

## **Consumer Protection Ordinance**

Hillsborough County Ordinance No. 06-22, also known as the Hillsborough County Consumer Protection Ordinance was implemented to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive trade practices while engaging in commerce. The ordinance allows the Consumer Protection Agency to intake consumer complaints, investigate the facts, mediate resolutions, prosecute violations, and refer matters to other jurisdictions.

### **Ordinance Amended**

Ordinance No. 06-22 was amended by Ordinance 08-01 in January 2008. The amended ordinance essentially deleted Sections 6 & 7 from the Consumer Protection Ordinance and eliminated the existence and need for a “Consumer Protection Board.”

### **Frequent Complaint Topics and Issues**

The Consumer Protection Agency intakes approximately 100 complaints per month. The topics and issues of these complaints vary greatly in terms of severity and complexity. The majority of the complaints usually involve at least one of the following issues:

- home improvement and contractors
- service and repair
- lease agreements and security deposits\*
- billing and credit disputes
- miscellaneous retail and warrantees
- criminal theft and fraud
- unlicensed activity
- failure to perform

\* Landlord/tenant issues involving the health, safety and condition of the property should be referred to the County’s Community Code Enforcement department.

### **Enforcement**

Most consumer complaints are investigated and mediated in order to find an agreeable resolution for both the consumer and the business. Repeat violators and egregious conduct can warrant a citation with a financial penalty of up to \$500, and a court appearance. Criminal conduct involving theft, fraud and some unlicensed activity may lead to arrest and criminal prosecution.

### **Education & Outreach Programs**

A major goal for the Agency is to educate the public on being a good consumer, and not falling victim to the many schemes, scams and unfair conduct in the market place. Agency investigators can provide a number of programs on consumer education while out in the community. If you have an event or community gathering where you would like us to make a presentation, please contact our Agency for additional details.