



CITY OF OAKLAND  
**newsrelease**  
Office of the City Attorney

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **City of Oakland Sues Fraudulent Immigration Consultants for Ripping Off Families**

OAKLAND, CA – On Thursday, January 28, Oakland City Attorney John Russo announced a lawsuit against an outlaw company that has swindled thousands of dollars from multiple Oakland families.

At the same time, Russo announced an upcoming immigration workshop that will include private consultations with immigration attorneys and training on how to avoid fraud – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, February 27 at Oakland City Hall.

The lawsuit filed Thursday by the City Attorney's Neighborhood Law Corps seeks to stop a local company called American Legal Services from defrauding families who are seeking legal residency in the country.

American Legal Services holds itself out as a law office, although none of its employees are attorneys. Evidence shows that the company has repeatedly defrauded Oakland families by making false promises of citizenship and charging exorbitant fees up front. Once they have their victims' money, the outfit routinely acts against the interests of those seeking help by giving false legal advice and botching immigration applications – in some cases resulting in deportation proceedings.

"This company is acting as an outright menace to the Oakland families who come to them seeking help," City Attorney Russo said. "They have tricked people by pretending to be lawyers, making false promises and charging thousands of dollars up front – in some cases, the life savings of the victims. With this lawsuit, we intend to prevent them from breaking the law and force them to pay back the families they have swindled."

The lawsuit seeks restitution and damages of at least \$150,000 for a group of six victims and civil penalties of at least \$8.2 million for violations of the state Immigration Consultants Act and the California Penal Code.

Based on evidence gathered by the City Attorney's Office, victims of this type of scam in Oakland could number in the hundreds.

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