1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	DAPEER ROSENBLIT LITVAK, LLP William Litvak, Esq. (Cal. Bar No. 90533) 11500 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 550 Los Angeles, CA 90064 E: wlitvak@drllaw.com T: 310-477-5575 HIRALDO P.A. Manuel Hiraldo, Esq. (pro hac vice forthcoming) 401 E. Las Olas Blvd., Suite 1400 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 E: Mhiraldo@Hirladolaw.com T: 954-400-4713 Attorneys for Plaintiff and Proposed Class							
15 16	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT							
17	NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA EVEL YN OFITERI Lindividually Case No. 3:21-cv-03423							
18	EVELYN OFITERU, individually and on behalf of all others similarly							
19	situated,	CLASS ACTION						
20	Plaintiff,	COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE						
21	r iamum,	TELEPHONE CONSUMER						
22	VS.	PROTECTION ACT, 47 U.S.C. §§ 227, ET SEQ. (TCPA)						
23	FIRST CALIFORNIA FINANACIAL,							
24	INC., a California corporation,	JURY TRIAL DEMANDED						
25	Defendant.							
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CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, Evelyn Ofiteru, brings this action against Defendant, First 1. California Finanacial, Inc.., to secure redress for violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA"), 47 U.S.C. § 227.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 2. This is a putative class action pursuant to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. §§ 227, et seq. (the "TCPA").
- Defendant markets itself as "your full-service California home loan and 3. refinance pros."1
- Defendant also uses prerecorded messages to send mass automated 4. marketing calls to individuals' cellular phone numbers without first obtaining the required express written consent.
- Through this action, Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief to halt Defendant's 5. illegal conduct, which has resulted in the invasion of privacy, harassment, aggravation, and disruption of the daily life of thousands of individuals. Plaintiff also seeks statutory damages on behalf of Plaintiff and members of the Class, and any other available legal or equitable remedies.

¹ www.firstcaliforniafinancial.com/Home

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 6. This Court has federal question subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, as the action arises under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. §§ 227, et seq. ("TCPA").
- 7. The Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant and venue is proper in this District because Defendant directs, markets, and provides its business activities to this District, and because Defendant's unauthorized marketing scheme was directed by Defendant to consumers in this District, including Plaintiff.

PARTIES

- 8. Plaintiff is a natural person who, at all times relevant to this action, was a resident of Sonoma County, California.
- 9. Defendant is a California corporation whose principal office is located at 30531 Via Ventana, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Defendant directs, markets, and provides its business activities throughout the United States, including throughout the state of California.
- 10. Unless otherwise indicated, the use of Defendant's name in this Complaint includes all agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors, assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, representatives, vendors, and insurers of Defendant.

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THE TCPA

- 11. The TCPA prohibits: (1) any person from calling a cellular telephone number; (2) using an automatic telephone dialing system or an artificial or prerecorded voice; (3) without the recipient's prior express consent. 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A).
- 12. The TCPA exists to prevent communications like the ones described within this Complaint. *See Mims v. Arrow Fin. Servs., LLC*, 132 S. Ct. 740, 744 (2012).
- 13. In an action under the TCPA, a plaintiff must show only that the defendant "called a number assigned to a cellular telephone service using an automatic dialing system or prerecorded voice." *Breslow v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.*, 857 F. Supp. 2d 1316, 1319 (S.D. Fla. 2012), *aff'd*, 755 F.3d 1265 (11th Cir. 2014).
- 14. The Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") is empowered to issue rules and regulations implementing the TCPA. According to the FCC's findings, calls in violation of the TCPA 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. The FCC also recognized that wireless customers are charged for incoming calls whether they pay in advance or after the minutes are used. *Rules and Regulations*

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Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991, CG Docket No. 02-278, Report and Order, 18 FCC Rcd 14014 (2003).

