



manager, and/or representative of Surety Law Group, LLP, Fortress Law Group, PC, and Redstone Law Group, LLC ;

and

EDWARD WILLIAM RENNICK III, individually and as an owner, officer, manager, and/or representative of Surety Law Group, LLP, Fortress Law Group, PC, and Redstone Law Group, LLC,

Defendants.

Plaintiff, the Federal Trade Commission (“Commission” or “FTC”), filed its Complaint for Permanent Injunction and Other Equitable Relief, subsequently amended as Amended Complaint for Permanent Injunction and Other Equitable Relief ( “Complaint”), for a permanent injunction, consumer redress, and other equitable relief in this matter, pursuant to Sections 13(b) and 19 of the Federal Trade Commission Act (“FTC Act”), 15 U.S.C. §§ 53(b) and 57b. The Court now resolves this action by entering the following Final Order.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED as follows:

#### **FINDINGS**

1. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter.
2. For the reasons stated in the Court’s July 7, 2016 Order (Doc. 281) granting summary judgment in favor of the FTC, the Court finds that Defendants participated in deceptive and unfair acts or practices in violation of Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, the FTC’s Telemarketing Sales Rule (“TSR”), 16 C.F.R. Part 310, and the Mortgage Assistance Relief

Services Rule (“MARS Rule”), 16 C.F.R. Part 322, recodified as Mortgage Assistance Relief Services (“Regulation O”), 12 C.F.R. Part 1015, in connection with the marketing and sale of mortgage assistance relief services.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Fortress Law Group LLC; Liberty & Trust Law Group of Florida, LLC; Fortress Law Group, PC; Michael W. Lanier; and Rogelio Robles, aka Roger Robles, individually, collectively, or in any combination.

- C. **“Corporate Defendants”** means Lanier Law, LLC, d/b/a Fortress Law Group, Redstone Law Group, The Law Offices of Michael W. Lanier, also d/b/a Vanguard Law Group; Fortress Law Group LLC; Liberty & Trust Law Group of Florida, LLC; Fortress Law Group, PC; and their successors and assigns.
- D. **“Individual Defendants”** means Michael W. Lanier; and Rogelio Robles, aka Roger Robles.
- E. **“Established Business Relationship”** means a relationship between a Seller and a Person based on: (a) the Person’s purchase, rental, or lease of the Seller’s goods or services or a financial transaction between the Seller and Person, within eighteen months immediately preceding the date of the Telemarketing call; or (b) the Person’s inquiry or application regarding a product or service offered by the Seller, within three months immediately preceding the date of a Telemarketing call.
- F. **“Financial Product or Service”** means any product, service, plan, or program represented, expressly or by implication, to:
1. provide any consumer, arrange for any consumer to receive, or assist any consumer in receiving, a loan, or other extension of credit;
  2. provide any consumer, arrange for any consumer to receive, or assist any consumer in receiving, credit, debit, or stored value cards;

3. improve, repair, or arrange to improve or repair, any consumer's credit record, credit history, or credit rating; or
  4. provide advice or assistance to improve any consumer's credit record, credit history, or credit rating.
- G. **“National Do Not Call Registry”** means the “do-not-call” registry of telephone numbers maintained by the Commission pursuant to 16 C.F.R. §310.4(b)(1)(iii)(B).
- H. **“Outbound Telephone Call”** means a telephone call initiated by a telemarketer to induce the purchase of goods or services or to solicit a charitable contribution.
- I. **“Person”** means a natural person, organization, or other legal entity, including a corporation, partnership, proprietorship, association, cooperative, or any other group or combination acting as an entity.
- J. **“Secured or Unsecured Debt Relief Product or Service”** means:
1. With respect to any mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation between a Person and one or more secured or unsecured creditors or debt collectors, any product, service, plan, or program represented, expressly or by implication, to:
    - a. stop, prevent, or postpone any mortgage or deed of trust foreclosure sale for a Person's dwelling, any other sale of collateral, any repossession of a Person's dwelling or

including a reduction in the amount of interest, principal balance, monthly payments, or fees owed by a Person to a secured or unsecured creditor or debt collector;

