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NEWS RELEASE

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## **Dating Websites Ordered to Pay Back Customers for Automatic Renewal Subscriptions**

Dating websites owned by Spark Networks USA, LLC, such as Christian Mingle and Jdate, have been ordered to pay up to \$985,000 in restitution to customers whose subscriptions were automatically renewed or who were denied refunds when requested, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced today.

A task force of local prosecutors including the District Attorney's Office and led by the Santa Monica City Attorney's Office, found that the company's dating sites were automatically renewing customer payments, without their express prior consent as required by federal and state law, among other alleged violations of law.

Under a judgement negotiated with Spark Networks and signed today in Santa Monica Superior Court, the company was fined \$500,000 in penalties and was ordered to have full transparency with consumers about automatically-renewing memberships. Jdate, Christian Mingle and their other dating sites now must:

- Clearly and conspicuously disclose the renewal terms;
- Get consumers' consent, through a separate check-box (or similar mechanism) that does not include other terms and conditions;
- Send a clear summary of the renewal terms after consumers pay; and
- Allow consumers to cancel easily.

Online "subscriptions" and other automatically recurring charges often come after "free trials," where consumers need to cancel in time to avoid the charges.

Federal and state law requires businesses to make these auto-renewals clear to consumers, and to get their "express, affirmative consent" – before they collect any money.

The California Auto Renewal Task Force (CART) investigates businesses to look for violations of California and Federal statutes regulating auto renewal contracts. The members of CART also include the district attorneys of San Diego, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties.

### **[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.