

PS COMMITTEE #2  
June 14, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

June 12, 2012

TO: Public Safety Committee  
FROM: Susan J. Farag, Legislative Analyst *SJF*  
SUBJECT: Update: Office of Consumer Protection

Today, the Committee will receive an update from the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) on its current initiatives and future plans. The following are expected to brief the Committee:

Eric Friedman, Director of the Office of Consumer Protection  
Ralph Vines, OCP  
Marsha Carter, OCP

**Recent Complaint Statistics:**

Over the past five months, OCP has handled about 560 new cases (complaint data attached at © 1-3). The largest number of complaints is related to non-consensual towing. The office has had 77 complaints since January. OCP has also had various home improvement complaints, including those related to repairs/remodeling/decorating, and work performed by unlicensed contractors.

**Performance Measures:**

Information on OCP's performance measures is included on © 4-6. The performance measures include ratings for two different aspects of customer satisfaction. The customer satisfaction rating based on the outcome of the case has increased from the last reporting period, from 2.3 to 2.6, although the customer satisfaction rating for the manner in which the case actually was handled fell slightly, from 3.7 to 3.3.

The office is closing cases more quickly when the subject of the complaint is valued at less than \$1,000. OCP has shaved off about one day for each type of case. For cases involving an amount in controversy between \$1,001 and \$5,000, investigation time has increased from 66 to 73 days on average. For cases involving more than \$5,000, closure time has increased from 51 days to 90.

Performance increased significantly in relation to Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC) cases. The percentage of CCOC cases resolved prior to a hearing increased from 55% to 87% since the last reporting period.

### **Significant Recent Accomplishments:**

OCP has included press releases on significant types of complaints they have resolved over the past several months. These include:

- Comcast Settlement © 7-8
- Gas Appliance Installation & Inspection ©9-10
- Intervened in Pepco Cases
- 40th Anniversary Annual Report ©11
- CCOC Updated Manual & Resource Guide ©12
- Live Email Chat – National Consumer Protection Week

### **Pending Investigations:**

- Illegal sale of used vehicles at 2 shopping centers
- Federal towing preemption – Congressmen Van Hollen and Moran ©
- Home Generator Installations – DPS and WSSC

### **Staffing and Resources:**

As the Committee is aware, OCP has faced significant downsizing over the past several years. OCP staff will provide an update on the following staffing and resource issues:

- Reconciliation List
- Expert Mediator ©15-16
- College and High School interns

### **Upcoming Events:**

- Home Improvement Forum ©17-19
- Senior Safety Summit with Fire Rescue Service © 20
- National TV News Report – “Grandparent Scam”

This packet includes the following: \_\_\_\_\_ ©#

Complaint Statistics – January 1, 2012 to May 31, 2012	1-3
Performance Measures	4-6
“Consumer Protection Reaches Agreement with Comcast Regarding Service Call Fees”	7-8
“Consumer Protection Issues Report Regarding Inspection of Gas Appliances”	9-10
“Consumer Protection Issues Annual Report Marking 40 Years”	11
“Commission on Common Ownership Communities Releases updated manual and Resource Guide”	12
Letter from Congressman Chris Van Hollen re: predatory towing	13-14
New Mediator	15-16
“Public Forum to Address home Improvement Issues”	17-18
Flyer “Improve Your Home Improvement Experience”	19
“Senior Safety Summit”	20

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# OCP New Case Summary

From  
1/1/2012

To  
5/31/2012

New Case Total  
559

New Complaint Description	Total
835 - Towing – Non-consensual	77
550 - Home Improvement – Repairs/Remodeling/Decorating	38
570 - Home Improvement – Unlicensed Contractors	35
230 - Automotive – Service – Dealers	32
760 - Retail Stores	31
240 - Automotive – Service – Non-Dealers	30
860 - Utilities	23
700 - Other Services (beauty, dating, cleaning)	20
800 - Telecommunications (long distance, wireless, pre-paid)	20
135 - Appliances – Service	15
350 - Credit Cards	14
720 - Professional Services (doctors, lawyers, agents, brokers)	14
220 - Automotive – Sales/Leasing	13
430 - Furniture	13
320 - Collection Practices	12
340 - Credit – Loans – Mortgages	12
520 - Home Improvement – Landscaping	10
670 - Miscellaneous	10
440 - Health Spas/Exercise/Karate Schools	9

