

Patent Troll Enforcement

Deceptive and threatening letters may claim you have no choice but to pay a patent infringement claim or face litigation. Patent trolls often target small businesses and nonprofits, knowing that they cannot easily afford to defend themselves in court.

While patent infringement letters may be valid, and you may want to consult your counsel, contact CAP if you receive one of these letters. You may also have recourse under VT's bad faith assertions of patent infringement statute.

May 2013 — VT legislature passed first-in-the-nation legislation creating new protections for targets of patent trolling. VT also filed a groundbreaking lawsuit against MPHJ Technology Investments, LLC, a “patent troll,” for engaging in unfair and deceptive acts.

April 2014 — Attorney General Bill Sorrell testified before Congress about the growing problem of unfair and deceptive patent demand letters.

Helpful Resources:

The “For Businesses” section of the CAP website:

<https://www.uvm.edu/consumer/?Page=business.html>

(File complaints, look up info on scams, find compliance guidelines.)

The Pure Vermont Newsletter:

Sign up, e-mail: ago.cadmin@state.vt.us

(A brief publication for businesses and consumers, includes useful resources, scam info and settlements from prior months.)

Social Networks:

Like us on Facebook:

[Facebook/VermontAttorneyGeneral](https://www.facebook.com/VermontAttorneyGeneral)

Follow us on Twitter: [@VTAttorneyGen](https://twitter.com/VTAttorneyGen)

(Receive up-to-date alerts, messages, information, and resources.)

CONTACT THE CONSUMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP)

VT Attorney General's CAP
146 University Place
Burlington, VT 05405

Website: www.uvm.edu/consumer
E-mail: consumer@uvm.edu

Local Phone: (802) 656-3183
Toll Free Phone: (800) 649-2424

Businesses...

- * **Are Consumers**
- * **Get Scammed**
- * **Can Get Help with Enforcement**
- * **Have Guidance Resources Available**



**Office of the
Attorney General**

CAP for Businesses

Business Consumer Issues

Vermont's Consumer Protection Statute defines "consumer" to include businesses that are the consumer in a transaction, such as when purchasing goods or services that are not for resale. (9 V.S.A. SS 2451a(a))

The Attorney General's Consumer Assistance Program provides a letter mediation service for businesses that experience issues in such transactions. Contacting CAP helps the office track the problems that VT businesses experience.

Cramming — Unauthorized charges from third-party businesses on your phone bill, though often small, could add up and cost thousands over time. Check your bills. Cramming is illegal in VT.

Credit/Debit Card Processors — Reported complaints often include door-to-door pressure sales with unsubstantiated claims or guarantees of lower costs. Contracts can include long terms, unexpected costs, and high termination fees.

Unsolicited Merchandise — Ever receive goods (such as supplies) or services (such as online listings) that you never asked to receive? Under Vermont law, you do not have to pay for things you did not request.

Common Scams Against Businesses

Online or Yellow Page Listings

(Demand payment for unsolicited services.)

Fake Sponsorship Programs

(Solicit your funds to support illegitimate programs, organizations, or even charities.)

Labor Poster Renewal

(Demands of payment for federal and state labor posters you can obtain for free online.)

Toner Phoner

(Cold-calls and subsequent payment demands for unsolicited supplies and toner.)

False Business Orders

(Contacts your business and makes arrangements to place a large order, but then requests that you wire or send money to a third party for "shipping".)

Phony Invoices/Unauthorized Billing

(Invoices and bills for products/services you never ordered, nor received.)

Scams that Claim to be your Business

(Misrepresent your business to the public in order to scam others, using your reputable name.)

Tax Filing Scams

(Either demand for payment due to tax filing errors, or your business tax return was filed by and received by another.)

Utility Disconnection

(Payment demands for supposed past due utility bills that threaten immediate shut off.)

Guidance

To help reduce some of the guesswork of business ownership, information and guidance on complying with Vermont's consumer protection laws are located in one place on our website. Some topics currently available online include:

- * Charitable Sponsorship/Fundraising
- * Data and Cyber Security
- * Gift Cards/Certificates
- * Lead in Products and Housing
- * Unlicensed Lending and Debt Adjustment
- * Vermont's Consumer Protection Rules

We are regularly adding information to our website. Please visit us online for the latest updates.

Pure Vermont Award

If you know someone who deserves to be recognized for their efforts helping neighbors, caring for our community, and promoting fair dealing in the marketplace, show your appreciation by nominating them to receive the Attorney General's Pure Vermont Award. Nominations can be submitted online.