

325F.69 UNLAWFUL PRACTICES.

Subdivision 1. **Fraud, misrepresentation, deceptive practices.** The act, use, or employment by any person of any fraud, false pretense, false promise, misrepresentation, misleading statement or deceptive practice, with the intent that others rely thereon in connection with the sale of any merchandise, whether or not any person has in fact been misled, deceived, or damaged thereby, is enjoined as provided in section 325F.70.

Subd. 2. **Referral and chain referral selling prohibited.** (1) With respect to any sale or lease the seller or lessor may not give or offer a rebate or discount or otherwise pay or offer to pay value to the buyer or lessee as an inducement for a sale or lease in consideration of the buyer's or lessee's giving to the seller or lessor the names of prospective purchasers or lessees, or otherwise aiding the seller or lessor in making a sale or lease to another person, if the earning of the rebate, discount or other value is contingent upon the occurrence of an event subsequent to the time the buyer or lessee agrees to buy or lease.

(2)(a) With respect to any sale or lease, it shall be illegal for any seller or lessor to operate or attempt to operate any plans or operations for the disposal or distribution of property or franchise or both whereby a participant gives or agrees to give a valuable consideration for the chance to receive something of value for inducing one or more additional persons to give a valuable consideration in order to participate in the plan or operation, or for the chance to receive something of value when a person induced by the participant induces a new participant to give such valuable consideration including such plans known as chain referrals, pyramid sales, or multilevel sales distributorships.

(b) The phrase "something of value" as used in paragraph (a) above, does not mean or include payment based upon sales made to persons who are not purchasing in order to participate in the prohibited plan or operation.

(3) If a buyer or lessee is induced by a violation of this subdivision to enter into a sale or lease, the agreement is unenforceable and the buyer or lessee has the option to rescind the agreement with the seller or lessor and, upon tendering the property received, or what remains of it, obtain full or in the case of remains, a proportional restitution of all sums paid, or retain the goods delivered and the benefit of any services performed without any further obligation to pay for them.

(4) With respect to a sale or lease in violation of this section an assignee of the rights of the seller or lessor is subject to all claims and defenses of the buyer or lessee against the seller or lessor arising out of the sale or lease notwithstanding an agreement to the contrary, but the assignee's liability under this section may not exceed the amount owing to the assignee at the time the claim or defense is asserted against the assignee. Rights of the buyer or lessee under this section can only be asserted as a matter of defense to or setoff against a claim by the assignee.

(5) In a sale or lease in violation of this section, the seller or lessor may not take a negotiable instrument other than a check as evidence of the obligation of the buyer or lessee. A holder is not in good faith if the holder takes a negotiable instrument with notice that it is issued in violation of this section.

(6) Any person who violates any provision of this subdivision shall be guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

Subd. 3. **Advertising media excluded.** Sections 325F.68 to 325F.70 shall apply to actions of the owner, publisher, agent or employee of newspapers, magazines, other printed matter or radio or television stations or other advertising media used for the publication or dissemination of an advertisement, only if the owner, publisher, agent, or employee has either knowledge of the false, misleading or deceptive character of the advertisement or a financial interest in the sale or distribution of the advertised merchandise.

Subd. 4. **Solicitation of money for merchandise not ordered or services not performed.** The act, use, or employment by any person of any solicitation for payment of money by another by any statement or invoice, or any writing that could reasonably be interpreted as a statement or invoice, for merchandise not yet ordered or for services not yet performed and not yet ordered, whether or not any person has in fact been misled, deceived, or damaged thereby, is enjoined as provided in section 325F.70.

Subd. 5. **Prohibited going out of business sales.** It is illegal for any person to represent falsely that a sale is a "going out of business sale." Any representation that a sale is a "going out of business sale" is presumed to be false and illegal under this subdivision, if at that location or within a relevant market area:

(1) the sale has been represented to be a "going out of business sale" for a period of more than 120 days;

(2) the business has increased its inventory for the sale by ordering or purchasing an unusual amount of merchandise during the sale or during the 90 days before the sale began;

(3) the business, or any of its officers or directors, has advertised any other sale as a "going out of business sale" during the 120 days before this sale began; or

(4) the sale has continued after a date on which the business has represented, expressly or by reasonable implication, that the business would terminate.

Any presumption arising under clauses (1) to (4) may be rebutted if the business shows, by clear and convincing evidence, that the sale was in fact conducted in anticipation of the imminent termination of the business. This subdivision does not apply to a sale in any statutory or home rule charter city that by ordinance requires the licensing of persons conducting a "going out of business sale," nor to public officers acting in the course of their official duties.

Subd. 6. **Deceptive use of financial institution name.** No person shall include the name, trade name, logo, or tagline of a financial institution as defined in section 49.01, subdivision 2, in a written solicitation for financial services directed to a customer who has obtained a loan from the financial institution without written permission from the financial institution, unless the solicitation clearly and conspicuously states that the person is not sponsored by or affiliated with the financial institution, which shall be identified by name. This statement shall be made in close proximity to, and in the same or larger font size as, the first and most prominent use or uses of the name, trade name, logo, or tagline in the solicitation, including on an envelope or through an envelope window containing the solicitation. For purposes of this section, the term "financial institution" includes a financial institution's affiliates and subsidiaries. This subdivision shall not prohibit the use of a financial institution name, trade name, logo, or tagline of a financial institution if the use of that name is part of a fair and accurate comparison of like products or services.

History: 1963 c 842 s 2; 1969 c 739 s 1; 1969 c 1100 s 1; 1971 c 391 s 1; 1973 c 454 s 1; 1975 c 364 s 3; 1985 c 148 s 3; 1986 c 444; 2004 c 228 art 1 s 56,57; 2005 c 118 s 17