

Credit company terminated by Better Business Bureau

Friday the Better Bureau of Kansas followed up on a series of complaints about National Credit Solutions of Oklahoma City, Okla., calling and mailing Kansas citizens asking for payment of supposed overdue charges from the now closed Hollywood Video.

The Better Business Bureau of Kansas press release followed one earlier in the week regarding the Hollywood Video collection notices sent out by National Credit Solutions.

The Better Business Bureau serving Oklahoma issued a release on Friday saying National Credit Solutions was located in the service area of the BBB Serving Central Oklahoma. As of Friday morning, the BBB listed this office at the HQ Bureau for the company and terminated its Accreditation based on a week of bad press surrounding the company and its practices.

Throughout the relatively brief term of the company's membership, our relationship has been rocky, the BBB of Oklahoma said in the release.

National Credit Solutions is a collection agency, typically contacting former customers of Columbia House, but most recently acting to collect late fees associated with Hollywood Video rentals. In the past, the company maintained it could not be held responsible for complaints from debtors because those debtors are not the true customer of the company; since the firm's real customers are the creditors they've contracted with to collect the debts, NCS argued consumer complaints were not valid. To even the field, our report explained the company's relationships and positions and referred consumers with questions about or problems with the firm's practices to the Office of Consumer Credit.

The firm was up for renewal in February; we "disinvited" the company from renewing its Accreditation.

Friday morning, The BBB became aware of a suit filed Thursday against National Credit Solutions by the Attorney General of Montana specifically accusing the company of violating consumer protection laws

and elements of the fair credit reporting act. Based on the negative media attention and the potential embarrassment to the BBB and its Accredited Businesses, we suspended and terminated the company's Accreditation. (The e-vote of the Executive Committee to terminate was immediate and unanimous.)

We do not know the scope of the firm's mailings to consumers or the potential call volume to Bureaus in other states. It is unlikely the company would have dropped a mailing to all 50 states at once, but we do not know what regions might be affected at this time.

The Montana Attorney General's press release covering the suit said the firm allegedly posted negative comments to consumers' credit reports without prior notice to those debtors in violation of credit reporting laws. The press release also maintains the company violated consumer protection laws by severely overcharging consumers. (A \$4 late return of a video might cost consumers upwards of \$110 to clear up.) The two core

complaints against the firm from Montana are serious (and public) enough we feel termination is warranted and reporting the pending action is appropriate.

The pending Montana action has been listed under Government Actions in the report. The alleged violations are neutrally reported in the Customer Experience section. The advice to contact the Office of Consumer Credit remains. The report notes Montana's action is pending and the report will be updated when the suit is concluded.

Similar complaints about NCS have been found in Alabama in November where the company was allegedly collecting debts for a Movie Gallery company that had closed. Alabama Consumer Protection Attorneys blog reported: "Many Alabama consumers are shocked to learn, in the last several months, that their credit reports have been trashed by a collection account with National Credit Solutions, a collection agency out of Oklahoma. The amount is usually around a \$100 dollars and it is allegedly for

a Movie Gallery rental."

Other reports of complaints with NCS deal with alleged accounts people had with the music company BMG, and all indicated the credit company filed notices on their personal credit reports without making any contact with the person about the account. In nearly every case the person has not had BMG account and when NCS is asked the response is they only have the information they purchased from BNG with the account names and balances.

ConsumerAffairs.com has another complaint about NCS dealing with a fraudulent Columbia House DVDs account. The site has many complaints about NCS dealing with BMG music.

The Better Business Bureau still urges consumers not to ignore the collection notice. They should take the following steps:

Request written proof of the debt; Dispute the debt in writing; send all correspondence - Certified Return Receipt; and keep copies of all letters and documents and a log of the correspondence.

Senator Moran appointed to a few familiar committees

The junior Senator from Kansas got his committee assignments last week, and he will be on some key committees to impact citizens of Kansas and the U.S. economy.

Sen. Jerry Moran was appointed to the committee on Appropriations; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Veterans' Affairs; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and Special Committee on Aging.

