1	CARLSON LYNCH SWEET KILPELA & CARPENTER, LLP								
2	Todd D. Carpenter (CA 234464)								
3	Brittany C. Casola (CA 306561) 402 West Broadway, 29th Floor								
4	402 West Broadway, 29th Floor San Diego, California 92101 Telephone: (619) 756-6994 Facsimile: (619) 756-6991								
5	tcarpenter@carlsonlynch.com								
6	bcasola@carlsonlynch.com								
7	Attorneys for Plaintiff								
8									
9									
10									
11									
12	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT								
13	SOUTHERN DISTRI	CT OF CALIFORNIA							
14									
15	TINA POWERS, on behalf of herself and	Case No.: <u>'17CV1462 AJB WVG</u>							
16	all others similarly situated, Plaintiff,	CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT							
17	,								
18	V.	1. VIOLATION OF THE FAIR CREDIT REPORTING ACT,							
19	JPMORGAN CHASE BANK, N.A. and DOES 1 through 50, inclusive,	15 U.S.C. § 1681b							
20	Defendant.								
21		DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL							
22									
23									
24									
25									
26									
27									
28									

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

Plaintiff TINA POWERS ("Plaintiff") brings this action on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated against Defendant JPMORGAN CHASE BANK, N.A. ("Defendant") and states:

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1. Arbitrary disclosure of a consumer's financial information engenders a grave threat to privacy. Congress enacted the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1681, *et al.* (the "FCRA") to curb the abuses of consumer reporting agencies and to ensure that entities that obtain credit reports exercise their duties with fairness and sensitivity to a consumer's privacy. In recognizing the risk of misuse of information and the unnecessary harm to a consumer's credit score, Congress strictly limits the instances in which a person or entity may access a consumer's credit report. Defendant blatantly defies this law by knowingly obtaining its customers' credit reports without a permissible purpose, resulting in an unreasonable and careless invasion of consumer privacy.
- 2. Defendant willfully violated the FCRA when it accessed the contents of Plaintiff's credit file. Defendant certified to Equifax that it had a legitimate business need or other permissible purpose for obtaining Plaintiff's consumer credit report despite knowing it no longer maintained any debtor-creditor relationship with Plaintiff. Accordingly, Defendant's actions constitute a willful violation of Section 1681b.
- 3. Plaintiff seeks to bring this action on behalf of herself and a Class of other similarly situated consumers who were subjected to Defendant's illegal conduct and seeks to recover actual, statutory, and punitive damages for each Class member due to Defendant's intentional violations.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 4. This Court has original jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1681p, without regard to the amount in controversy, because the action arises out of Defendant's willful violations of the FCRA.
- 5. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant is authorized to conduct and does conduct business in California. Defendant maintains over

9

10 11

12

13 14

15

16

17

18 19

20

22

21

23 24

25

26 27

28

1,000 locations in California and thus, has sufficient minimum contacts with California and sufficiently avails itself of the California market.

6. Venue is appropriate in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a) and (b) because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to Plaintiff's claims occurred while she resided in this judicial district. Venue is also proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1965(a) because Defendant transacts substantial business in this District.

III. **PARTIES**

Plaintiff

Plaintiff Tina Powers ("Plaintiff") is an individual currently residing in Clark 7. County, Nevada. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1681a(c).

Defendant

8. Defendant JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A, a subsidiary of JPMorgan Chase & Co., is a national banking association incorporated in New York with its principal place of business in Newark, Delaware. Defendant operates branches in 23 states in the United States. Defendant is a "person" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1681a(b) because it is a national association.

IV. **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

- 9. On or about December 20, 2005 Plaintiff obtained a mortgage from Defendant secured by real property located at 4872 and 4874 Coconino Way, San Diego, California 92117 (the "Property"). The Parties effectively entered into a debtor-creditor relationship with respect to the mortgage on the Property.
- On or before January 28, 2016, Plaintiff successfully paid off the mortgage. 10. Defendant mailed Plaintiff a letter dated January 28, 2016 confirming that Plaintiff paid off the mortgage for Account No. 0917681146.
- 11. At that time, Plaintiff maintained no other existing accounts with Defendant, nor did she maintain any revolving lines of credit with Defendant. Accordingly, the debtorcreditor relationship between the Parties had concluded.

