



SIGTARP

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR THE TROUBLED ASSET RELIEF PROGRAM

ADVANCING ECONOMIC STABILITY THROUGH TRANSPARENCY, COORDINATED OVERSIGHT AND ROBUST ENFORCEMENT

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MEDIA AGENCY OWNER SENTENCED FOR HAMP MORTGAGE MODIFICATION FALSE ADVERTISING

Commercials Generated Leads Linking Homeowners with Scammers

WASHINGTON, DC – Christy Goldsmith Romero, Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (SIGTARP), and Deirdre M. Daly, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced Thursday that Matthew Goldreich, age 46, of East Lyme, Connecticut, was sentenced to two years of probation, including three months of home confinement, for producing and disseminating false advertisements for mortgage modification services. Goldreich was also ordered to pay a \$100,000 fine and \$75,794 in restitution.

“Matthew Goldreich seized upon the financial crisis as a way to line his own pockets at the expense of homeowners desperate to save their homes,” said Christy Goldsmith Romero, Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program. “Using images of President Obama and references to the TARP bailout housing program known as HAMP, Goldreich used his marketing company to lure in unsuspecting homeowners by falsely touting in television, radio, and internet advertisements for the National Mortgage Help Center, that his company could provide mortgage relief with rate reductions as low as 1% and mortgage payments cut in half. But in reality, Goldreich was a lead generator who routed homeowners to his other clients in return for payments from these clients. Many of the clients then charged homeowners fees and provided no service whatsoever. We commend U.S. Attorney Dierdre M. Daley for standing alongside SIGTARP in efforts to root out and prosecute all TARP-related crimes, as well as law enforcement partners at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Office of the Inspector General.”

According to court documents and statements made in court, in March 2009, the U.S. Department of the Treasury created the Home Affordable Modification Program (“HAMP”), which consisted of a number of incentives to encourage struggling homeowners and financial institutions to modify existing loans on owner-occupied primary residences in order to help keep these properties out of foreclosure. Between approximately May 2009 and February 2013, Goldreich used his New London-based media agency, National Media Connection, LLC, to produce and air television, radio, and Internet advertisements for the National Mortgage Help Center, LLC (“NMHC”), a shell company incorporated by Goldreich.

The advertisements falsely claimed that NMHC could help struggling homeowners obtain home mortgage loan modifications. Many of the advertisements also falsely depicted NMHC as affiliated with the federal government, including through references to government stimulus programs and the use of President Barack Obama’s image. One advertisement that aired in 2010 stated: “Attention

homeowners. We know it's tough out there. And while America's homeowners are facing more challenges than ever before, the National Mortgage Help Center is ready to help." The same advertisement also stated: "We may be able to lower your rate to as low as 1% and cut your mortgage payment in half. Our trained specialists know all the new regulations to get you quick relief. We help thousands of homeowners every day."

The advertisements included toll-free telephone numbers for mortgage borrowers to call for help modifying their mortgages. In truth, NMHC did not provide mortgage modification services for any homeowners, and operated only as a front. Homeowners who called the toll-free telephone numbers advertised by NMHC were routed to National Media Connection's clients. The clients, in turn, paid National Media Connection for these "leads." Under the pretense of helping homeowners modify their mortgages, certain National Media Connection clients then charged the homeowners fees and provided no services whatsoever in return.

As a result of the advertisements, several struggling homeowners across the United States were defrauded by unscrupulous clients of Goldreich's media company, and some are in danger of losing their homes.

On August 13, 2015, Goldreich pleaded guilty to one count of false advertising.

This investigation is being conducted by the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program (SIGTARP), the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Office of Inspector General, and Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Avi Perry and Liam Brennan.

This prosecution was brought in coordination with President Barack Obama's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force, which was established to wage an aggressive and coordinated effort to investigate and prosecute financial crimes. SIGTARP is a member of the task force and co-chairs the Rescue Fraud Working Group. To learn more about the President's Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force, please visit www.StopFraud.gov.

About SIGTARP

The Office of the Special Inspector General for the Troubled Asset Relief Program investigates fraud, waste, and abuse in connection with TARP. To date, SIGTARP investigations have yielded more than 200 convictions and resulted in the recovery of over \$2.4 billion to the Government.

To report suspected illicit activity involving TARP, dial the **SIGTARP Hotline**: 1-877-SIG-2009 (1-877-744-2009).

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