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NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 26, 2004

Settlement Agreement Promises Partial Relief for Consumers Seeking Restitution from Travel and Tour Provider

(Juneau) – Attorney General Gregg D. Renkes announced a settlement was reached in a consumer protection lawsuit, *State of Alaska v. Alaska Adventures and Accommodations, Inc.; a/k/a Ask Alaska Travel & Tours, Inc.; a/k/a Anchorage Adventures and Accommodations, Inc.; and Jennifer Christensen*, 3AN-03-10165 CIV, and a related fraud and misrepresentation lawsuit, *State of Alaska v. Jennifer Christensen*, 3AN-03-11046 CIV.

“Customers and vendors, within the state and around the world, discovered that travel plans and itineraries scheduled for the height of Alaska’s summer tourism season were disrupted or ruined as a result of actions of this business,” said Renkes. “We cannot turn back the clock, but we did negotiate a settlement that will substantially reimburse the individuals impacted, prohibits future conduct of the type previously engaged in by Christensen and her company and provides for additional enforcement ‘teeth’ to ensure that the settlement shall be honored.”

In August and September 2003, the state filed the lawsuits against Christensen alleging violations of the Alaska Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection Act, fraud and misrepresentation. The civil complaints alleged that Christensen engaged in unfair or deceptive acts or practices, fraud or misrepresentation by:

- Making unauthorized charges to and uses of consumer credit cards and misrepresenting the ownership of the cards
- Accepting payments from consumers for lodging, transportation and other services but failing to pay the vendors for those services
- Failing to respond to requests for refunds by consumers
- Failing to provided services as represented.

The settlement prohibits defendant Christensen from engaging in activities of the type alleged in the complaints and places a 10 year ban on her from acting in an ownership, management, consulting or officer position in businesses that process credit/debit card transactions. Violation of these provisions will subject Christensen to a fine of \$25,000 per violation.

The settlement also requires the payment of consumer restitution in the amount of \$30,134 and vendor restitution in the amount of \$17,775. These restitution payments equal approximately 75 percent of the principal amount still owed to consumers harmed by the conduct alleged in the

More

(Ask Alaska Settlement Release – pg.2)

State's complaint, and 75 percent of the principal amount owed to vendors damaged by Christensen's improper use of consumers' credit cards. A \$50,000 civil penalty will be waived if the restitution is paid as ordered. The settlement also prohibits Christensen from engaging in business under the name of the company that she operated.

"I am pleased with the efforts made by the attorneys in the Department of Law to bring this matter to a close," said Renkes. I am also concerned about how this case has impacted tourism. Visitor industry operators are the hospitality ambassadors for Alaska. It is my hope that this settlement makes it clear to everyone that consumer protection is a priority concern for the Department of Law. I also hope that this agreement removes some of the tarnish on a critical industry for this state."

For additional information, please contact Assistant Attorney General Julia Coster at (907) 269-5100 or Mark Morones at 269-6393.

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