3 4

5

6 7

8

9

10 11

12

13 14

15

16

17

18

19

20 21

22 23

24 25

26

28

27

- Notwithstanding the conclusion of a relationship between the Parties, 12. Defendant accessed Plaintiff's Equifax credit file on February 9, 2016.
- 13. Equifax Inc. ("Equifax") is a consumer credit reporting agency incorporated under the laws of the State of Georgia with its principal place of business in Atlanta, Georgia. Equifax is a "consumer reporting agency" as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1681a(f) because it an entity which "regularly engages in . . . the practice of assembling or evaluating consumer credit information or other information on consumers for the purpose of furnishing consumer report to third parties . . ." Equifax regularly provides consumer credit reporting services to Defendant, who subscribes to Equifax's services.
- Defendant is a "furnisher of information" as described in 15 U.S.C. § 1681s-14. 2 because it regularly furnishes information to Equifax and other consumer reporting agencies about its customers.
- 15. On February 9, 2016, Defendant willfully obtained Plaintiff's credit file from Equifax. In doing so, Defendant furnished Plaintiff's information to Equifax and generally or specifically certified that it maintained a permissible purpose for accessing Plaintiff's credit consumer report in that instance.
- In correspondence dated March 21, 2016, Defendant confirmed that its access 16. to Plaintiff's credit file was improper and indicated it would take steps to have the improper February 9, 2016 credit inquiry removed.

V. **CLASS ALLEGATIONS**

- 17. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of herself and all other similarly situated Class members pursuant to Rules 23(a) and (b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and seeks certification of the following Class against Defendant:
 - All consumers in the United States, from October 17, 2014 through the date of trial, whose credit consumer report was obtained by Defendant at a time when the consumer no longer had an existing account or credit relationship, as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1681b(a)(3)(A)-(F), with Defendant.

- 18. Excluded from the Class is Defendant, their officers, directors, and employees.
- 19. *Numerosity*. The members of the Class are so numerous that joinder of all members of the Class is impracticable. Plaintiff is informed and believes that the proposed Class contains hundreds of thousands of customers in the United States who have been damaged by Defendant's impermissible access of their credit consumer reports. The precise number of Class members is unknown to Plaintiff.
- 20. Existence and Predominance of Common Questions of Law and Fact. This action involves common questions of law and fact, which predominate over any questions affecting individual Class members. These common legal and factual questions include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a) Whether Defendant willfully obtained Plaintiff's and Class members' credit consumer reports for an impermissible purpose;
 - b) Whether Defendant's alleged conduct constitutes a violation of the FCRA; and
 - c) Whether Plaintiff and Class members have been harmed by Defendant's willful noncompliance with the FCRA and the proper measure of such harm.
- 21. *Typicality*. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the Class members because, *inter alia*, all Class members were injured by the uniform misconduct described above and each claim arises from the same factual basis and unlawful violation.
- 22. Adequacy of Representation. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class members. Plaintiff has retained counsel experienced in complex consumer class action litigation, and Plaintiff intends to prosecute this action vigorously. Plaintiff has no adverse or antagonistic interests to those of the Class.
- 23. *Superiority*. A class action is superior to all other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy. Individualized litigation would create the danger of inconsistent or contradictory judgments arising from the same set of facts.

1	I
2	(
3	(
4	(
5	
6	8
7	\
8	
9	
10	
11	8
12	
13	،
13 14 15	ł
15	
16	(
17	
18	
19	
20	
21	
22	
23]
24	
25	6
26	

28

Individualized litigation would also increase the delay and expense to all parties and the court system from the issues raised by this action. By contrast, utilizing the class action device here promotes judicial economy and consistency because it will resolve hundreds of thousands of claims in a single action.

24. An ascertainable Class exists because Defendant maintains extensive records and data comprised of its customers' and former customers' identification information, which can be accessed by Defendant with reasonable effort.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION Violation of the Fair Credit Reporting Act ("FCRA") 15 U.S.C. § 1681b

- 25. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges the allegations contained in the paragraphs above, as if fully set forth herein.
- 26. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1681a(c). Defendant is a "person" as defined by § 1681a(b). Equifax is a "consumer reporting agency" as defined by § 1681a(f).
- 27. The FCRA prohibits a person or entity from issuing or obtaining a consumer's credit report for an impermissible purpose. The statute provides in relevant part:

(f) Certain use or obtaining of information prohibited:

A person shall not use or obtain a consumer report for any purpose unless—

- (1) the consumer report is obtained for a purpose for which the consumer report is authorized to be furnished under this section; and
- (2) the purpose is certified in accordance with section 1681e of this title by a prospective user of the report through a general or specific certification.
- 15 U.S.C. § 1681b(f).
- 28. The FCRA enumerates the *only* permissible purposes for which a person or entity may obtain a consumer's credit report:

(a) In general

 \dots [A]ny consumer reporting agency may furnish a consumer report under the following circumstances and <u>no other</u>:

. .

