of the Class.
- 38. Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Class and predominate over any questions affecting solely individual members of the Class. Among the questions of law and fact common to the Class are:
 - (a) Whether Defendant engaged in unfair or deceptive acts or practices with regard to the Credit Card's Bill Pay autopay registration in violation of the Consumer Legal Remedies Act ("CLRA");
 - (b) Whether Defendant made false and/or misleading statement with regard to the Credit Card's Bill Pay autopay registration in violation of the False Advertising Law ("FAL");
 - (c) Whether Defendant engaged in an unfair practice and violated section 17200 of the California Business and Professions Code by engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or

of the Class will continue to be damaged by the deceptive and misleading acts, practices, and advertising of Defendants.

CAUSES OF ACTION FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of the Consumers Legal Remedies Act [Civil Code § 1750 et seq.] (Against All Defendants)

- 43. The allegations of the preceding paragraphs are incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein.
- 44. The Credit Card and the Bill Pay program are "goods" within the meaning of the CLRA, Civil Code sections 1761(a) and 1770.
- 45. Each Defendant is a "person" within the meaning of the CLRA, Civil Code sections 1761(c) and 1770.
- 46. Holders of the Credit Card enrolled in the Bill pay program, including Plaintiff and the Class, are "consumers" within the meaning of the CLRA, Civil Code sections 1761(d) and 1770.
- 47. Plaintiff's and the Class Members' availment of the Credit Card and the subsequent enrollment to the Bill Pay program constitute "transactions" within the meaning of the CLRA, Civil Code sections 1761(e) and 1770.
- 48. Defendants' unfair or deceptive acts or practices as described herein, were undertaken by Defendants in transactions intended to result or which resulted in the sale of goods to consumers, and were intended to induce, and did in fact induce, Plaintiff to avail of the Credit Card and enroll in the Bill Pay program, which they would not have otherwise done.
- 49. Defendants' practices, acts and course of conduct with respect to their distribution and sale of the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program violate the CLRA in that Defendants' non-disclosure of the effect of non-use of the Credit Card on the Bill Pay registration constitutes: (1) a misrepresentation as to their source, sponsorship, approval, or certification in violation of Civil Code § 1770(a)(2); and (2) a representation, whether express or implied, that they have sponsorship, approval, characteristics, ingredients, uses or benefits which they do not have in violation of Civil Code § 1770(a)(5). Here, despite knowing that failure to use the Credit Card could lead to automatic cancellation of a Bill Pay registration, Defendants continue to withhold that information from

consumers, including Plaintiff and the Class.

- 50. Defendants' practices, acts and course of conduct in connection with the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program are likely to mislead a reasonable consumer acting reasonably under the circumstances to his or her detriment. Further, the non-disclosure of this information is clearly material to the determination to avail of the Credit Card, enroll in the Bill Pay program, as the potential harm to the consumer's credit standing is significantly greater than the value conferred by the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program, there are equivalent products that confer a similar benefit to the consumer that the Credit Card and Bill Pay program provided, and, as a result, no reasonable consumer, including Plaintiff and the Class, would avail of the Credit Card and enroll in the Bill Pay program, had they known that their registration could be automatically cancelled for non-use of the Card and their bills could become overdue and reported to the credit bureaus, and could potentially affect their credit standing.
- 51. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' violations of law, Plaintiff and the Class have suffered damages by not receiving what was promised to them in exchange for signing up for the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program, which Defendants contended would automatically pay their enrolled bills.
- 52. By filing this Complaint, Plaintiff and the Class seek an order enjoining Defendants from the continued sale of the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program; an Order enjoining Defendants from collecting money from Plaintiff and the Class from the sale of such products; and an Order requiring Defendants to notify consumers of their violations of the CLRA and the remedy they will provide to them. Plaintiff is entitled to equitable relief in the form of restitutionary disgorgement of all earnings, profits, compensation, and benefits obtained by Defendants as a result of their violations of the CLRA, along with other appropriate relief including reasonable attorneys' fees

24 and expenses.

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SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of the False Advertising Law [Business And Professions Code Section 17500, Et Seq.] (Against all Defendants)

- 53. Plaintiff and the Class hereby incorporate by reference all previous paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein and further alleges as follows:
- 54. Plaintiff and the Class bring this cause of action pursuant to California Business & Professions Code § 17500. California Business & Profession's Code § 17500 provides that it is unlawful for any person, firm, corporation or association to dispose of property or perform services, or to induce the public to enter into any obligation relating thereto, through the use of untrue or misleading statements.
- 55. Plaintiff and the Class availed of Defendant's Credit Card and signed up for the Bill Pay program and have suffered injury in fact and have lost money or property as a result of the unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business practices and unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading advertising.
- 56. At all times herein alleged, Defendants have committed acts of disseminating untrue and misleading statements as defined by California Business & Professions Code § 17500 by engaging in the following acts and practices with intent to induce members of the public to sign up for the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program: (a) Representing that the enrolled bills would be automatically paid after signing up for the program, knowing that said representations were false, and concealing that the Bill Pay registration can be automatically cancelled if the Credit Card is not used for a certain period of time, which can lead to the enrolled bills being unpaid and overdue, reported to the credit bureaus, and negatively impacting consumers' credit rankings. (b) Issuing promotional literature and commercials deceiving potential users of the Credit Card and the Bill
- Pay program by relaying positive information and concealing material relevant information regarding these products; and other unfair, unlawful and fraudulent conduct.
- 57. The foregoing practices constitute false and misleading advertising within the meaning of California Business & Professions Code § 17500.

