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Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces Partnership with Amazon to Counter Pandemic-Related Price Gouging by Unscrupulous Operators

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced today a partnership with Amazon.com to combat unconscionable online price gouging of Alabamians by bad actors during the current pandemic. The partnership is part of Attorney General Marshall’s effort to enlist the nation’s largest technology companies to stem the tide of price gouging of Alabama consumers seeking to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus.

“It is an unfortunate reality that unscrupulous operators prey upon the public during times of disaster, artificially inflating the cost of essentials and often driving panic buying for their own financial benefit,” said Attorney General Marshall. “This is particularly apparent online where such illegal activity often hides under a perceived cloak of anonymity. However, thanks to our new partnership with one of America’s major online retailers, such criminal acts are being discovered and illicit businesses are being stopped in their tracks. I am pleased to announce that Amazon.com has agreed to participate with my office in a coordinated effort to identify and shutdown online price gouging.”

Amazon officials are currently reviewing and removing potential price gouging listings by bad actors for COVID-19-related products from the Amazon.com site. Furthermore, the e-commerce retailer has agreed to partner with the Alabama Attorney General’s Office to receive and investigate potential price gouging of products being marketed by bad actors to Alabamians including hand sanitizer, household cleaners, face masks and toilet paper.

“We do not tolerate price gouging in Amazon’s stores,” said Brian Huseman, Amazon Vice President of Public Policy. “Amazon proactively monitors around the clock and removes any offers that violate our policies. We value our partnership with the Alabama Attorney General’s office and look forward to continued collaboration to prosecute bad actors who try to take advantage of our customers during this global health crisis.”

Attorney General Marshall [announced](#) that Alabama’s price gouging law is now in effect with the issuance of a State Public Health Emergency by Governor Kay Ivey on March 13. Although what constitutes an unconscionable price is not specifically set forth in state law, a price that is 25 percent or more above the average price charged in the same area within the last 30 days – unless the increase can be attributed to a reasonable cost in connection with the rental or sale of the commodity – is a prima facie case of unconscionable pricing.

The penalty is a fine of up to \$1,000 per violation, and those determined to have willfully and continuously violated this law may be prohibited from doing business in Alabama.

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Alabamians who want to file an illegal price gouging report are encouraged to do so via the Alabama Attorney General's Consumer Interest Division web link: <https://www.alabamaag.gov/consumercomplaint>, or by calling 1-800-392-5658 to receive a form by mail to complete and return.

Attorney General Marshall will soon announce more partnerships with other technology companies who have also agreed to work with his office to combat price gouging.