1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	BRADLEY/GROMBACHER, LLP Marcus J. Bradley, Esq. (SBN 174156) Kiley L. Grombacher, Esq. (SBN 245960) Taylor L. Emerson, Esq. (SBN 225303) 2815 Townsgate Road, Suite 130 Westlake Village, California 91361 Telephone: (805) 270-7100 Facsimile: (805) 270-7589 mbradley@bradleygrombacher.com kgrombacher@bradleygrombacher.com temerson@bradleygrombacher.com						
9	Attorneys for Plaintiff, KENNETH HOAGLAND						
10 11	[Additional Counsel of Following Page]						
12 13	IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA						
14							
15 16 17 18 19	KENNETH HOAGLAND, individually and on behalf of others similarly situated,  Plaintiff,  Case No. <u>'19CV0750 BAS JLB</u> CLASS ACTION						
20	v. )						
21 22 23	H&R BLOCK, INC. and AXOS BANK,  Defendants.						
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27 28							

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

- 1	
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# **CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT**

- 1. Plaintiff Kenneth Hoagland brings this action against H&R Block, Inc. ("H&R Block") and Axos Bank ("Axos"), collectively "Defendants," to secure redress for their sending numerous nonconsensual, autodialed text message calls to the cellular telephone numbers of Plaintiff and others, in violation of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA"), 47 U.S.C. § 227.
- 2. Defendants continued to send Plaintiff automated texts even after Plaintiff had requested several times that the texts stop.

#### INTRODUCTION

- 3. Advancements in telephone dialing technology by the 1980s and 90s made reaching a large number of consumers by telephone easier and more cost-effective. However, this technology also has brought with it an onslaught of unsolicited robocalls, spam text messages, and junk faxes that intrude on individual privacy and waste consumer time and money. As a result, the federal government and numerous states have enacted legislation to combat these widespread abuses. See Mims v. Arrow Fin. Servs., LLC, 565 U.S. 368, 371 (2012) (noting that federal legislation the TCPA was enacted after Congress found that callers, "by operating interstate, were escaping state-law prohibitions on intrusive nuisance calls").
  - 4. As is relevant here, the TCPA prohibits "mak[ing] any call (other than

a call made for emergency purposes or made with the prior express consent of the called party) using any automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice . . . to any telephone number assigned to a . . . cellular telephone service[.]" 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii).

- 5. Text messages are "calls" under the TCPA. In re Rules & Regs. Implementing the TCPA, 18 FCC Rcd. 14014, 14115 ¶ 165 (2003).
- 6. The TCPA provides for injunctive relief and the greater of actual damages or \$500 per violation, which can be trebled where the statute was "willfully or knowingly" violated. 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3).
- 7. H&R Block and Axos Bank caused multiple, unsolicited, autodialed text message calls to be made to Plaintiff's cell phone, causing Plaintiff aggravation and inconvenience. Plaintiff files this class action complaint on behalf of himself and others similarly situated, seeking relief from these illegal calling practices.

# JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 8. This Court has federal question subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 with respect to Plaintiff's TCPA claims. *Mims*, 565 U.S. at 372.
- 9. Additionally, the Court has subject matter jurisdiction pursuant to the Class Action Fairness Act of 2005 ("CAFA"), 28 U.S.C. 1332(d)(2). The matter in controversy exceeds \$5,000,000 in the aggregate, exclusive of interest and costs, as

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each member of the proposed Class of at least tens of thousands is entitled to up to \$1,500 in statutory damages for each call that has violated the TCPA. Further, Plaintiff alleges a nationwide class, which will result in at least one Class member residing in a state different from Defendants.

Venue is appropriate in this District under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a) because 10. Axos is based here, and because a substantial portion of the events giving rise to this cause of action occurred in this District.

### **PARTIES**

- Plaintiff Kenneth Hoagland is a natural person and a citizen of the State 11. of Kentucky, who resides in Jefferson County, Kentucky. At all relevant times, Plaintiff was the subscriber for the cellular telephone at issue.
- Defendant H&R Block, Inc. is a Missouri company headquartered at 12. One H&R Block Way, Kansas City, Missouri 64105.
- Defendant Axos Bank is a technology-driven financial services 13. company providing a diverse range of innovative banking products and services for personal, business and institutional clients nationwide. Axos Bank is the bank behind H&R Block's branded prepaid credit cards, including the Emerald card. Axos is headquartered in San Diego, California.

