

Monthly Columns

by Attorney General Jack Conway



February 2009

Kentucky consumers can be assured that my office is continuing to investigate allegations of price gouging in the wake of January's ice storm. We have received more than 550 complaints related to gasoline prices, hotel rooms, generators, kerosene and other storm related necessities. My Office of Consumer Protection is currently investigating each complaint and sending notices to retailers to allow them to respond. If we find that these retailers were reaping excessive profits during the time of a disaster, I will take action.

Because of the extent of the storm damage across the Commonwealth, Governor Steve Beshear has extended the period for filing price-gouging complaints for another 30 days. If you suspect that you're a victim of price gouging, send us the information at icestormcomplaints@ag.ky.gov. When possible, please include digital photos or scanned copies of receipts. You may also call my office at 888-432-9257.

Cybercrimes Legislation Passes House 97-0

I am also pleased to report that we are a step closer to enacting legislation that will better protect Kentucky children from Internet predators. The Kentucky House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the cybercrimes legislation that Representative Johnny Bell and I are promoting during this legislative

session. I am hopeful that the bill will find the same bi-partisan support in the Senate.

Budget Cuts

While protecting consumers and improving cybersafety in the Commonwealth have been top priorities, I have also been tasked with maintaining the mission critical services of the Office of the Attorney General during a time of unprecedented budget cuts and a lingering economic recession.

I have joined many Kentucky families in doing some serious belt tightening. Since taking office, my budget has been cut by about 20%, taking this office back to funding levels last seen in 1999. However, I assure you our budget cuts and streamlining of operations have in no way affected our commitment to uphold the laws of the Commonwealth, pursue our priorities and protect our citizens.

The following are some of the cost savings we have realized in the Office of the Attorney General:

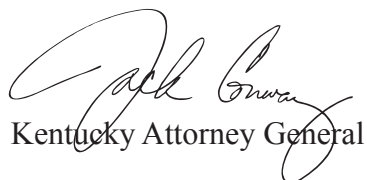
- Saved \$46,000 in rent and utilities by streamlining our divisions and obtaining free rental space for our field offices.
- Saved \$75,000 in vehicle expenses
- Saved \$50,000 in travel expenses.
- Distributed Open Records/Open Meetings materials to all elected county officials via email
- Office of the Attorney General Biennial Report will be available online rather than printed, saving \$2100.
- Completed a re-organization of the Office of the Attorney General to streamline and consolidate operations.
- Created new Cybercrimes Unit utilizing existing investigators.

Our new and improved website is also helping us realize additional cost savings. We are communicating with the media and constituents via email, my weekly blogs and our monthly newsletter, which are available at www.ag.ky.gov. Audio and video from our press conferences is uploaded to our multimedia page. Our brochures, pamphlets and other informative materials can also be found on our website. Soon, consumers will be able to fill out complaint forms and submit them electronically via our website.

We are improving services for consumers, expanding our cybersafety initiatives, forming new partnerships that will help us combat the growing prescription drug problem in Kentucky and over the next two years, we will train nearly 200 prosecutors, social workers and law enforcement to improve the

investigation and prosecution of child sexual assault cases in Kentucky.

I invite you to visit our website and see firsthand the work we're doing to protect our citizens and make Kentucky a safer place to live, work and raise a family.



Jack Conway
Kentucky Attorney General