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

BONNIE MEYER, Individually and on Behalf of	) Case No.: 17-cv-959
All Others Similarly Situated,	) CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
Plaintiff,	) )
VS.	ý
NATIONS RECOVERY CENTER, INC.,	) Jury Trial Demanded ) )
Defendant.	) )

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. This class action seeks redress for collection practices that violate the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq*. (the "FDCPA"), and the Wisconsin Consumer Act, chapter 427, Wisconsin Statutes (the "WCA").

### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

2. The court has jurisdiction to grant the relief sought by the Plaintiff pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331, 1337 and 1367. Venue in this District is proper in that Defendant directed its collection efforts into the District.

### **PARTIES**

- 3. Plaintiff Bonnie Meyer is an individual who resides in the Eastern District of Wisconsin (Milwaukee County).
- 4. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined in the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3), in that Defendant sought to collect from Plaintiff a debt allegedly incurred for personal, family or household purposes, specifically, used only for personal, family or household purposes.

- 5. Plaintiff is also a "customer" as defined in the Wisconsin Consumer Act, Wis. Stat. § 421.301(17), in that the alleged debt allegedly arose from consumer transaction that included agreements to defer payment, namely a consumer credit card.
- 6. Defendant Nations Recovery Center, Inc. ("NRC") is a foreign limited liability company with its principal place of business located at 6491 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Doraville, GA 30360.
- 7. NRC is engaged in the business of a collection agency, using the mails and telephone to collect consumer debts originally owed to others.
- 8. NRC is engaged in the business of collecting debts owed to others and incurred for personal, family or household purposes. NRC is a debt collector as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692a and Wis. Stat. § 427.103(3).

### **FACTS**

- 9. On or about May 5, 2017, Plaintiff received a debt collection letter from NRC, regarding an alleged debt owed to "APPLIED BANK." ("Applied"). A copy of this letter is attached to this complaint as Exhibit A.
- 10. Upon information and belief, the alleged debt referenced in <u>Exhibit A</u> is an alleged personal credit card debt, issued by Applied and used only for personal, family or household purposes.
- 11. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form letter, generated by computer, and with the information specific to Plaintiff inserted by computer.
- 12. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form debt collection letter used by NRC to attempt to collect alleged debts.

- 13. The letter Defendant sent to Plaintiff (Exhibit A) includes the text: "This collection agency is licensed by the Division of Banking in the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, www.wdfi.org."
- 14. The above language on a collection letter is a representation that the debt collector holds a Wisconsin Collection Agency License, pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 218.04 and Wis. Admin. Code § DFI-Bkg. 74.
  - 15. NRC does not, in fact, hold a Wisconsin Collection Agency License.
- 16. NRC is not licensed by the Office of the Administrator of the Division of Banking.
- 17. NRC was not licensed by the Office of the Administrator of the Division of Banking at the time Exhibit A was sent to Plaintiff.
- 18. NRC is not listed on the Division of Banking's website that lists all collection agencies that currently hold a Wisconsin collection agency license. http://www.wdfi.org/fi/lfs/licensee\_lists/Default.asp?Browse=CA (visited June 11, 2017).
- 19. A representative of the Division of Banking confirmed to Plaintiff's counsel over the telephone that NRC did not hold a Wisconsin collection agency license on the date that Exhibit A was mailed.
- 20. A false statement about a debt collector's licensing status is a material false statement. "It suggests that [the debt collector] has been approved by the state, thereby enhancing in the mind of the unsophisticated consumer [the debt collector's] legitimacy and power to collect the debt." *Radaj v. ARS Nat. Services, Inc.*, No. 05 C 773, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 68883 at \*10; 2006 WL 2620394 at \*3 (E.D. Wis. Sep. 12, 2006); *Seeger v. Aid Assocs.*, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 22824 at \*13, 2007 WL 1029528 (E.D. Wis. Mar. 29, 2007) ("this court believes

that the false statement used by Plaza that it was licensed by the state of Wisconsin, is precisely the kind of misrepresentation that Congress sought to prohibit when it passed the FDCPA.").

