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11	Los Angeles, CA 90024		
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13	ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION		
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15	UNITED STATI CENTRAL DISTI	ES DISTRICT COURT RICT OF CALIFORNIA	
16			
17	FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION,	CIVIL NO.	
18	Plaintiff,	SACV 00-964 DOC (EEx)	
19	V.		
20	FIRST ALLIANCE MORTGAGE		
21 22	COMPANY, a California corporation, FIRST ALLIANCE CORPORATION,	THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION'S SECOND	
23	a Delaware c <b>orporation, and FIRST</b> ALLIANCE MORTGAGE	AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTIVE AND	
23 24	COMPANY, a Minnesota corporation, and BRIAN CHISICK,	OTHER EQUITABLE RELIEF	
25 <sup>,</sup>	Defendants, and		
26	SARAH CHISICK,		
_	Relief Defendant.		

Plaintiff, the Federal Trade Commission ("Commission"), by its undersigned attorneys, alleges as follows:

### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 1. This is an action under Sections 5(a) and 13(b) of the Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act"), 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a) and 53(b), to secure permanent injunctive relief and other equitable relief, including rescission, reformation, redress and disgorgement, against defendants for engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices in violation of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, as amended, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), and acts or practices in violation of the Truth in Lending Act's ("TILA") implementing Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226, as amended.
- 2. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a), 53(b), 1607(c), and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331,1337(a) and 1345.
- 3. Venue is proper in the United States District Court for the Central District of California under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b) and (c), and 15 U.S.C. § 53(b).

#### **PARTIES**

- 4. Plaintiff, the Commission, is an independent agency of the United States Government created and given statutory authority and responsibility by the FTC Act, as amended, 15 U.S.C. §§ 41-58. The Commission is charged with enforcing Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), which prohibits unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce, and Section 108(c) of the TILA, 15 U.S.C. § 1607(c). The Commission is authorized by Section 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), to initiate federal district court proceedings to enjoin violations of the FTC Act and to secure such equitable relief as may be appropriate in each case including, but not limited to, redress and disgorgement.
- 5. First Alliance Mortgage Company is a California corporation with its principal place of business at 17305 Von Karman Avenue in Irvine, California ("FAMCO"). FAMCO transacts business in this District.

6. First Alliance Corporation ("FACO") is a publicly traded Delaware corporation with its principal place of business at 17305 Von Karman Avenue in Irvine, California. FACO has a one hundred percent ownership interest in FAMCO. FACO transacts business in this District.

- 7. In July of 1997, FAMCO created a wholly-owned subsidiary Minnesota corporation of the same name, First Alliance Mortgage Company ("FAMCO-MN"). FAMCO-MN has its principal place of business at 7900 Xerxes Avenue in Bloomington, Minnesota. FAMCO-MN transacts business in this District.
- **8.** The foregoing defendant corporations operate together as part of a common enterprise (hereinafter, "First Alliance").
- 9. Brian Chisick ("Chisick") has been chairman of the board of directors and chief executive officer of FACO and its subsidiaries since February 2000. From June 1996 to February 2000, Chisick served as chairman, chief executive officer and president of FACO and its subsidiaries. From 1971 to June 1996, he served as chairman of the board of directors, chief executive officer and president of FAMCO. Individually or in concert with others, he directs, controls, formulates or participates in the acts and practices set forth herein. He resides, transacts or has transacted business in this district.
- 10. Relief defendant Sarah Chisick is the spouse of defendant Brian Chisick. Individually or jointly with her spouse Brian Chisick, she has received funds and other property, that were derived unlawfully from payments by consumers as a consequence of the acts and practices complained of herein and she does not have a legitimate claim to those funds.
- 11. On March 23,2000, FAMCO, FACO and FAMCO-MN each filed a voluntary petition for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the United States Bankruptcy Court, Central District of California, Case Nos. **SA** 00-12370-LR, SA 00-12371-LR and SA 00-12372-LR, respectively.

12. First Alliance has disseminated advertisements to the public that promote consumer credit transactions, as the terms "advertisement" and "consumer credit," are defined in Section 226.2 of Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.2, as amended.

13. First Alliance is a "creditor" offering and extending "closed-end credit," as those terms are defined in Section 226.2 of Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.2, as amended, and therefore is required to comply with applicable provisions in Regulation Z.

