WILLIAM E. KOVACIC General Counsel 2 JOHN D. JACOBS (CA Bar No. 134154) Federal Trade Commission 10877 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700 4 Los Angeles, CA 90024 (310) 824-4343; Fax (310) 824-4380 5 JEROME M. STEINER, JR. Federal Trade Commission 901 Market Street, Suite 570 San Francisco, CA 94131 (415) 848-5100; Fax (415) 848-5184 ELIZABETH A. BLACKSTON Office of the Illinois Attorney General 500 South Second Street Springfield, IL 62706 (217) 782-4436; Fax (217) 782-1097 11 12 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 13 14 15 FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION AND 01 CV 1868 JM (POR) STATE OF ILLINOIS, 16 Plaintiffs. SETTLEMENT AND STIPULATED 17 FINAL ORDER AS TO DEFENDANT MEMBERSHIP SERVICES, INC. v. 18 MEMBERSHIP SERVICES, INC., a 19 Delaware corporation, and 20 JAMES M. SCHWINDT, individually and as an officer of Membership 21 Services, Inc., 22 Defendants. 23 Plaintiffs Federal Trade Commission ("Commission" or "FTC") 24 and the State of Illinois filed a Complaint for a permanent 25 injunction and other equitable relief pursuant to Sections 13(b) 26 and 19 of the Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act"), 15 U.S.C. 27

§§ 53(b) and 57b, the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse

Prevention Act ("Telemarketing Act"), 15 U.S.C. §§ 6101 et seq., and the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices

Act ("ICFA"), 815 ILCS 505. The Complaint charged Defendants with violations of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act, as amended, 15 U.S.C.

§ 45(a), and the Commission's Trade Regulation Rule entitled

Telemarketing Sales Rule (the "Rule"), 16 C.F.R. Part 310, as well as Section 2 of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, 815 ILCS 505/2.

Plaintiffs and Defendant MSI have agreed to settle the charges against Defendant MSI by stipulating to entry of a final order with the terms and conditions set forth below, without adjudication of any issue of fact or law and without Defendant MSI admitting liability for any of the matters alleged in the Complaint.

Plaintiffs and Defendant MSI having requested the Court to enter this Settlement and Stipulated Final Order ("Order"), the Court hereby finds and orders as follows:

#### **DEFINITIONS**

- 1. "Consumer" means an actual or potential purchaser, customer, subscriber, or natural person.
- 2. "Credit card loss protection" means the advertisement, promotion, offering for sale, or sale of any product or service represented to register credit or debit accounts, including credit card accounts, or protect, indemnify, or reimburse the holder of a credit or debit account against unauthorized use or charges.
- 3. "Credit-related good or service" means any good or service that is purported directly or indirectly to (1) provide to consumers, arrange for consumers to receive, or assist consumers in receiving grants, loans, financing, credit or debit cards, or other

- 4. The term "Defendants" refers to Defendants Membership
  Services, Inc. and James Schwindt, and the agents, servants,
  employees, and attorneys of either of them, and all persons or
  entities directly or indirectly under the control of either of
  them, and all other persons or entities in active concert or
  participation with either of them who receive actual notice of this
  Order by personal service or otherwise, and each such person.
- 5. The term "document" is synonymous in meaning and equal in scope to the usage of the term in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 34(a), and includes writings, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, audio and video recordings, computer records, and other data compilations from which information can be obtained and translated, if necessary, through detection devices into reasonably usable form. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of the term.
- 6. "Material" means likely to affect a person's choice of, or conduct regarding, goods or services.
- 7. "Telemarketing" means any business activity (whether or not covered by the Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 310, including, but not limited to, initiating or receiving telephone calls, managing others who initiate or receive telephone calls, operating an enterprise that initiates or receives telephone calls, owning an enterprise that initiates or receives telephone calls, or otherwise participating as an officer, director, employee or independent contractor in an enterprise that initiates or receives

telephone calls) that involves attempts to induce consumers to purchase any investment, item, good, service, partnership interest, trust interest or other beneficial interest, or to enter a contest for a prize, by means of telephone sales presentations, either exclusively or in conjunction with the use of other forms of marketing.

8. The terms "and" and "or" shall be construed conjunctively or disjunctively as necessary, and to make the applicable phrase or sentence inclusive rather than exclusive.

