

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BEFORE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS:
Robert Pitofsky, Chairman
Mary L. Azcuenaga
Sheila F. Anthony
Mozelle W. Thompson
Orson Swindle

In The Matter of

FRANK BOMMARITO OLDSMOBILE, INC., a corporation, and FRANK J. BOMMARITO,
individually and as an officer of the corporation.

DOCKET NO. C-3774
DECISION AND ORDER

The Federal Trade Commission having initiated an investigation of certain acts and practices of the respondents named in the caption hereof, and the respondents having been furnished thereafter with a copy of a draft of complaint which the Bureau of Consumer Protection proposed to present to the Commission for its consideration and which, if issued by the Commission, would charge the respondents with violation of the Federal Trade Commission Act, the Consumer Leasing Act and its implementing Regulation M, and the Truth in Lending Act and its implementing Regulation Z; and

The respondents, their attorneys, and counsel for the Commission having thereafter executed an agreement containing a consent order, an admission by the respondents of all the jurisdictional facts set forth in the aforesaid draft of complaint, a statement that the signing of said agreement is for settlement purposes only and does not constitute an admission by the respondents that the law has been violated as alleged in such complaint, or that the facts as alleged in such complaint, other than jurisdictional facts, are true and waivers and other provisions as required by the Commission's Rules; and

The Commission having thereafter considered the matter and having determined that it had reason to believe that the respondents have violated the said Acts and Regulations, and that a complaint should issue stating its charges in that respect, and having thereupon accepted the executed consent agreement and placed such agreement on the public record for a period of sixty (60) days, now in further conformity with the procedure prescribed in Section 2.34 of its Rules, the Commission hereby issues its complaint, makes the following jurisdictional findings and enters the following order:

1. Respondent Frank Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc. is a Delaware corporation with its principal office or place of business at 15736 Manchester Road, Ballwin, Missouri 63011.

2. Respondent Frank J. Bommarito is an officer of the corporate respondent. His principal office or place of business is the same as that of Frank Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc.

3. The Federal Trade Commission has jurisdiction of the subject matter of this proceeding and of the respondents, and the proceeding is in the public interest.

ORDER DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this order, the following definitions shall apply:

"Clearly and conspicuously" shall mean as follows:

1. In a television or video advertisement, the audio disclosure shall be delivered in a volume and cadence sufficient for an ordinary consumer to hear and comprehend it. The video disclosure shall be of a size and shade, and shall appear on the screen for a duration, sufficient for an ordinary consumer to read and comprehend it.
2. In a print advertisement, the disclosure shall be in a type size, location, and in print that contrasts with the background against which it appears, sufficient for an ordinary consumer to notice, read, and comprehend it.
3. In a radio advertisement, the disclosure shall be delivered in a volume and cadence sufficient for an ordinary consumer to hear and comprehend it.

Nothing contrary to, inconsistent with, or in mitigation of the disclosure shall be used in any advertisement.

"Equal prominence" shall mean as follows:

1. In a television or video advertisement, the video disclosure shall be presented in the same or similar format, including but not necessarily limited to type size, shade, contrast, duration, and placement. The audio disclosure shall be delivered in the same or similar manner, including but not necessarily limited to volume, cadence, pace, and placement.
2. In a print advertisement, the disclosure shall be presented in the same or similar format, including but not necessarily limited to type size, shade, contrast, and placement.
3. In a radio advertisement, the disclosure shall be delivered in the same or similar manner, including but not necessarily limited to volume, cadence, pace, and placement.

Nothing contrary to, inconsistent with, or in mitigation of the disclosure shall be used in any advertisement.

4. "Total amount due at lease inception" shall mean the total amount of any initial payments required to be paid by the lessee on or before consummation of the lease or delivery of the vehicle, whichever is later.
5. "Commerce" shall mean as defined in Section 4 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 44.

6. Unless otherwise specified, "respondents" shall mean Frank Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc., a corporation, its successors and assigns and its officers; Frank J. Bommarito, individually and as an officer of the corporation; and each of the above's agents, representatives, and employees.