- 15. In 2012, the FCC issued an order further restricting automated telemarketing calls, requiring "prior express written consent" for such calls. *See In the Matter of Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of* 1991, 27 F.C.C.R. 1830, 1838 ¶ 20 (Feb. 15, 2012) (emphasis supplied).
- 16. To obtain express written consent for telemarketing calls, a defendant must establish that it secured the plaintiff's signature in a form that gives the plaintiff a "clear and conspicuous disclosure' of the consequences of providing the requested consent....and having received this information, agrees unambiguously to receive such calls at a telephone number the [plaintiff] designates." *In re Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, 27 F.C.C.R. 1830, 1837 ¶ 18, 1838 ¶ 20, 1844 ¶ 33, 1857 ¶ 66, 1858 ¶ 71 (F.C.C. Feb. 15, 2012).
- 17. The TCPA regulations promulgated by the FCC define "telemarketing" as "the initiation of a telephone call or message for the purpose of encouraging the purchase or rental of, or investment in, property, goods, or services." 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(f)(12). In determining whether a communication constitutes telemarketing, a court must evaluate the ultimate purpose of the communication. *See Golan v. Veritas Entm't, LLC*, 788 F.3d 814, 820 (8th Cir. 2015).

18. "Neither the TCPA nor its implementing regulations 'require an explicit mention of a good, product, or service' where the implication of an improper purpose is 'clear from the context." *Id.* (citing *Chesbro v. Best Buy Stores, L.P.*, 705 F.3d 913, 918 (9th Cir. 2012)).

- 19. "Telemarketing' occurs when the context of a call indicates that it was initiated and transmitted to a person for the purpose of promoting property, goods, or services." *Golan*, 788 F.3d at 820 (citing 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(a)(2)(iii); 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(f)(12); *In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, 18 F.C.C. Rcd at 14098 ¶ 141, 2003 WL 21517853, at *49).
- 20. The FCC has explained that calls motivated in part by the intent to sell property, goods, or services are considered telemarketing under the TCPA. *See In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, 18 FCC Rcd. 14014, ¶¶ 139-142 (2003). This is true whether call recipients are encouraged to purchase, rent, or invest in property, goods, or services during the call *or in the future. Id.*
- 21. In other words, offers "that are part of an overall marketing campaign to sell property, goods, or services constitute" telemarketing under the TCPA. See In re Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991, 18 FCC Rcd. 14014, ¶ 136 (2003).

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If a call is not deemed telemarketing, a defendant must nevertheless 22. demonstrate that it obtained the plaintiff's prior express consent. See In the Matter of Rules and Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991, 30 FCC Rcd. 7961, 7991-92 (2015) (requiring express consent "for non-telemarketing and non-advertising calls").

FACTS

- On or about January 27, 2021, Defendant caused a prerecorded voice 23. message to be transmitted to Plaintiff's cellular telephone number ending in 5576 ("5576 Number"):
- 24. The prerecorded voice message states that they were being sent from Kemmer Matteson of First California Financial and states, "just wanted to give you a follow-up call on mortgage interest rates, currently we're at 2.75% with 0 points, so if you're interested give me a call back 714 606 8400 and I'll be happy to go over the options with you. Have a great day."
 - Plaintiff is the subscriber and/or sole user of the 5576 number. 25.
 - 26. The prerecorded message came from the number 949-421-1000.
- 27. When Plaintiff listened to the voice messages, she was easily able to determine that it was a prerecorded message. Rahn v. Bank of Am., No. 1:15-CV-4485-ODE-JSA, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 186171, at *10-11 (N.D. Ga. June 23, 2016) ("When one receives a call, it is a clear-cut fact, easily discernible to any lay person,

whether or not the recipient is speaking to a live human being, or is instead being subjected to a prerecorded message.").

- 28. Defendant's prerecorded calls constitute message telemarketing/advertising because they promote Defendant's business, goods and services.
- At no point in time did Plaintiff provide Defendant with her express 29. written consent to be contacted by prerecorded message.
- 30. Upon information and belief, Defendant caused similar prerecorded messages to be sent to individuals residing within this judicial district.
- Defendant's unsolicited prerecorded messages caused Plaintiff 31. additional harm, including invasion of privacy, aggravation, annoyance, intrusion on seclusion, trespass, and conversion. Defendant's call also inconvenienced Plaintiff and caused disruption to Plaintiff's daily life.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

PROPOSED CLASS

- 32. Plaintiff brings this case as a class action pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23, on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated.
 - 33. Plaintiff brings this case on behalf of the Class defined as follows:

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NO CONSENT CLASS: All persons in the United States who, within four years prior to the filing of this action, (1) were sent a prerecorded message by or on behalf of Defendant, (2) regarding Defendant's goods, products or services, and (4) for which Defendant failed to secure the called party's express written consent

- 34. Plaintiff reserves the right to modify the Class definitions as warranted as facts are learned in further investigation and discovery.
- 35. Defendant and its employees or agents are excluded from the Class. Plaintiff does not know the number of members in the Class but believes the Class members number in the several thousands, if not more.