#### **FINDINGS**

- 1. This Court has jurisdiction of the subject matter of this case and over Defendant MSI. Venue in the Southern District of California is proper.
- 2. The Complaint states a claim upon which relief may be granted under Sections 5(a), 13(b) and 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 45(a), 53(b) and 57b; Sections 310.3(a)(2)(iii), 310.3(a)(4), and 310.4(a)(4) of the Commission's Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. §§ 310.3(a)(2)(iii), 310.3(a)(4), and 310.4(a)(4); and Section 2 of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, 815 ILCS 505/2.
- 3. Plaintiffs have the authority under Sections 13(b) and 19 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 53(b) and 57b, and Sections 7 and 10 of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, 815 ILCS 505/7 and 505/10, to seek the relief they have requested.

- 5. This Order is for settlement purposes only and does not constitute and shall not be interpreted to constitute an admission by Defendant MSI that (i) the defendant has engaged in violations of any law or regulations, including but not limited to the FTC Act, the Telemarketing Sales Rule, or the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, or (ii) the facts alleged in the Complaint, other than the jurisdictional facts, are true.
- 6. Defendant MSI has waived all rights to seek judicial review or otherwise challenge or contest the validity of this Settlement and Order. Defendant MSI has also waived all claims under the Equal Access to Justice Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2412, as amended by PL 104-121, 110 Stat. 847, 863-64 (1996), concerning prosecution of this action to the date of this Order.
- 7. Entry of this Settlement and Order is in the public interest.

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## PROHIBITION ON SALE OF CREDIT CARD LOSS PROTECTION AND CREDIT-RELATED GOODS OR SERVICES

ORDER

I.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED AND AGREED that Defendant MSI, and its successors, assigns, officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and those persons or entities in active concert or participation with MSI who receive actual notice of this Order by personal service or otherwise, whether acting directly or through

any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, are hereby permanently enjoined from engaging or participating in the advertising, promoting, offering for sale, or sale of (1) credit card loss protection, or (2) any credit-related good or service.

II.

#### PROHIBITION ON MISREPRESENTATIONS AND UNAUTHORIZED CHARGES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that Defendant MSI, and its successors, assigns, officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and those persons or entities in active concert or participation with MSI who receive actual notice of this Order by personal service or otherwise, whether acting directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the advertising, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service, are hereby permanently enjoined from the following:

- A. falsely representing that any **consumer** will be charged small monthly payments to purchase such good or service;
- B. falsely representing that any consumer has given authorization for his credit card account to be charged for such good or service;
- C. making any express or implied representation of material fact that is false or misleading; or
- D. causing any **consumer**'s credit card account to be charged for such good or service without having previously obtained the **consumer**'s authorization for such charge.

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PROHIBITION ON VIOLATIONS OF THE TELEMARKETING SALES RULE

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that Defendant MSI, and its successors, assigns, officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and those persons or entities in active concert or participation with MSI who receive actual notice of this Order by personal service or otherwise, whether acting directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, are hereby permanently restrained and enjoined from the following:

- A. Violating Section 310.3(a)(2)(iii) of the Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(a)(2)(iii), by making any material misrepresentation of any material aspect of the performance, efficacy, nature, or central characteristics of goods or services;
- B. Violating Section 310.3(a)(4) of the Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. § 310.3(a)(4), by making a false or misleading statement to induce any person to pay for goods or services, including but not limited to either of the following statements:
- (1) that **consumers** who have not agreed to be charged by Defendants owe Defendants for goods or services; or 2) that **consumers** will be charged small monthly payments to purchase products or services; or
- C. Violating or assisting others in violating any other provision of the Telemarketing Sales Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 310.

A copy of the Rule is appended to this Order as Attachment A and is incorporated herein as if fully rewritten. In the event that the Rule is amended by the Commission in a manner which would create a new or different standard applicable to the defendant's obligations under this Order, compliance with the Rule as so amended shall not be deemed a violation of this Order.

# PROHIBITION ON VIOLATIONS OF THE ILLINOIS CONSUMER FRAUD AND DECEPTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that Defendant MSI, and its successors, assigns, officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and those persons or entities in active concert or participation with MSI who receive actual notice of this Order by personal service or otherwise, whether acting directly or through any corporation, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the advertising, offering for sale, or sale of any good or service, are hereby permanently enjoined from violating Section 2 of the Illinois Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Business Practices Act, 815 ILCS 505/2 by engaging in the following practices:

- A. falsely representing any good or service other than those goods or services prohibited for sale by defendants in Paragraph I of this Order;
- B. falsely representing to consumers, expressly or by implication, that defendants are affiliated with, or are calling from or on behalf of Mastercard, Visa, or the consumers' credit card issuers;
- C. falsely representing, expressly or by implication, that consumers have given defendants their credit card accounts to be billed for defendants' goods or services;
- D. falsely representing, expressly or by implication, that consumers will be billed in installment payments for defendants' goods or services, instead of being billed for the full amount in a lump sum;

- E. billing or causing any consumer's credit card accounts to be billed for defendants' goods or services, without first obtaining the consumers' express authorization to bill their accounts; or
- F. billing or causing any consumer's credit card account to be billed for defendants' goods or services, when the consumer has agreed only to receive information about defendants' offer.