- c. obtain any forbearance or modification in the timing of payments from any secured or unsecured holder or servicer of any mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation;
- d. negotiate, obtain, or arrange any extension of the period of time within which a Person may (i) cure his or her default on the mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation, (ii) reinstate his or her mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation, (iii) redeem a dwelling or other collateral, or (iv) exercise any right to reinstate the mortgage, loan, debt, or obligation or redeem a dwelling or other collateral;
- e. obtain any waiver of an acceleration clause or balloon payment contained in any promissory note or contract secured by any dwelling









- G. the Person who will provide any product, service, plan, or program to any consumer;
- H. that any Person providing a testimonial has purchased, received, or used the product, service, plan, or program;
- I. that the experience represented in a testimonial of the product, service, plan, or program represents the Person's actual experience resulting from the use of the product, service, plan, or program under the circumstances depicted in the advertisement; or
- J. any other fact material to consumers concerning any Financial Product or Service, such as: the total costs; any material restrictions, limitations, or conditions; or any material aspect of its performance, efficacy, nature, or central characteristics.

**III. PROHIBITION AGAINST ABUSIVE TELEMARKETING PRACTICES**

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that, in connection with Telemarketing, Defendants, Defendants' officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other Persons in active concert or participation with any of them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, are permanently restrained and enjoined from engaging in, causing others to engage in, or Assisting Others engaging in, any of the following practices:

- A. Initiating any Outbound Telephone Call to any Person at a telephone number on the National Do Not Call Registry, unless Defendants prove that:

1. they have obtained the express agreement, in writing, of such Person to place calls to that Person. Such written agreement shall clearly evidence such Person's authorization that calls made by or on behalf of Defendants may be placed to that Person, and shall include the telephone number to which the calls may be placed and the signature of that Person; or
  2. Defendants have an Established Business Relationship with such Person, and that Person has not previously stated that he or she does not wish to receive Outbound Telephone Calls made by or on behalf of Defendants;
- B. Initiating any Outbound Telephone Call to a Person when that Person previously stated that he or she does not wish to receive an Outbound Telephone Call made by or on behalf of Defendants;
- C. Initiating any Outbound Telephone Call to a telephone number within a given area code when the annual fee for access to the telephone numbers within that area code that are on the National Do Not Call Registry has not been paid by or on behalf of Defendants, unless the telephone call is:
1. A solicitation to induce charitable contributions;
  2. To a business;
  3. To Persons who have given the Seller their express agreement, in writing and signed, to receive call from Defendants; or

4. To Persons who have an Established Business Relationship with Defendants.

#### **IV. MONETARY JUDGMENT**

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that:

- A. Judgment for equitable monetary relief is entered in favor of the Commission against Defendants, jointly and severally, in the amount of \$13,586,713, which is the amount of unjust enrichment caused by Defendants' conduct. As a result of the separate Stipulated Order for Permanent Injunction and Monetary Judgment between the Commission and Edward William Rennick III, Redstone Law Group LLC, and Surety Law Group LLP ("Settling Defendants"), Settling Defendants are jointly and severally liable for such monetary relief to the extent of \$8,000,000, subject to the terms and condition of the Stipulated Order. The amount owed on the Judgment by Defendants, as defined in this Final Order, shall be reduced by any amount actually recovered by the Commission from the Settling Defendants. Furthermore, the \$8,000,000 owed by the Settling Defendants, as set forth in the Stipulated Order, shall be reduced by any amount actually recovered by the Commission from the Defendants, after the Commission has recovered \$5,586,713 from Defendants.

