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# Telemarketers Allegedly Posed as U.S. Immigration Officials

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A Nevada federal judge has approved a Federal Trade Commission request to shut down an alleged immigration scam in which operators posed as the U.S. government and duped consumers into paying fees for processing immigration forms.

According to the FTC, defendants Immigration Center and Immigration Forms and Publications Inc., "set up websites that mimic official government sites, and then used the fake sites to steer immigrants to their deceptive telemarketing operation."

The telemarketers answered the phone with "USCIS or "U.S. Immigration Center," and identified themselves as an "agent," "immigration officer," or "caseworker."

"In numerous instances, consumers who call Defendants' toll-free numbers believe that they are talking to an agent of the USCIS, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or another agency of the United States government," [the complaint states](#).

According to the FTC, telemarketers then conned consumers into paying fees ranging from \$200 to \$2,500 by claiming the money would cover processing by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Consumers ended up paying for applications that were never processed, or, in some cases, they were charged twice, once by the defendants and again by the government.

The companies' Web sites had official-sounding URLs such as [www.uscis-ins.us](http://www.uscis-ins.us) and [www.usgovernmenthelpline.com](http://www.usgovernmenthelpline.com), complete with flags, eagles and the Statue of Liberty.

"On their websites, Defendants state that they are not affiliated with the United States government," the FTC acknowledged in its complaint. "However, Defendants' disclaimers are inadequate and ineffective."

The FTC charged the Reno-based defendants with violating Section 13(b) of the Federal Trade Commission Act by misrepresenting that they were authorized to provide immigration and naturalization services; that they were affiliated with the U.S. government; and that the fees paid by consumers would cover all the costs associated with submitting immigration documents.

Judge Edward Reed on Jan. 26 froze the defendants' assets and appointed a receiver to take over the business until the case is resolved. The FTC has asked the court to halt the business practices permanently and order the operation to repay its victims.