"This is great news for Kansas. Our delegation has never been better positioned. These assignments will be a big help in creating jobs in Kansas," said Kansas Governor Sam Brownback in reaction to the assignments.

Sen. Moran said he will bring Kansas common sense and hard-nosed fiscal oversight to the appropriations process. In his new role on the Appropriations Committee he will forcefully advocate for spending cuts, tougher funding standards

and broad reform. The last time a freshman Republican senator was appointed to the Appropriations Committee was 30 years ago in 1981.

"America's fiscal situation is dire and getting worse by the day. Our more than \$14 trillion national debt - the result of out-of-control government borrowing and spending - is jeopardizing the prosperity of our kids and grandkids who will have to pay for our irresponsibility," Sen. Moran said. "The fact is reform comes from the inside out. I asked to be appointed to the Appropriations Committee in order to change Washington's culture of spending and corruption."

Through his appointment to the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee as well as the Senate Small Business Committee, he will continue his long-time commitment to strengthening the economy, creating jobs, opening

up foreign markets to U.S. exports, and fostering the growth of small businesses.

Sen. Moran has made improving the quality of life for the nearly 250,000 veterans living in Kansas a top priority throughout his time on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and will continue doing so as a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

He will take on the challenges facing all Kansas seniors - including access to health care, the solvency of Social Security and Medicare, and retirement planning - as a member of the Special Committee on Aging.

"There is no group of Americans I hold in higher regard than our veterans, who bravely put their lives at risk to protect the freedoms and liberties we all enjoy," Sen. Moran said. "They kept their promise to us; we must keep our promise to them. I am humbled to have the opportunity to continue working on behalf of those who have honorably served our country."



Moran

First District Congressman assigned to Ag subcommittees

Kansas First District Congressman Republican Tim Huelskamp, a member of the House Committee on Agriculture said Wednesday he will serve on three subcommittees.

The subcommittees include General Farm Commodities and Risk Management; Conservation, Energy, and Forestry; and Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry.

"The ability to affect meaningful change is not restricted to activity on the floor of the House," Rep. Huelskamp said. "I look forward to being able to contribute to the policy debate and legislative process with my committee and subcommittee activities. I am particularly excited about the opportunity to bring my real-world experiences and knowledge as a farmer to the Agriculture Com-



Huelskamp

mittee. Kansas' agriculture community will have a voice and an advocate.

"The General Farm Commodities and Risk Management subcommittee will handle matters relating to wheat, feed grains, and soybeans, as well as things like risk management and crop insurance. The Conservation subcommittee is an important assignment given the challenges facing my district, especially as it relates to water access and rural electrification.

"Given the economy of the First District and its exports, my assignments on General Farms and Livestock are very relevant to my constituents. The Livestock Subcommittee will handle meat and dairy affairs, including inspection, marketing, and promotion of commodities."

Rep. Huelskamp will regularly post information about his committee and subcommittee activity on his website <http://Huelskamp.House.Gov>.

Former KU associate athletic director pleads guilty to leading ticket conspiracy

A former associate athletic director who was in charge of the ticket office at the University of Kansas has pleaded guilty to conspiring to steal tickets for sporting events, U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom said Friday.

During a hearing Thursday in U.S. District Court in Wichita, Charlette Faye Blubaugh, 44, Medford, Okla., pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States. In her plea, she admitted she and co-defendants diverted \$2 million worth of tickets to KU athletic events.

Beginning in 2005, Blubaugh began to steal individual and season tickets for Kansas Athletic events and provide them to co-defendants including Brendan Simmons, Jason Jeffries, Ben Kirtland, Rodney Dale Jones and Kassie Liebsch to sell to third parties in violation of university policies. The tickets were moved in interstate commerce and marketed through individuals and ticket brokers. The tickets were advertised for sale on the Internet and sold in ways meant to hide the fact the tickets were coming from employees of the ticket office.

As part of the scheme to divert tickets, the conspirators misled the Director of Athletics to believe a

computer system was in place to prevent tickets from being stolen, converted or taken by fraud. Conspirators paid kickbacks to individuals who marketed the stolen tickets and they used various means to cover up their crimes including using third parties not connected with the ticket office to sell the tickets, having checks written to third parties, and concealing the illicit income from the NCAA.