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#### PROHIBITION ON SALE OF CUSTOMER LISTS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that Defendant MSI, and its successors, assigns, officers, agents, servants, employees, and attorneys, and those persons or entities in active concert or participation with MSI who receive actual notice of this Order by personal service or otherwise, and each such person, whether acting directly or through any corporation, limited liability company, subsidiary, division or other device, are hereby restrained and enjoined from selling, renting, leasing, transferring or otherwise disclosing the name, address, telephone number, credit card number, bank account number or other identifying information of any consumer or purchaser identified in Defendants' customer database or files pertaining to Defendants' Low Interest Credit Card Protect Program ("LICCP") -- i.e., the telemarketing program encompassing the two types of products or services that are the subject of the Complaint in this matter--to any third party; provided, however, that Defendant MSI may disclose such identifying information to the Receiver or a law enforcement agency, or as required by any law, regulation or court order.

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#### MONETARY RELIEF

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that judgment is hereby Α. entered against Defendant MSI in the amount of \$1,500,000 (ONE MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that all funds paid В. pursuant to this Section shall be deposited into a fund administered by the Commission or its agent to be used for equitable relief, including but not limited to consumer redress and any attendant expenses for the administration of any redress fund. In the event that direct redress to consumers is wholly or partially impracticable or funds remain after redress is completed, the Commission may apply any remaining funds for such other equitable relief (including consumer information remedies) as it determines to be reasonably related to Defendants' practices alleged in the complaint. Any funds not used for such equitable relief shall be deposited to the Treasury as disgorgement. Defendants shall have no right to challenge the Commission's choice of remedies under this Paragraph.

#### VII.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that, within five (5) business days after entry of this Order, Defendant MSI shall submit to the Commission a truthful sworn and notarized statement that shall acknowledge receipt of this Order as approved by the Court.

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#### RECORD KEEPING PROVISIONS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that, for a period of seven (7) years from the date of entry of this Order, Defendant MSI, to the extent it owns or operates any business, in whole or in part, that is engaged in telemarketing, is hereby restrained and enjoined from:

- Α. Failing to create the following records:
- Accounting records that, in reasonable detail, 1. accurately and fairly reflect the cost to the business entity of goods or services sold, revenues generated, and the disbursement of such revenues;
- Personnel records accurately reflecting the name, 2. address, and telephone number of each person employed in any capacity by such business, including as an independent contractor (but not an entity so engaged); that person's job title or position; the date upon which the person commenced work; and the date and reason for the person's termination, if applicable; provided, however, that nothing in this provision shall be construed to require the violation of any state or federal law or regulation;
- Consumer records containing the names, addresses, phone numbers, dollar amounts paid, quantity of items or services purchased, and description of items or services purchased, to the extent such information is obtained in the ordinary course of business; and

- 4. Consumer complaint and refund requests (whether received directly, indirectly or through any third party) and any responses to those complaints or requests;
- B. Failing to retain, for a period of three (3) years, all records required to be created pursuant to part A of this Paragraph; and
- C. Failing to retain, for a period of two (2) years after the last date of dissemination, copies of all sales scripts, training materials, advertisements, or other marketing materials that are actually utilized.

IX.

#### MONITORING COMPLIANCE OF SALES PERSONNEL

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that Defendant MSI, to the extent it owns or operates any business, in whole or in part, that is engaged in telemarketing, is hereby permanently restrained and enjoined from:

1. Failing to take reasonable steps sufficient to monitor and ensure that all employees and independent contractors engaged in sales or other customer service functions comply with Paragraphs I through III of this Order. Such steps shall include adequate monitoring of sales presentations or other calls with customers, and shall also include, at a minimum, the following:

(1) periodically listening to, or engaging an independent firm to listen to and provide Defendant MSI with a report on, a representative sample of the oral representations made by persons engaged in sales or other customer service functions for or on behalf of Defendant MSI; (2) establishing a procedure for receiving

and responding to consumer complaints; and (3) ascertaining the

number and nature of consumer complaints regarding transactions in which each employee or independent contractor is involved;

- Failing to promptly and fully investigate any consumer complaint received by any business to which this Paragraph applies;
- 3. Failing to take corrective action with respect to any sales person whom Defendant MSI determines is not complying with this Order, which may include training, disciplining, and/or terminating such sales person.