- 21. Plaintiff was confused by Exhibit A.
- 22. The unsophisticated consumer would be confused by Exhibit A.
- 23. Plaintiff had to spend time and money investigating Exhibit A, and the consequences of any potential responses to Exhibit A.
- 24. Plaintiff had to take time to obtain and meet with counsel, including traveling to counsel's office by car and its related expenses, including but not limited to the cost of gasoline and mileage, to advise Plaintiff on the consequences of Exhibit A.
- 25. The FDCPA creates substantive rights for consumers; violations cause injury to consumers, and such injuries are concrete and particularized. *Bock v. Pressler & Pressler, LLP*, No. 11-7593, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 81058 \*21 (D.N.J. May 25, 2017) ("through [s]ection 1692e of the FDCPA, Congress established 'an enforceable right to truthful information concerning' debt collection practices, a decision that 'was undoubtedly influenced by congressional awareness that the intentional provision of misinformation' related to such practices, 'contribute[s] to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy,"); *Quinn v. Specialized Loan Servicing, LLC*, No. 16 C 2021, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 107299 \*8-13 (N.D. Ill. Aug. 11, 2016) (rejecting challenge to Plaintiff's standing based upon alleged FDCPA statutory violation); *Lane v. Bayview Loan Servicing, LLC*, No. 15 C 10446, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 89258 \*9-10 (N.D. Ill. July 11, 2016) ("When a federal statute is violated, and especially when Congress has created a cause of action for its violation, by definition Congress has created a legally protected interest that it deems important enough for a lawsuit."); *Church v. Accretive Health, Inc.*, No. 15-15708, 2016 U.S.

App. LEXIS 12414 \*7-11 (11th Cir. July 6, 2016) (same); see also Mogg v. Jacobs, No. 15-CV-1142-JPG-DGW, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 33229, 2016 WL 1029396, at \*5 (S.D. Ill. Mar. 15, 2016) ("Congress does have the power to enact statutes creating legal rights, the invasion of which creates standing, even though no injury would exist without the statute," (quoting Sterk v. Redbox Automated Retail, LLC, 770 F.3d 618, 623 (7th Cir. 2014)). For this reason, and to encourage consumers to bring FDCPA actions, Congress authorized an award of statutory damages for violations. 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a).

26. Moreover, Congress has explicitly described the FDCPA as regulating "abusive practices" in debt collection. 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(a) – 1692(e). Any person who receives a debt collection letter containing a violation of the FDCPA is a victim of abusive practices. *See* 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(e) ("It is the purpose of this subchapter to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses").

### COUNT I – FDCPA

- 27. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 28. <u>Exhibit A</u> falsely states that: "This collection agency is licensed by the Division of Banking" for the State of Wisconsin.
- 29. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e generally prohibits "any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt."

- 30. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(1) specifically prohibits the false representation that "the debt collector is vouched for, bonded by, or affiliated with the United States or any State, including the use of any badge, uniform, or facsimile thereof."
- 31. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(9) specifically prohibits "the use or distribution of any written communication which simulates or is falsely represented to be a document authorized, issued, or approved by any court, official, or agency of the United States or any State, or which creates a false impression as to its source, authorization, or approval."
- 32. Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(1) and 1692e(9) by falsely telling consumers that NRC was licensed by the State of Wisconsin's Division of Banking.

### **COUNT II – WCA**

- 33. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 34. The alleged underlying transaction, i.e. a credit card account, was a consumer credit transaction or consumer transactions with an agreement to defer payment.
- 35. Wis. Stat. § 427.104(1)(k) specifically prohibits a debt collector from using "a communication which simulates legal or judicial process or which gives the appearance of being authorized, issued or approved by a government, governmental agency or attorney—at—law when it is not."
- 36. By using a letter which falsely represented NRC's licensing status in Exhibit A, Defendant used a communication which gave the appearance of being authorized or approved by a governmental agency (the Division of Banking).
  - 37. Defendant violated Wis. Stat. § 427.104(1)(k).

