

NORTH DAKOTA JOINS BIPARTISAN MULTISTATE LAWSUITS AGAINST GOOGLE

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Bismarck, ND – Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem joined a bipartisan coalition of states in two antitrust lawsuits against Google.

The first lawsuit (</sites/ag/files/documents/MediaAttachments/2020-12-16-Complaint-Google.pdf>), filed by the states in US District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, alleges that Google engaged in false, misleading and deceptive acts while selling, buying and auctioning online display ads. Google’s monopolization of online display advertising includes an anticompetitive agreement with Facebook, misrepresenting customers, suppressing competition and harming consumers, in violation of antitrust and consumer protection laws.

“Google’s enormous size has given it the ability to stifle competition and the power to control the online advertising marketplace. Google also misrepresented to consumers that it would never sell user’s personal information, but its entire business model involves the purchase and sale of advertisements targeted to individual users based on their personal information,” said Stenehjem.

North Dakota and 37 states filed a second lawsuit (</sites/ag/files/documents/MediaAttachments/2020-12-17-Complaint-Google.pdf>) against Google in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, in support of allegations recently filed by a number of states and the United States Department of Justice regarding Google’s control of search engines, which also alleges a broader range of illegal conduct by Google.

Google pays billions of dollars annually to phone manufacturers to have Google products such as Chrome and Google Search as the device’s default, and to require that Google products are preinstalled in a way that consumers cannot uninstall or delete them. As a result, Google controls almost 90 percent of all search engine queries and almost 95% of queries using mobile devices, effectively ensuring that competitors cannot easily gain a meaningful share of the market and consumers have few alternatives to Google products.

The states also allege that Google has attempted to stifle the emergence of next generation search platforms, operates to limit the viability of competing search engines, and uses its position as a gatekeeper to the internet to throttle consumers from going directly to specialized sites such as Yelp, HomeAdvisor, or Expedia.

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