<b>New Complaint Description</b>	<b>Total</b>
540 - Home Improvement – Plumbing Contractors	9
650 - Mail Order	9
500 - Home Improvement – Electrical Contractors	8
100 - Advertising	7
680 - Moving/Storage/Shipping	7
310 - Cable TV/Satellite Dishes	6
360 - Credit Report Problems	6
380 - Drycleaners	6
510 - Home Improvement – Heating/Air Conditioning	6
580 - Residential Tenancy	6
999 - None	5
110 - Alarm/Security Companies	4
250 - Automotive – Unlicensed Sellers (curbstoners)	4
560 - Home Improvement – Roofing Contractors	4
370 - Door-to-Door Sales	3
690 - New Homes	3
750 - Restaurants	3
840 - Transportation (shuttles, limos, taxis)	3
850 - Travel (agents, airlines, internet agents)	3
200 - Automotive – Extended Service Contracts	2
210 - Automotive – Rental Agency	2

<b>New Complaint Description</b>	<b>Total</b>
260 - Automotive – Warranty/Lemon Law	2
330 - Computers – Repair	2
410 - Extended Service Contracts – Non-Automotive	2
740 - Repair Shops (shoe repair, locksmith, tailor, etc.)	2
780 - Subscriptions	2
815 - Telemarketing – phone	2
830 - Towing – Other	2
120 - Animals and Pets	1
335 - Computers – Sales	1
345 - Credit – Loans – Other (repossessions)	1
400 - Entertainment/Amusement	1
530 - Home Improvement – Pest Control	1
610 - Identity Theft/Privacy	1
640 - Investments	1
660 - Medical (drugs, equipment)	1
775 - Schools – Vocational/Career	1
790 - Sweepstakes/Contests/Prizes/Gifts	1
820 - Time Shares	1

**Performance Search**

Department:

Result Area:

Measure Type:



Glossary of Terms

**Results Area:** The Eight Priority Objectives developed by a group of 150 community representatives during the 2006 County Executive Leggett Transition.





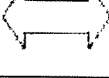


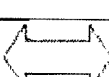
**Headline Measure:** Outcome-based measures that monitor results achieved by County departments.

**Supporting Measure:** Measures that link programmatic achievements to departmental Headline Performance Measures.

\* If you are having trouble viewing the measure details, please enable your pop-up blocker.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the Montgomery County Government Performance Dashboard, please contact CountyStat at [countystat.montgomery@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:countystat.montgomery@montgomerycountymd.gov)

Dept	Measure Text	Detail	Current Value	Previous Value	Fiscal Year	Performance
OCP	Restitution received as a percent of restitution asked for by the consumer and validated by the assigned OCP case investigator	<a href="#">Detail</a>	81%	92%	FY12	↓
OCP	Average OCP customer satisfaction rating - Manner in which the customer's case was handled (1-4 scale) based on customer satisfaction survey	<a href="#">Detail</a>	3.3	3.7	FY12	↓
OCP	Average OCP customer satisfaction rating - Outcome of the customer's case (1-4 scale) based on customer satisfaction survey	<a href="#">Detail</a>	2.6	2.3	FY12	↑
OCP	Average time in workdays to investigate and close a written complaint: (<\$100)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	55	56	FY12	↑
OCP	Average time in workdays to investigate and close a written complaint: (\$101 - \$1,000)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	58	59	FY12	↑
OCP	Average time in workdays to investigate and close a written complaint: (\$1,001 - \$5,000)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	73	66	FY12	↓
OCP	Average time in workdays to investigate and close a written complaint: (>\$5,000)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	90	51	FY12	↓
OCP	Average time in workdays to investigate and close a written complaint: (\$NA)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	70	64	FY12	↓
OCP	Average time in workdays to investigate and close a written complaint: All complaints	<a href="#">Detail</a>	66	60	FY12	↓
OCP	Percent of cases closed within 60 days	<a href="#">Detail</a>	56%	64%	FY12	↓
OCP	Percent of OCP-initiated consumer protection cases closed that are resolved by OCP	<a href="#">Detail</a>	60%	52%	FY12	↑
OCP	Media Coverage - Percent of news releases receiving media coverage, including print news, television and radio.	<a href="#">Detail</a>	100%	100%	FY12	↔
OCP	Media Coverage - Number of times media outlets, including print news,	<a href="#">Detail</a>	11	17	FY12	↔

