

# KEWANEE CREDIT BUREAU

206 1/2 W. 2nd St. / PO Box 93 / Kewanee IL 61443

11-B N. Sixth St. / PO Box 305 / Pekin IL 61555

Web page: [www.kewaneecreditbureau.com](http://www.kewaneecreditbureau.com)

309-852-2574 fax: 309-852-0995

309-856-6630 fax: 309-347-1351

e-mail: [Inelson@ocslink.com](mailto:Inelson@ocslink.com)

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## FTC BANS CREDIT REPAIR CO.

The Federal Trade Commission obtained a settlement agreement with Keith Berggren and his "credit repair" company, Clear Your Credit, Inc., based in Chicago, permanently barring Berggren and his company from doing any business in connection with credit improvement services.

The agreement settles the FTC's civil contempt of court charges against Berggren and Clear Your Credit for continuing to misrepresent that they could remove negative information about bankruptcies and automobile repossessions from consumers' credit reports. Berggren admitted he violated the April 1996 consent order prohibiting him from misrepresenting credit improvement services.

Under the settlement, Berggren is also required to notify all relevant clients that they do not have to pay the amount that they still owe on contracts they entered after April 12, 1996.

The FTC first filed charges against Berggren in April 1996, as part of a case against Giving You Credit, Inc., a San Diego-based franchiser of credit repair operations. Berggren, one of the largest "independent representatives" of Giving You Credit in the country, advertised his services by placing posters on telephone poles and bus stop benches, and business cards on car windshields. (ACA Credit-Alert, June 1997)

### EXPERIAN (TRW) DEBUTS "ASK MAX"

Experian's site on the World Wide Web now includes a consumer credit advice column through which consumers can e-mail questions and have them answered via the Internet. Maxine Sweet, Experian Vice President of Consumer Education, is the "Max" behind the "Ask Max."

According to Sweet, the idea started when, after the establishment of Experian's website, consumers were asking many e-mail questions through the site. "People really seemed to want to get the information on line," said Sweet. "We recognized that we

couldn't answer every single question pouring in, so this was a good solution." Questions come in to the "Ask Max" e-mail system and are reviewed by Experian staff members. When questions are too specific to be answered in the column, for instance a question relating to a specific item on a consumer's credit report, the question is directed to a specific Experian staff member. Otherwise, the questions are categorized and the most frequently asked questions are answered in the "Ask Max" column. To visit "Ask Max," set your web browser to <http://www.experian.com> and click on the "Personal Credit Pavilion," which also includes information about credit reports and related issues. (ACB Communicator, Vol. VII, #6)

### REGIONAL SUPERMARKET CHAINS SETTLE WITH FTC FOR FCRA VIOLATION

The FTC has reached settlement with two regional grocery store chains to resolve charges that the stores misused credit reports for employment screening purposes. Batavia, IL-based Aldi, Inc., and Bruno's Inc, of Birmingham, AL, were charged with denying employment to job applicants based on information in their credit reports., but not making it clear that their failure to be hired had anything to do with their credit reports.

The FCRA mandates that when a consumer is denied credit, insurance, or employment based in whole or in part on information in his or her credit report, the denying company must notify the consumer that the report played a role in the denial. The company must also give the consumer the name and address of the credit reporting agency that supplied the report, giving the consumer a chance to review the report. (ACB Communicator, June 1997)

### OUTSTANDING CONSUMER INSTALLMENT CREDIT CONTINUES TO CLIMB

There was \$1,212 trillion outstanding in March 1997 compared to \$1,210 trillion in Feb. 1997 and \$1,133 trillion in March 1996.

### KEWANEE CREDIT BUREAU HOURS

Monday - Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm  
Kewanee office: 206 1/2 W Second  
Pekin office: 11-B N 6th Street