#### FIRST ALLIANCE'S BUSINESS PRACTICES

- 14. First Alliance advertises, offers, extends and sells home equity loans. These loans are primarily secured by first mortgages on consumers' homes.
- 15. First Alliance styles itself a niche lender catering to the "subprime" loan market. Its customers include homeowners with poor or insufficient credit histories, records, or ratings who might experience difficulty securing conventional home equity financing.
- 16. First Alliance charges consumers substantial prepaid finance charges, such as loan origination fees, underwriting fees, loan processing fees and other fees. These charges typically total between ten and twenty-five percent of the amount financed.
- 17. First Alliance solicits prospective customers for its products and services through telemarketing and direct mail advertising. As part of its marketing campaign, First Alliance targets financially vulnerable consumers including elderly persons and individuals who have significant equity in their homes. In its solicitations, First Alliance states that the consumer has been "pre-qualified to receive up to" some amount of money, such as \$82,500. *See* Exhibits 1 through 3. These solicitations tout the benefits of obtaining a First Alliance loan, such as "NO APPLICATION FEES," "NO UP-FRONT APPRAISAL FEES," "LOW RATES" and "LOW PAYMENTS." See Exhibits 1 through 3. Other solicitations state that one of the benefits of a First Alliance loan is that there are "NO OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES." *See* Exhibits 1 and 3. A certain solicitation offers consumers benefits relative to their current loans,

 such as "Lower Interest Rates," "Lower Monthly Payments" and "Tax Savings Benefits." See Exhibit 2. One solicitation states that consumers will "SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS" and "SAVE \$500" by refinancing their debt with First Alliance. See Exhibit 3.

#### **Sales Presentation**

- 18. First Alliance requires its loan officers to attend an intensive training course where they are taught to memorize and deliver First Alliance's lengthy sales presentation, known as "the Track." The Track presentation consists of thirteen steps and usually takes more than two hours to present to consumers.
- 19. The Track presentation contains false or misleading statements that cause consumers to be deceived about the material terms of the loan, and misleads consumers about the meaning of the material information used in the TILA disclosure as required by Section 128 of the TILA, 15 U.S.C § 1638, and Section 226.18 of Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.18, ("TILA disclosure statement"). For example, one of the material disclosures that is deceptively used by First Alliance is the "amount financed" for the loan. First Alliance misrepresents that the amount financed, appearing on the TILA disclosure statement, is the total amount of money that consumers borrow. In fact, the total amount that consumers borrow, and upon which interest accrues, is the amount financed plus the substantial prepaid finance charges imposed by First Alliance.
- 20. First Alliance also misleads consumers about costs and fees, such as the existence and amount of loan origination fees. Such misrepresentations obscure the existence of these costs and fees and misrepresent the true amount of debt consumers will incur.
- 21. In addition, First Alliance loan officers are trained to, and do, mislead consumers by stating or implying that the total cost of credit for the loan is the interest rate displayed on the loan note and mortgage and not the "annual percentage rate" ("APR") displayed on the TILA disclosure statement. In fact, the APR, and not the interest rate on the loan, measures the total cost of credit, and for this reason is an

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important indicator to consumers that the lender is including substantial prepaid charges.

## Adjustable Rate Mortgage Loans

- 22. The majority of First Alliance's borrowers obtain **an** adjustable rate mortgage ("ARM") based on a six-month U.S. dollar "LIBOR" index, which is the acronym for the London InterBank Offered Rate.
- 23. The terms of the ARM loans include short-term front-end "teaser" interest rates. The teaser interest rate only applies for the first six months of the loan (the "teaser period"). The teaser rate is then phased out through several rate increases, until the rate reaches the "fully indexed rate" the LIBOR index rate plus a fixed number of percentage points (the "margin").
- 24. First Alliance misrepresents how the interest rates on its ARM loans adjust over time, falsely representing that adjustments in the interest rates are based on changes in the LIBOR index. In fact, the interest rate on these loans can, and does, increase as much as one percentage point at every six month adjustment period until the "artificial discount" (the difference between the teaser interest rate and the LIBOR index plus the margin) disappears. This results in higher interest rates and higher monthly payments for consumers.
- 25. The acts and practices of First Alliance alleged in this Complaint have been in or affecting commerce, as "commerce" is defined in Section 4 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. \$44.

## FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ACT VIOLATIONS

## **Count I: Failure to Substantiate Cost Savings**

- 26. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- 27. In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, and in credit advertisements, including but not necessarily limited to Exhibit 3, First Alliance has represented, expressly or by implication, that consumers will save money when consolidating debts. First Alliance did not possess and rely upon a reasonable basis

that substantiates the representation at the time it was made.

28. First Alliance's practices constitute deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C.  $\S$  45(a).

## **Count 11: Misrepresentation of the Terms of the ARM Loans**

- 29. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- 30. In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, First Alliance has represented, expressly or by implication, that adjustments in the interest rate on its ARM loans are based entirely on changes in the LIBOR index and that, over the course of the loan, the interest rate can be lower than the initial teaser rate.
- 31. In truth and in fact, adjustments in the interest rate on First Alliance's ARM loans are not based entirely on changes in the LIBOR index, and over the course of the loan the interest rate cannot be lower than the initial teaser rate. The initial teaser interest rate automatically increases as much as one percentage point every six months until the artificial discount disappears, and the lowest the interest rate can be is the initial teaser interest rate, regardless of any decrease in the LIBOR index. Therefore, First Alliance's representation as alleged in paragraph 30, was, and is, false or misleading.
- 32. First Alliance's practices constitute deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

## **Count 111: Misrepresentation of the Monthly Payments**

- 33. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- 34. In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, First Alliance has represented, expressly or by implication, that the initial monthly payment on its ARM loans will not increase unless the LIBOR index increases.
- 35. In truth and in fact, the initial monthly payment on First Alliance's **ARM** loans will increase even if the LIBOR index does not. The initial monthly payment will

increase at every six-month adjustment period until the artificial discount disappears, regardless of whether the LIBOR index increases. Therefore, First Alliance's representation as alleged in paragraph 34, was, and is, false or misleading.

**36.** First Alliance's practices constitute deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

## **Count IV: Misrepresentation of Loan Origination Fees**

- 37. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- **38.** In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, First Alliance has represented, expressly or by implication, that it does not impose loan origination fees.
- 39. In truth and in fact, First Alliance imposes loan origination fees on the vast majority, if not all, of its loans. Therefore, First Alliance's representation as alleged in paragraph 38, was, and is, false or misleading.
- 40. First Alliance's practices constitute deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

## **Count V: Misrepresentation of the Amount Borrowed**

- 41. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- 42. In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, First Alliance has represented, expressly or by implication, that the total amount that consumers borrow on its loans, and upon which interest accrues, is the amount financed, which appears on the TILA disclosure statement.
- 43. In truth and in fact, the total amount that consumers borrow on its loans, and upon which interest accrues, is not only the amount financed but includes substantial additional fees and charges imposed by First Alliance, upon which interest will accrue. Therefore, First Alliance's representation as alleged in paragraph 42, was, and is, false or misleading.

44. First Alliance's practices constitute deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a).

## **Count VI: Misrepresentation of the Prepaid Finance Charges**

- 45. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- 46. In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, First Alliance has represented, expressly or by implication, that its prepaid finance charges, such as the loan origination fees, are part of the interest payments on the loan.
- 47. In truth and in fact, the prepaid finance charges imposed by First Alliance are not part of the interest payments on the loan. These charges are added to the amount financed and are part of the loan principal, or the total amount of money borrowed, and interest accrues on these charges. Therefore, First Alliance's representation as alleged in paragraph 46, was, and is, false or misleading.
- 48. First Alliance's practices constitute deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C.  $\S$  45(a).

#### **REGULATION Z VIOLATIONS**

#### **Count VII**

- 49. Plaintiff incorporates by reference all the foregoing paragraphs.
- 50. In the course and conduct of offering and extending credit, First Alliance has failed to provide borrowers who have loans
- (a) with a term greater than one year, (b) secured by the borrowers' principal dwelling, and (c) for which the APR may increase after consummation, with the booklet titled *Consumer Handbook on Adjustable Rate Mortgages* or a suitable substitute. First Alliance has, therefore, violated the requirements of TILA's implementing Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226.19(b)(1).