	television and radio, seek out OCP's expertise					
OCP	Percent of Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC) cases resolved prior to a hearing	<u>Detail</u>	87%	55%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC) cases resolved at a CCOC hearing	<u>Detail</u>	0%	37%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC) cases with no jurisdiction/referred	<u>Detail</u>	13%	8%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through referral by another agency (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<u>Detail</u>	12.0%	12.0%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through the County website (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<u>Detail</u>	27.0%	25.0%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through a friend or family member (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<u>Detail</u>	25.0%	26.0%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through a newspaper article (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<u>Detail</u>	1%	1%	FY12	
12						



Department:

Result Area:

Measure Type:



Glossary of Terms

**Results Area:** The Eight Priority Objectives developed by a group of 150 community representatives during the 2006 County Executive Leggett Transition.

**Headline Measure:** Outcome-based measures that monitor results achieved by County departments.

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If you have any questions or comments relating to the Montgomery County Government Performance Dashboard, please contact CountyStat at [countystat.montgomery@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:countystat.montgomery@montgomerycountymd.gov)

Dept	Measure Text	Detail	Current Value	Previous Value	Fiscal Year	Performance
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through a radio announcement (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	0%	1%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through a television program (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	2%	1%	FY12	
OCP	Percent of consumers using OCP services who found out about the office through "other" (as reported by the consumer to OCP at the time of intake)	<a href="#">Detail</a>	32%	36%	FY12	
12						

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND****News Release**

For Immediate Release: 1/10/2012

### Consumer Protection Reaches Agreement with Comcast Regarding Service Call Fees

Montgomery County's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP), in collaboration with the County's Office of Cable and Broadband Services, reached an agreement with Comcast regarding the charging of "truck trip fees" when an in-house service call is made by a Comcast technician to resolve a television, internet or telephone service problem.

Between March 2007 and September 2011 the Office of Cable and Broadband Services received, and resolved, 85 complaints in which subscribers alleged that a "truck trip fee" in the amount of \$19.95, \$29.95 or \$39.95 was imposed by Comcast without prior disclosure or when such fee was not appropriate due to the nature of the repair.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, Comcast will provide two forms of disclosure to subscribers. The first disclosure will be made by a live operator when subscribers call Comcast to schedule a service call. The second disclosure will be made in a recorded telephone call to subscribers in advance of the service appointment. These disclosures will notify consumers that a service call fee will be charged if the service problem is caused by the equipment owned by the subscriber or by the subscriber's failure to use the equipment properly. Comcast has also agreed to pay \$25,000 to OCP for consumer education. This agreement is not an admission that Comcast has violated any consumer protection laws.

"The number of 'truck trip fee' complaints has been decreasing as the County has been working with Comcast to resolve this issue," said Mitsuko Herrera, Montgomery County Cable and Broadband Communications Administrator. "We believe that better consumer disclosure will further reduce the number of complaints."

While most service problems are resolved by just calling Comcast, there are times when an in-house service call by a Comcast technician is required to resolve the subscriber's problem. Comcast does not charge any fee for an in-house service call if the problem is caused by Comcast's equipment. However, since February 2007, Comcast has charged a "truck trip fee" for a Comcast technician to make an in-house service call if the service problem is caused by the subscriber's equipment, inside wiring, or the subscriber not using the equipment correctly.

Subscribers may file complaints against any of the cable franchisees by calling 240-773-8111, or by sending an email to the Office of Cable and Broadband Services at [CATV.complaints@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:CATV.complaints@montgomerycountymd.gov).

The majority of the 85 complaints filed by subscribers alleged that Comcast either failed to disclose that a "truck trip fee" could be charged or that a "truck trip fee" was improperly charged by Comcast when the service problem was caused by Comcast's equipment.