# **FACTS**

H&R Block and/or Axos have sent multiple text message calls to 14.

Plaintiff's cellular telephone.

- 15. The text messages consisted largely of account-related communications, such as a customer survey, notifications about charges to the person's H&R Block Emerald Card debit card, H&R Block appointment reminders, and messages about the person's tax return and a refund advance loan.
- 16. For example, H&R Block and Axos sent Plaintiff the following text message on February 2, 2019, from short code 71577:

HRBLOCK: Axos Bank(R) has approved your Refund Advance loan for \$500.00. Funds are being loaded to your H&R Block Emerald Prepaid Mastercard(R).

- 17. Defendants also sent Plaintiff numerous credit-related text messages from short code 58084 on February 7, 2019:
  - \$11.28 charge was made to Emerald Card 1533. Avail bal \$1.26. Full access at hrblock.com/emeraldcard. Reply STOP to Cancel.
- 18. H&R Block and/or Axos have sent Plaintiff more than fifty such text messages.
- 19. Plaintiff has no relationship with either H&R Block or Axos. Neither H&R Block nor Axos had Plaintiff's consent to receive these messages.
- 20. Defendants knew they did not have consent to send these messages: Plaintiff notified H&R Block that it was sending texts to the wrong person and requested that the texts stop multiple times, to no avail. Defendants kept sending him

text message calls.

- 21. On information and belief, H&R Block and/or Axos logged Plaintiff's wrong-number notifications/do-not-call requests in their systems, but kept sending texts in spite of this. Alternatively, they should have logged the request, but failed to do so.
- 22. Within the four years prior to the filing of this action, Defendants and each of them caused autodialed text message calls to be made to the cell phones of Plaintiff and other consumers, without the prior express consent of the called party.
- 23. Defendants caused the text message calls at issue to be made using an automatic telephone dialing system, as that term is used in the TCPA.
- 24. The equipment used to call Plaintiff and others not only had the capacity to store or produce telephone numbers to be called using a random or sequential number generator (and to dial such numbers), but was programmed to sequentially or randomly access stored telephone numbers to automatically call such numbers when it made the text message calls to plaintiff and the class. These text message calls were made with equipment capable of dialing numerous phone numbers in a short period of time without human intervention, as part of an automated process.
- 25. The equipment had the capacity to store or produce telephone numbers to be called using a random or sequential number generator, and to dial such

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27 28 numbers. In other words, no human being physically dialed each digit of Plaintiff's and the other class members' telephone numbers to call their phones—the text message calls were made automatically pursuant to a computer program that was programmed to automatically decided what phone numbers to call when, and what to say in the text messages.

- 26. The autodialer accessed a dataset of Defendant, sorted through that dataset to determine which data to use to generate a list of numbers to call, generated a brand-new sequence for calling those numbers based upon complex algorithms, and then called the numbers. The dialer randomly and sequentially generated phone numbers for calling from a dataset, and then automatically called those numbers to send the text messages.
- 27. Defendants' violations were negligent. Alternatively, Defendants made these text message calls to Plaintiff and the other members of the class defined below intentionally. Defendants were well aware of the TCPA's prohibitions against use of autodialers in calls to consumers, but made the business decision to send these text messages, anyway.
- 28. This is not H&R Block's first time facing allegations of TCPA violations. In 2007, H&R Block received an official citation from the FCC for violating TCPA's prohibition junk the against faxing. See https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-303369A1.pdf.

- 29. Upon information and belief, Defendants each keep records and data from which they can determine which autodialed text message calls made without consent.
- 30. Plaintiff and the class have been damaged by these text message calls. Their privacy was improperly invaded, Defendant's text message calls temporarily seized and trespassed upon the use of their phones, and they were forced to divert attention away from other activities to address the text messages. Defendant's text messages were annoying and a nuisance, and wasted the time of Plaintiff and the class. *See, e.g., Mims*, 565 U.S. at 372 (discussing congressional findings of consumer "outrage" as to autodialed calls).

# **Class Action Allegations**

31. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf a class, defined as follows:

All non-customers in the United States whose cellular telephone number, (a) H&R Block or Axos, or someone on either of their behalf, placed a text message, (b) using the same or similar system used to place any text message call to Plaintiff's phone number.

