

Across the Country, U.S. Attorneys and States Attorneys General Join Forces in COVID-19 Enforcement Measures

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On the heels of U.S. Attorney General William Barr's order directing the Department of Justice to prioritize the investigation and [prosecution of COVID-19 related fraud](#), U.S. Attorneys across the country are implementing COVID-19 Fraud Task Forces, which include partnerships with State Attorneys General to aggressively combat individuals taking advantage of the pandemic to commit cyber, financial, and health care fraud. The list of jurisdictions that have announced such enforcement measures continues to grow. Just this week, U.S. Attorneys in [Alabama](#), [Arizona](#), [Georgia](#), [Kansas](#), and [New Jersey](#) announced joint task forces, adding to likes of [Pennsylvania](#), [Virginia](#), and [West Virginia](#). Federal prosecutors in [Florida](#) and [Washington D.C.](#) have also announced the formation of their own COVID-19 Anti-Fraud Task Force.

As stories of coronavirus-related fraud continue to increase across the nation, we expect the joint task force list to grow. Earlier this week, the Federal Trade Commission reported that it had received almost 12,000 consumer complaints related to COVID-19 in just three months—more than half of those complaints were fraud-related, with a total loss to consumers of \$8.39 million. State Attorneys General's Offices have also reported spikes in COVID-19-related consumer fraud complaints.

U.S. Attorneys are urging individuals to report these and other similar fraudulent schemes to the National Center for Disaster Fraud. In fact, many of the joint task forces have already taken legal action against businesses offering fake coronavirus remedies.

This heightened government enforcement will only increase as billions of dollars of relief funds are paid out as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act"). Companies receiving funds under CARES should maintain efforts to comply with all relevant regulations, as use of these funds will likely bring civil and criminal government investigations. Corporate decisions and conduct related to relief funds will be subject to great scrutiny in the form of government oversight and investigative efforts to crack down on fraud and abuse. If there is any doubt, one need only look at the 2008 financial crisis, which resulted in the prosecution of 291 individuals and recovery of over \$11 billion in funds distributed through the Troubled Asset Relief

Program. The COVID-19 joint task forces' message is clear: government enforcement remains open for business.

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