- 58. The acts of untrue and misleading statements by Defendants described hereinabove present a continuing threat to members of the public in that the acts alleged herein are continuous and ongoing, and the public will continue to suffer the harm alleged herein.
- 59. As a result of their conduct described above, Defendants have been and will be unjustly enriched. Specifically, Defendants have been unjustly enriched by receipt of hundreds of millions of dollars in ill-gotten gains from Plaintiff, the Class, and other consumers who signed up for the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program as a result of the acts and omissions described herein.
- 60. Pursuant to California Business & Professions Code § 17535, Plaintiff and the Class seek an order of this Court compelling the Defendants to provide restitution and injunctive relief calling for Defendants, and each of them, to cease unfair business practices in the future.
- 61. Plaintiff and the Class seek restitutionary disgorgement of the monies collected from Plaintiff and the Class by Defendants, and each of them, and other injunctive relief to cease such false and misleading advertising in the future.
- 62. Defendants' actions described above were performed willfully, intentionally, and with reckless disregard of the life and safety of the Plaintiff, the Class, and the general public.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of the Unfair Competition Law [Business and Professions Code Section 17200, et seq.] (Against all Defendants)

- 63. Plaintiff and the Class hereby incorporate by reference all previous paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully set forth herein and further alleges as follows.
- 64. California Business & Professions Code § 17200 provides that unfair competition shall mean and include "all unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business practices and unfair, deceptive, untrue or misleading advertising."
- 65. Plaintiff and the Class signed up for the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program and have suffered injury in fact and have lost money or property as a result of the unlawful, unfair, or fraudulent business practices and unfair, deceptive, untrue, or misleading advertising.
 - 66. The acts and practices described above violate the "unlawful" prong of § 17200.

- 67. The acts and practices described above also violate the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, and the False Advertising Law, as described above, in that Defendants have represented to Plaintiff, the Class, and the general public, that signing up for the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program would mean automatic payments of their enrolled bills. Thus, these statements made by Defendants constitute unlawful acts within the meaning of California Business & Professions Code § 17200.
- 68. Further, by offering the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program throughout the State of California, Defendants violated and violate the Consumer Legal Remedies Act, by passively intimating that these products complied with all of California's laws, when, in fact, they were not. This conduct, prohibited by the CLRA, also constitutes unlawful acts within the meaning of California Business & Professions Code § 17200.
- 69. The acts and practices described above were and are also likely to mislead the general public and therefore constitute unfair business practices within the meaning of California Business & Professions Code § 17200, including unfair, unlawful, and/or fraudulent practices.
- 70. The acts of untrue and misleading advertising set forth in the preceding paragraphs are incorporated by reference and are, by definition, violations of California Business & Professions Code § 17200. This conduct is set forth fully herein, and includes, but is not limited to: (a) Representing that the enrolled bills would be automatically paid after signing up for the program, knowing that said representations were false, and concealing that the Bill Pay registration can be automatically cancelled if the Credit Card is not used for a certain period of time, which can lead to the enrolled bills being unpaid and overdue, reported to the credit bureaus, and negatively impacting consumers' credit rankings. (b) Issuing promotional literature and commercials deceiving potential users of the Credit Card and the Bill Pay program by relaying positive information and concealing material relevant information regarding these products; and other unfair, unlawful and fraudulent conduct.
- 71. These practices constitute unlawful, unfair and/or fraudulent business acts or practices, within the meaning of California Business & Professions Code § 17200. The fraudulent conduct includes representing that enrolled bills would be automatically paid once a Credit Card is

COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

1	5. For an order awarding pre- and post-judgment interest to Plaintiff and the Class, at the	
2	highest rate allowed by law;	
3	6. For an order awarding costs, including experts' fees, and attorneys' fees and expenses,	
4	and the costs of prosecuting this action; and	
5	7. For an order awarding granting such other and further relief as is just and proper.	
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7	Dated: August 15, 2023 POTTER HANDY LLP	
8	/s/ James M. Treglio	
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10	By:	
11	Mark Potter, Esq. James M. Treglio, Esq.	
12	Attorneys for Plaintiff	
13	Attorneys for Frankin	
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	COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL	

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>Bank of America Did Not Warn Credit Cardholders About Auto Bill Pay Cancellation Terms, Class Action Says</u>