The County Council's Government Operations (GO) Committee oversees the cable franchises in Montgomery County. "This is just one more example of the outstanding work done everyday by our Office of Consumer Protection," said County Council Vice President and GO Committee Chair Nancy Navarro. "Consumers have a right to know about any

potential fees before they schedule a service call. The GO Committee will continue working to make sure Comcast and other cable providers treat our residents fairly.”

For more information, call the Office of Consumer Protection at 240-777-3636 or the Office of Cable and Broadband Services at 240-773-8111.

###

Release ID: 12-008  
Media Contact: Sue Tucker 240-777-6507

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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND****News Release**

For Immediate Release: 2/23/2012

### Consumer Protection Issues Report Regarding Inspection of Gas Appliances

Montgomery County's Advisory Committee on Consumer Protection has issued a report regarding the installation and inspection of gas appliances. A joint investigation by the Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) found that a majority of gas appliances installed in Montgomery County during a test period had not been properly inspected following installation.

The regulatory code for gas appliances in Montgomery and Prince George's counties is enforced by WSSC and applies to water heaters, furnaces, ranges, grills, generators, clothes dryers and fireplaces. The WSSC code requires that all gas appliances be installed by a licensed gas plumber/gas fitter after a permit has been obtained. The code further states that an inspection with WSSC must be scheduled within five days of the installation. The failure to have gas appliances inspected in a timely fashion is both a violation of the law and a potential safety hazard.

After reviewing comments from consumers, retailers, Fire and Rescue Services and WSSC, the advisory committee made the following recommendations:

- Expand the hours and days for WSSC inspections;
- Provide a longer period of time for WSSC inspections;
- Raise consumer awareness;
- Enforce the existing rules;
- Audit a small percentage of permits;
- Change the existing rules to require more WSSC involvement throughout the process; and
- Undertake a broad survey of other jurisdictions to determine best practices.

The report can be viewed in its entirety at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer). Click on Advisory Committee on Consumer Protection on the right side of the page.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission is proposing to amend and update the 2011 WSSC Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code and is currently seeking input from the public on the proposed changes.

OCP, the County's consumer protection agency, investigates thousands of complaints each year involving automotive sales and repairs, new home purchases, home improvements, credit issues, retail sales, internet services and most other consumer transactions. The Advisory Committee on Consumer Protection is comprised of nine members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. The committee meets

monthly and provides advice to OCP in carrying out its duties and functions.

For more information call the Office of Consumer Protection at 240-777-3636.

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Release ID: 12-053

Media Contact: Sue Tucker 240-777-6507

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## MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND News Release

For Immediate Release: 6/11/2012

### Consumer Protection Issues Annual Report Marking 40 Years

Montgomery County's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) has issued its 2011 Annual Report in celebration of 40 years of service to consumers and businesses in Montgomery County.

One of the first actions of the newly-formed 1971 County Council was to establish a consumer protection office to "eliminate consumer fraud and deceptive and unfair trade practices." ([press release](#)) The office was created and signed into law by then-County Executive James P. Gleason. Today, the office has garnered a national reputation and works closely with other government agencies and non-profit organizations to "ensure integrity in our marketplace."

The 40-year milestone coincides with the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) by the President and Congress who recognized the importance of federal regulation in our financial marketplace.

"With the advent of electronic commerce, our marketplace has changed radically over the past 40 years and consumer pitfalls have become more sophisticated," said County Executive Isiah Leggett. "We are fortunate to have a local consumer protection office capable of educating and protecting consumers and businesses."

OCP licenses various retail businesses, has the authority to issue civil citations and administrative subpoenas and mediates thousands of disputes. A dedicated staff of experts, including a certified automotive technician and a team of volunteers address most consumer transactions. In addition, OCP administers several other programs including the Commission on Common Ownership Communities, energy utility advocacy, estimated property tax disclosure and domestic worker contracts.

The annual report is available [online](#) and a limited number of copies are available at all Montgomery County library branches.

For more information, call the Office of Consumer Protection at 240-777-3636 or visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer).