- 32. Based upon the automated nature of the messages at issue, it is reasonable to infer that Defendants placed thousands such messages in the four years leading up to this case.
- 33. Common questions of law or fact exist as to all members of the class, which predominate over any questions solely affecting any individual member, including Plaintiff. Such questions common to the class include but are not limited

to:

a. Whether the text messages identified herein were made using an "automatic telephone dialing system" or an "artificial or prerecorded voice" as such terms are defined or understood under the TCPA and applicable FCC regulations and orders;

- b. Whether Defendants had "prior express consent" to make the text message calls to non-customers, such as Plaintiff and the class; and
- c. Damages, including whether any violations were performed willfully or knowingly such that Plaintiff and the other members of the class are entitled to treble damages under 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3).
- 34. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the other members of the class. The factual and legal bases of Defendants' liability to Plaintiff and the other members of the class are the same: Defendants violated the TCPA by causing autodialed text message calls to be made to the cellular telephone number of each member of the class, without permission.
- 35. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class. Plaintiff has no interests that might conflict with the interests of the class. Plaintiff is interested in pursuing his claims vigorously, and he has retained counsel competent and experienced in class and complex litigation, including with regards to the claims alleged herein.
- 36. Class action treatment is superior to the alternatives for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy alleged herein. Such treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a

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single forum simultaneously, efficiently, and without the duplication of effort and expense that numerous individual actions would entail. There are, on information and belief, thousands of class members, such that joinder of all members is impracticable.

- 37. No difficulties are likely to be encountered in the management of this action that would preclude its maintenance as a class action, and no superior alternative exists for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy.
- 38. Defendants have acted and failed to act on grounds generally applicable to Plaintiff and the other members of the class, thereby making relief appropriate with respect to the class as a whole. Prosecution of separate actions by individual members of the class, should they even realize that their rights have been violated, would likely create the risk of inconsistent or varying adjudications with respect to individual members of the class that would establish incompatible standards of conduct.
- 39. The identity of the class is, on information and belief, readily identifiable from Defendants' records.

# COUNT I Violations of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227 nd/or Artificial or Prerecorded Voice Call Violations

(Autodialed and/or Artificial or Prerecorded Voice Call Violations)

- 40. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates all foregoing allegations.
- 41. It is a violation of the TCPA to make "any call (other than a call made

- 42. A text message is a "call" under the TCPA. Satterfield v. Simon & Schuster, Inc., 569 F.3d 946, 951 (9th Cir. 2009).
- 43. Defendants initiated or caused to be initiated text message calls to the cellular telephone numbers of Plaintiff and the other members of the class using an automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice.
- 44. These calls were made to non-customers who are persons who had not previously provided permission to receive texts from Defendants. Plaintiff and the class members are non-customers.
  - 45. Defendants violated the TCPA when they made the calls alleged herein.
- 46. As a result of Defendants' conduct, and pursuant to Section 227(b)(3) of the TCPA, Plaintiff and the other members of the class were harmed and are each entitled to a minimum of \$500 in damages for each violation.
- 47. Moreover, given the facts and circumstances here, including that H&R Block has been cited by the FCC for TCPA violations before, it is apparent that injunctive relief is necessary to wrench compliance. Plaintiff and the class therefore request an injunction against future automated calls to non-customers, pursuant to

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47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3).

48. Because Defendants knew or should have known that neither Plaintiff nor the class had given prior express consent to receive text messages to their cell phones—and/or willfully caused such text message calls to be made to the cell phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the class without prior express consent—the Court should treble the amount of statutory damages available to Plaintiff and the other members of the class, pursuant to Section 227(b)(3) of the TCPA. *Krakauer v. Dish Network LLC*, 2017 WL 2242952 (M.D.N.C. May 22, 2017) (trebling TCPA damages after \$21M jury verdict in favor of class).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Kenneth Hoagland, individually and on behalf of the class, respectfully requests that the Court enter judgment against each Defendant for:

- A. Certification of the class as alleged herein;
- B. A declaration that Defendants and each of them violated the TCPA as to Plaintiff and the class;
- C. Injunctive relief aimed at preventing future automated calls to non-customers' cell phones;
  - D. Damages pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3);
  - E. Costs, expenses, and attorneys' fees, to the extent permitted by law; and
  - F. Such other or further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

