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BEFORE THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE  
OF THE STATE OF IDAHO

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| <p>IN THE MATTER OF:</p> <p>RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM; AUTO SALES GROUP, LLC; AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC; LARRY GIBBS; DARIUS PETRONIS; and John Does 1 to 10</p> <p>Respondents.</p> | <p>Docket No. 2023-41-03</p> <p><b>ORDER TO CEASE AND DESIST<br/>and<br/>NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR A HEARING</b></p> |
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This Order arises out of a complaint received from an Idaho financial institution regarding attempted harm to one of its customers from an alleged fake RV sales business, including a fake website. The staff of the Idaho Department of Finance (Department) conducted an investigation regarding

the complaint, pursuant to its statutory authority as Idaho's financial services regulator. See Idaho Code § 67-2754 ("Powers of Director"). This order results from that investigation.

Patricia R. Perkins, Director of the Idaho Department of Finance (Director), being authorized and directed to administer and enforce the Idaho Financial Fraud Prevention Act, Idaho Code § 67-2750 *et seq.* (the Act), hereby alleges the following facts that constitute a basis for the issuance of an order pursuant to Idaho Code § 67-2755 requiring the domain/website RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM, the entities AUTO SALES GROUP, LLC and AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC, and individuals Larry Gibbs, Darius Petronis, and John Does 1 to 10 (collectively, the Respondents) to CEASE AND DESIST from violating the Act.

## I.

### **FINDING OF FACTS**

#### **Respondents**

1. RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM is a website and domain that was leased from the registrar Webnic on November 18, 2022. Webnic indicates the registering entity of the domain/website was Ronald Gist (apparently someone impersonating Ronald Gist) and the email provided was rongist@rongistrvautosales.com.

2. Auto Sales Group LLC is a business entity of currently unknown origin.

3. AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC is a Pennsylvania domestic limited liability company registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State initially on December 11, 2022, and with the listed address of 847 Cedarwood Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15235-2604, which is a personal residence.

4. Larry Gibbs is an individual believed to be residing at 847 Cedarwood Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15235-2604, and has represented himself as a Member of AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC.

5. Darius Petronis is, upon information and belief, the alias of an otherwise unidentified male, with a photograph on the RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM website that is stolen from another individual on-line.

6. John Does 1-10 are the various as yet unknown individuals orchestrating these fake RV sales frauds and wiring the stolen funds out of the country.

### **October 2023 Victims**

7. The website at RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM (“Website”) lists an address of 169 G St., Caledonia, Ohio 43314 and a phone number of 740-251-0128, and purports to be for a business called Ron Gist RV that has been operating “since 1988.”

8. On or about October 30, 2023, an individual residing in Albuquerque, New Mexico (“Victim 1”) contacted law enforcement in Marion County to report a potential fraud related to the Website.

9. Victim 1 indicated that he had attempted to purchase an RV, a 2006 Gulf Stream Endura, from the Website and from the business purporting to be Ron Gist RV. Victim 1 originally learned of the RV through a Craigslist Ad that directed him to the Website and to a corresponding Facebook page for Ron Gist RV, <https://www.facebook.com/p/Ron-Gist-RV-Auto-Sales-Inc-100070683980879/>. Victim 1 called the phone number on the Website, 740-251-0128, and spoke with a “Darius” who purported to be a sales associate for Ron Gist RV.

10. Darius sent various documents to Victim 1, including (1) a document that purported to be an Ohio title for the RV, (2) the EIN from the Internal Revenue Service for the business Ron Gist RV at 169 G. St, Caledonia, Ohio, (3) a vehicle dealer license for the business entity Ron Gist RV, and (4) a purported Carfax Vehicle History Report for the RV.

11. Victim 1 eventually agreed to purchase the RV for \$21,400, with Darius representing that the RV would be shipped/driven to Victim 1.

12. On or about October 19, 2023, Victim 1 wired the money as instructed by Darius: wiring \$21,400 from his financial institution to a bank account at Chase Bank in Mt. Gilead, Ohio. The wire instructions sent to

Victim 1 were signed by a “Darius Petronis” and stated that it was a “DBA Business Account” and listed the account beneficiary as AAAEQUIPLAG LLC, with the address 169 G. St, Caledonia, OH 43314.

