

# NEW YORK NEWS PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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*Diane Kennedy*  
President

Albany—Times Union  
Amsterdam—The Recorder  
Auburn—The Citizen  
Batavia—The Daily News  
Binghamton—Press & Sun-Bulletin  
Buffalo—The Buffalo News  
Canandaigua—The Daily Messenger  
Catskill—The Daily Mail  
Corning—The Leader  
Cortland—Cortland Standard  
Dunkirk—The Observer  
Elmira—Star-Gazette  
Geneva—Finger Lakes Times  
Glens Falls—The Post-Star  
Gloversville—The Leader-Herald  
Herkimer—The Evening Telegram  
Hornell—The Evening Tribune  
Hudson—Register-Star  
Ithaca—The Ithaca Journal  
Jamestown—The Post-Journal  
Kingston—Daily Freeman  
Little Falls—The Evening Times  
Lockport—Union-Sun & Journal  
Long Island—Newsday  
Malone—The Malone Telegram  
Massena and Potsdam—  
Courier-Observer/The Advance News  
Medina—The Journal-Register  
Middletown—The Times Herald-Record  
New York City—The New York Times  
New York City—The Wall Street Journal  
Niagara Falls—Niagara Gazette  
Norwich—The Evening Sun  
Ogdensburg—Ogdensburg Journal  
Olean—The Times Herald  
Oneida—Oneida Daily Dispatch  
Oswego—The Palladium Times  
Plattsburgh—Press-Republican  
Poughkeepsie—Poughkeepsie Journal  
Rochester—Democrat and Chronicle  
Rochester—The Daily Record  
Rome—Daily Sentinel  
Salamanca—Salamanca Press  
Saranac Lake—Adirondack Daily  
Enterprise  
Saratoga Springs—The Saratogian  
Schenectady—The Daily Gazette  
Staten Island—Staten Island Advance  
Syracuse—The Post-Standard  
The Tonawandas—Tonawanda News  
Troy—The Record  
Utica—Observer-Dispatch  
Watertown—Watertown Daily Times  
Wellsville—Wellsville Daily Reporter  
White Plains—The Journal News

TO: NYNPA Member Publishers and Advertising Directors  
FROM: Diane Kennedy, President  
DATE: December 1, 2015  
RE: Foreclosure scam advertising alert

I am writing to enlist your help in an effort that the New York News Publishers Association (NYNPA) and the Office of the New York State Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman are jointly undertaking to combat foreclosure rescue scams which are on the rise across New York State.

Recently, I met with the Attorney General's senior staff to discuss ways in which our member newspapers can help our readers avoid falling victim to criminals who take advantage of their trust and desperation to save their homes by stealing their money, and sometimes even their homes as well. Among our industry's greatest strengths is the trust that consumers place in our publications. We know that your advertising staff do their best to weed out misleading, fraudulent or discriminatory ads as a service to your readers, and we keep you informed about categories of ads that may bear additional scrutiny.

We have learned, in our talks with the Attorney General's staff, that one of the most pervasive methods that these scammers use to target homeowners is placing advertisements in newspapers and on radio. In many cases, the originators of these ads are in violation of state and federal laws which require individuals who advertise foreclosure prevention or loan modification services to include specific disclosures in their advertisements.

For this reason we are asking our members to scrutinize ads placed by foreclosure rescue companies to ensure that they comply with state law as it relates to required disclosures (a copy of the New York statute is enclosed with this letter and the section regarding disclosures is highlighted.) While it is clear that the duty to comply with this law is placed squarely on the producers of these ads, and not the media outlets, we have an important opportunity to help curtail the spread of foreclosure rescue scams by declining to accept ads that don't include the required language.

We would also invite member newspapers to publish stories about these rescue scams in order to alert readers to the tactics they use.

Foreclosure rescue scammers take advantage of homeowners in several different ways. Many offer homeowners a much-needed loan modification, in exchange for a fee, but fail to provide any services. Others attempt to trick homeowners into signing over the title to their home or into making monthly payments to the scammer rather than the actual mortgage holder. The frequency of these scams has risen to a crisis level in New York. According to a 2014 Report from The Center for New York City Neighborhoods, homeowners in New York State are more likely to encounter loan modification scams than residents of nearly every other state and from March 2010 to September 2014, New York homeowners have submitted over 2,700 foreclosure rescue scam complaints, documenting at least \$8.25 million in losses.

In 2012, Attorney General Schneiderman launched the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP), a network of more than 85 housing counseling and legal services providers who provide free, high-quality representation to families who need help with their mortgage and who are at risk of foreclosure. To date this network of direct service providers have assisted more than 50,000 New Yorkers as they struggle to remain in their homes.

As part of a comprehensive effort to combat these scams, the Office of the Attorney General has launched a consumer education web-based app; [www.AgScamHelp.com](http://www.AgScamHelp.com). In addition to educating consumers about how to avoid these types of scams, the app directs families to the HOPP network of direct service providers, where they can connect to legitimate free-cost help. The Attorney General also sponsors a direct hotline which will connect any homeowner to a HOPP direct service provider within 48 hours (1-855-HOME-456).

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.