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#### COMPLIANCE REPORTING

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that, in order that compliance with the provisions of this Order may be monitored:

- A. Defendant MSI shall, for a period of five (5) years from the date of entry of this Order, notify the Commission of any proposed change in the structure of Defendant MSI or any business entity that is owned or controlled by Defendant MSI, such as creation, incorporation, dissolution, assignment, sale, merger, creation or dissolution of subsidiaries, proposed filing of a bankruptcy petition, or change in the company name or address, or any other change that may affect compliance obligations arising out of this Order, thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of any proposed change;
- B. One hundred eighty (180) days after the date of entry of this Order, Defendant MSI shall provide a written report to the Commission, sworn to under penalty of perjury, setting forth in detail the manner and form in which it has complied and is

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complying with this Order. This report shall include but not be limited to:

- Defendant MSI's then current office address (if any), mailing address, and telephone number(s);
- 2. A description of all business activities of Defendant MSI;
- 3. A copy of each acknowledgment of receipt of this
  Order obtained pursuant to Paragraph VII of this
  Order:
- 4. A statement describing the manner in which Defendant
  MSI has complied and is complying with Paragraphs I
  through III of this Order; and
- D. Upon reasonable written request by a representative of the Commission, Defendant MSI shall submit additional written reports (under oath, if requested) and produce documents on thirty (30) days' notice with respect to any conduct subject to this Order, unless additional time is mutually agreed to.

XI.

#### ACCESS TO BUSINESS PREMISES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that, for a period of five

(5) years from the date of entry of this Order, for the purpose of
further determining compliance with this Order, Defendant MSI shall
permit representatives of the Commission, within three (3) business
days of receipt of written notice from the Commission:

A. Access during normal business hours to any office, or facility storing documents, of any business that engages in telemarketing where Defendant MSI owns a majority interest in the business or directly or indirectly manages or controls the

In providing such access, Defendant MSI shall permit representatives of the Commission to inspect and copy all documents 2 relevant to any matter contained in this Order; and shall permit 3 Commission representatives to remove documents relevant to any 5 matter contained in this Order for a period not to exceed five (5) calendar days so that the documents may be inspected, inventoried, 6 and copied. Provided, however, that the Commission, will not, in 7 the absence of appropriate consent, review, seize, copy, remove, possess or exercise dominion over any materials which the Commission knows or has reason to know constitute or contain 10 11 attorney-client communications or work product, and will not otherwise order, direct, instruct, permit or condone same. Provided further, that in the event the Commission, without prior consent, obtains materials which it knows or has reason to know 14 15 constitute or contain attorney-client communications or work product, the Commission will return all originals and copies of 16 17 such material within five business days; and

To interview the officers, directors, and employees, В. including all personnel involved in responding to consumer complaints or inquiries, and all sales personnel, whether designated as employees, consultants, independent contractors or otherwise, of any business to which Part A of this Paragraph applies, concerning matters relating to compliance with the terms of this Order. The person interviewed may have counsel present and will promptly be so informed by the Commission.

Provided that, upon application of the Commission and for good cause shown, the Court may enter an ex parte order granting immediate access to Defendant MSI's business premises for the

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purposes of inspecting and copying all documents relevant to any matter contained in this Order. In such event, Commission representatives shall be permitted to remove documents as identified in the ex parte order for a period not to exceed five (5) calendar days so that the documents may be inspected, inventoried and copied. Provided further, that the Commission will not, in the absence of appropriate consent, review, seize, copy, remove, possess or exercise dominion over any materials which the Commission knows or has reason to know constitute or contain attorney-client communications or work product, and will not otherwise order, direct, instruct, permit or condone same. Provided further, that in the event the Commission, without prior consent, obtains materials which it knows or has reason to know constitute or contain attorney-client communications or work product, the Commission will return all originals and copies of such material within five (5) business days.

XII.

#### RECEIVERSHIP

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the temporary receivership imposed in the Preliminary Injunction entered in this action shall be continued until such time as the Temporary Receiver has taken the necessary steps to wind down the business of Defendant MSI.

