

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION**

KAREN EVANS, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated,	:	Case No. 2:17-cv-515
	:	
	:	
Plaintiff,	:	
	:	JURY DEMANDED
v.	:	
	:	
AP GAS & ELECTRIC (TX), LLC,	:	
	:	
AP GAS & ELECTRIC (OH), LLC,	:	
	:	
AP HOLDINGS, LLC	:	
	:	
Defendants.	:	

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Preliminary Statement

1. Plaintiff Karen Evans (“Plaintiff”) brings this action to enforce the consumer-privacy provisions of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”), 47 U.S.C. § 227, a federal statute enacted in 1991 in response to widespread public outrage about the proliferation of intrusive, nuisance telemarketing practices. *See Mims v. Arrow Fin. Servs., LLC*, 132 S. Ct. 740, 745 (2012).

2. In violation of the TCPA, Defendants AP Gas & Electric (OH), LLC, AP Gas & Electric (TX), LLC, and/or AP Holdings, LLC (collectively “Defendants”) placed telemarketing calls to Plaintiff’s cellular telephone number for the purposes of advertising its services using an automated dialing system.

3. Plaintiff never consented to receive these calls, and they were placed to her for telemarketing purposes in an attempt to generate new business for the Defendants. Because telemarketing campaigns generally place calls to hundreds of thousands or even millions of

potential customers *en masse*, Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of a proposed nationwide class of other persons who received illegal telemarketing calls from or on behalf of Defendants.

4. A class action is the best means of obtaining redress for the Defendants' wide scale illegal telemarketing and is consistent both with the private right of action afforded by the TCPA and the fairness and efficiency goals of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

Parties

5. Plaintiff Karen Evans is a resident of the state of Ohio and this district.

6. Defendant AP Gas & Electric (TX), LLC ("AP G&E (TX)") is a Texas limited liability corporation that has its principal office at 6161 Savoy Drive, Suite 500, Houston, TX 77036.

7. Defendant AP Gas & Electric (OH), LLC ("AP G&E (OH)") is a Texas limited liability corporation that has its principal office at 6161 Savoy Drive, Suite 500, Houston, TX 77036.

8. Defendant AP Holdings, LLC ("AP Holdings") is a Texas limited liability corporation that has its principal office at 6161 Savoy Drive, Suite 500, Houston, TX 77036. AP Holdings is the parent company of AP G&E (TX) and AP G&E (OH) and by and through those and other subsidiaries, AP Holdings provides and supports electricity services, including but not limited to performing administrative services and customer service support.

9. Defendants send solicitations, including telemarketing calls, into the state of Ohio and this district. *See* <http://www.apge.com/residential-electric-service> (Last Visited June 8, 2017).

Jurisdiction & Venue

10. The Court has federal question jurisdiction over these TCPA claims. *Mims v. Arrow Financial Services, LLC*, 132 S. Ct. 740 (2012).

11. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2) because Plaintiff is a resident of this district and she received the illegal telemarketing calls that are the subject of this putative class action lawsuit in this district.

TCPA Background

12. In 1991, Congress enacted the TCPA to regulate the explosive growth of the telemarketing industry. In so doing, Congress recognized that “[u]nrestricted telemarketing . . . can be an intrusive invasion of privacy [.]” Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991, Pub. L. No. 102-243, § 2(5) (1991) (codified at 47 U.S.C. § 227).

13. The TCPA makes it unlawful “to make any call (other than a call made for emergency purposes or made with the prior express consent of the called party) using an automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice . . . to any telephone number assigned to a . . . cellular telephone service.” *See* 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii). The TCPA provides a private cause of action to persons who receive calls in violation of 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A). *See* 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3).

14. According to findings by the Federal Communication Commission (“FCC”), the agency Congress vested with authority to issue regulations implementing the TCPA, such calls are prohibited because, as Congress found, automated or prerecorded telephone calls are a greater nuisance and invasion of privacy than live solicitation calls, and such calls can be costly and inconvenient.

15. The FCC also recognized that “wireless customers are charged for incoming calls whether they pay in advance or after the minutes are used.” *In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, CG Docket No. 02-278, Report and Order, 18 F.C.C. Rcd. 14014, 14115 ¶ 165 (2003).

16. In 2013, the FCC required prior express written consent for all autodialed or prerecorded telemarketing calls (“robocalls”) to wireless numbers and residential lines.

Specifically, it ordered that:

[A] consumer’s written consent to receive telemarketing robocalls must be signed and be sufficient to show that the consumer: (1) received “clear and conspicuous disclosure” of the consequences of providing the requested consent, i.e., that the consumer will receive future calls that deliver prerecorded messages by or on behalf of a specific seller; and (2) having received this information, agrees unambiguously to receive such calls at a telephone number the consumer designates.[] In addition, the written agreement must be obtained “without requiring, directly or indirectly, that the agreement be executed as a condition of purchasing any good or service.[]”

In the Matter of Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991, 27 F.C.C. Rcd. 1830, 1844 (2012) (footnotes omitted).