NUMEROSITY

- 36. Upon information and belief, Defendant has placed automated calls to cellular telephone numbers belonging to thousands of consumers throughout the United States without their prior express consent. The members of the Class, therefore, are believed to be so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable.
- 37. The exact number and identities of the members of the Class are unknown at this time and can only be ascertained through discovery. Identification of the Class members is a matter capable of ministerial determination from Defendant's call records.

COMMON QUESTIONS OF LAW AND FACT

- 38. There are numerous questions of law and fact common to members of the Class which predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Class. Among the questions of law and fact common to the members of the Class are:
 - a. Whether Defendant made non-emergency calls to Plaintiff's and Class members' cellular telephones using a prerecorded message;
 - b. Whether Defendant can meet its burden of showing that it obtained prior express written consent to make such calls;
 - c. Whether Defendant's conduct was knowing and willful;
 - d. Whether Defendant is liable for damages, and the amount of such damages; and
 - e. Whether Defendant should be enjoined from such conduct in the future.
- 39. The common questions in this case are capable of having common answers. If Plaintiff's claim that Defendant routinely transmits calls to telephone numbers assigned to cellular telephone services is accurate, Plaintiff and the Class members will have identical claims capable of being efficiently adjudicated and administered in this case.

TYPICALITY

40. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members, as they are all based on the same factual and legal theories.

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF THE CLASS MEMBERS

41. Plaintiff is a representative who will fully and adequately assert and protect the interests of the Class, and has retained competent counsel. Accordingly, Plaintiff is an adequate representative and will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class.

PROCEEDING VIA CLASS ACTION IS SUPERIOR AND ADVISABLE

42. A class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this lawsuit, because individual litigation of the claims of all members of the Class is economically unfeasible and procedurally impracticable. While the aggregate damages sustained by the Class are in the millions of dollars, the individual damages incurred by each member of the Class resulting from Defendant's wrongful conduct are too small to warrant the expense of individual lawsuits. The likelihood of individual Class members prosecuting their own separate claims is remote, and, even if every member of the Class could afford individual litigation, the court system would be unduly burdened by individual litigation of such cases.

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43. The prosecution of separate actions by members of the Class would create a risk of establishing inconsistent rulings and/or incompatible standards of conduct for Defendant. For example, one court might enjoin Defendant from performing the challenged acts, whereas another may not. Additionally, individual actions may be dispositive of the interests of the Class, although certain class members are not parties to such actions.

COUNT I

Violations of the TCPA, 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)

(On Behalf of Plaintiff and No Consent Class)

- 44. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.
- 45. It is a violation of the TCPA to make "any call (other than a call made for emergency purposes or made with the prior express consent of the called party) using any …artificial or prerecorded voice to any telephone number assigned to a … cellular telephone service …." 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii).
- 46. It is a violation of the TCPA regulations promulgated by the FCC to "initiate any telephone call...using an... artificial or prerecorded voice to any telephone number assigned to a paging service, cellular telephone service, specialized mobile radio service, or other radio common carrier service, or any

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service for which the called party is charged for the call." 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(a)(1)(iii).

- 47. Additionally, it is a violation of the TCPA regulations promulgated by the FCC to "[i]nitiate, or cause to be initiated, any telephone call that includes or introduces an advertisement or constitutes telemarketing, ...artificial or prerecorded voice ...other than a call made with the prior express written consent of the called party or the prior express consent of the called party when the call is made..." 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200(a)(2).
- 48. Defendant or third parties directed by Defendant used prerecorded messages to make non-emergency telephone calls to the cellular telephones of Plaintiff and the other members of the Class defined below.
- 49. Defendant or third parties directed by Defendant used prerecorded messages to make non-emergency telephone calls to the telephones of Plaintiff and other members of the Class.
- 50. These calls were made without regard to whether or not Defendant had first obtained express permission from the called party to make such calls. In fact, Defendant did not have prior express consent to call the cell phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class when its calls were made.
- 51. Defendant has, therefore, violated § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) of the TCPA by using a prerecorded message to make non-emergency telephone calls to the cell

phones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class without their prior express written consent.