###

Release ID: 12-151

Media Contact: Sue Tucker 240-777-6507

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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND****News Release**

For Immediate Release: 11/29/2011

**Commission on Common Ownership Communities Releases Updated Manual and Resource Guide**

The Montgomery County Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC) announces its updated "Common Ownership Community Manual and Resource Guide" for the operation of condominium, cooperative and homeowner associations. The updated manual contains information on a variety of topics, including annual and special meetings, employee hiring and firing, capital replacement reserves, stormwater management, setting and collecting assessments, and financing.

"Montgomery County has more than 1,000 community associations that represent more than 126,000 homes," said commission chair Staci Gelfound. "All of the associations are operated by volunteer boards of directors, many of whom have had no experience or training in this area. One of the commission's most important responsibilities is to help educate and inform our associations on operating procedures. This manual and our website provide valuable information to these associations."

The new manual updates the one prepared in 2005 and is available online on the Office of Consumer Protection website at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer). Copies of the manual are available for \$15 each.

The 15-member CCOC is a commission whose mission includes advising on public policy issues that impact these communities; educating owners, residents and professionals associated with these communities on community management and governance; and resolving disputes between owners or residents and their governing bodies. Members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council and serve without pay.

For more information, contact the Office of Consumer Protection at 240-777-3636.

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Release ID: 11-355

Media Contact: Sue Tucker 240-777-6507

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**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

Senator Barbara Boxer  
Conference Committee Chair  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative John Mica  
Conference Committee Vice-Chair  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator James Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Environment and Public Works Committee  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Nick Rahall  
Ranking Member  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
2163 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

May 18, 2012

Dear Conferee:

As the House and Senate meet in conference on the transportation bill, we urge you to correct a loophole that has prevented our state and local governments from protecting consumers from predatory towing practices.

Since the mid-1990s, the authority to regulate the towing industry has been in limbo. A provision slipped into the Federal Aviation Administration Act of 1994 defined the tow truck industry as an interstate carrier, preempting state and local regulatory authority of tow truck operations. Further, the passage of the Interstate Commerce Termination Act the following year eliminated the federal regulatory body that oversaw the towing industry, leaving it essentially without oversight despite clear consumer abuses.

In the years since, a number of conflicting court rulings have been issued on cases between towing operators and localities, including the Supreme Court decision in *City of Columbus v. Ours Garage and Wrecker Service*, which found that state and local governments should be permitted to exercise "safety regulatory authority," regardless of federal preemption. However, the Court declined to address what specific types of regulations would qualify as "safety regulatory authority." Subsequent federal court decisions have upheld some aspects of local regulations, while staying silent on others.

The resulting patchwork of federal preemption and judicial rulings has created a confusing environment for business and consumers, prevented state and local governments from establishing consumer protections in the towing industry, and even exempted towing firms from generic state and local consumer protection laws prohibiting misleading advertising and deceptive trade practices. Local jurisdictions are potentially subject to liability if they attempt to protect vehicle owners by enacting and enforcing local laws.

Complaints about exorbitant towing fees and abusive operators grew so bad that in 2005, Congress agreed, through a bipartisan amendment to the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy of Users (SAFETEA-LU), to allow some limited state regulations in the area of nonconsensual towing. The amendment also directed the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a study to identify additional means to protect the rights of individuals whose vehicles are towed.

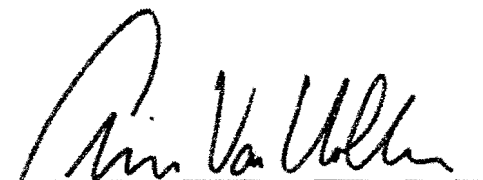
That study recommends that consumers and tow truck operators would be better served by eliminating federal preemption. It notes that consumers seeking redress for overcharges or other unfair treatment would "no longer be in the Catch-22 position of having their State case thrown out on preemption grounds only to find that they have no real recourse at the Federal level either. Since business practices



vary from place to place, it may also be more practical to have nonconsensual towing regulated by the States rather than by the Federal government.”

States and localities are the more logical place to regulate towing. They have an established body of law in place to do so. I urge you to include language in the transportation bill that will end the unnecessary and impractical federal overreach and return this important authority to the States.