Factual Allegations

17. Defendants are providers of energy services.
18. To generate new clients, Defendants rely on telemarketing.
19. One of the telemarketing strategies used by Defendants involves the use of an automatic telephone dialing system (“ATDS”) to solicit potential customers.
20. Plaintiff is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a “person” as defined by 47 U.S.C. § 153(39).
21. Plaintiff is the owner of a cellular telephone number, (614) 203-XXXX.
22. Defendants, or their agent acting on their behalf, placed multiple automated telemarketing calls using an ATDS to Plaintiff’s cellular telephone number.

23. One such call was placed on April 19, 2016 from the telephone number (740) 302-8430.

24. During the call, the representative stated that she was calling on behalf of the Defendants.

25. The representative pressed the Plaintiff to locate a recent copy of her gas and electric bill.

26. The representative wanted to review and discuss how the Plaintiff could reduce her energy costs.

27. Plaintiff was not interested in changing energy providers.

28. Other individuals have also lodged complaints about calls from Defendants using that number:

Says they are APG and have authority from AEP to change our utility providers. BULL!!!
HANG UP ON THESE PEOPLE!!! What a pain!!!

Caller: APG
Call type: Telemarketer

Called 3 times in less than 1 minute, left a message indicating a problem with my AEP account. I tried to call back to see what the problem was and they tried to change my electric provider by saying I was due a rebate check from AEP. I figured out it was a scam and hung up on them. I will be filing complaint with PUCO

Caller: American Electric & Gas
Call type: Telemarketer

See <http://800notes.com/Phone.aspx/1-740-302-8430> (Last Visited June 8, 2017).

29. The Plaintiff also received multiple calls in May 2016 from the Defendants, or their agent acting on their behalf.

30. Indeed, other individuals have complained about telemarketing calls from the Defendants on other telephone numbers:

A guy from American Power and Gas trying to get me to switch my natural gas supplier. They call frequently, which is very annoying. Every time I request they do not call me again and to take me off their list. Clearly they don't honor that request. After I hung up this guy immediately called back multiple times in a row. He clearly has anger management issues.

Caller: American Power and Gas
Call type: Telemarketer

After telling her that we won't provide her a copy of our bill, and being very cordial about it, she was very aggressive to the point that we hung up on her. This has happened twice now, and on each instance she continues to call over and over and over; when asked to speak with her manager she hung up on me. I will be reporting this to APG&E as well as the BBB.

Caller: APG&E
Call type: Telemarketer

See <http://800notes.com/Phone.aspx/1-440-219-0173> (Last Visited June 8, 2017).

31. Plaintiff and the other call recipients were harmed by these calls. They were temporarily deprived of legitimate use of their phones because the phone line was tied up, they were charged for the calls, and their privacy was improperly invaded.

32. Moreover, these calls injured Plaintiff because they were frustrating, obnoxious, annoying, were a nuisance, and disturbed the solitude of Plaintiff and the class.

Class Action Allegations

33. As authorized by Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of a class of all other persons or entities similarly situated throughout the United States.

34. The class of persons Plaintiff proposes to represent are tentatively defined as:

All persons within the United States: (a) to whom Defendants, and/or a third party acting on their behalf, made one or more non-emergency telephone calls; (b) promoting Defendants' products or services; (c) to their cellular telephone number; (d) using an automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice; and (e) at any time in the period that begins four years before the date of filing this Complaint to trial.

35. Excluded from the class are Defendants, and any entities in which Defendants have a controlling interest, Defendants' agents and employees, any judge to whom this action is assigned, and any member of such judge's staff and immediate family.

36. The class as defined above is identifiable through phone records and phone number databases.

37. The potential class members number at least in the thousands, since automated and pre-recorded telemarketing campaigns make calls to hundreds or thousands of individuals a day. Individual joinder of these persons is impracticable.

38. Plaintiff is a member of the proposed class.

39. There are questions of law and fact common to Plaintiff and to the proposed class, including but not limited to the following:

a. Whether Defendants violated the TCPA by using an ATDS to call cellular telephones;

b. Whether Defendants placed calls without obtaining the recipients' prior consent for the calls; and

c. Whether the Plaintiff and the class members are entitled to statutory damages because of Defendants' actions.

40. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of class members. Plaintiff's claims, like the claims of the class, arise out of the same common course of conduct by Defendants and are based on the same legal and remedial theories.

41. Plaintiff is an adequate representative of the class because her interests do not conflict with the interests of the class, she will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the

class, and she is represented by counsel skilled and experienced in class actions, including TCPA class actions.