Charlette Blubaugh is set for sentencing April 14. Blubaugh faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000. In her plea, she agreed to a forfeiture judgment against her and the other defendants of \$2 million.

Thomas Ray Blubaugh, 46, Medford, Okla., the husband of Charlette Blubaugh, pleaded guilty in a hearing on Friday to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States. Thomas Blubaugh is set for sentencing April 14. He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$250,000. In his plea, he agreed to a forfeiture judgment against him and other defendants of \$2 million.

He was on the payroll of the ticket office as a consultant from August 2007 through January 2010.

Ben Kirtland, 54, Lenexa, Kan., who is set for a jury trial March 8, Kirtland was Associate Athletic Director of Development and supervisor of the Williams Educational Fund, the fund-raising arm of Kansas Athletics Inc.

Kassie Liebsch, 28, Lawrence, Kan., who is set for sentencing March 30 after pleading guilty to a charge of conspiracy.

Rodney Dale Jones, 42, Lawrence, Kan., who is set for sentencing March 31 after pleading guilty to a charge of conspiracy.

Brandon Simmons, 30, Lawrence, Kan., who is set for sentencing March 7 after pleading guilty to a charge of concealing a felony.

Jason Jeffries, 36, Lawrence, Kan., who is set for sentencing March 7 after pleading guilty to a charge of concealing a felony.

Grissom commended the Internal Revenue Service, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Hathaway and Assistant U.S. Attorney Christine Kenney for their work on the case.

School board plans public meetings

SCHOOL, from Page 1

the Administration Building have expressed an interest in purchasing it. There has been some interest in West Elementary to be used by a church group or turned into apartments.

The board did not want to leave an empty building on Main so the administration would be moved to Central.

With the final decision to look at renovating North into a kindergarten through sixth in the fall of 2010 and pursue a bond.

Superintendent Angelos said there was a water problem hurting the cement floor with the junior high gym at Max Jones. The insurance company has been contacted.

Wilkins said he attended the

meeting of the Northwest Kansas Education Service Center at Oakley. He said they are thinking about moving the Second Chance School from Grinnell and he said he told them that Goodland had room for the school.

The fourth grade teachers from Central Elementary School and the leadership team talked about how they were trying to implementing the Multi Tears of System Support at the school. They said they have mostly been working in reading to start early intervention when students need it. They are also targeting math.

The teachers said they were starting to teach third graders how to take assessment tests on computers so that they would know what to do when taking the state assessments.

In other business:

- All school board members were in attendance.
- Paid \$20,370 in bills.
- There were no student matters.
- There were executive sessions to talk about negotiation and personnel.
- Accepted the resignations of Melissa Schritter and Charity McIntyre as Central School paraprofessionals.
- Hired Devlin Mull as the seventh grade boys basketball assistant coach.
- Hired Jill Minchow as a Paraprofessional at Central Elementary School.

The next regular school board meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 14, at the Administration building, 1312 Main.

matters of record

Accidents

The following accidents were investigated by the Goodland Police Department.

Dec. 14 - 3:26 p.m., intersection of K-27/Business U.S. 24, a 2010 Ford Driven by Iris Clemons was stopped at the red light facing north and a 2003 Buick driven by Jarvis E. Young ran into the back of the Ford. 7:46 p.m., 2160 Commerce Rd., a 2001 Chevrolet driven by Lucinda Lee Lounge was cutting across the Walmart parking lot. A 1997 Ford driven by Mary Butler did not see

the Chevrolet cutting across the lot as she was driving west down the aisle and hit the car.

Dec. 15 - 1 p.m., 1203 Caldwell Ave., a 2005 Pontiac driven by Roxanne S. Yonkey backed into a 1996 Jeep owned by Arlene Lee Rome that was parked in the alley behind the Yonkey residence at 1203 Caldwell. Yonkey left contact information on the windshield of the Jeep. Rome later reported the accident. Yonkey took photos of how the Jeep was parked. Based on those photos, Officer Mike Fenner

believes the Jeep may have been illegally parked.

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