UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA TAMPA DIVISION

2019 JAN 17 AM II: I, C CLEAR OF DISTRICT OF FLORADA MAPA FLORIDA

Shasta Rice, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated;

Plaintiff.

Civil Action No: 3',19-CV-00125-T-33AEP

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

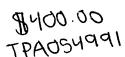
-v.Pendrick Capital Partners, LLC,
Debt Recovery Solutions, LLC,
and John Does 1-25.

Defendant.

Plaintiff Shasta Rice (hereinafter, "Plaintiff" or "Rice"), a Florida resident, brings this Class Action Complaint by and through her attorneys, Zeig Law Firm, LLC against Defendant Pendrick Capital Partners, LLC (hereinafter "Defendant Pendrick") and Defendant Debt Recovery Solutions, LLC (hereinafter "Defendant Debt Recovery"), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff's counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff's personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Congress enacted the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (hereinafter "the FDCPA") in 1977 in response to the "abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors." 15 U.S.C. §1692(a). At that time, Congress was



concerned that "abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy."

Id. Congress concluded that "existing laws...[we]re inadequate to protect consumers," and that "the effective collection of debts" does not require "misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices." 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).

2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt collection practices, but also to "insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged." *Id.* § 1692(e). "After determining that the existing consumer protection laws were inadequate." *Id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 3. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et. seq. The Court has pendent jurisdiction over the State law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
- 4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2), as this is where a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 5. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of Florida consumers under §1692 et seq. of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act ("FDCPA"), and
 - 6. Plaintiff is seeking damages and declaratory relief.

PARTIES

- 7. Plaintiff is a resident of the State of Florida, County of Pinellas, residing at 1331 49th St. N, Saint Petersburg, FL 33710.
- 8. Defendant Pendrick is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA with an address at 1714 Hollinwood Drive Alexandria, VA 22307 and may be served with process upon the CT Corporation System, its registered agent for service of process at CT Corporation System, 1200 South Pine Island Road, Plantation, FL 33324
- 9. Upon information and belief, Defendant Pendrick is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.
- 10. Defendant Debt Recovery is a "debt collector" as the phrase is defined in 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a)(6) and used in the FDCPA with an address at 6800 Jericho Turnpike, Suite 113E Syosset, NY 11791 and may be served with process upon the Corporation Service Company, its registered agent for service of process at Corporation Service Company, 1201 Hays Street Tallahassee, FL 32301
- 11. Upon information and belief, Defendant Debt Recovery is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.
- 12. John Does I-25, are fictitious names of individuals and businesses alleged for the purpose of substituting names of Defendants whose identities will be disclosed in discovery and should be made parties to this action.

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

13. Plaintiff brings this claim on behalf of the following case, pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a) and 23(b)(3).

14. The Class consists of:

- a. all individuals with addresses in the State of Florida;
- b. to whom Defendant Debt Recovery sent a collection letter attempting to collect a consumer debt;
- c. on behalf of Defendant Pendrick;
- d. writing in the collection letter that only the "current" creditor can no longer sue;
- e. and falsely stating that a partial payment "may" re-start the statute of limitations;
- f. which letter was sent on or after a date one (1) year prior to the filing of this action and on or before a date twenty-one (21) days after the filing of this action.
- 15. The identities of all class members are readily ascertainable from the records of Defendants and those companies and entities on whose behalf they attempt to collect and/or have purchased debts.
- 16. Excluded from the Plaintiff Class are the Defendants and all officer, members, partners, managers, directors and employees of the Defendants and their respective immediate families, and legal counsel for all parties to this action, and all members of their immediate families.
- 17. There are questions of law and fact common to the Plaintiff Class, which common issues predominate over any issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is whether the Defendants' written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as Exhibit A, violate 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e.
- 18. The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the class members, as all are based upon the same facts and legal theories. The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Plaintiff Class defined in this complaint. The Plaintiff has retained counsel with experience in

handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions, and neither the Plaintiff nor her attorneys have any interests, which might cause them not to vigorously pursue this action.

- 19. This action has been brought, and may properly be maintained, as a class action pursuant to the provisions of Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure because there is a well-defined community interest in the litigation:
 - a. <u>Numerosity</u>: The Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that the Plaintiff Class defined above is so numerous that joinder of all members would be impractical.
 - b. <u>Common Questions Predominate:</u> Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Plaintiff Class and those questions predominance over any questions or issues involving only individual class members. The principal issue is \whether the Defendants' written communications to consumers, in the forms attached as Exhibit A violate 15 USC §1692e.
 - c. <u>Typicality:</u> The Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the class members.