#### **CONSUMER INJURY**

51. Consumers have suffered, and will continue to suffer, substantial injury as a result of First Alliance's violations of § 5(a) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a), and TILA's implementing Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226, as set forth above.

#### PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, plaintiff requests that this Court, as authorized in § 13(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 53(b), Section 108(c) of the TILA, 15 U.S.C. § 1607(c), and pursuant to its own equitable powers:

- 1. Enterjudgment against the defendants and in favor of plaintiff for each violation charged in the Complaint;
- 2. Permanently enjoin and restrain defendants from violating § 5(a) of the FTC Act in connection with offering and extending credit and any provision of the TILA and Regulation Z;
- 3. Find the defendants jointly and severally liable for redress to all borrowers who were injured as a result of defendants' violations of § 5(a) of the FTC Act and Regulation Z;
- 4. Award such relief as the Court deems necessary to prevent unjust enrichment and to redress borrower injury resulting from the defendants' violations of § 5(a) of the FTC Act and Regulation Z including, but not limited to, rescission of contracts, the refund of monies paid, and disgorgement of ill-gotten gains; and
- 5. Award such relief against relief defendant Sarah Chisick that the Court deems necessary to protect and return funds and other property, to which Sarah Chisick has no legitimate claim, that were derived from Defendants' violations of § 5(a) of the FTC Act in connection with offering and extending credit and any provision of the TILA and Regulation Z, including an order to disgorge all ill-gotten gains or proceeds that she has received as a result of the acts and practices complained of herein, and an order imposing a constructive trust upon such gains or proceeds; and

6. Award plaintiff its costs of bringing this action, as well as such other additional equitable relief as the Court may determine to be just and proper.

Dated: November 26,2001

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLIAM E. KOVACIC General Counsel

ANNE M. McCORMICK JOHN A. KREBS JULIE K. BROF
JEANNE-MARIE S. RAYMOND
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Cal. Bar No. 186907
Federal Trade Commission
10877 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 700
Los Angeles, CA 90024



ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

#### \*\* IMPORTANT OPEN HOMEDIATELY





FROM:

FIRST ALLIANCE MORTGAGE 7900 XERXES AVE. SO. BLOOMINGTON, MN 55431 TELEPHONE REPLY REQUESTED 1-800-695-6900

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SAINT PAUL, MN 55110-4551 

DEAR :

GOOD NEWS! FIRST ALLIANCE IS PLEASED TO NOTIFY YOU THAT YOU HAVE BEEN PRE-OUALIFIED FOR UP TO \$82,500.

IF YOU'RE PAYING HIGH INTEREST ON CREDIT CARDS, CHARGE ACCOUNTS OR FINANCE COMPANY LOANS, YOU'RE PAYING TOO MUCH! HERE ARE THE BENEFITS YOU'LL RECEIVE WITH A FIRST ALLIANCE HOME EQUITY LOAN:

- NO APPLICATION FEES
- NO UP-FRONT APPRAISAL FEES NO OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES
- NO CREDIT OR INCOME HASSLES
- NO PAYMENTS FOR UP TO 60 DAYS
- LOW PAYMENTS
- LOW RATES
- 72-HOUR APPROVAL
- 25 YEARS EXPERIENCE

PLUS, YOU CAN USE THE MONEY FOR ANY PURPOSE; PAY OFF BILLS, DO HOME IMPROVEMENTS OR JUST GET EXTRA CASH.

EVEN IF YOU'RE SELF EMPLOYED, RETIRED OR HAVE HAD CREDIT TROUBLE, IT'S NO PROBLEM. YOU CAN GET THE MONEY YOU NEED AND HAVE A LOW MONTHLY PAYMENT YOU CAN AFFORD.

PLEASE, CALL NOW AND SIMPLY TELL US HOW MUCH MONEY YOU NEED. WE'LL GLADLY ANSWER YOUR OUESTIONS.

MON THRU FRI 8AM-8PM, CALL TODAY 1-800-695-6900. SAT 9AM-3PM.

PAM PETERSON FIRST ALLIANCE MORTGAGE

50LTDL10010

SUBJECT TO VERIFIED EQUITY AND INCOME.