13. Darius stated that the RV would be delivered on October 28, 2023. Darius provided the contact information for the delivery driver, an Erik Hernandez at 216-365-8095. On October 26th, a person purporting to be Hernandez contacted Victim 1 to claim that the RV was delayed due to mechanical issues. The RV never arrived.

### **Criminal Investigation in Ohio**

14. Law enforcement issued a subpoena to Chase Bank regarding the account that received the wired funds from Victim 1. The account documents showed that the business account for AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC was opened by a Larry Gibbs, SSN ending in 0679, on February 23, 2023, with Gibbs listed as a Member of the LLC entity, with “Articles of Organization” listed as the Primary ID Type, and with the business address listed as 847 Cedarwood Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15235-2604. The account records do not contain a copy of any identification document for Larry Gibbs or a phone number.

15. Subpoenaed bank account documents show that Larry Gibbs made a \$100 deposit into the account when he opened it on February 23, 2023, then the account sat essentially dormant until October 2023, when it received four wires and a fifth book transfer credit, for a total of \$125,200, from

October 18th-24th. The wire transfers were from persons located in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Victim 1, \$21,400), Hermitage, Tennessee (\$23,000), Tonopah, Nevada (\$29,400), and Paso Robles, California (\$26,400). The book transfer credit was from a person located in Los Angeles, California (\$25,000).

16. The bank records show that the AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC account then had three electronic withdrawals from October 19-24<sup>th</sup> of \$58,060, which withdrawals were international wire transfers to bank accounts in China and Hong Kong. The Department does not yet have additional bank records to show when the additional stolen funds were transferred out of the account and where.

17. On October 20th, Larry Gibbs withdrew \$4,000 in cash from the account and on October 24th, Larry Gibbs withdrew \$5,000 in cash from the account.

18. The victim from Paso Robles, California (Victim 2) described a similar experience. He saw an RV ad on the Autotrader website, which directed him to the RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM website. The website listed several pages of RVs, and the name of the website and business matched with records with the Ohio Secretary of State for the registered entity Ron Gist RV & Auto Sales, Inc., registered on October 26, 1988, and

still listed as “Active.” Victim 2 wired the funds and then never received the RV that was supposed to be delivered.

19. Victim 2 did some additional research and determined that the photos of the RV lot at 169 G St., Caledonia, Ohio 43314, as found on Google Earth and on Google Maps, were old. Victim 2 spoke to a local resident who confirmed that the RV lot at 169 G St., Caledonia, Ohio 43314 had discontinued business several years prior and a new business was currently under construction at that location.

20. Law enforcement contacted Ron Gist, the actual owner of Ron Gist RV & Auto Sales, Inc., who had registered that business entity in Ohio in 1988. Mr. Gist confirmed that the business was not sold and had shut down several years prior. Mr. Gist also confirmed that the Website was a fraud.

21. Law enforcement has not been able to recover the stolen funds that were transferred to the AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC account and then transferred overseas.

### **Idaho Complaint and Investigation**

22. On or about November 30, 2023, an Idaho financial institution contacted its regulator, the Department, to report an attempted fraud against its account holder (Victim 3).

23. The financial institution (Idaho FI) is an Idaho-chartered credit union.

24. Victim 3 recounted that he had seen an ad on Craigslist that directed him to the RONGISTRVAUTOSALES.COM website, with its list of RVs for sale, its numerous on-line reviews suggesting it was a legitimate business, its name that matched a business listed as “Active” on the Ohio Secretary of State’s website, and its address that matched the old location of the real Ron Gist RV business. Victim 3 called the phone number listed on the website and spoke with a person calling himself Darius.

25. Darius sent Victim 3 the same documents that he sent to the other victims: a Certificate of Good Standing from the Ohio Secretary of State for the business entity Ron Gist RV & Auto Sales, Inc., a Motor Vehicle Dealer License from the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles for Ron Gist RV, an EIN document from the IRS for Ron Gist RV, and a Carfax.

26. On or about November 22, 2023, Victim 3 signed a “State of Ohio, Department of Motor Vehicles, Ohio Vehicle Purchase Order” provided by Darius, purporting to purchase a 2006 Gulf Stream Conquest Endura, Serial Number 1GBE5U1286F418119, from Ron Gist RV & Auto Sales Inc. for \$27,400 “including shipping and taxes.” A “Darius Petronis” signed the purchase document on behalf of the purported seller.

