



TIPS FOR CORRECTING CREDIT REPORT ERRORS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

MAINTAINING A GOOD CREDIT REPORT can translate into quicker loan approvals, lower interest rates and a strong financial foundation. All Texans should periodically examine their credit reports and take quick action to address any disputes and respond to any inaccurate information.

Under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, the credit bureau and any organizations responsible for reporting inaccurate information must correct errors or incomplete information on credit reports.

Texans who discover errors on their credit reports should send a written dispute letter to the erroneous creditor and all three major credit bureaus: Equifax, Trans Union and Experian. Because credit bureaus do not cross-verify information, it is possible that one bureau's report contains unique errors that are not reported by other bureaus. In some cases, two different bureaus may report two separate but equally inaccurate problems. To ensure errors are corrected in each report, credit report problems should be disputed in separate letters to individual credit bureaus.

Dispute letters seeking corrections should very specifically describe the facts and circumstances surrounding the mistake. Consumers should always provide their full name, address and Social Security number, along with copies of any supporting documentation,

such as receipts, statements that verify payment and a copy of the inaccurate credit report in the letter. Each error on the report should be circled or highlighted and accompanied by a detailed explanation clarifying why the information is inaccurate.

To prove that requests for changes are received, dispute letters should be sent by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Once a credit bureau is notified of a dispute, it must investigate the items in question (unless it considers the dispute frivolous). The bureau also must forward all the data provided by the consumer to the appropriate creditor. Upon receiving the information, the creditor must review the dispute and report the results back to the credit bureau. If the reporting creditor discovers the disputed information is inaccurate, it must notify all three credit bureaus so corrections can be made to the information in the complainant's file.

When the investigation is complete, the credit bureau must provide the results to the complainant in writing, along with a free copy of his or her credit report if the dispute led to a change. (Note: This corrected credit report does not count as the consumer's annual free report.) If an item is changed or deleted, it cannot be put back in a consumer's file unless the reporting creditor verifies that it is accurate and complete. The credit bureau also must send the consumer written

notice that includes the creditor's name, address and phone number.

A creditor who is contacted about a reporting error must include a notice of the consumer's dispute if it reports the item to a credit bureau. If the consumer proves the dispute was accurate, the creditor may not report it to a credit bureau again.

If a credit bureau's investigation does not resolve a consumer's dispute, the complainant may request that the dispute be included in future credit reports. Texans also may ask the credit bureau to provide the dispute statement to anyone who previously received a copy of the report. Consumers may be required to pay a fee for this service.

When negative information in a credit report is accurate, only time and patience can remove it. Credit bureaus can report accurate negative information for seven years and bankruptcy information for ten years. Information about lawsuits or unpaid judgments can be reported for seven years – or until the statute of limitations expires, whichever is longer. Generally, the time period runs from the time the event occurred. There is no time limit on reporting criminal convictions.

If a credit reporting agency or creditor refuses to correct inaccurate, incomplete or outdated information, consumers should file a complaint with the Texas Attorney General's Office or the Federal Trade Commission.

POINTS TO REMEMBER



HOW TO CORRECT A CREDIT REPORT

Texans who detect inaccurate, incomplete or outdated information in their credit reports should contact the organization that provided the information and the three major credit bureaus:

- **Equifax**
P.O. Box 740241
Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
(800) 685-1111 • www.equifax.com
- **Experian**
P.O. Box 2104
Allen, TX 75013-2104
(888) 397-3742 • www.experian.com
- **Trans Union**
P.O. Box 390
Springfield, PA 19064
(800) 916-8800 • www.transunion.com

To obtain a free annual credit report:

- **Annual Credit Report Request Service**
P.O. Box 105281
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281
(877) 322-8228 • www.annualcreditreport.com

For more information on the Fair Credit Reporting Act:

- **Federal Trade Commission**
600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20580
(877) 382-4357 • www.ftc.gov

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov.



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