



AG ANNOUNCES \$500,000 CONSUMER PROTECTION SETTLEMENT

(MONTGOMERY) –Attorney General Luther Strange today announced a \$500,000 settlement with ThompsonGas-Smokies LLC and Suburban Gas Propane Partners LLC. The agreement was filed today in Jefferson County Circuit Court to settle alleged violations of the Alabama Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Thompson’s and Suburban’s regional headquarters is in Columbiana with numerous branches throughout Alabama.

The Attorney General’s complaint alleged that in May 2012 Thompson and Suburban billed approximately 2,000 of their customers a minimum usage or non-usage fee ranging from \$192.80 to \$706.80. Many of these customers were the result of Thompson’s and Suburban’s acquisition of other propane companies, with which the customers had varying contracts that did not necessarily provide for the charging of such fees.

“Alabama law requires that our consumers be able to rely upon contracts and that they be provided clear notice of any changes that will incur new fees,” said Attorney General Strange. “We will not allow businesses to impose fees on consumers who were operating under a contract that did not provide for such fees. I am pleased that consumers in this case will receive refunds and that abusive practices will no longer be conducted.”

The consent decree provides refunds to Alabama consumers and measures to prevent recurrence of the alleged violations. Thompson and Suburban will send a letter to affected customers notifying them of the refund amount due to them, as well as information about procedures to contest the amount. Thompson and Suburban also agreed to clear the balance on any of the incorrectly charged fees that were not paid, and to pay customers for gas that was in removed tanks. Any future fee changes to new or existing customers must be clearly set out in a prominent notice mailed to consumers.

Attorney General Strange commended those involved in reaching this agreement, noting in particular Assistant Attorneys General Noel S. Barnes, T. Cameron McEwen and Kyle Beckman.

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