- B. In partial satisfaction of the monetary judgment,
1. Defendants shall cooperate fully with the Liquidating Agent<sup>1</sup> and take such steps as the Liquidating Agent may require to transfer to the Liquidating Agent possession and legal and equitable title to any assets listed in Appendix A within 10 days of request by the Liquidating Agent, including executing any documents, procuring the signatures of any

for Michael W. Lanier and dated June 23, 2015, for Rogelio Robles;

- b. Defendants shall remain current on all amounts due and payable on the assets, including but not limited to tax, insurance, maintenance, and similar fees;
  - c. Defendants shall cause existing insurance coverage for the assets to remain in force until the surrender of possession and legal and equitable title and shall both notify the insurance carriers immediately of the appointment of the Liquidating Agent and request that the Liquidating Agent and Plaintiff be added to the insurance policy or policies as additional insureds thereunder.
4. Defendants shall not add any encumbrances to any assets.
  5. Until Defendants transfer possession of any real property to the Liquidating Agent, Defendants shall remain current on all amounts due and payable on the real property, including but not limited to tax, insurance, homeowner's assessments, reasonable and necessary maintenance, and similar fees.
  6. Nothing in this Order requires Defendants to pay any amount relating to or concerning the assets, including but not limited to any taxes, insurance, homeowner's assessments, maintenance, and similar fees after Defendants have vacated and transferred possession and legal and equitable title of the assets to the Liquidating Agent. The transfer of possession of the real property occurs when Defendants vacate the real property in "broom

clean condition," delivers all keys and security codes, if any, to the Liquidating Agent along with written notice that possession is surrendered, or has transferred legal and equitable title.

- C. In accordance with 31 U.S.C. § 7701, Defendants are required, unless already provided, to furnish to the Commission with his taxpayer identification number (social security number or employer identification number), which shall be used for purposes of collecting and reporting on any delinquent amount arising out of this Order.
- D. In partial satisfaction of the monetary judgment, the following frozen assets held by third parties in the name of, or for the benefit of, Defendants shall be transferred to the Commission as follows:
  - 1. Within fifteen (15) days of receiving notice of this Order, Wells Fargo Bank, its parent corporation, subsidiaries, principals, and agents shall transfer to the Commission by electronic fund transfer or certified bank or cashier's check, in accordance with instructions to be provided by the Commission, all funds in the name of, or for the benefit of, Defendants, including but not limited to:
    - a. Account No. XXXXXX , held in the name of Rogelio Robles;
    - b. Account No. XXXXXX , held in the name of Lanier Law, LLC.;
    - c. Account No. XXXXXX , held in the name of Michael W.

Lanier;

d. Account No. XXXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Liberty & Trust Law Group; and

e. Account No. XXXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Fortress Law Group LLP;

2. Within fifteen (15) days of receiving notice of this Order, Chase Bank, its parent corporation, subsidiaries, principals, and agents shall transfer to the Commission by electronic fund transfer or certified bank or cashier's check, in accordance with instructions to be provided by the Commission, all funds in the name of, or for the benefit of, Defendants, including but not limited to Account No. XXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Lanier Law LLC;

3. Within fifteen (15) days of receiving notice of this Order, VyStar Credit Union, its parent corporation, subsidiaries, principals, and agents shall transfer to the Commission by electronic fund transfer or certified bank or cashier's check, in accordance with instructions to be provided by the Commission, all funds in the name of, or for the benefit of, Defendants, including but not limited to:

a. Account No. XXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Lanier Law LLC;

b. Account No. XXXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Lanier Law LLC;



c. Account No. XXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Lanier Law LLC; and

d. Account No. XXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Lanier Law LLC.

