UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA FT. MYERS DIVISION

BEN BAKER, Individually and on Behalf of All Others Similarly Situated,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No.

NATIONAL CREDIT MANAGEMENT, INC.,

Defendant.

<u>CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES</u> <u>AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL</u>

Plaintiff, BEN BAKER ("Plaintiff"), on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, alleges the following upon information and belief based upon personal knowledge:

NATURE OF THE CASE

1. Plaintiff brings this action for himself and others similarly situated seeking damages and any other available legal or equitable remedies resulting from the illegal actions of NATIONAL CREDIT MANAGEMENT, INC., ("Defendant" or "NCM"), in negligently, knowingly, and/or willfully communicating with Plaintiff and failing to provide Plaintiff with meaningful disclosure of the nature or purpose of Defendant's calls in violation of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act,

15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq. ("FDCPA").

JURISDICTION & VENUE

2. Jurisdiction of this Court arises under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(d).

3. Venue is proper in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida because Plaintiff, a resident of Ft. Myers Florida, resides here and Defendant does business within the state of Florida and this Judicial District.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff, BEN BAKER ("Plaintiff"), is a natural person residing in Ft. Myers, Florida and is a "consumer" as defined by the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. \$1692a(3).

5. At all relevant times herein, Defendant, NATIONAL CREDIT MANAGEMENT, INC. ("Defendant"), was a company engaged, by use of the mails and telephone, in the business of collecting a debt from Plaintiff which qualifies as a "debt," as defined by 15 U.S.C. \$1692a(5). Defendant regularly attempts to collect debts alleged to be due another, and therefore is a "debt collector" as defined by the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. \$1692a(6).

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

6. At various and multiple times prior to the filing of the instant complaint, including within the one year preceding the filing of this complaint, Defendant contacted Plaintiff in an attempt to collect an alleged outstanding debt.

7. Defendant, in its attempt to collect the alleged debt owed by Plaintiff, placed telephone calls to Plaintiff.

8. The debt Defendant is attempting to collect is an allegedly past due account stemming from student loans account allegedly owed to another lending entity.

9. The alleged debt is a "debt" as defined by the FDCPA as the alleged debt is for individual consumer student loans used primarily for personal, family and/or household use/purposes.

10. Defendant called Plaintiff's telephone number in an attempt to collect the alleged debt and, when Plaintiff did not answer said calls, left voice messages on Plaintiff's telephone in connection with the collection of the aforementioned debt. In all, Defendant has left at least two (2) such voicemails on Plaintiff's telephone in connection with the collection of the alleged debt owed within the past one year from the date of filing. Case 2:16-cv-00881-JES-CM Document 1 Filed 12/12/16 Page 4 of 12 PageID 4

11. Each and every voicemail that Defendant left for Plaintiff was the same, nearly word for word verbatim. The voice messages left on Plaintiff's telephone, stated as follows:

Hi Benjamin, this is Nick Carson calling regarding your reference number 1993157, we spoke yesterday, just calling to follow up with you. Once you receive this message call me at 1-800-526-3213 at extension 318. Thank you.¹

Hi this message is for Ben Baker, this is Nick Carson calling regarding reference number 1993157. Once you receive this message call me at 1-800-526-3213 at extension 318. Thank you.

12. The voice messages left by Defendant's employee is a scripted message that Defendant has trained all of its employees to leave for all class members. It is Defendant's internal policy and procedure to leave this scripted and pre-approved message each and every time one of Defendant's employees leaves a voicemail message on a consumer's telephone relating to the collection of a debt. This is further evidenced by the fact that each of the two (2) messages described above were nearly word for word identical to one another.

¹ Plaintiff is in possession of true and correct copies of Defendant's messages and can provide a copy of said messages via Compact Disc ("CD") to this Honorable Court upon request.

13. Defendant's voice messages do not identify Defendant's full and true business name, in fact, Defendant's voice messages make no reference to Defendant's business name at all in any fashion.

14. Defendant's voice messages do not alert Plaintiff as to the purpose or reason for the Defendant's telephone calls. Defendant's voice messages do not advise Plaintiff in any fashion as to the reason for Defendant's call whatsoever (i.e., that Defendant is calling in regards to the collection of a debt).

15. Defendant's voice messages do not alert Plaintiff that Defendant is a debt collector.

16. As a result of Defendant's alleged violations of law by leaving these voice messages on Plaintiff's telephone without the requisite disclosures as mandated by the FDCPA, Defendant caused Plaintiff harm and/or injury such that Article III standing is satisfied in at least the following, if not more, ways:

a. Invading Plaintiff's and the putative class' right to specific information mandated by the FDCPA to be provided by Defendant in each collection communication, including Defendant's true and full business name, the purpose for Defendant's collection calls, and that Defendant is a collection agency;

b. Engaging in the unfair business practice of intentionally, falsely and deceptively depriving Plaintiff and the putative class of their right to

specific information mandated by the FDCPA to be provided by Defendant in each collection communication, including Defendant's true and full business name, the purpose for Defendant's collection calls, and that Defendant is a collection agency;

c. Impermissibly causing Plaintiff and the putative class confusion and/or lack of knowledge and information such as Defendant's true and full business name, the purpose of Defendant's call, and that Defendant is a collection agency.