This is not a Check

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1998

Pay the Sum of:

EIGHTY THREE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED DOLLARS

\$83,700.00

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Roseville, MN 55113-2401



12345099 222555

NON-NEGOTIABLE · NON-TRANSFERABLE

NOT A GOVERNMENT AGENCY

DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	CHECK NO.
10/07/98	Pre-Qualified Amount	\$83,700.00	4509922

Dear '

Good News First Alliance is pleased to notify you that you have been pra-qualified to receive up to \$83,700 for any purpose.

If you're paying high interest on credit cards, charge accounts or finance company loans, you're paying too much! Here are the benefits you'll receive with a First Alliance low interest home equity loan:

- Lower Interest Rates
- Lower Monthly Payments
- Tax Saving Benefits
- 72 Hour Loan Approval.
- · No Credit Hessies
- No income Hessia
- · No Application Fees
- · No Up-Front Appraisal Fees

Plus, you will have no payments for up to 90 days.

You can use the money for any purpose; pay off bills, do home improvements or just get extra cash.

Even if you've had financial problems or credit trouble, you can get the money you need and have a low monthly payment you can afford.

Please, call now and simply tall us how much money you need. We'll cledly answer your questions.

Gall Today 1-999-595-5909 Monday - Friday SAM - SPM, Saturday SAM - 3PM

John Skelly First Alliance Mortgage

#### **EBLCCA466**4

Reference III: 5BLCCA09273630

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# LEGRA DISPATCH

PRIORITY TRANSMISSION PREPAID

TIME: 9-12-30 PM DATE: 09/02/98

RTE: AHCI OPER: \$02-70

NATICK, MA 01760-3324 Monadallanidadlarındınıdlandılılılınıdıdılland

TELEGRAM DISPATCH

REGISTRY AND FILE NUMBER

15975500

FIRST ALLIANCE MORTGAGE CO. 20 WILLIAM ST. WELLESLEY, MA 02181

IMPORTANT FINANCIAL MESSAGE:

Title Here to French FIRST ALLIANCE MORTGAGE IS PLEASED TO NOTIFY YOU THAT YOU HAVE BEEN PRE-QUALIFIED FOR UP TO \$82,500 FOR ANY PURPOSE.

IF YOU'NEED TO PAY OFF BILLS, DO HOME IMPROVEMENTS OR JUST NEED EXTRA CASH, WE CAN SAVE YOU BOTH TIME AND MONEY WITH OUR NEW "72-HOUR" HOME EQUITY LOAN. The state of the s

- SAVE \$500

- 72-HOUR 'APPROVAL
- FAST FUNDING
- NO APPLICATION FEES'. - NO UP-FRONT APPRAISAL FEES
- LOW RATES
- NO OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES
  - LOW MONTHLY PAYMENTS
- NO PAYMENTS FOR UP. TO 60 DAYS TAX SAVING BENEFITS

PLUS, WE CAN START YOUR LOAN RIGHT OVER THE PHONE, APPROVE YOUR LOAN IN JUST "72-HOURS" AND PUT TEE MONEY IN YOUR HANDS IN 10' WORKING DAYS OR SOONER UPON REQUEST.

DON'T DELAY. .. CALL NOW AND SIMPLY TELL US HOW MUCH MONEY YOU NEED YOU LL SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS AND HAVE NO PAYMENTS FOR UP TO 60 DAYS.

IN NATICK CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-695-6900. MON THRU FRI 8AM-8PM, SAT 9AM-3PM. ASK FOR HOWARD COLEMAN, MANAGER OF PREFERRED ACCOUNTS.

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WE WILL GLADLY ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

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Tracking #: 09080677

SUBJECT TO VERIFIED EQUITY AND INCOME. First Alliance Mortgage Company is licensed in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachumotts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Chio, Gregon, Fennsylvania, Utah, Virgina and Mashington. In Arizona, state license BKISSIT. In California, leans will be made pursuant to a California Department of Corporations California Financo Londer Licenso. In Georgia, Two Concourse Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30328, Georgia Residential Hortgago Licensoe. In Harrachusetts, State License ML0824. In New York a Licensed Mortgage Banker. New York State Banking Department. In Oregon, under State Regulation. In Illinois, doing business as First Alliance Credit Corporation. Illinois Residential Mortgogo Licenzee.



Exhibit 3