(3) To a person which it has reason to believe—

(A) Intends to use the information in connection with a credit transaction involving the consumer on whom the information is to be furnished and involving the extension of credit to, or review or collection of an account of, the consumer; or

- (F) otherwise has a legitimate business need for the information—
 - (i) in connection with a business transaction that is initiated by the consumer; or
 - (ii) to review an account to determine whether the consumer continues to meet the terms of the account.

15 U.S.C. § 1681b(3)(A), (F) (emphasis added).

- 29. Once Plaintiff successfully paid off the mortgage on or before January 28, 2016, the debtor-creditor relationship between the Parties was terminated and Plaintiff had no other continuing credit obligations with Defendant. At that time, Defendant had actual knowledge that it had no remaining legitimate business need or any other permissible purpose to obtain Plaintiff's credit report. Nevertheless, Defendant obtained Plaintiff's credit report on February 9, 2016.
- 30. Accordingly, Defendant intentionally and unlawfully accessed Plaintiff's credit report from Equifax for an impermissible purpose. Defendant willfully engages in a widespread scheme of impermissibly accessing Class members' credit reports who have no existing accounts or other continuing obligations with Defendant.
- 31. Civil liability exists for anyone who willfully fails to comply with any provision of the FCRA in the amount of "any actual damages sustained by the consumer as a result of the failure <u>or</u> damages of not less than \$100 and not more than \$1,000." 15 U.S.C. § 1681n(a)(1)(A) (emphasis added). Together with any actual damages or statutory damages awarded, a consumer is entitled to punitive damages, reasonable attorneys' fees, and costs in an amount to be determined by the court. *Id.* § 1681n(a)(2)-(3).
- 32. Defendant's noncompliance with this provision of the FCRA is willful because Defendant is, and at all times was, aware of its offending business practices and is aware of its existing business relationships, or lack thereof, with each customer.

Defendant's repeated and willful violations of the FCRA are further evidenced by Defendant's history of class actions and settlements arising from the same type of offending conduct. *See e.g.*, *Duncan v. JPMorgan Chase Bank*, *N.A.*, Civil No. SA-14-CA-912-FB, 2016 WL 4419472 (W.D. Tex. May 24, 2016); *Sleezer v. Chase Bank USA*, *N.A.*, Civil No. SA-14-CA-961-H (W.D. Tex. 2007).

33. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's willful conduct, Plaintiff and the Class members, and each of them, have suffered actual and concrete harm in the form of, without limitation, invasion of their credit privacy and resulting damage to their credit scores and Plaintiff and the Class members are entitled to statutory damages ranging from \$100-\$1000 each, punitive damages, and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1681n. In the alternative, Defendant is liable for negligent noncompliance in impermissibly accessing Plaintiff's credit consumer report, in which case Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for actual damages in an amount to be established at trial, together with attorneys' fees and costs incurred in pursuing the action. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 1681o.

VI. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for a judgment:

- A. Certifying the Class as requested herein;
- B. Awarding Plaintiff and the proposed Class members actual, statutory, and punitive damages;
- C. Awarding attorneys' fees and costs; and
- D. Providing such further relief as may be just and proper.

22 | ///

23 | | ///

24 | | ///

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL VII. Plaintiff hereby demands a jury trial for all claims so triable. 34. Date: July 19, 2017 **CARLSON LYNCH SWEET** KILPELA & CARPENTER, LLP /s/ Todd D. Carpenter Todd D. Carpenter (CA 234464) Brittany C. Casola (CA 306561) 402 West Broadway, 29th Floor San Diego, California 92101 Telephone: (619) 756-6994 Facsimile: (619) 756-6991 tcarpenter@carlsonlynch.com bcasola@carlsonlynch.com Attorneys for Plaintiff