### **CLASS ALLEGATIONS**

- 38. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of a Class, consisting of (a) all natural persons in the State of Wisconsin (b) who were sent a collection letter by NRC, (c) regarding an alleged debt, (d) stating that NRC is licensed by the Division of Banking in Wisconsin, (e) seeking to collect a debt for personal, family or household purposes, (f) between July 12, 2016 and July 12, 2017, inclusive, (g) that was not returned by the postal service.
- 39. The Class is so numerous that joinder is impracticable. Upon information and belief, there are more than 50 members of the Class.
- 40. There are questions of law and fact common to the members of the class, which common questions predominate over any questions that affect only individual class members. The predominant common question is whether Exhibit A violates the FDCPA and/or the WCA.
- 41. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members. All are based on the same factual and legal theories.
- 42. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent the interests of the Class members. Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in consumer credit and debt collection abuse cases.
- 43. A class action is superior to other alternative methods of adjudicating this dispute. Individual cases are not economically feasible.

### **JURY DEMAND**

44. Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that the Court enter judgment in favor of Plaintiff and the Class and against Defendants for:

(a) actual damages;

- (b) statutory damages;
- (c) attorneys' fees, litigation expenses and costs of suit; and
- (d) such other or further relief as the Court deems proper.

Dated: July 12, 2017

### **ADEMI & O'REILLY, LLP**

By: /s/ John D. Blythin
Shpetim Ademi (SBN 1026973)
John D. Blythin (SBN 1046105)
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dmorris@ademilaw.com

# **EXHIBIT A**

P.O. Box 620130 Atlanta, GA 30362-1660

### Personal & Confidential



Address Changed? Make Changes Below

### իրգոյի**կրի**նիցիինգցիկիովրիցենկկեսիրի

Bonnie Meyer 3365 E HENRY AVE CUDAHY WI 53110-3035

IF PAYING BY CRED	IT CARD, F	ILL OU	BELOW
ZIP CODE VISA VISA	MASTERCA	Master	DICOVE
CARD NUMBER	Į.	XP. DATE	AMOUNT
NAME AS ITAPPEARS ON CARD			MUST INCLUDE 3 DIGIT SECURITY CODE FROM BACK OF CARD
SIGNATURE			FILE NUMBER:

### <u>վիրեիկիիը դերգիկին ինսակիրին հենրիիկիիի</u>

Nations Recovery Center, Inc. P.O. Box 620130 Atlanta, GA 30362-2130

$\triangleleft$
To
Pay
$\triangleleft$

>	Billing Phone Number:	 	 	 _	 	
٢	E-Mail Address:					

➤ Make check or money order payable to Nations Recovery Center <
• Please Detach And Return in The Enclosed Envelope With Your Payment •

NRC Nations Recovery Center, Inc.

6491 Peachtree Industrial Blvd. Atlanta, GA 30360 www.PayNRC.com

Hours of Operation

Monday - Thursday 9AM-9PM EST

Friday 9AM-5PM EST

Saturday 9AM-1PM EST

File #:	5132	 
Creditor:	APPLIED BANK	
Account #:	8056	
Balance	\$3,518.28	

PAY THIS AMOUNT

05/05/2017

### **ACCOUNT NOTICE**

Dear Bonnie Meyer:

The above creditor has placed your account with our company for collection. We realize it may have been an oversight on your part and not an intentional disregard of an obligation.

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

Please call us should you wish to resolve this matter. You may also pay 24/7 at www.PayNRC.com.

Calls received outside of office hours will be promptly returned. Please leave your name, phone number and/or convenient time you wish to be called.









Mail payment in enclosed envelope

Pay online by credit card: www.PayNRC.com File Number: 7055132 Call us: (800) 935-1139

Scan this code with your smartphone to pay your bill online.

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

Sincerely, Brian Wilson

This collection agency is licensed by the Division of Banking in the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. www.wdfi.org.

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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.)