- E. Within fifteen (15) days of receiving notice of this Order, Wells Fargo Bank, its parent corporation, subsidiaries, principals, and agents shall transfer to the Liquidating Agent by electronic fund transfer or certified bank or cashier's check, in accordance with instructions to be provided by the Liquidating Agent, all funds in Account No. XXXXX [REDACTED], held in the name of Liberty & Trust Law Group, to be used for expenses incurred prior to the payment of rents to the Liquidating Agent or prior to the obtaining of proceeds from the sale of assets;
- F. All money paid to the Commission pursuant to this Order may be deposited into a fund administered by the Commission or its designee to be used for equitable relief, including consumer redress and any attendant expenses for the administration of any redress fund. If a representative of the Commission decides that direct redress to consumers is wholly or partially impracticable or money remains after redress is completed, the Commission may apply any remaining money for such other equitable relief (including consumer information remedies) as it determines to be reasonably related to Defendants' practices alleged in the Complaint. Any money not used for such equitable relief is to be deposited to the U.S. Treasury as disgorgement. Defendants

have no right to challenge any actions the Commission or its representatives may take pursuant to this Subsection.

- G. The asset freezes imposed pursuant to the August 1, 2014 Preliminary Injunction Order (Doc. 59) and the February 6, 2015 Preliminary Injunction Order (Doc. 115) are modified only to permit the payments and transfers identified in the Monetary Judgment Section. Upon completion of those payments and transfers, the asset freezes are dissolved with regard to these Defendants.

**V. APPOINTMENT AND DUTIES OF LIQUIDATING AGENT**

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT Aaron Cohen is appointed as Liquidating Agent with all the rights and powers of an equity receiver, over the assets described in Appendix A (“the assets”).

- A. As soon as reasonably possible, the Liquidating Agent shall, at reasonable cost and in a commercially reasonable fashion, determine which assets have value and liquidate such assets. In liquidating the accounts listed in Appendix A, the Liquidating Agent shall pay any necessary brokerage fees and taxes from the proceeds. After the assets have been liquidated, the Liquidating Agent shall account for the net proceeds derived, and transfer all such net proceeds to the Commission. The Liquidating Agent shall make the transfer required by this Section by electronic fund transfer or certified or cashier's check, in accordance with instructions provided by the Commission.



as may be necessary in order to carry out his duties as Liquidating Agent and to preserve, maintain, and protect the assets;

4. to determine or abrogate, in the Liquidating Agent's sole sound business discretion, any or all agreements, contracts, understandings or commitments entered into by Defendants with respect to the assets to the extent permitted by applicable law;
5. to open new accounts with, or negotiate, compromise or otherwise modify the Defendants' existing obligations with, third parties, including utility companies, other service providers or suppliers of goods and services related to the assets, and to otherwise enter into such agreements; and
6. to apply to this Court for further directions and for such further powers as may be necessary to enable the Liquidating Agent to fulfill his duties.

- E. The Liquidating Agent shall keep a true and accurate account of any and all receipts and expenditures and periodically file with the Court a Liquidating Agent Report under oath, accurately identifying all such revenues received and expenditures made, including adequately detailed information concerning income, expenses, payables and receivables. The first report is due no later than **sixty (60) days** after the Liquidating Agent's appointment, and periodic reports are due every **sixty (60) days** thereafter. These periodic filings shall be served by the Liquidating Agent on the Commission's counsel.

- F. Defendants and their agents, employees or other representatives are enjoined from interfering in any manner with the Liquidating Agent's management and operation of the assets, and Defendants and their agents, employees or other representatives are enjoined and restrained from collecting any rents or profits which are now or hereafter become due with respect to all or any portion of the assets and from interfering in any way with the Liquidating Agent's collection of such rents or profits.
- G. The Liquidating Agent shall not be bound by all or any unsecured contracts, agreements, understandings or other commitments in the nature of service

compensation and the compensation of any Persons hired by him are to be paid solely from the assets and the proceeds of the sale of or rents from the assets, and such payments shall have priority over all other distributions except for any transfer fees, recording fees, or other payments owed through the transfer of the assets at the time of their sale.