JS 44 (Rev. 08/16)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS Tina Powers, on behalf of		DEFENDANTS JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. and DOES 1 through 50, inclusive,						
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Clark County, Nevace (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES) (c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number) Todd D. Carpenter, Brittany C. Casola (619-756-6994) Carlson Lynch Sweet Kilpela & Carpenter, LLP 402 W. Broadway, 29th Floor, San Diego, CA 92101				County of Residence of First Li (IN U.S. NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNA' THE TRACT OF LAND		LAINTIFF CASES ON CASES, USE 1	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
				Attorneys (If Known) 17 CV1462 AJB WVG				
II. BASIS OF JURISD	ICTION (Place an "X" in C	One Box Only)	III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF P	PRINCIPA	L PARTIES	(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff	
☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	3 Federal Question (U.S. Government	Not a Party)			TF DEF	Incorporated or Pr		
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizens)	hip of Parties in Item III)	Citiz	en of Another State	1 2 1 2	Incorporated and of Business In		
			l .	en or Subject of a reign Country	3 3	Foreign Nation	□ 6 □ 6	
IV. NATURE OF SUIT							nit Code Descriptions.	
CONTRACT	1 	ORTS		ORFEITURE/PENALITY	1	KRUPTCY	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	□ 310 Airplane □ 315 Airplane Product Liability □ 320 Assault, Libel & Slander □ 330 Federal Employers' Liability □ 340 Marine □ 345 Marine Product Liability □ 350 Motor Vehicle □ 355 Motor Vehicle □ 370 Other Personal Injury □ 385 Property Dam □ 385 Property Dam	Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Persona	☐ 69	5 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 0 Other	☐ 423 With 28 U	RTY RIGHTS rights	☐ 375 False Claims Act ☐ 376 Qui Tam (31 USC ☐ 3729(a)) ☐ 400 State Reapportionment ☐ 410 Antitrust ☐ 430 Banks and Banking ☐ 450 Commerce ☐ 460 Deportation ☐ 470 Racketeer Influenced and	
(Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise		Liability PERSONAL PROPER	71	LABOR 0 Fair Labor Standards Act 0 Labor/Management Relations 10 Railway Labor Act 11 Family and Medical Leave Act 10 Other Labor Litigation	SOCIAL SECURITY 861 HIA (1395ff) 862 Black Lung (923) 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) 864 SSID Title XVI 865 RSI (405(g))		□ 480 Consumer Credit □ 490 Cable/Sat TV □ 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange □ 890 Other Statutory Actions □ 891 Agricultural Acts □ 893 Environmental Matters □ 895 Freedom of Information	
REAL PROPERTY	CIVIL RIGHTS	PRISONER PETITIO		1 Employee Retirement		AL TAX SUITS	Act	
□ 210 Land Condemnation □ 220 Foreclosure □ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment □ 240 Torts to Land □ 245 Tort Product Liability □ 290 All Other Real Property	□ 440 Other Civil Rights □ 441 Voting □ 442 Employment □ 443 Housing/ Accommodations □ 445 Amer. w/Disabilities Employment □ 446 Amer. w/Disabilities Other □ 448 Education	Habeas Corpus: 463 Alien Detainee 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence 530 General 535 Death Penalty Other: 540 Mandamus & Oth 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement	☐ 46	Income Security Act IMMIGRATION 2 Naturalization Application 5 Other Immigration Actions	or De	s (U.S. Plaintiff efendant) Third Party ISC 7609	■ 896 Arbitration ■ 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision ■ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes	
	moved from	Appellate Court	•	pened Anothe (specify,	er District	6 Multidistr Litigation Transfer		
VI. CAUSE OF ACTIO	ON Brief description of c	·		Oo not cite jurisdictional sta	tutes unless div	versity):		
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:		S IS A CLASS ACTION		EMAND \$		HECK YES only URY DEMAND:	if demanded in complaint:	
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKE	T NUMBER	- VAN SALVO BILLY - ALTERNATION - ALTERNATIO	
DATE 07/19/2017	signature of attorney of record /s/ Todd D. Carpenter							
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			,			**************************************		
RECEIPT# AM	MOUNT	APPLYING IFP		JUDGE		MAG. JUI	DGE	

JS 44 Reverse (Rev. 08/16)

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. Section 1407.

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>JPMorgan Chase Faces Lawsuit Over 'Improper' Credit Score Requests</u>