



ERIK NASARENKO
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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Westlake Village Company Ordered to Pay Over \$2 Million for False Advertising

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that his office settled a civil law enforcement action against Leaders Merchant Services, LLC (Leaders), of Westlake Village. The settlement resolves a civil complaint filed by the District Attorney’s Office, alleging that Leaders violated California laws prohibiting unfair competition and misleading advertising. The complaint alleges Leaders’ sales personnel failed to fully disclose the company’s fees while signing up customers to contracts for payment card and electronic payment services, and for the leasing of related equipment. Leaders’ sales presentations were made to prospective customers, including small to medium size businesses and nonprofits throughout the United States.

Under the final judgment, Leaders will be bound by the terms of a permanent injunction prohibiting similar future violations of law, and must pay \$1 million in civil penalties and \$250,000 in cost recovery to the District Attorney’s Office. The final judgment also requires Leaders pay restitution to customers whose complaints had been received by the District Attorney’s Office before the settlement, including releasing liens, terminating collection efforts, and providing updated status reports to credit reporting agencies. The total value of restitution owed victims in this case exceeds \$800,000.

This case was investigated and prosecuted by the District Attorney’s Office Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit after reviewing complaints provided by the Better Business Bureau of the Tri-Counties and the California Attorney General’s Office.

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The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office is the public prosecutor for the county’s 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.