

Fifty-eighth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

SENATE BILL NO. 2228

Introduced by

Senators Trenbeath, Holmberg, Urlacher

Representatives Belter, Grosz

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact sections 51-15-01, 51-15-04, 51-15-05, 51-15-06,
2 51-15-06.1, 51-15-07, 51-15-08, 51-15-10, and 51-15-11 of the North Dakota Century Code,
3 relating to unlawful sales or advertising practices; and to provide a penalty.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is
6 amended and reenacted as follows:

7 **51-15-01. Definitions.** In this chapter, unless the context or subject matter otherwise
8 requires:

- 9 1. "Advertisement" includes the attempt by publication, dissemination, solicitation, or
10 circulation, oral or written, to induce, directly or indirectly, any person to enter into
11 any obligation or acquire any title or interest in any merchandise.
- 12 2. "Attorney general" means the attorney general of North Dakota or the attorney
13 general's authorized delegate.
- 14 3. "Merchandise" means any objects, wares, goods, commodities, intangibles, real
15 estate, charitable contributions, or services.
- 16 4. "Person" means any natural person or the person's legal representative,
17 partnership, corporation, limited liability company, company, trust, business entity,
18 or association, and any agent, employee, salesman, partner, officer, director,
19 member, stockholder, associate, trustee, or cestui que trust thereof.
- 20 5. "Sale" means any charitable solicitation, or any sale, offer for sale, or attempt to
21 sell any merchandise for any consideration.

22 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-04 of the North Dakota Century Code is
23 amended and reenacted as follows:

1 **51-15-04. Powers of attorney general.** When it appears to the attorney general that a
2 person has engaged in, or is engaging in, any practice declared to be unlawful by this chapter
3 or any of the provisions of chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18, or when the
4 attorney general believes it to be in the public interest that an investigation should be made to
5 ascertain whether a person in fact has engaged in, is engaging in, or is about to engage in, any
6 unlawful practice under chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18, the attorney
7 general may:

- 8 1. Require that person to file, on forms the attorney general prescribes, a statement
9 or report in writing, under oath or otherwise, of all the facts and circumstances
10 concerning the sale or advertisement of merchandise by that person, as well as
11 other data and information the attorney general may determine necessary.
- 12 2. Examine under oath any person in connection with the sale or advertisement of
13 any merchandise.
- 14 3. Examine any merchandise or sample thereof, record, book, document, account, or
15 paper as the attorney general may determine necessary.
- 16 4. Pursuant to an order of a district court impound any merchandise or sample thereof,
17 record, book, document, account, or paper, ~~or sample of merchandise~~ material to
18 that practice and retain the same in the attorney general's possession until the
19 completion of all proceedings undertaken under this section or in the courts.

20 **SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-05 of the North Dakota Century Code is
21 amended and reenacted as follows:

22 **51-15-05. Subpoena - Hearing - Rules.** To accomplish the objectives and to carry out
23 the duties prescribed by this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18,
24 the attorney general, in addition to other powers conferred upon the attorney general by this
25 chapter, may issue subpoenas to any person, administer an oath or affirmation to any person,
26 conduct hearings in aid of any investigation or inquiry, and prescribe forms and adopt rules as
27 may be necessary.

28 **SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-06 of the North Dakota Century Code is
29 amended and reenacted as follows:

30 **51-15-06. Failure to supply information or obey subpoena.** If any person fails or
31 refuses to file any statement or report, or obey any subpoena issued by the attorney general,

the attorney general may, after notice, apply to a district court and, after hearing thereon, request an order:

1. Granting injunctive relief, restraining the sale or advertisement of any merchandise by such persons;
2. Vacating, annulling, or suspending the charter of a for-profit or nonprofit corporation or limited liability company created by or under the laws of this state or revoking or suspending the certificate of authority to do business in this state of a foreign corporation or limited liability company or revoking or suspending any other licenses, permits, or certificates issued pursuant to law to such person which are used to further the allegedly unlawful practice; and
3. Granting such other relief as may be required;

until the person files the statement or obeys the subpoena.

SECTION 5. AMENDMENT. Section 51-15-06.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

51-15-06.1. Assurance of discontinuance. The attorney general may accept an assurance of discontinuance of any act or practice the attorney general determines to be in violation of this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18 from any person the attorney general alleges is engaging in, or has engaged in, the act or practice. The assurance of discontinuance must be in writing and must be filed with and is subject to the approval of the district court of the county in which the alleged violator resides or has as a principal place of business or in Burleigh County. An assurance of discontinuance may not be considered an admission of a violation. However, failure to comply with an assurance of discontinuance which has been approved by the district court is contempt of court.

