



Roy Cooper North Carolina Attorney General

Top Ten Consumer Complaints of 2010

Last year, 21,879 consumers filed complaints with Attorney General Roy Cooper's Consumer Protection Division. To file a complaint or get tips on avoiding problems, visit www.ncdoj.gov or call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM. Here are the top consumer complaints of 2010:

1. Health Care: In 2010, a total of 4,605 people filed complaints about health insurance, medical providers, and health products and services. Common complaints include getting charged money for supposedly free trials of weight loss products. Consumers often have problems with medical billing or collection practices, and also complain about overcharging for medical services. For help with health insurance issues such as grievances, appeals, and external reviews, call our Managed Care Patient Assistance Program at (919) 733-MCPA or (866) 867-MCPA (toll-free in North Carolina) or email MCPA@ncdoj.gov.

2. Lending: 3,909 people complained to us about lenders last year. Complaints often include problems with high interest rates, charges for late or missed payments, adjustable rate mortgages, prepayment penalties and loan fees. Many consumers are looking for help dealing with foreclosure, or have fallen for a foreclosure assistance or loan modification scam. It's against North Carolina law to charge an upfront fee for foreclosure help. For free help dealing with foreclosure, call 866-234-4857 or 888-995-HOPE.

3. Do Not Call/Unwanted Telemarketing Calls: 2,514 consumers filed complaints with our office about unwanted telemarketing calls in 2010. Among the top sources of complaints are offers for credit cards with lower interest rates, free grants, or debt consolidation services. Many of these pitches are made using illegal robo calls which ask consumers to press a number to speak with a representative. To cut down on unwanted sales calls, join the Do Not Call Registry. Sign up at www.donotcall.gov or call 1-888-382-1222 from the number you wish to register.

4. Telemarketing Fraud: A total of 2,093 North Carolina consumers filed complaints about telemarketing fraud last year. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that fraudulent telemarketers take as much as \$40 billion a year from unsuspecting U.S. consumers. Scammers often located outside the U.S. try to lure consumers into giving up their money and their personal information. Some of the most popular telemarketing schemes pitch bogus lower credit card rates, international lottery tickets, advance fee loans, government grants, identity theft protection, and phony prizes or sweepstakes.

5. Credit and Collections: 1,633 North Carolinians filed complaints about credit repair scams, debt collectors and identity theft. Complaints about scams that promise to fix your credit or settle your debts for an upfront fee are increasingly common. Under North Carolina law, it's illegal to charge an upfront fee for credit repair or debt settlement help. Consumers also complain about threatening calls from debt collectors. People also get calls about debts that aren't really theirs, as identity

thieves continue to steal personal financial information and use it to run up debts and commit fraud in someone else's name.

6. Motor Vehicles: We received 1,437 complaints from consumers who had problems with car repair and purchases. Common complaints include mechanical problems with used cars, difficulties obtaining a car title when the dealership has gone out of business, and failure to honor warranties. People also complain about pricing, improper diagnosis, unauthorized repairs, and slow repair jobs.

7. Home Furnishings: 1,367 consumers complained about furniture sales in 2010. Consumers often contact us when an item they've paid for never arrives, or when their piece of furniture arrives damaged or defective. Many of these complaints come from out-of-state consumers who placed orders with North Carolina retailers by telephone or online.

8. Home Repair: We received 1,296 complaints about home construction and repair work. Most consumers who complain are dissatisfied with work done on their homes. Other common sources of complaints are contractors who abandon the job after getting paid, miss deadlines, or go over budget. There are also scam artists who target homeowners, especially seniors, attempting to talk them into a series of expensive and unnecessary repairs.

9. Television Services: 978 consumers filed complaints about problems with their satellite or cable television service in 2010. Many of those consumers complained about extended contracts and hidden fees with satellite provider DIRECTV, problems that were addressed by a settlement reached with the company in December. Under the agreement, the company must make reforms to its ads and business practices and pay refunds to eligible consumers. Consumers can also file complaints with the Consumer Protection Division about state-issued cable franchises.

10. Telecommunications: We heard from 910 people with complaints about their telephone or cell phone. Many people complain that bundled packages for phone, television and Internet service don't provide the savings they were expecting. People also have problems with cell phone bills, poor cell service, and the cramming of unauthorized charges onto their phone bills.