- J. The Liquidating Agent shall file with the Court and serve on the parties a request for the payment of reasonable compensation at the time of the filing of periodic reports and no less than every **sixty (60) days**. If any Defendant objects to the amount of the request, he must file an objection within

- L. Upon the final transfer of all funds to the Commission pursuant to this Section V, the duties of the Liquidating Agent shall terminate. The Liquidating Agent shall file his final application for fees, complete liquidation, and terminate his service within 270 days of the execution of this Order, unless the Court approves an extension beyond 270 days upon a showing of good cause. At the termination of Liquidating Agent's duties, the Liquidating Agent shall transfer any unliquidated right, title, and interest in the assets at the direction of the Commission.

**VI. COOPERATION WITH THE LIQUIDATING AGENT**

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Defendants must provide to the Liquidating Agent the following:

- A. The most recent invoice or other communication received from any mortgage company or other entity holding a lien or encumbrance against any of the assets;
- B. The names of the renters occupying any of the assets and the amount of rent being paid;
- C. A copy of the leases between any of the Defendants and the renters; and
- D. A copy of any and all insurance policies existing regarding any of the assets.

**VII. CUSTOMER INFORMATION**

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendants, Defendants' officers, agents, employees, and attorneys, and all other Persons in active concert or participation with any of

them, who receive actual notice of this Order, whether acting directly or indirectly, are permanently restrained and enjoined from directly or indirectly:



- B. For 5 years after entry of this Order, each Individual Defendant for any business that such Defendant, individually or collectively with any other Defendants, is the majority owner or controls directly or indirectly, and each Corporate Defendant, must deliver a copy of this Order to: (1) all principals, officers, directors, and LLC managers and members; (2) all employees, agents, and representatives who participated in conduct related to the subject matter of this Order; and (3) any business entity resulting from any change in structure as set forth in the Section titled "Compliance Reporting." Delivery must occur within 7 days of entry of this Order for current personnel. For all others, delivery must occur before they assume their responsibilities.
- C. From each individual or entity to which a Defendant delivered a copy of this Order, that Defendant must obtain, within 30 days, a signed and dated acknowledgment of receipt of this Order and submit them to the Federal Trade Commission.

## **IX. COMPLIANCE REPORTING**

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Defendants make timely submissions to the Commission:

- A. 180 days after entry of this Order, each Defendant must submit a compliance report, sworn under penalty of perjury:
1. Each Defendant must: (a) identify the primary physical, postal, and email address and telephone number, as designated points of contact, which representatives of the Commission may use to communicate

with Defendant; (b) identify all of that Defendant's businesses by all of their names, telephone numbers, and physical, postal, email, and Internet addresses; (c) describe the activities of each business, including the goods and services offered, the means of advertising, marketing, and sales, and the involvement of any other Defendant (which each Individual Defendant must describe if they know or should know due to their own involvement); (d) describe in detail whether and how that Defendant is in compliance with each Section of this Order; and (e) provide a copy of each Order Acknowledgment obtained pursuant to this Order, unless previously submitted to the Commission.

2. Additionally, each Individual Defendant must: (a) identify all telephone numbers and all physical, postal, email and Internet addresses, including all residences; (b) identify all business activities, including any business for which such Individual Defendant performs services whether as an employee or otherwise and any entity in which such Individual Defendant has any ownership interest; and (c) describe in detail such Individual Defendant's involvement in each such



1746, such as by concluding: “I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: \_\_\_\_\_” and supplying the date, signatory’s full name, title (if applicable), and signature.

- E. Unless otherwise directed by a Commission representative in writing, all

- C. records of all consumer complaints and refund requests, whether received directly or indirectly, such as through a third party, and any response;
- D. all records necessary to demonstrate full compliance with each provision of this Order, including all submissions to the Commission; and
- E. a copy of each unique advertisement or other marketing material.



APPENDIX A

For Defendant Michael W. Lanier:

1. 2013 Dodge Charger automobile, identified in Defendant Michael W. Lanier's financial statement dated June 30, 2015;

For Defendant Rogelio Robles:

1. 2010 Chevrolet Camaro automobile, identified in Defendant Rogelio Robles's financial statement dated June 23, 2015;
2. real estate property at 883 Garris