1	Dated: April 23, 2019	Respectfully submitted,
2		KENNETH HOAGLAND, individually and
3		on behalf of others similarly situated,
4		By: /s/Kiley Grombacher
5		Kiley Grombacher BRADLEY/GROMBACHER, LLP
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14		Jgordenberg@gs regar.com
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22		Telephone: (312) 729-5288 aburke@burkelawllc.com
23		Counsel for Plaintiff
24		Coursel for I taming
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1 **JURY DEMAND** 2 Plaintiff requests a trial by jury of all claims that can be so tried. 3 4 Respectfully submitted, Dated: April 23, 2019 5 KENNETH HOAGLAND, individually and 6 on behalf of others similarly situated, 7 By: /s/Kiley Grombacher 8 Kiley Grombacher BRADLEY/GROMBACHER, LLP 9 2815 Townsgate Rd., Suite 130 10 Westlake Village, CA 91361 Telephone: (805) 270-7100 11 kgrombacher@bradleygrombacher.com 12 Jeffrey S. Goldenberg 13 (pro hac to be filed) GOLDENBERG SCHNEIDER, L.P.A. 14 One W. 4th St., 18th Floor 15 Cincinnati, OH 45202 Telephone: (513) 345-8297 16 igoldenberg@gs-legal.com 17 Joseph M. Lyon (pro hac to be filed) 18 THE LYON FIRM 2021 Auburn Ave. 19 Cincinnati, OH 45219 20 Telephone: (513) 381-2333 jlyon@thelyonfirm.com 21 22 Alexander H. Burke (pro hac to be filed) BURKE LAW OFFICES, LLC 23 155 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 9020 Chicago, IL 60601 24 Telephone: (312) 729-5288 25 aburke@burkelawllc.com 26 Counsel for Plaintiff 27 28

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

# **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.)

r-r								
I (a) PLAINTIFFS KENNETH HOAGLAND, situated,	HAR BLOCK, INC. and AXOS BANK,							
(b) County of Residence of		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.						
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Bradley/Grombacher, LL Village, CA 91361; (805)	P, 2815 Townsgate R		stlake	Attorneys (If Known)		<u>'19</u>	CV0750 BA	1S JLB
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	ICTION (Place an "X" in C	ne Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPA	L PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One	Box for Plainti
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	■ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government)	Not a Party)			rf def	Incorporated or Pri		
<ul> <li>2 U.S. Government Defendant</li> </ul>	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizensh	ip of Parties in Item III)	Citize	en of Another State	2 🗖 2	Incorporated and P of Business In A		5 0 5
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☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment	☐ 320 Assault, Libel &	Pharmaceutical				RTY RIGHTS	☐ 410 Antitrust	
& Enforcement of Judgment  151 Medicare Act	Slander  330 Federal Employers'	Personal Injury Product Liability			☐ 820 Copy ☐ 830 Paten		☐ 430 Banks and B ☐ 450 Commerce	anking
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	☐ 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	Product Liability	J /3	1 Family and Medical Leave Act			893 Environmenta 895 Freedom of 1	
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	Telephone Consu	umer Protection Ac		A"), 47 U.S.C. § 227				
VII. REQUESTED IN	☐ CHECK IF THIS	IS A CLASS ACTION	N D	EMAND \$	C	HECK YES only i	if demanded in con	aplaint:
COMPLAINT:	UNDER RULE 2	3, F.R.Cv.P.			JI	URY DEMAND:	X Yes □	JNo
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKE	T NUMBER		
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#### 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.Cv.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; NOTE: 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 there are multiple nature of suit codes associated with the case, pick the nature of suit code that is most applicable. Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.
- 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 Transfer. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C.
  - Multidistrict Litigation Direct File. (8) Check this box when a multidistrict case is filed in the same district as the Master MDL docket.

    PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NOT AN ORIGIN CODE 7. Origin Code 7 was used for historical records and is no longer relevant due to changes in statue.
- 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 actual dollar amount 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.

# **ClassAction.org**

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>H&R Block</u>, <u>Axos Bank Sent More Than 50 Texts to Wrong Number</u>, <u>Lawsuit Says</u>