d. Causing Plaintiff and the putative class to expend needless time in receiving, researching and attempting to identify on their own who Defendant is, the purpose for Defendant's calls and that Defendant is a collection agency.

e. The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals has confirmed that such deprival of mandated disclosures under the FDCPA, as alleged by Plaintiff in this matter, constitutes a concrete and particularized injury in fact so as to satisfy Article III Standing pursuant to the United States Constitution and the recent United States Supreme Court's *Spokeo* decision. See *Church v. Accretive Health, Inc.*, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 12414 (11th Cir., July 6, 2016).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

17. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, as a member of the proposed class (hereafter "The Class") defined as follows:

All persons within the State of Florida who received any collection telephone call from Defendant, which resulted in Defendant leaving a voice message that is identical or substantially similar to those Plaintiff received from Defendant, which failed to inform said person of Defendant's true and full business name, the nature or purpose for Defendant's call, or that Defendant is a debt collector, within the one year prior to the filing of this Complaint

18. Plaintiff represents, and is a member of, The Class, consisting of All persons within the State of Florida who received any collection telephone call from Defendant, which resulted in Defendant leaving a voice message that is identical or substantially similar to those Plaintiff received from Defendant, which failed to inform said person of Defendant's true and full business name, the nature or purpose for Defendant's call, or that Defendant is a debt collector, within the one year prior to the filing of this Complaint

19. Defendant, its employees and agents are excluded from The Class. Plaintiff does not know the number of members in The Class, but believes the Class members number in the hundreds, if not more. Thus, this matter should be certified as a Class Action to assist in the expeditious litigation of the matter.

20. The Class is so numerous that the individual joinder of all of its members is impractical. While the exact number and identities of The Class members are unknown to Plaintiff at this time and can only be ascertained through appropriate discovery, Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that The Class includes hundreds of members. Plaintiff alleges that The Class members may be ascertained by the records maintained by Defendant.

21. Common questions of fact and law exist as to all members of the Class which predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Class. These common legal and factual questions, which do not vary between Class members, and which may be determined without reference to the individual circumstances of any Class members, include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Whether Defendant has a policy of communicating with consumers in connection with the collection of an alleged debt wherein Defendant fails to inform said consumers of Defendant's full and true business name, the nature or purpose for Defendant's calls, or that Defendant is a debt collector;

b. Whether Defendant has communicated with consumers in connection with the collection of an alleged debt wherein Defendant fails to inform said consumers of Defendant's full and true business name, the nature or purpose for Defendant's calls, or that Defendant is a debt collector; and c. The nature and extent of damages and other remedies to which the conduct of Defendant entitles the Class members.

22. As a person that received collection calls from Defendant wherein Defendant fails to inform him of Defendant's full and true business name, the nature or purpose for Defendant's calls, or that Defendant is a debt collector, Plaintiff is asserting claims that are typical of The Class.

23. Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the members of The Class. Plaintiff has retained attorneys experienced in the prosecution of class actions.

24. A class action is superior to other available methods of fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy, since individual litigation of the claims of all Class members is impracticable. Even if every Class member could afford individual litigation, the court system could not. It would be unduly burdensome to the courts in which individual litigation of numerous issues would proceed. Individualized litigation would also present the potential for varying, inconsistent, or contradictory judgments and would magnify the delay and expense to all parties and to the court system resulting from multiple trials of the same complex factual issues. By contrast, the conduct of this action as a class action presents fewer management difficulties, conserves the resources of the parties and of the court system, and protects the rights of each Class member.

25. The prosecution of separate actions by individual Class members would create a risk of adjudications with respect to them that would, as a practical matter, be dispositive of the interests of the other Class members not parties to such adjudications or that would substantially impair or impede the ability of such non-party Class members to protect their interests.

26. Defendant has acted or refused to act in respects generally applicable to The Class, thereby making appropriate final and injunctive relief with regard to the members of the Class as a whole.

COUNT I:

VIOLATION OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

27. Plaintiff hereby incorporates the preceding paragraphs as if set forth in full.

28. Based upon the foregoing, Defendant's conduct violated the FDCPA as follows:

- a) Placing telephone calls without providing meaningful disclosure of the caller's identity (§1692d(6));
- b) Failing to advise a consumer in all subsequent communications that Defendant is a debt collector
 (§ 1692e(11)); and

29. Plaintiff alleges that to the extent that Defendant's actions, counted above, violated the FDCPA, those actions were done knowingly and willfully.

30. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant's violations of the FDCPA, *15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq.*, Plaintiff and the members of the Class have suffered injury, and may recover from Defendant up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) in statutory damages in addition to actual damages and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs pursuant to *15 U.S.C. § 1692k*.