I.

IT IS ORDERED that respondents, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or any other device, in connection with any advertisement to promote, directly or indirectly, any consumer lease in or affecting commerce, as "advertisement" and "consumer lease" are defined in Section 213.2 of Regulation M, 12 C.F.R. § 213.2, as amended, shall not, in any manner, expressly or by implication:

1. Misrepresent the costs of leasing a vehicle, including but not necessarily limited to the total amount due at lease inception.
2. State any amount due at lease inception (or that no such amount is required), except for the statement of a periodic payment, unless the advertisement also states with equal prominence the total amount due at lease inception.
3. State the amount of any payment, the number of required payments, or that any or no downpayment or other payment is required at consummation of the lease unless all of the following items are disclosed, clearly and conspicuously, as required by Regulation M, as amended:

- (1) that the transaction advertised is a lease;
- (2) the total amount of any payment such as a security deposit or capitalized cost reduction required at the consummation of the lease, or that no such payments are required;
- (3) the number, amounts, due dates or periods of scheduled payments, and the total of such payments under the lease;
- (4) a statement of whether or not the lessee has the option to purchase the leased property and at what price and time (the method of determining the price may be substituted for disclosure of the price); and
- (5) a statement of the amount or method of determining the amount of any liabilities the lease imposes upon the lessee at the end of the term and a statement that the lessee shall be liable for the difference, if any, between the estimated value of the leased property and its realized value at the end of the lease term, if the lessee has such liability.

For all lease advertisements, respondents may comply with the requirements of this subparagraph by utilizing Section 184(a) of the Consumer Leasing Act ("CLA"), 15 U.S.C. § 1667c(a), as amended by Title II, Section 2605 of the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1997, Pub. L. No. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009, 3009-473 (Sept. 30, 1996) (to be codified at 15 U.S.C. § 1667c(a))("Section 184(a) of the revised CLA"), as amended, or by utilizing Section 213.7(d) of revised Regulation M, 61 Fed. Reg. 52246, 52261 (October 7, 1996) and 62 Fed. Reg. 15364, 15368 (Apr. 1, 1997) (to be codified at 12 C.F.R. § 213.7(d)) ("revised

Regulation M"), as amended. For radio lease advertisements, respondents may also comply with the requirements of this subparagraph by utilizing Section 184(b) of the CLA, 15 U.S.C. § 1667c(b), as amended by Title II, Section 2605 of the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1997, Pub. L. No. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009, 3009-473 (Sept. 30, 1996)(to be codified at 15 U.S.C. § 1667c(c))("Section 184(c) of the revised CLA"), as amended, or by utilizing Section 213.7(f) of revised Regulation M (to be codified at 12 C.F.R. § 213.7(f)), as amended. For television lease advertisements, respondents may also comply with the requirements of this subparagraph by utilizing Section 213.7(f) of revised Regulation M, as amended.

Fail to comply in any other respect with Regulation M, 12 C.F.R. § 213, as amended, and the CLA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1667-1667e, as amended. Respondents may comply with the requirements of this subparagraph regarding Regulation M by utilizing revised Regulation M, 61 Fed. Reg. 52246 (Oct. 7, 1996) and 62 Fed. Reg. 15364 (Apr. 1, 1997) (to be codified at 12 C.F.R. § 213), as amended.

II.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondents, directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or any other device, in connection with any advertisement to promote, directly or indirectly, any extension of consumer credit in or affecting commerce, as "advertisement" and "consumer credit" are defined in Section 226.2 of Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.2, as amended, shall not, in any manner, expressly or by implication:

A. Misrepresent the terms of financing a vehicle, including but not necessarily limited to the amount of any balloon payment.

B. State the amount of any payment or the amount or percentage of any downpayment or amount "down" in any advertisement unless respondents state the amount of any final balloon payment prominently and in close proximity to the most prominent of the above statements.