Sincerely,



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CHRIS VAN HOLLEN



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JIM MORAN

CC:

Senator Max Baucus  
Senator Orrin Hatch  
Senator Tim Johnson  
Senator Richard Shelby  
Senator Jay Rockefeller  
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Senator Dick Durbin  
Senator Chuck Schumer  
Senator Bill Nelson  
Senator David Vitter  
Senator Bob Menendez  
Senator John Hoeven

Representative Dave Camp  
Representative Fred Upton  
Representative Henry Waxman  
Representative Ralph Hall  
Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Representative Doc Hastings  
Representative Ed Markey  
Representative Don Young  
Representative Peter DeFazio  
Representative John Duncan  
Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Representative Jerry Costello  
Representative Corrine Brown  
Representative Jerrold Nadler  
Representative Ed Whitfield  
Representative Elijah Cummings  
Representative Earl Blumenauer  
Representative Leonard Boswell  
Representative Shelley Moore Capito  
Representative Patrick Tiberi  
Representative Bill Shuster  
Representative Rob Bishop  
Representative Tim Bishop  
Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Representative Larry Bucshon  
Representative Chip Cravaack  
Representative Rick Crawford  
Representative Richard Hanna  
Representative James Lankford  
Representative Reid Ribble  
Representative Steve Southerland

CONSUMER PROTECTION

FEB 11 2011

RECEIVED

MICHAEL C. LANG.  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

10 February 2011

Mr. Eric S. Friedman  
Director  
Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection  
100 Maryland Avenue (Room 330)  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Friedman,

I recently read an article in the Washington Post indicating that your office makes use of qualified volunteers to assist in the resolution of consumer complaints involving both businesses and common ownership communities.

In August, 2009 I moved to Bethesda from New York where, for the previous dozen years, I actively worked as a mediator helping to resolve disputes in both the public and private sector. I also taught courses in negotiation theory & skills as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Cardozo Law School.

Since coming to Maryland I have joined the panel of mediators of the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division of the DC Superior Court, where I mediate cases one day each week. A copy of my old C.V. is enclosed, along with a copy of the application that was required by the Multi-Door program.

If you think my credentials and experience are appropriate, I would be most interested in assisting the Montgomery County OCP as a volunteer one day each week. One of my special areas of focus in New York was co-op and condo disputes, and I would particularly like to work, at least in part, in the area of common ownership communities.

Please let me know if you might be able to utilize my services. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,



(15)

AS OF AUGUST 2009!

**MICHAEL C. LANG.**  
COUNSELLOR AT LAW

*(Practice limited to Mediation and Dispute Resolution)*

- Education:** A.B., 1967, Hamilton College (Honors Degree in Ancient Greek).  
J.D., 1970, N.Y.U. School of Law (Root-Tilden Scholar).
- ADR:**
- Mediator, NYC Civil Court (Safe Horizon).
  - Mediator, N.Y. Community Dispute Resolution Centers Program for Manhattan & Brooklyn (Safe Horizon).
  - Consultant Mediator, NYC Family Court Mediation Program.
  - Mediator, EEOC (Cardozo Mediation Clinic).
  - Mediator, NYS Department of Labor.
  - Mediator, Special Projects, NYC Council District 1.
  - Mediator, Federal Aviation Administration (ADR Program).
  - Mediator, MediateArt (Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts).
  - Arbitrator, Small Claims Court, N.Y. County.
  - Arbitrator & Mediator, Attorney-Client Fee Disputes (Joint Committee on Fee Disputes and Conciliation).
  
  - Adjunct Professor of Law, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law  
*(Negotiation Theory & Skills; Mediation Clinic)*
  
  - Chair, Joint Committee on Fee Disputes and Conciliation *(A joint project of the New York County Lawyers' Assn., The Assn. of the Bar of the City of New York, and the Bronx County Bar Assn.)*
  
  - Practitioner Member, Association for Conflict Resolution.
  - CLE Lecturer (Negotiation Strategy & Skills), NYCLA
  - Member, Committee on Arbitration & Alternate Dispute Resolution, NYCLA.
- Non-ADR:** 1989 - 2001: Senior Vice President, Business Affairs, ABC Television Network (Broadcast Operations & Engineering Division). Responsible for handling employment, legal and various contractual matters, and negotiating major business deals.
- 1974 - 1989: Attorney, ABC labor relations. Handled numerous arbitrations & conducted complex local and national negotiations with entertainment industry unions.
- Other:** Admitted to practice in New York & Federal Courts.