42. Common questions of law and fact predominate over questions affecting only individual class members. The only individual question concerns identification of class members, which will be ascertainable from records maintained by Defendants and/or their agents.

43. Management of these claims is likely to present significantly fewer difficulties than are presented in many class claims because the calls at issue are all automated. Class treatment is superior to multiple individual suits or piecemeal litigation because it conserves judicial resources, promotes consistency and efficiency of adjudication, provides a forum for small claimants, and deters illegal activities. There will be no significant difficulty in the management of this case as a class action.

44. The likelihood that individual members of the class will prosecute separate actions is remote due to the time and expense necessary to prosecute an individual case.

45. Plaintiff is not aware of any litigation concerning this controversy already commenced by others who meet the criteria for class membership described above.

Legal Claims

Count One: Violation of the TCPA's Automated Calling Provisions

46. Plaintiff incorporates the allegations from all previous paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

47. The foregoing acts and omissions of Defendants constitute numerous and multiple violations of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227, by making calls, except for emergency purposes, to the cellular telephone numbers of Plaintiff and members of the class using an ATDS.

48. As a result of Defendants' violations of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227, Plaintiff and members of the class presumptively are entitled to an award of \$500 in damages for each and every call made to their cellular telephone numbers using an ATDS and/or artificial or prerecorded voice in violation of the statute, pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B).

49. Plaintiff and members of the class are also entitled to and do seek injunctive relief prohibiting Defendants from violating the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227, by making calls, except for emergency purposes, to any cellular telephone numbers using an ATDS and/or artificial or prerecorded voice in the future.

50. Defendants' violations were negligent and/or knowing.

Relief Sought

For herself and all class members, Plaintiff requests the following relief:

- A. Certification of the proposed class;
- B. Appointment of Plaintiff as representative of the class;
- C. Appointment of the undersigned counsel as counsel for the class;
- D. A declaration that Defendants and/or their affiliates, agents, and/or other related entities' actions complained of herein violate the TCPA;
- E. An order enjoining Defendants and/or their affiliates, agents, and/or other related entities, as provided by law, from engaging in the unlawful conduct set forth herein;
- F. An award to Plaintiff and the class of damages, as allowed by law;
- G. Leave to amend this Complaint to conform to the evidence presented at trial; and
- H. Orders granting such other and further relief as the Court deems necessary, just, and proper.

Plaintiff requests a jury trial as to all claims of the complaint so triable.

PLAINTIFF,
By her attorneys

/s/ Brian K. Murphy
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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 THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

Karen Evans, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated

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

(c) Attorney's (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number) See attached

DEFENDANTS

AP Gas & Electric (TX), LLC, AP Gas & Electric (OH), LLC, and AP Holdings, LLC

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.

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)

Table with columns for Plaintiff (PTF) and Defendant (DEF) citizenship: Citizen of This State, Citizen of Another State, Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country, 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)

Large table with categories: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, CIVIL RIGHTS, TORTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES.

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, 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

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

47 U.S.C. § 227

Brief description of cause:

Class action for violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23, DEMAND \$, CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions): JUDGE, DOCKET NUMBER

DATE, SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

06/14/2017, /s/ Brian K. Murphy

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT #, AMOUNT, APPLYING IFP, JUDGE, MAG. JUDGE

Attorneys for Plaintiff

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(608) 237-1774

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

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Ohio

Karen Evans, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated

Plaintiff(s)

v.

AP Gas & Electric (TX), LLC, et al.

Defendant(s)

Civil Action No. 2:17-cv-515

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address) AP Gas & Electric (OH), LLC
c/o Barend Vanderhorst, Registered Agent
6161 Savoy Drive, Suite 500
Houston, TX 77036

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:

Brian K. Murphy
Murray Murphy Moul + Basil LLP
1114 Dublin Road
Columbus, OH 43215

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:

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 2:17-cv-515

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 _____ .

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:

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

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Ohio

Karen Evans, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated

Plaintiff(s)

v.

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Defendant(s)

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6161 Savoy Drive, Suite 500
Houston, TX 77036

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Murray Murphy Moul + Basil LLP
1114 Dublin Road
Columbus, OH 43215

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:

Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 2:17-cv-515

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)*:

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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:

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Karen Evans, on behalf of herself and others similarly situated

Plaintiff(s)

v.

AP Gas & Electric (TX), LLC, et al.

Defendant(s)

Civil Action No. 2:17-cv-515

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c/o Barend Vanderhorst, Registered Agent
6161 Savoy Drive, Suite 500
Houston, TX 77036

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:

Brian K. Murphy
Murray Murphy Moul + Basil LLP
1114 Dublin Road
Columbus, OH 43215

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Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

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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 _____ .

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:

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [AP Holdings Accused of Placing Illegal Robocalls](#)