27. Victim 3 was living in North Dakota, and Darius indicated that Eric Hernandez, at 216-365-8095, would be transporting the RV to him.



28. On November 27, 2023, Victim 3 initiated a wire transfer in the amount of \$27,400, utilizing the wire instructions provided by Darius. The wire was to send the funds from Victim 3's account at the Idaho FI to a Chase business account for the entity Auto Sales Group, LLC. Additional information about this Auto Sales Group business checking account and about the entity Auto Sales Group LLC is the subject of on-going investigation.

29. Chase, however, apparently was already aware of this account's connection to the fraud that occurred one month earlier in the account for AAAEQUIPLAG, LLC. Chase responded to the wire by sending a message to the Idaho FI that stated, "ON BEHALF OF OUR SECURITY DEPT PLEASE BE ADVISED THIS TRANSACTION DOES NOT FIT IN THE NORMAL PATTERN OF OUR CUSTOMER AND WE THEREFORE CONSIDER THIS AS SUSPICIOUS. PLEASE CHECK WITH THE REMITTER TO CONFIRM WHETHER OR NOT THIS TRANSACTION WAS INITIATED CORRECTLY AND WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS FRAUD INVOLVED. YOUR QUICK RESPONSE WOULD BE HIGHLY APPRECIATED BY US."

30. The Idaho FI (in coordination with its account holder) then did an immediate investigation. Investigators from the Idaho FI quickly determined, using a reverse search function, that the individuals listed on the purported dealer's website had photos that existed for other individuals elsewhere on the internet. Investigators also quickly uncovered that the website had numerous

reviews that had been created very recently, the website was recently registered in November of 2022, and recent photos of the business location were much different from photos of the business location in 2015, when it was filled with RVs. The Idaho FI also called Caledonia, Ohio (a village of approximately 600 people) and spoke to locals who confirmed the Ron Gist RV had shut down, Ron Gist was retired and in his mid-80s, and the people shown on the purported business website were not locals.

31. The Idaho FI concluded, “It seems that fraudsters have stolen the identity and location of a once existing small business and then fabricated a fake business with fake employees taken from unrelated web images.”

32. Fortunately, due in large part to the good work by Chase, the Idaho FI, and Ohio law enforcement, Victim 3 was able to cancel the wire transfer and Victim 3’s funds were not stolen.

## **II.**

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND VIOLATIONS**

33. The Findings of Facts above are hereby reiterated and incorporated by reference.

34. The Idaho Financial Fraud Prevention Act, Idaho Code § 67-2750 et seq., prohibits persons from engaging in certain types of fraudulent financial activity in the state of Idaho. Idaho Code § 67-2752 provides, in relevant part, that it is unlawful, for any person, directly or indirectly:

(1) To employ any device, scheme or artifice to defraud a financial institution; [or]

(2) To obtain or attempt to obtain money, funds, credits, assets, securities, or other property owned by, or under the custody or control of a financial institution by means of false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises or through the use of any fraudulent device, scheme, artifice, or fraudulent monetary instrument;

35. “Financial Institution” means any “state or federally chartered bank, savings bank, savings and loan association, thrift institution, holding company, credit union...mortgage lender, mortgage broker, or loan originator licensed under the Idaho residential mortgage practices act...and doing business in Idaho.” Idaho Code § 67-2751(4).

36. Respondents’ conduct, as set forth above related to Victim 3 and the Idaho FI, constitutes “employ[ing] any device, scheme or artifice to defraud a financial institution,” in violation of Idaho Code § 67-2752(1)

37. Respondents’ conduct, as set forth above related to Victim 3 and the Idaho FI, constitutes “attempt[ing] to obtain money, funds, credits, assets ... owned by or under the custody or control of a financial institution by means of false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises or through the use of any fraudulent device, scheme, artifice, or fraudulent monetary instrument,” in violation of Idaho Code § 67-2752(2).

