



# News Release

Attorney General Robert E. Cooper, Jr.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STATE FILED LAWSUIT AGAINST BUSINESS OWNER ALLEGED TO HAVE ENGAGED  
IN UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW, VIOLATIONS OF STATE'S CONSUMER LAW**

The State has filed suit against a woman alleged to be engaging in legal services without a license, Tennessee Attorney General Bob Cooper and Commerce and Insurance (TDCI) Division of Consumer Affairs Director Gary Cordell announced today. Today's announcement is part of a national immigration services initiative by state Attorneys General and the Federal Trade Commission.

Martha Salazar, doing business as Comunidad Hispana on Nolensville Road, is named in the lawsuit, alleging she is providing legal services without being licensed as an attorney. The State alleges that she has prepared immigration petitions, custody agreements and contracts and provided other legal services for primarily Spanish-speaking consumers. Salazar is not licensed as an attorney, nor has she worked under the supervision of an attorney, and therefore she is not authorized to engage in the practice of law, the lawsuit contends.

The complaint alleges Salazar has advertised the services of "notario publico" without the legally required notice that a notary public is not a lawyer. In many Spanish-speaking countries, notarios publicos are civil-law notaries, and are highly trained, licensed practitioners providing a full range of regulated legal services. The translation of "notary public" in the United States causes substantial confusion, providing the opportunity to mislead consumers regarding the qualifications of a notary public to provide legal services.

"Providing unlicensed legal services can be very serious and often results in legal problems that are difficult, if not impossible, to repair," Attorney General Cooper said, "My Office will do everything we legally can do to stop anyone in Tennessee from being exploited through misunderstandings caused by language or culture."

Today's action is part of an on-going initiative by the attorney general's office on UPL and problems related to immigration and other services targeting the immigrant community. For more information on recent similar cases, go:

<http://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/upl/uplfilings.html>

It is unknown at this time how many people may have purchased services from Martha Salazar. Cordell said "Consumers who paid Martha Salazar or Comunidad Hispana for legal services should contact the Division of Consumer Affairs at 615-741-4737 or toll-free within Tennessee at 1-800-342-8385 as soon as possible." Consumers who have complaints about any individuals or businesses engaged in unfair or deceptive trade practices should contact Consumer Affairs at either of the numbers listed above. Complaints also may be filed online at

<http://tn.gov/consumer/consCompFrm.shtml>.

If you know of an individual or company that may be practicing law without a license, please file a complaint with this Office by downloading a complaint form from <http://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/upl/uplcomplaint.pdf> and mailing it back to this Office at:

Tennessee Attorney General's Office  
Consumer Advocate and Protection Division  
Attn: UPL Complaint  
P.O. Box 20207  
Nashville, TN 37202-0207

The State also encourages Tennesseans in need of an attorney to confirm the attorney is in good standing and licensed to practice law in the state of Tennessee by contacting the Board of Professional Responsibility at 615-361-7500. You can also call that number to file a complaint about a licensed attorney.

The lawsuit is pending in Davidson County Circuit Court. To see a copy of the State's filings, go to: <http://www.tn.gov/attorneygeneral/recentfilings.html>.