31. The violations of the FDCPA, *15 U.S.C.* § *1692 et seq.*, described herein present a continuing threat to members of the Class and members of the general public in that Plaintiff is informed and believes and thereon alleges that Defendant continues to engage in these practices, and will not cease doing so unless and until forced to do so by this Court.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Wherefore, Plaintiff respectfully requests the Court grant Plaintiff and The Class members the following relief against Defendant:

- That this action be certified as a class action on behalf of The Class, Plaintiff be appointed as the representative of The Class, and that Plaintiff's Counsel be appointed as Class Counsel;
- 2. For statutory damages up to \$1,000.00 per class member, or of

\$500,00.00 or 1% of Defendant's net worth, whichever is the lesser,

pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k;

3. For reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit;

4. For such further relief as this Court deems necessary, just, and proper.

Dated: December 8, 2016

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

By:

Benjamin H. Crumley, Esq. CRUMLEY & WOLFE, P.A. 2254 Riverside Ave., Jacksonville FL 32204-4620 Telephone: (904) 374-0111 Facsimile: (904) 374-0113 ben@cwbfl.com *Attorney for Plaintiff* JS 44 (Rev. 11/15)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS BEN BAKER, Individually	y and On Behalf of All	Others Similarly Site	uated DEFENDANTS	IT MANAGEMENT, INC		
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff LEE (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)			County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY) NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.			
(c) Attorneys (Firm Name,) Benjamin H. Crumley, Ci 2254 Riverside Ave., Jac Phone: (904) 374-0111			Attorneys (If Known)			
II. BASIS OF JURISDI	CTION (Place on "X" in ()	ne Box Onlyj	III. CITIZENSHIP OF P	RINCIPAL PARTIES		
I U.S. Government Plaimiff				FF DEF 1		
2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Cittzenshi	p of Parties in Item 111)	Citizen of Another State	2 □ 2 Incorporated and 1 of Business In .	Another State	
			Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3 🗇 3 Foreign Nation	0606	
IV. NATURE OF SUIT						
CONTRACT		RTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
 110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted 	330 Federal Employers' Liability	 PERSONAL INJURY 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability 367 Health Care/ Pharmacentical Personal Injury Product Liability 368 Asbestos Personal 	 ¹ 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 ¹ 690 Other 		 375 False Claims Act 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) 400 State Reapportionment 410 Antitrust 430 Banks and Banking 450 Commerce 460 Deportation 	
Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits 160 Stockholders' Suits 190 Other Contract 195 Contract Product Liability 196 Franchise	 340 Marine 345 Marine Product Liability 350 Motor Vehicle 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability 360 Other Personal Injury 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice 	Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPER □ 370 Other Fraud □ 371 Truth in Lending □ 380 Other Personal Property Damage □ 385 Property Damage Product Liability	LABOR TY 710 Fair Labor Standards Act 720 Labor/Management Relations 740 Railway Labor Act 751 Family and Medical Leave Act 790 Other Labor Litigation	SOCIAL SECURITY	 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations 480 Consumer Credit 490 Cable/Sat TV 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange 890 Other Statutory Actions 891 Agricultural Acts 893 Environmental Matters 895 Freedom of Information 	
REAL PROPERTY 210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Forts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability	CIVIL RIGHTS 440 Other Civil Rights 441 Voting 442 Employment 443 Housing/ Accommodations	PRISONER PETITION Habeas Corpus: ⊐ 463 Alien Detaince ⊐ 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence ⊐ 530 General	Income Security Act	FEDERAL TAX SUITS 5 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) 5 871 IRS - Third Party 26 USC 7609	Act 896 Arbitration 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision 950 Constitutionality of	
290 All Other Real Property	445 Amer, w/Disabilities - Employment	35 Death Penalty Other:	IMMIGRATION 462 Naturalization Application		State Statutes	
	☐ 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other ☐ 448 Education	 Other: 540 Mandamus & Other 550 Civil Rights 555 Prison Condition 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement 				
	moved from 🗇 3	Remanded from CAppellate Court	J 4 Reinstated or ☐ 5 Transfe Reopened Anothe (specify)	er District Litigation		
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	<u> </u>	tute under which you an mise Fair Debt Collection	e filing (Do not cite jurisdictional stat	tutes unless diversity):		
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: Image: Completion of the Pair Debt Conection Completion of the Pair Debt Conection Completion of the Pair Debt Conection Completion of the Pair Debt Conection						
VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER		
DATE 12/08/2016		SIGNATURE OF ATT	TORNEY OF RECORD			
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			\mathcal{O} —			
RECEIPT # AM	MOUNT	APPL VING IFP	JUDGE	MAG. JU	DGE	

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JS 44 Reverse (Rev. 11/15)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- **I.(a)** Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".

II. Jurisdiction. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.Cv.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below. United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here. United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box. Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.
Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; NOTE: federal question actions take precedence over diversity

- cases.)
- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerk(s) in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.
- V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the six boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date. Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

- VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity. Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553 Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service
- VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P. Demand. In this space enter the actual dollar amount being demanded or indicate other demand, such as a preliminary injunction. Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.
- VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases, if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: <u>National Credit Management Hit with FDCPA Class Action</u>