

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

DANIEL GOTEL, on behalf of himself and
all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

ALLTRAN FINANCIAL, LP

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION

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

Plaintiff DANIEL GOTEL (hereinafter, “Plaintiff”), a New York resident, brings this class action complaint by and through his attorneys, Daniel Cohen, PLLC, against Defendant ALLTRAN FINANCIAL, LP (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. Upon information and belief, Defendant's principal place of business is located in Houston, TX.
10. Upon information and belief, 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”):

- Plaintiff brings this action individually and as a class action on behalf of all persons similarly situated in the State of New York from whom Defendant attempted to collect a consumer debt using the same unlawful form letter herein, from one year before the date of this Complaint to the present.
- The Class satisfies all the requirements of Rule 23 of the FRCP for maintaining a class 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 letters and/or notices from Defendant that violate specific provisions 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 DANIEL GOTEL

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 an unpaid balance allegedly owing to American Express Co..
17. On or around July 27, 2017, Defendant sent Plaintiff a collection letter. *See Exhibit A.*
18. The letter was sent or caused to be sent by persons employed by Defendant as a "debt collector" 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. Defendant's July 27, 2017 Collection Letter states in pertinent part: "Amount due as of July 27, 2017."
21. Defendant was attempting to collect on Plaintiff's purportedly overdue credit card account with American Express Co.
22. Upon information and belief, Plaintiff's account with American Express Co. was charged-off

and is not subject to change, and will never increase due to any terms of the original agreement.

23. Upon information and belief, the amount due and collected by Defendant will never change due to interest, late charges or other charges.
24. Rather, upon information and belief, Defendant subtly pressed the least sophisticated consumer, in an attempt at pressuring Plaintiff into paying the account quickly, so as to avoid a threatened increase in the Amount Due.
25. Upon information and belief, Defendant has no legal or contractual right to change the amount that Plaintiff allegedly owes to the Creditor.
26. As a result of the following Counts Defendant violated the FDCPA.

First Count

15 U.S.C. §1692e et seq.

False or Misleading Representations as to Status of Debt

27. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “26” herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
28. Defendant’s debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
29. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, a debt collector is prohibited from using false, deceptive, or misleading representation in connection with the collection of a debt.
30. 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.
31. Collection notices are deceptive if they can be reasonably read to have two or more different meanings, one of which is inaccurate.
32. The question of whether a collection letter is deceptive is determined from the perspective of the “least sophisticated consumer.”

33. Defendant's conduct constitutes a false, deceptive and misleading means and representation in connection with the collection of the debt, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
34. The Letter can reasonably be read by the least sophisticated consumer to have two or more meanings concerning the actual balance due, one of which must be inaccurate, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
35. By stating "Amount due as of July 27, 2017: \$5,022.23" Defendant falsely suggested that immediate payment of the balance would benefit Plaintiff by implying that the "Amount due as of July 27, 2017" would be subject to change, and could be subject to additional interest when in fact no such interest is accruing on the account.¹
36. Defendant's debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to § 1692(e).
37. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692e *et seq.* of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

¹ I recognize that ambiguity can be indicative of a misleading or deceptive communication. See *Easterling v. Collecto, Inc.*, 692 F.3d 229, 233 (2d Cir. 2012). But *Avila* compels the conclusion that any ambiguity as to post-dated accruals in a collection notice gives rise to a claim under the general prohibition of § 1692e – even if the ambiguity does no harm or even inures to the benefit of the debtor. *FATEMA ISLAM, Individually and on behalf of a class, Pl., v. AMERICAN RECOVERY SERVICE INCORPORATED*, Def., 17-CV-4228 (BMC), 2017 WL 4990570, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Oct. 31, 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
Attorneys 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
November 8, 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

DANIEL GOTEL, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated

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

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

DANIEL COHEN PLLC, 300 Cadman Plz W, 12 Fl, Brooklyn, NY 11201, (646) 645-8482

DEFENDANTS

ALLTRAN FINANCIAL, LP

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)

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 - 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 11/08/2017 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: Question of law rather than question of fact predominates

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. 12/09) Summons in a Civil Action

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Eastern District of New York [dropdown arrow]

DANIEL GOTEL, on behalf of himself and all others
similarly situated

Plaintiff

v.

ALLTRAN FINANCIAL, LP

Defendant

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)
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)
)
)
)

Civil Action No.

SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION

To: (Defendant's name and address) ALLTRAN FINANCIAL, LP
C/O CT CORPORATION SYSTEM
111 EIGHTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10011

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, NY 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.

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:

PO BOX 4043
CONCORD CA 94524-4043



July 27, 2017

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Daniel Gotel



Alltran Financial, LP

Creditor: American Express Co.
Account: XXXXXXXXXXXX73004
Alltran ID: [REDACTED] 8295
Amount Due as of July 27, 2017: \$5,022.23
Partial Account Number for Your Security

Alltran Financial, LP
PO BOX 722929
HOUSTON TX 77272-2929



Please detach at perforation and return with your payment.

Dear Daniel Gotel

Your account referenced above has been referred to this office for collection. Please remit payment in full of any undisputed amount, payable to American Express, in the enclosed envelope.

We want to help you resolve this account. If you wish to discuss your account, please call SHANNON L RANDLE at 866-740-3108, extension 3638, so we may assist you.

Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of the debt or any portion thereof, this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within the thirty day period that the debt, or any portion thereof, is disputed, 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 this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice, this office will provide you the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

Please see the reverse side of this letter for important notices concerning your rights.

Sincerely,

SHANNON L RANDLE
Alltran Financial, LP
P.O. Box 722929
HOUSTON TX 77272-2929

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

Office Hours (all times Central)
Monday-Thursday: 8 AM to 9 PM • Friday: 8 AM to 4 PM • Saturday: 7 AM to 11 AM

If you write to us and ask us to stop communicating with you about this debt, we will, but if you owe this debt, you will still owe it and the debt may still be collected from you. If you have a complaint about the way we are collecting this debt, you may write to our Contact Center, 5800 North Course Drive, Houston, TX 77072 or call our toll-free Complaint Hotline at (800) 326-8040 between 7 AM and 4 PM (Central Time) Monday-Friday.

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [Man Claims Alltran Falsely Threatened Debt Balance Increases](#)