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND****News Release**

For Immediate Release: 5/31/2012

### Public Forum Planned to Address Home Improvement Issues

Montgomery County's Advisory Committee on Consumer Protection will host a public forum that will examine home improvement issues, with topics covering everything from avoiding scams to state licensing requirements. The forum will be held on Wednesday, June 20 from 7 to 9 p.m., at the Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Ave., First Floor Auditorium, Rockville. Montgomery County Council Member Nancy Floreen will give introductory remarks.

Entitled, "Improve Your Home Improvement Experience," the free forum will be moderated by Eric Friedman, director, Office of Consumer Protection (OCP). He will lead a discussion with experts on home improvements, including Marceline White, executive director of the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition; Steven Smitson, executive director of the Maryland Home Improvement Commission (a division of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation); the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services; and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

"As we approach the summer building season, our Office of Consumer Protection generally sees a rise in complaints involving home improvement projects," said Councilmember Nancy Floreen. "I look forward to having an opportunity to help educate our residents on ways to avoid getting scammed while hearing from experts to address all sides of the issue. The Office of Consumer Protection is such a valuable resource for our residents and I am pleased to be able to participate in this important forum."

"Home improvement scams cost consumers tens of thousands of dollars each year," said Friedman. "The best defense consumers have against fraud or disappointment when they employ home improvement contractors is to get educated about their rights and responsibilities."

The forum will address a number of topics including common scams, how to be sure your contractor is properly licensed, how to structure your home improvement contract, permitting requirements for homeowners and what remedies are available for consumers. Lights refreshments will be served.

Pre-registration is not required but is recommended as seating is limited. Free parking is available. Sign language interpreter services will be provided only upon request with notice as far in advance as possible, but no less than 72 hours prior to the event. To register for the forum or to request sign language or other services or aids needed to participate in the forum, call 240-777-3636 or MD Relay at 1-800-735-2258, or email [consumerprotection@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:consumerprotection@montgomerycountymd.gov)

The Office of Consumer Protection investigates thousands of complaints each year involving new home purchases, home improvements, credit issues, automotive sales and repairs, retail sales, Internet services and most other consumer transactions. OCP provides both pre-purchase information to consumers and speakers to the community on consumer issues.

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For more information, call 240-777-3636 or visit  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer).

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Media Contact: Sue Tucker 240-777-6507

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# ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION

2012

and

MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

Presents

## Improve Your Home Improvement Experience

Special Guest:  
The Honorable Nancy Floreen  
Montgomery County Council

Wednesday, June 20<sup>th</sup>

Light Refreshments: 6:30 p.m.

Program: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Council Office Building

First Floor Auditorium

100 Maryland Avenue

Rockville, MD

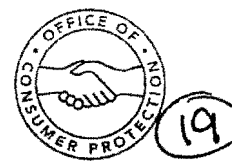
*Moderated by:  
Eric Friedman, Director  
Office of Consumer Protection*

*Common Scams  
Finding a Licensed Contractor  
Home Improvement Contracts  
Permitting Requirements  
Remedies Available*

Please register by calling 240.777.3636. Registration is not required but recommended.



100 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330 · Rockville, MD 20850  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/consumer)  
[consumerprotection@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:consumerprotection@montgomerycountymd.gov)



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Montgomery County Fire & Rescue  
Chief Richard Bowers Presents a:

# *Senior Safety Summit*

Thursday, June 14, 2012 1 to 4

PM

*Leisure World Crystal Ballroom  
3701 Rossmoor Boulevard*

**Learn About:**

● Fire Safety Around the Home



● Preventing Trips & Falls



**Door Prizes!**

20 ● Scams, Cons & Fraud

● Security in the Home



*Hosted by the:*

*Leisure World Emergency*

*Preparedness Advisory Committee*

*Leisure World*  
of Maryland