Place an X in the appropriate	Box: Green Bay Division	•	☐ Milwaukee Division	
I. (a) PLAINTIFFS BONNIE ME	IVED	DEFENI		ED INC
DOMNIE WIE	TER	NATIO	ONS RECOVERY CENTE	EK, INC.
•	e of First Listed Plaintiff  EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)		Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES) : IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, U	,
		NOTI	LAND INVOLVED.	SE THE LOCATION OF THE
(c) Attorney's (Firm Name	e, Address, and Telephone Number)	Attorneys (	If Known)	
	3620 E. Layton Ave., Cudahy, WI 53110 ne (414) 482-8001-Facsimile			
II. BASIS OF JURISI	OICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)		IP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff
1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)	(For Diversity C	ases Only)  PTF DEF  1 Incorporated or P  of Business In Th	
2 U.S. Government Defendant	4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item II	Citizen of Another Sta	ate 2 2 Incorporated and of Business In	
		Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	a 3 Foreign Nation	6 6
	T (Place an "X" in One Box Only)			O THE PART OF A THE PART OF
110 Insurance   120 Marine   130 Miller Act   140 Negotiable Instrument   150 Recovery of Overpayment	<del></del>	njury - practice pury - practi		OTHER STATUTES
☑ 1 Original ☐ 2 R	an "X" in One Box Only) emoved from	4 Reinstated or Reopened	(specify) Litigation	n Judgment
VI. CAUSE OF ACTI	ON  Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which 15 U.S.C. 1692 et seq Brief description of cause: Violation of Fair Debt Collection Practices			
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTUNDER F.R.C.P. 23	ΓΙΟΝ DEMAND \$	CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	y if demanded in complaint:  Yes No
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY	(See instructions): JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER	
DATE	SIGNATURE C	OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD		
July 12, 2017	s/ John D	. Blythin		
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY				

- <sup>AMOUNT</sup> Cas<del>e 2:17-cv-0095</del>9-NJ File<del>d 07/12/17</del> Page 1 <del>of 2 Docum</del>ent 1-2

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- I. (a) Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".
- **II. Jurisdiction**. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.C.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.)

- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- **IV. Nature of Suit.** Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerks in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.
- V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.

Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment. (7) Check this box for an appeal from a magistrate judge's decision.

VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity. Example:

U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553

Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service

VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.

Demand. In this space enter the dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded or indicate other demand such as a preliminary injunction.

Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.

VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

### UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the Eastern District of Wisconsin

		)
BONNIE M	IEYER	) )
Plaintifj	$\overline{(s)}$	- <i>'</i> )
v.		Civil Action No. 17-cv-959
		)
		)
NATIONS RECOVER	Y CENTER, INC.	)
	$\overline{ut(s)}$	- <i>)</i> )
		,
	SUMMONS	S IN A CIVIL ACTION
To: (Defendant's name and address)	NATIONS RECOVERY c/o CORPORATION SEI 8040 EXCELSIOR DRIV MADISON, WI 53717	RVICE COMPANY
A lawsuit has been file	ed against you.	
the United States or a United 12(a)(2) or (3) – you must se	States agency, or an offi rve on the plaintiff an ar	on you (not counting the day you receive it) – or 60 days if you are icer or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. aswer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the on must be served on the plaintiff or the plaintiff's attorney, whose
If you fail to respond. You also must file your answe	, judgment by default wil	Il be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. t.
		STEPHEN C. DRIES, CLERK OF COURT
Date:		
		Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk

Civil Action No. 17-cv-959

### PROOF OF SERVICE

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

were r	eceived by me on (date)	·		
	☐ I personally served	the summons and the attached complain	nt on the individual at (place):	
			On (date)	; or
	☐ I left the summons	and the attached complaint at the indiv	idual's residence or usual place of a	abode with (name)
		, a perso	on of suitable age and discretion wh	o resides there,
	on (date)	, and mailed a copy to the	ne individual's last known address;	or
	☐ I served the summo	ons and the attached complaint on (name	of individual)	
	who is designated by la	aw to accept service of process on beha	If of (name of organization)	
		on	(date)	; or
	☐ I returned the summ	nons unexecuted because		; or
	Other (specify):			
	My fees are \$	for travel and \$	for services, for a total of \$	0.00
		of perjury that this information is true.		
	r decrare under penanty	of perjury that this information is true.		
Date:				
			Server's signature	
			Printed name and title	
			g	
			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: Nations Recovery Falsely Claims Government Approval, Suit Says