- 52. Defendant has therefore violated § 64.1200(a)(1)(iii) and § 64.1200(a)(2) by using prerecorded messages to make non-emergency telephone calls to the telephones of Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class without their prior express written consent.
- 53. Defendant knew that it did not have prior express consent to make these calls, and knew or should have known that it was using prerecorded messages. The violations were therefore willful or knowing.
- 54. As a result of Defendant's conduct and pursuant to § 227(b)(3) of the TCPA, Plaintiff and the other members of the putative Class were harmed and are each entitled to a minimum of \$500.00 in damages for each violation. Plaintiff and the members of the Class are also entitled to an injunction against future calls. *Id*.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, individually and on behalf of the Class, prays for the following relief:

 a) An order certifying this case as a class action on behalf of the Class as defined above, and appointing Plaintiff as the representative of the Class and Plaintiff's counsel as Class Counsel;

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- b) An award of actual and statutory damages for Plaintiff and each member of the Class;
- c) As a result of Defendant's negligent violations of 47 U.S.C. §§ 227, et seq., Plaintiff seeks for herself and each member of the Class \$500.00 in statutory damages for each and every violation pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 277(b)(3)(B);
- d) As a result of Defendant's knowing and/or willful violations of 47 U.S.C. §§ 227, *et seq.*, Plaintiff seeks for herself and each member of the Class treble damages, as provided by statute, up to \$1,500.00 for each and every violation pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 277(b)(3)(B) and § 277(b)(3)(C);
- e) An order declaring that Defendant's actions, as set out above, violate the TCPA;
- f) An injunction requiring Defendant to cease all unsolicited call activity, and to otherwise protect the interests of the Class;
- g) An injunction prohibiting Defendant from using, or contracting the use of, prerecorded messages without obtaining, recipient's consent to receive calls made with such equipment;
- h) An award of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to, *inter alia*,

 California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5; and

i) Such further and other relief as the Court deems necessary.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff hereby demand a trial by jury.

DOCUMENT PRESERVATION DEMAND

Plaintiff demands that Defendant take affirmative steps to preserve all records, lists, electronic databases or other itemization of telephone numbers associated with Defendant and the calls as alleged herein.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: May 6, 2021 /s/ William Litvak By:

William Litvak (SBN 90533)

wlitvak@drllaw.com

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Attorneys for Plaintiff and the Proposed

Class

JS-CAND 44 (Rev. 10/2020)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS-CAND 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 in its original form by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the Clerk of Court to initiate the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS			DEFENDANTS						
EVELYN OFITERU, indi	FIRST CALIFORNIA FINANACIAL, INC., a California Corporation, County of Residence of First Listed Defendant Orange County (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.								
(b) County of Residence o (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAIN.									
(2)				THE TR. Attorneys (If Know		AND INVOLVED).		
(c) Attomeys (Firm Name, Villiam Litvak, Dapeer Ro Manuel Hiraldo, Hiraldo I				Los Angeles, CA	90064, T		75		
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JS-CAND 44 (rev. 10/2020)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS-CAND 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet. The JS-CAND 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 in its original form by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the Clerk of Court to initiate 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 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a), 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.
 - (1) United States plaintiff. Jurisdiction based on 28 USC §§ 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.
 - (2) United States defendant. When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.
 - (3) Federal question. This refers to suits under 28 USC § 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.
 - (4) <u>Diversity of citizenship</u>. This refers to suits under 28 USC § 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-CAND 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 clerk(s) 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 six boxes.
 - (1) Original Proceedings. Cases originating in the United States district courts.
 - (2) Removed from State Court. Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 USC § 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.
 - (3) Remanded from Appellate Court. Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.
 - (4) Reinstated or Reopened. Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.
 - (5) <u>Transferred from Another District</u>. For cases transferred under Title 28 USC § 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.
 - (6) Multidistrict Litigation Transfer. Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 USC § 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.
 - (8) <u>Multidistrict Litigation Direct File</u>. Check this box when a multidistrict litigation case is filed in the same district as the Master MDL docket. <u>Please note that there is no Origin Code 7</u>. Origin Code 7 was used for historical records and is no longer relevant due to changes in statute.
- 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 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23.
 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-CAND 44 is used to identify related pending cases, if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.
- IX. Divisional Assignment. If the Nature of Suit is under Property Rights or Prisoner Petitions or the matter is a Securities Class Action, leave this section blank. For all other cases, identify the divisional venue according to Civil Local Rule 3-2: "the county in which a substantial part of the events or omissions which give rise to the claim occurred or in which a substantial part of the property that is the subject of the action is situated."

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: First California Financial Hit with Class Action Over Alleged Telemarketing Calls