



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

PROTECTING AMERICA'S CONSUMERS

American Immigration Center Settles with FTC on Government Imposter Allegations

Defendants will pay \$2.2 million to provide refunds to consumers harmed by the scheme

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FOR RELEASE

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The Federal Trade Commission filed a complaint today against defendants Forms Direct, Inc., also known as American Immigration Center, and owner Cesare Alessandrini, alleging that they falsely implied that their websites were affiliated with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The defendants allegedly used such deception since 2010 to sell immigration form preparation services to consumers, many of whom were attempting to reach the government site to renew their green cards or apply for naturalization. The FTC's settlement bars the defendants from continuing their misleading business practices and requires them to pay \$2.2 million to compensate consumers.

What the FTC Complaint Alleges

The FTC's complaint states that consumers encountered the defendants' deceptive scheme when they used search platforms such as Google, Yahoo!, or Bing to look for immigration-related government websites. They searched online using terms like "USCIS," "INS," or "US Immigration" and clicked on the defendants' search advertisements when they saw tag lines like "USCIS Forms – Easy Online Forms for Green Card & Citizenship." Instead of going to the government website as expected, consumers landed on one of the defendants' many websites.

According to the FTC, consumers believed they were on the government website because the defendants designed their websites to foster that false impression. They used government-related images such as the U.S. passport or a picture of then-President Obama; patriotic color schemes of red, white, and blue; and web addresses or URLs such as [usimmigration.us](#), [us-immigration.com](#), [uscitizenship.info](#), and [usimmigrationcitizenship.com](#).

The defendants also referred to their form preparation services simply by the applicable USCIS form number or an abbreviated version of the form name such as the "Green card Renewal Form I-90." The FTC alleges that the defendants did not explain who they were, that they were really selling a "software wizard" to fill out government immigration forms, or that the fees they charged did not include any government filing fees. The complaint also states that many consumers did

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not realize that they were not on a government website until they had already paid the defendants' fees of \$120 to \$300 and provided their personal information to them.

What the Settlement Means

The settlement announced today bars the defendants from continuing to imply an affiliation with the government. They must clearly and conspicuously disclose to consumers that their websites are not affiliated with the government, that consumers must separately submit their completed immigration applications to the government, and that consumers must separately pay the applicable government filing fees to the government.

The settlement also imposes a \$2.2 million judgment, which can be used to send refunds to defrauded consumers.

The Commission vote authorizing the staff to file the complaint and stipulated final order was 5-0. The FTC filed the complaint and proposed order in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The order settles the FTC's allegations against: 1) Forms Direct, Inc., also d/b/a Immigration Direct and successor in interest to American Immigration Center Inc., File Right, LLC, United Immigration Inc., and US Immigration Technology LLC; and 2) Cesare Alessandrini, individually and as an officer of Forms Direct, Inc.

NOTE: The Commission files a complaint when it has "reason to believe" that the law has been or is being violated and it appears to the Commission that a proceeding is in the public interest. Stipulated final orders have the force of law when approved and signed by the District Court judge.

The Federal Trade Commission works to promote competition, and [protect and educate consumers](#). You can [learn more about consumer topics](#) and file a [consumer complaint online](#) or by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357). Like the FTC on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), read our [blogs](#), and [subscribe to press releases](#) for the latest FTC news and resources.

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