### **III.**

#### **REMEDIES SOUGHT**

38. Idaho Code § 67-2755(1) provides that whenever it appears to the Director that any person has engaged or is about to engage in any act or practice constituting a violation of any provision of the Act, the Director may in his discretion “Order the person to cease and desist from the violation or attempted violation of any provision of this act, rule or order hereunder, if, in the determination of the director, it is necessary to protect any financial institution or the public, or a person is violating or is about to violate this act, or other good cause justifies the same, without prior notice to the person or opportunity for hearing.”

39. Idaho Code § 67-2755(2) further provides that, “after giving reasonable notice and opportunity for a hearing,” the Director can impose restitution, civil penalties, costs (may include reasonable attorney’s fees and reimbursement of investigative efforts), and other appropriate remedies.

#### **ORDER**

The Director, having reviewed the foregoing, and good cause being shown therefor,

THE DIRECTOR HEREBY FINDS that Respondents have violated the Idaho Financial Fraud Prevention Act, Idaho Code § 67-2750 *et seq.*, as alleged in the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law above.

THE DIRECTOR HEREBY FINDS that this Order to Cease and Desist is “necessary to protect any financial institution or the public” and “Respondents are violating or are about to violate this act,” therefore this Order to Cease and Desist is being issued without prior notice to the Respondents or prior opportunity for hearing.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

Respondents shall CEASE AND DESIST from violations of the Idaho Financial Fraud Prevention Act, including: (1) employing any device, scheme or artifice to defraud a financial institution; or (2) attempting to obtain money, funds, credits, assets, securities, or other property owned by, or under the custody or control of a financial institution by means of false or fraudulent pretenses, representations, or promises or through the use of any fraudulent device, scheme, artifice, or fraudulent monetary instrument.

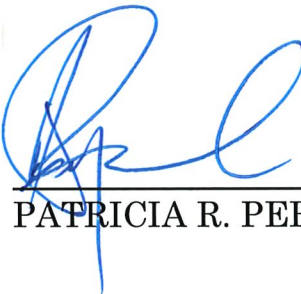
Respondents are also hereby given notice of the Director’s intent to issue a subsequent order, after Respondents’ opportunity for a hearing, that imposes a civil penalty and costs. Based on the known facts, the Director gives notice that she intends to impose (1) a \$5,000 civil penalty for the Respondents’ violation of the Act by attempting to defraud the Idaho FI (and its account holder, Victim 3) of \$27,400, and (2) costs in the amount of \$3,500 for reasonable attorney fees and investigative efforts. This civil penalty and costs would be imposed jointly and severally against all Respondents.

These sanctions are limited to the facts related to the Idaho FI and its customer, Victim 3. The Director does not believe she has jurisdiction to impose further restitution and civil penalties for the various other frauds against other victims and their financial institutions in other states, as described above.

This ORDER TO CEASE AND DESIST is effective upon its issuance.

Dated this 21<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2023.

STATE OF IDAHO  
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE



*on behalf of P.R.*

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PATRICIA R. PERKINS, Director

## **NOTICE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR A HEARING**

The Respondents shall take notice that if the Respondents wish to contest the foregoing Order to Cease and Desist ("Order"), the Respondents shall file a request for hearing within fourteen (14) days after the service of this Order. A request for a hearing must be made in writing, addressed to:

Salvador Cruz  
Financial Institutions Bureau Chief  
Idaho Department of Finance  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, Idaho 83720-0031

A copy of such request must also be served upon the Department's counsel, Loren Messerly, Deputy Attorney General, at the address listed above on the first page of the Order or via email to [loren.messerly@ag.idaho.gov](mailto:loren.messerly@ag.idaho.gov).

If a hearing is timely requested, the Director will refer the matter to the Office of Administrative Hearings, for the appointment of a hearing officer to review the matter, and such contested case hearing will be conducted pursuant to Chapter 52, Title 67, Idaho Code and the Idaho Rules of Administrative Procedure of the Attorney General (IRAP) at IDAPA 4.11.01.

If the Respondents do not timely request a hearing, then the Director has given notice that she intends to issue a subsequent, final order that is consistent with the above Order but also imposes a civil penalty and costs, as itemized and discussed in the Order.

If any Respondent requires any assistance of the kind the Department provides under the Americans with Disabilities Act (e.g. sign language interpreters, Braille copies of documents) in order to participate in or understand these proceedings, the Department will supply such reasonable assistance upon an advance request.