



Office of the Attorney General

Consumer Protection Unit

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Contact: Consumer Protection Unit
(307) 777-6397
ag.consumer@wyo.gov

33 Attorneys General Urge Online Marketplace Platforms to Protect Consumers from Price Gouging

Cheyenne, Wyoming — Today, Attorney General Hill joined a letter with 32 Attorneys General, urging Amazon, Facebook, Ebay, Walmart, and Craigslist to rigorously monitor price gouging practices by online sellers using their services.

“We want the business community and American consumers to know that we endeavor to balance the twin imperatives of commerce and consumer protection in the marketplace,” said the coalition of Attorneys General in its letter. “And, while we appreciate reports of the efforts made by platforms and online retailers to crack down on price gouging as the American community faces an unprecedented public health crisis, we are calling on you to do more at a time that requires national unity.”

The letter lists several examples of price-gouging on these marketplace platforms, all of which took place in March: on Craigslist, a two-liter bottle of hand sanitizer was being sold for \$250; on Facebook Marketplace, an eight-ounce bottle was being sold for \$40; and on Ebay, packs of face masks were being sold for \$40 and \$50.

The 33 Attorneys General recommend several changes to protect consumers from price gouging:

- **Set policies and enforce restrictions on unconscionable price gouging during emergencies:** Online retail platforms should prevent unconscionable price increases from occurring by creating and enforcing strong policies that prevent sellers from deviating in any significant way from the product’s price before an emergency. Such policies should examine historical seller prices, and the price offered by other sellers of the same or similar products, to identify and eliminate price gouging.

- **Trigger price gouging protections prior to an emergency declaration**, such as when your systems detect conditions like pending weather events or future possible health risks.
- **Implement a complaint portal** for consumers to report potential price gouging.

“My office is actively monitoring Wyoming’s marketplace for unlawful attempts to exploit this public health emergency,” commented Attorney General Hill. She encourages Wyomingites to report coronavirus-related price gouging and false marketing to the Consumer Protection Unit by telephone (307-777-6397) or email (ag.consumer@wyo.gov).

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