SECTION 6. AMENDMENT. Section 51-15-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

51-15-07. Remedies - Injunction - Other relief - Receiver - Cease and desist orders - Civil penalties - Costs recoverable in adjudicative proceedings. Whenever it appears to the attorney general that a person has engaged in, or is engaging in, any practice declared to be unlawful by this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18, the attorney general may seek and obtain in an action in a district court an injunction prohibiting that person from continuing the unlawful practice or engaging in the unlawful practice or doing any act in

1 furtherance of the unlawful practice after appropriate notice to that person. The notice must
2 state generally the relief sought and be served at least ten days before the hearing of the
3 action. The court may make an order or judgment as may be necessary to prevent the use or
4 employment by a person of any unlawful practices, or which may be necessary to restore to any
5 person in interest any money, or property that may have been acquired by means of any
6 practice in this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18 declared to be
7 unlawful, including the appointment of a receiver.

8 When it appears to the attorney general that a person has engaged in, or is engaging in,
9 a practice declared to be unlawful by this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or
10 51-18, and that the person is about to conceal assets or oneself or leave the state, the attorney
11 general may apply to the district court, ex parte, for an order appointing a receiver of the assets
12 of that person. Upon a showing made by affidavit or other evidence that the person has
13 engaged in, or is engaging in, a practice declared to be unlawful by this chapter and that the
14 person is about to conceal assets or oneself or leave the state, the court shall order the
15 appointment of a receiver to receive the assets of the person.

16 When it appears to the attorney general that a person has engaged in, or is engaging in,
17 a practice declared to be unlawful by this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14,
18 51-16.1, or 51-18, or by an order of the attorney general issued under this chapter, the attorney
19 general, without notice and hearing, may issue any cease and desist order, which the attorney
20 general deems necessary or appropriate in the public interest, including if a person fails or
21 refuses to file a statement or report, or to obey a subpoena issued by the attorney general
22 under this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, and 51-18. In addition to
23 any other remedy authorized by this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or
24 51-18, the attorney general may impose by order and collect a civil penalty against a person
25 found in an adjudicative proceeding to have violated a cease and desist order issued pursuant
26 to this section, in an amount not more than one thousand dollars for each violation. The
27 attorney general may bring an action in district court to recover penalties under this section. A
28 person aggrieved by an order issued under this section may request a hearing before the
29 attorney general if a written request is made within ten days after the receipt of the order. An
30 adjudicative proceeding under this section must be conducted in accordance with chapter
31 28-32, unless otherwise specifically provided herein. If the attorney general prevails in an

1 adjudicative proceeding pursuant to this section, the attorney general may assess the
2 non-prevailing person for all adjudicative proceeding and hearing costs including reasonable
3 attorney's fees, investigation fees, costs, and expenses of any investigation and action.

4 **SECTION 7. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-08 of the North Dakota Century Code is
5 amended and reenacted as follows:

6 **51-15-08. Powers of receiver.** When a receiver is appointed by the court pursuant to
7 this chapter, the receiver may sue for, collect, receive, or take into possession all the goods and
8 chattels, rights and credits, moneys and effects, lands and tenements, books, records,
9 documents, papers, choses in action, bills, notes, and property of every description, derived by
10 means of any practice declared to be unlawful by this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13,
11 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18, including property with which the property has been mingled if it
12 cannot be identified in kind because of the commingling, and sell, convey, and assign the
13 property and hold and dispose of the proceeds under the direction of the court. Any person
14 who has suffered damages as a result of the use or employment of any unlawful practices and
15 submits proof to the satisfaction of the court that that person has in fact been damaged may
16 participate with general creditors in the distribution of the assets to the extent that person has
17 sustained out-of-pocket losses. The court has jurisdiction of all questions arising in these
18 proceedings and may make orders and judgments therein as may be required.

19 **SECTION 8. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-10 of the North Dakota Century Code is
20 amended and reenacted as follows:

21 **51-15-10. Costs recoverable.** In any action brought under the provisions of this
22 chapter, or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1, or 51-18, the court shall award to the
23 ~~attorney general is entitled to recover costs, expenses, and attorney's fees incurred by the~~
24 ~~attorney general in the investigation and prosecution of such action. In any inquiry or~~
25 ~~investigation initiated under this chapter in which fraud is determined, the attorney general may~~
26 ~~request and collect costs, expenses, and attorney's fees incurred by the attorney general in the~~
27 ~~inquiry or investigation~~ reasonable attorney fees, investigation fees, costs and expenses of any
28 investigation and action brought under this chapter or chapter 50-22, 51-12, 51-13, 51-14,
29 51-16.1, or 51-18. All attorney's fees, investigation fees, and costs, expenses, and attorney's
30 fees received by the attorney general under this section must be deposited into the attorney
31 general refund fund.

1 **SECTION 9. AMENDMENT.** Section 51-15-11 of the North Dakota Century Code is
2 amended and reenacted as follows:

3 **51-15-11. Civil penalties.** The court may assess for the benefit of the state a civil
4 penalty of not more than five thousand dollars for each violation of this chapter or for each
5 violation of chapter 51-12, 51-13, 51-14, or 51-18. The penalty provided in this section is in
6 addition to those remedies otherwise provided by this chapter or by chapter 50-22, 51-12,
7 51-13, 51-14, 51-16.1 or 51-18.