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

| MORGAN OTTMANN, Individually and on |) Case No.: 17-cv-995 |
|--|--------------------------|
| Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated, |) CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT |
| Plaintiff, |) } |
| V. | ý) |
| |) Jury Trial Demanded |
| CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LP, | { |
| 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").

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 and 1337. Venue in this District is proper in that Defendant's collection efforts took place in this District.

PARTIES

- 3. Plaintiff Morgan Ottmann is an individual who resides in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.
- 4. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined in the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3), in that Defendant sought to collect from her a debt allegedly incurred for personal, family or household purposes, namely a personal credit card debt.
- 5. Defendant Capital Management, LLP ("Capital Management") is a is a debt collection agency with its principal offices located at 698 ½ South Ogden Street, Buffalo, NY 14206.

- 6. Capital Management is engaged in the business of a collection agency, using the mails and telephone to collect consumer debts originally owed to others.
- 7. Capital Management is engaged in the business of collecting debts owed to others and incurred for personal, family or household purposes. Capital Management is a debt collector as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692a.

FACTS

- 8. On or around September 10, 2016, Capital Management mailed a debt collection letter to Plaintiff regarding an alleged debt, allegedly owed to "Bank of America, N.A." ("BoA"). A copy of this letter is attached to this complaint as Exhibit A.
 - 9. The alleged debt identified in Exhibit A was for an alleged credit card account.
- 10. The alleged debt identified in <u>Exhibit A</u> was allegedly owed to BoA and was incurred only for personal, family or household purposes.
- 11. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form letter, generated by a computer, and with the information specific to Plaintiff inserted by the computer.
- 12. Upon information and belief, <u>Exhibit A</u> is a form debt collection letter used by Capital Management to attempt to collect alleged debts.
 - 13. Exhibit A represents the balance allegedly owed to BoA as \$2992.64.
 - 14. Exhibit A contains the following text:

On behalf of our client, Bank of America, Capital Management Services, L.P. is authorized to accept less than the full balance due as a settlement on the above-mentioned account. Please contact our representatives to discuss a potential settlement on your account.

You may send the settlement payment to Capital Management Services, L.P. at 698 ½ South Ogden Street, Buffalo, NY 14206-2317. Our representatives are trained to offer assistance regarding this obligation. For account inquiries, you may contact Capital Management Services, L.P. by calling 1-888-787-0933 Mon. through Fri. 8 am to 9 pm ET, Sat. 8 am to 1 pm ET. You may also make payments online at www.cms-trans.com.

Exhibit A.

- 15. The statements above are confusing and misleading to the unsophisticated consumer. Such broad, open-ended language is inherently confusing to the consumer and an unfair collection practice.
- 16. <u>Exhibit A</u> tells the consumer where to send the settlement payment, but gives no details as to when the settlement offer expires or how much the settlement offer is for.
- 17. The consumer has no way to know from Exhibit A whether or for how long Capital Management and/or BoA would treat a payment sent to the listed address as an actual settlement, i.e. releasing Plaintiff from any remaining liability, of the alleged debt.
- 18. Capital Management's language leaves open the possibility that the consumer will call the number and get a settlement amount, then make a payment at the settlement amount, only to be informed that the offer has since expired and Capital Management will continue to collect on the remaining balance.
- 19. The consequences of misleading a consumer with respect to settling a debt are much greater than misleading about the amount of the debt. A payment of the entire debt would leave pennies or, at most, a few dollars left over for payment later. *See eg. Miller v. McCalla, Raymer, Padrick, Cobb, Nichols, & Clark, L.L.C.*, 214 F.3d 872, 876 (7th Cir. 2000). Due to the confusing language in Exhibit A, however, Capital Management could continue to collect the remaining balance of the alleged debt, despite receiving payment(s) the consumer believed to be settlement payment(s).
- 20. Capital Management's misrepresentations are material misrepresentations because they mislead the unsophisticated consumer about the nature of the settlement offer.
 - 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.
- 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. 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. III. 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. III. 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").

- 27. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e generally prohibits a debt collector from using "any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt."
- 28. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10) specifically prohibits the "use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt."
- 29. 15 U.S.C. § 1692f generally prohibits "unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt."