C. State the amount or percentage of any downpayment, the number of payments or period of repayment, the amount of any payment, or the amount of any finance charge, without disclosing clearly and conspicuously all of the terms required by Section 144 of the Truth in Lending Act ("TILA"), 15 U.S.C. § 1664, as amended, and Section 226.24(c) of Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.24(c), as amended, as more fully set out in Section 226.24(c) of the Federal Reserve Board's Official Staff Commentary to Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.24(c), as amended, as follows:

1. the amount or percentage of the downpayment;
2. the terms of repayment, including but not necessarily limited to the amount of any balloon payment; and
3. the annual percentage rate, using that term or the abbreviation "APR." If the annual percentage rate may be increased after consummation of the credit transaction, that fact must also be disclosed.

D. Fail to comply in any other respect with Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226, as amended, and the TILA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1601-1667, as amended.

III.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc., and its successors and assigns, and respondent Frank J. Bommarito shall, for five (5) years after the last date of dissemination of any representation covered by this order, maintain and upon request make available to the Federal Trade Commission for inspection and copying all records that will demonstrate compliance with the requirements of this order.

IV.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc., and its successors and assigns, and respondent Frank J. Bommarito shall deliver a copy of this order to all current and future principals, officers, directors, and managers, and to all current and future employees, agents, and representatives having responsibilities with respect to the subject matter of this order, and shall secure from each such person a signed and dated statement acknowledging receipt of the order. Respondents shall deliver this order to such current personnel within thirty (30) days after the date of service of this order, and to such future personnel within thirty (30) days after the person assumes such position or responsibilities.

V.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Frank Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc., and its successors and assigns, shall notify the Commission at least thirty (30) days prior to any change in the corporation that may affect compliance obligations arising under this order, including but not necessarily limited to a dissolution, assignment, sale, merger, or other action that would result in the emergence of a successor corporation; the creation or dissolution of a subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this order; the proposed filing of a bankruptcy petition; or a change in the corporate name or address. Provided, however, that, with respect to any proposed change in the corporation about which respondent learns less than thirty (30) days prior to the date such action is to take place, respondent shall notify the Commission as soon as is practicable after obtaining such knowledge. All notices required by this Part shall be sent by certified mail to the Associate Director, Division of Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

VI.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Frank J. Bommarito, for a period of ten (10) years after the date of issuance of this order, shall notify the Commission of the discontinuance of his current business or employment, or of his affiliation with any new business or employment involving the advertising and/or extension of a "consumer lease," as that term is defined in the CLA and its implementing Regulation M, or the advertising and/or extension of "consumer credit," as that term is defined in the TILA and its implementing Regulation Z. The notice shall include respondent's new business address and telephone number and a description of the nature

of the business or employment and his duties and responsibilities. All notices required by this Part shall be sent by certified mail to the Associate Director, Division of Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

VII.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent Bommarito Oldsmobile, Inc., and its successors and assigns, and respondent Frank J. Bommarito shall, within sixty (60) days after the date of service of this order, and at such other times as the Federal Trade Commission may require, file with the Commission a report, in writing, setting forth in detail the manner and form in which they have complied with this order.

VIII.

This order will terminate on January 5, 2018, or twenty (20) years from the most recent date that the United States or the Federal Trade Commission files a complaint (with or without an accompanying consent decree) in federal court alleging any violation of the order, whichever comes later; provided, however, that the filing of such a complaint will not affect the duration of:

1. Any Part in this order that terminates in less than twenty (20) years;
2. This order's application to any respondent that is not named as a defendant in such complaint; and
3. This order if such complaint is filed after the order has terminated pursuant to this Part.

Provided, further, that if such complaint is dismissed or a federal court rules that the respondent did not violate any provision of the order, and the dismissal or ruling is either not appealed or upheld on appeal, then the order will terminate according to this Part as though the complaint had never been filed, except that the order will not terminate between the date such complaint is filed and the later of the deadline for appealing such dismissal or ruling and the date such dismissal or ruling is upheld on appeal.

By the Commission, Commissioner Thompson and Commissioner Swindle not participating.

Donald S. Clark
Secretary

SEAL

ISSUED: January 5, 1998