 The Plaintiff and all members of the Plaintiff Class have claims arising out of the Defendants' common uniform course of conduct complained of herein.
 - d. Adequacy: The Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class members insofar as Plaintiff has no interests that are adverse to the absent class members. The Plaintiff is committed to vigorously litigating this matter. Plaintiff has also retained counsel experienced in handling consumer lawsuits, complex legal issues, and class actions. Neither the Plaintiff nor her counsel have

- any interests which might cause them not to vigorously pursue the instant class action lawsuit.
- e. <u>Superiority:</u> A class action is superior to the other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy because individual joinder of all members would be impracticable. Class action treatment will permit a large number of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum efficiently and without unnecessary duplication of effort and expense that individual actions would engender.
- 20. Certification of a class under Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure is also appropriate in that the questions of law and fact common to members of the Plaintiff Class predominate over any questions affecting an individual member, and a class action is superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy.
- 21. Depending on the outcome of further investigation and discovery, Plaintiff may, at the time of class certification motion, seek to certify a class(es) only as to particular issues pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(c)(4).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 22. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 23. Some time prior to April 3, 2018 an obligation was allegedly incurred to Maritime ER SVCS Partners.

- 24. The Maritime ER SVCS Partners obligation arose out of transactions in which money, property, insurance or services, which are the subject of the transaction, were primarily for personal, family or household purposes, specifically medical services.
- 25. The alleged Maritime ER SVCS Partners obligation is a "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C.§ 1692a(5).
 - 26. Defendant Pendrick purportedly purchased the alleged debt.
- 27. Defendant Pendrick, a subsequent owner of the Maritime ER SVCS Partners debt, contracted with the Defendant Debt Recovery to collect the alleged debt.
- 28. Defendant Pendrick and Defendant Debt Recovery collect and attempt to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and internet.

Violation - April 3, 2018 Collection Letter

- 29. On or about April 3, 2018, Defendant Debt Recovery sent Plaintiff an initial collection letter (the "Letter") regarding the alleged debt owed to Defendant Pendrick. See Exhibit A.
- 30. The letter states in part: "The law limits how long you can be sued on a debt. Because of the age of your debt, the current creditor cannot sue you for it. Should you choose to make a payment for less that the discount offer it may be considered a partial payment and may re-start the statute of limitations."
 - 31. The alleged debt is time-barred, meaning that no creditor can sue Plaintiff.
- 32. The letter language of "current" creditor (Defendant Pendrick) cannot sue, implies that future creditors may be able to sue, instead of the true fact that neither Defendant Pendrick, nor any subsequent creditor/collector can file a lawsuit.

- 33. This statement is materially deceptive to the unsophisticated consumer, who would believe that a subsequent creditor has the option to sue.
- 34. Moreover, the letter makes a deceptive and misleading statement by stating that a partial payment may re-start the statute of limitations.
- 35. Under Florida law, Fla. Stat. § 95.04, the statute of limitations can only be revived by a written, signed agreement.
- 36. The letter misleads the consumer regarding Florida law by incorrectly stating that a partial payment "may" revive the statute of limitations when, in fact, only a written signed agreement will re-start the statute of limitations.
- 37. This letter does not contain any mention of a requirement for a written promise, and in fact makes offers for the client to pay by phone and on the internet.
- 38. Defendants made deceptive and misleading representations when they mislead the Plaintiff by stating that a partial payment may re-start the statute of limitations.
- 39. As a result of Defendants' deceptive, misleading and unfair debt collection practices, Plaintiff has been damaged.

COUNT I VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. §1692e et seq.

- 40. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 41. Defendants' debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
- 42. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, a debt collector may not use any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt.

43. Defendants violated said section

- a. by creating a false and misleading representation of the status of the debt/and the effect of partial payment of the debt in violation of §1692e(10); and
- b. by falsely representing the character, amount or legal status of the debt in violation of §1692e(2)(A);
- 44. By reason thereof, Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendants' conduct violated Section 1692e et seq. of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

<u>COUNT II</u> VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT 15 U.S.C. §1692f et seq.

- 45. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs above herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
- 46. Defendants' debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards the Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692f.
- 47. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692f, a debt collector may not use any unfair or unconscionable means in connection with the collection of any debt.
- 48. Defendants violated this section by omitting material information that gave Plaintiff a false understanding of the proper legal status of the debt and the ramifications of specific actions.
- 49. By reason thereof, Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendants' conduct violated Section 1692f et seq. of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

50. Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Shasta Rice, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, demands judgment from Defendant Pendrick Capital Partners, LLC, and Defendant Debt Recovery Solutions, LLC, as follows:

- 1. Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative, and Justin Zeig, Esq. as Class Counsel;
 - 2. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;
 - 3. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;
- 4. Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;
 - 5. Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
- 6. Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Dated: January 10, 2019 Respectfully Submitted,

ZEIG LAW FIRM, LLC

Justin Zeig, Esq. FL Bar No. 112306 3475 Sheridan Street, Suite 310 Hollywood, FL 33021 Telephone: 754-217-3084

Fax: 954-272-7807

Attorneys for Plaintiff

JS 44 (Rev. 06/17)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

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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 rules of court.

purpose of initiating the civil di	ocket sheet. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEXT PAGE O	F THIS FO						
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(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Pinellas				County of Residence of First Listed Defendant					
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ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: Consumer Sues Pendrick Capital Partners, Debt Recovery Solutions Over Allegedly Misleading Letter