COUNT I - FDCPA

- 30. Plaintiff incorporates by reference as if fully set forth herein the allegations contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint.
- 31. <u>Exhibit A</u> includes an offer that is misleading as to the amount necessary to effectuate the settlement and when the offer may expire.
- 32. A consumer who mails a "settlement" payment to the address listed on the letter, may not have actually settled the claim if Capital Management decides, on its own whim, that the offer expired prior to the payment.
 - 33. Capital Management violated 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10) and 1692f.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

34. 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 in the form represented by Exhibit A to the complaint in this action, (c) seeking to collect a debt for personal, family or

household purposes, (d) between May 3, 2016 and May 3, 2017, inclusive, (e) that was not returned by the postal service.

- 35. The Class is so numerous that joinder is impracticable. On information and belief, there are more than 50 members of the Class.
- 36. 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 the Defendant complied with 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, 1692e(10), 1692f.
- 37. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members. All are based on the same factual and legal theories.
- 38. 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.
- 39. A class action is superior to other alternative methods of adjudicating this dispute. Individual cases are not economically feasible.

JURY DEMAND

40. 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 Defendant 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: May 3, 2017

ADEMI & O'REILLY, LLP

By: /s/ John D. Blythin
Shpetim Ademi (SBN 1026973)
John D. Blythin (SBN 1046105)
Mark A. Eldridge (SBN 1089944)
Denise L. Morris (SBN 1097911)
3620 East Layton Avenue
Cudahy, WI 53110
(414) 482-8000
(414) 482-8001 (fax)
sademi@ademilaw.com
jblythin@ademilaw.com
meldridge@ademilaw.com
dmorris@ademilaw.com

EXHIBIT A



CAPITAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LP

698 1/2 South Ogden Street Buffalo, NY 14206-2317

Office Hours: M-F 8 am - 9 pm ET Sat 8 am - 1 pm ET

Toll Free: 1-877-211-5288, Fax: 716-512-6046

Creditor: Bank of America, N.A. Account #: XXXXXXXXXXXXX7750

Balance: \$2992.64

Reference#

T111 P2****AUTO**ALL FOR AADC 530

Morgan V Ottmann 224 MONTANA AVE APT 4 SOUTH MILWAUKEE, WI 53172-2582

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN TOP PORTION WITH PAYMENT

Dear Morgan V Ottmann:

September 10, 2016

On behalf of our client, Bank of America, Capital Management Services, L.P. is authorized to accept less than the full balance due as a settlement on the above-mentioned account. Please contact our representatives to discuss a potential settlement on your account.

You may send the settlement payment to Capital Management Services, L.P. at 698 ½ South Ogden Street, Buffalo, NY 14206-2317. Our representatives are trained to offer assistance regarding this obligation. For account inquiries, you may contact Capital Management Services, L.P. by calling 1-888-787-0933 Mon. through Fri. 8 am to 9 pm ET, Sat. 8 am to 1 pm ET. You may also make payments online at www.cms-trans.com.

Upon clearance of sufficient funds, our records will be updated to reflect that the above account has been settled for less than the balance owed.

