

Attorney General’s Office Shuts Down Fraudulent “Notarios” and Unauthorized Immigration Consultants in South Texas

State secures judgments that permanently shut down three unlawful firms operated by “notarios”

MCALLEN – Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott announced today that he has shut down three fraudulent “notario” operations in the Rio Grande Valley.

A Hidalgo County district court granted the State’s request and issued permanent and temporary injunctions against the following four defendants:

- Veronica G. Garcia and Cecilia H. Solis, doing business as Garcia & Solis Services (permanent injunction);
- Ana Isabel Lumbreras, doing business as Montemayor Services (permanent injunction);
- Marilia Luz, doing business as Immigration Help (permanent injunction);
- Jairo Romanovich, doing business as Romanovich Charitable Service Inc. (temporary injunction).

Media links
Final judgment against Garcia & Solis Services and Others
Final judgment against Montemayor Services and Others
Final judgment against Immigration Help and Others
Restraining order against Romanovich Charitable Services, Inc. and others

Earlier this month, the State filed separate enforcement actions against the four defendants and charged each of them with violating the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act (DTPA) and the Notary Public Act. At the State’s request, a Hidalgo County district court ordered the four defendants to pay civil penalties for unlawfully representing that they were legally authorized to process immigration cases before federal authorities. During the discovery process, state investigators discovered that the defendants were neither licensed attorneys nor accredited to offer immigration-related legal services.

Under federal law, only licensed attorneys and organizations accredited by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Board of Immigration Appeals may offer immigration consulting services. Texas law authorizes notaries public to witness the signing of legal documents – but specifically forbids them from providing immigration services unless they hold a separate license to practice law. Scam artists have long exploited the misunderstanding between the term “notary” and the similar-sounding Spanish term “notario público,” which is used in Latin America to describe highly experienced, specialized attorneys.

The State’s cases against the four defendants were part of the Office of the Attorney General’s (OAG) month-long crackdown on immigration scams in Hidalgo County. The OAG’s case

against Jairo Romanovich – doing business as Romanovich Charitable Service Inc. – remains pending. On May 21, a Hidalgo County district court granted the State’s request for a temporary restraining order stopping Romanovich and his firm from offering unauthorized immigration-related legal services.

Since assuming office in 2002, Attorney General Abbott has shut down more than 75 businesses for providing unauthorized legal services. Former or current clients of an unauthorized legal services provider should file a complaint with the Attorney General’s Office at (800) 252-8011 or online at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.