A. Such steps shall include conducting a claims process for creditors of MSI. After all claims have been submitted, and the Temporary Receiver has completed all other steps necessary to winding down the business of Defendant MSI, the Temporary Receiver shall promptly provide a report to the Court which details the steps taken to discharge her duties under this Paragraph and a

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- tentative resolution of the claims received from creditors. The report shall include an inventory of the receivership estate and an accounting of the receivership estate's finances. The report shall be served on Plaintiff Commission, Defendant Schwindt, and all creditors of Defendant MSI.
- B. Any creditor of Defendant MSI may object to the Temporary Receiver's tentative resolution of claims. Such objections must be filed with the Court and served on all persons and entities listed in the Temporary Receiver's service list within two weeks of the date of service of the Temporary Receiver's tentative resolution of claims. Plaintiffs, Defendant Schwindt, and the Temporary Receiver may file a reply to any objections, which must be filed and served within one month from the date of service of the Temporary Receiver's tentative resolution of claims. Unless the Court instructs otherwise, any objections shall be taken under submission and decided by the Court without a hearing. If no objections are filed and served within the time required by this Paragraph, the Temporary Receiver may pay claims as proposed in her tentative resolution.
- C. Upon payment of claims and completion of the requirements of this Paragraph, the Temporary Receiver shall move that this Court order termination of this receivership. At such time, the Receiver shall make a final request for payment of compensation for the performance of duties pursuant to the Preliminary Injunction entered in this proceeding and pursuant to this Paragraph and for the cost of actual out-of-pocket expenses incurred. The Receiver shall promptly tender all other records and items of Defendant MSI in her possession or control to Defendant Schwindt. Should

Defendant Schwindt decline such offer, the Temporary Receiver may dispose of remaining records and documents as she sees fit.

XIII.

#### FTC'S AUTHORITY TO MONITOR COMPLIANCE

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that the Commission is authorized to monitor Defendant MSI's compliance with this Order by all lawful means, including, but not limited to, the following:

- A. The Commission is authorized, without further leave of this Court, to obtain discovery from any person in the manner provided by Chapter V of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Fed. R. Civ. P. 26-37, including the use of compulsory process pursuant to Federal R. Civ. P. 45, for the purpose of investigating Defendant MSI's compliance with any provision of this Order;
- B. The Commission is authorized, without the necessity of identification or prior notice, to use representatives posing as customers or prospective customers of (i) Defendant MSI, (ii) the employees of Defendant MSI, or (iii) any other entity managed or controlled in whole or in part by Defendant MSI; and
- C. Nothing in this Order shall limit the Commission's lawful use of compulsory process, pursuant to Sections 9 and 20 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 49, 57b-1, for the purpose of investigating compliance with this Order, Section 5 of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45, or the Rule, 16 C.F.R. Part 435.

XIV.

#### ORDER DISTRIBUTION

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that, for a period of five (5) years from the date of entry of this Order, Defendant MSI shall:

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A. Immediately provide a copy of this Order to,	and obtain a
signed and dated acknowledgment of receipt of the same	from, each
officer, director and managing agent of any company or	other
business entity which is directly or indirectly owned,	operated or
controlled by Defendant MSI and which is engaged in te	lemarketing;
and	

B. Maintain for a period of three (3) years after creation, and upon reasonable notice make available to the FTC's representatives, the original signed and dated acknowledgments of the receipt of copies of this Order, as required by Part A of this Paragraph.

XV.

#### NOTICES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that for purposes of this Order, Defendant MSI shall, unless otherwise directed by the Commission's authorized representatives, mail all written notifications to the Commission to:

ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR
Federal Trade Commission
Western Region-Los Angeles
10877 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 700
Los Angeles, CA 90024
Re: FTC v. Membership Services, Inc.

XVI.

#### INDEPENDENCE OF OBLIGATIONS

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that each of the obligations imposed by this Order is independent of all other obligations under the Order, and that the expiration of any requirements imposed by this Order shall not affect any other obligation arising under this Order.

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#### COSTS AND ATTORNEYS FEES

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that each party to this Order bear its own costs and attorneys fees incurred in connection with this action.

#### XVIII.

#### CONTINUED JURISDICTION

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED AND AGREED that this Court shall retain jurisdiction of this matter for all purposes.

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XIX. 1 2 ENTRY BY CLERK 3 There being no just reason for delay, the Clerk of the Court is hereby directed to enter this Order. 4 SO STIPULATED: 5 6 FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION 7 Dated: Docember 10, 2003 8 John D. Jacobs Jerome M. Steiner, Jr. 9 Attorneys for Plaintiff FTC 10 STATE OF ILLINOIS 11 12 Elizabeth A. Blackston 13 Attorney for Plaintiff State of Illinois 14 15

> Leslie Gladstone Receiver over Defendant Membership Services, Inc.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Judge of the District Court

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