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

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 | · · | Ŀ | Milwaukee Division | |
|---|--|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| I. (a) PLAINTIFFS | | DE | FENDANTS | | |
| MORGAN O | TTMANN | C | APITAL M | ANAGEMENT SEI | RVICES, LP |
| , , | e of First Listed Plaintiff EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES) | Coun | NOTE: IN LANI | of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES) CONDEMNATION CASES, USINVOLVED. | |
| (c) Attorney's (Firm Name | e, Address, and Telephone Number) | Atto | orneys (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) | | | RINCIPAL PARTIES | (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff |
| U.S. Government Plaintiff | 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party) | (For Div | | TF DEF 1 | |
| 2 U.S. Government Defendant | 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III | Citizen of Ano | other State | 2 Incorporated and of Business In . | |
| | | Citizen or Sub Foreign Co | _ | 3 Greign Nation | 6 6 6 |
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| CONTRACT | TORTS | | URE/PENALTY | BANKRUPTCY | OTHER STATUTES |
| □ 110 Insurance □ 120 Marine □ 130 Miller Act □ 140 Negotiable Instrument □ 150 Recovery of Overpayment ■ & Enforcement of Judgment □ 151 Medicare Act □ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans) □ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits □ 160 Stockholders' Suits □ 190 Other Contract □ 195 Contract Product Liability □ 196 Franchise ■ REAL PROPERTY □ 210 Land Condemnation □ 220 Foreclosure □ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment □ 240 Torts to Land □ 245 Tort Product Liability □ 290 All Other Real Property | | jury - | Food & Drug Related Seizure perty 21 USC 881 r Laws & Truck e Regs. bational //Health ABOR abor Standards //M gmt. Relations //M gmt. Reporting elosure Act ay Labor Act Labor Litigation Ret. Inc. ty Act IGRATION ulization Application s Corpus - Detainee Immigration | 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 423 Withdrawal | 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit 490 Cable/Sat TV 810 Selective Service 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410 890 Other Statutory Actions 891 Agricultural Acts 892 Economic Stabilization Act 893 Environmental Matters 894 Energy Allocation Act 895 Freedom of Information Act 900Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes |
| ☑ 1 Original ☐ 2 R | an "X" in One Box Only) emoved from | 4 Reinstated of Reopened | or \Box 3 anothe (speci | | 1 Judgment |
| VI. CAUSE OF ACTI | ON Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which y 15 U.S.C. 1692 et seq Brief description of cause: Violation of Fair Debt Collection Practices | | cite jurisdiction | ai statutes uniess diversity): | |
| VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: | CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACT UNDER F.R.C.P. 23 | TION DEMAN | D \$ | CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND | r if demanded in complaint: : ☑ Yes ☐ No |
| VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY | (See instructions): JUDGE | | | DOCKET NUMBER | |
| DATE | SIGNATURE O | F ATTORNEY OF REC | ORD | | |
| July 18, 2017 | s/ John [| D. Blythin | | | |
| FOR OFFICE USE ONLY | | | | | |

- Case 2:17-cv-00995 Filed 07/18/17 Page 1 of 2 Document 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

| | |) |
|--|--|---|
| Mongayor | TYPN (A N. |)) |
| MORGAN O' | |) |
| Plaintiff | (s) |) C' 'I A d' N 15 205 |
| V. | |) Civil Action No. 17-cv-995 |
| | |) |
| CAPITAL MANAGEME | ENT SERVICES, LP |)) |
| Defendan | t(s) |) |
| | CLIMATONIC | IN A CIVIL A CIVION |
| | SUMMONS | IN A CIVIL ACTION |
| To: (Defendant's name and address) | CAPITAL MANAGEMEN 698 1/2 SOUTH OGDEN S BUFFALO, NEW YORK, | STREET |
| A lawsuit has been file | ed against you. | |
| the United States or a United 12(a)(2) or (3) – you must sen | States agency, or an office ve on the plaintiff an ans | a you (not counting the day you receive it) – or 60 days if you are er or employee of the United States described in Fed. R. Civ. P. swer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the n must be served on the plaintiff or the plaintiff's attorney, whose |
| If you fail to respond, You also must file your answer | | be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. |
| | | STEPHEN C. DRIES, CLERK OF COURT |
| Date: | | |
| | | Signature of Clerk or Deputy Clerk |
| | | |

Civil Action No. 17-cv-995

PROOF OF SERVICE

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

| received by me on (date) | · | | |
|--|--|--|------------------|
| ☐ I personally served | I the summons and the attached com | aplaint on the individual at (place): | |
| | | On (date) | ; or |
| ☐ I left the summons | and the attached complaint at the ir | ndividual's residence or usual place of a | bode with (name |
| | , a p | erson of suitable age and discretion who | o resides there, |
| on (date) | , and mailed a copy | to the individual's last known address; of | or |
| ☐ I served the summ | ons and the attached complaint on (r | name of individual) | |
| who is designated by l | aw to accept service of process on b | pehalf of (name of organization) | |
| | | on (date) | ; or |
| | | | |
| \Box I returned the sum | mons unexecuted because | | ; or |
| | mons unexecuted because | | ; or |
| ☐ Other (specify): | | | ; or |
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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: <u>Suit Claims Capital Management Tricks Consumers into Paying False Settlements</u>