

# NEWS

**JEREMIAH W. (JAY) NIXON**

**CONTACT**

Communications  
Office:  
573-751-8844

OFFICE OF MISSOURI ATTORNEY GENERAL

Nov. 20, 2000

## **Nixon sues in St. Louis to stop illegal pyramid scheme**

Jefferson City, Mo. -- Attorney General Jay Nixon today filed a lawsuit against two St. Louis County women who Nixon said were involved in an illegal pyramid scheme that has been reported in several parts of the state. The lawsuit states that as operators of the Original Dinner Party (ODP), Barbara Bright (a/k/a Barbara Ann Horlick) and Cindy G. Mechura gave as many as 25 presentations to induce other participants into the pyramid scheme.

"The pyramid schemes we've seen in Missouri recently style themselves as 'gifting networks' to pretend that they have an air of legitimacy," Nixon said. "That notion dissolves quickly when you realize you have to bring in new people — and their money — to keep it going, just like any other pyramid. A lucky few will pocket ill-gotten gains from these schemes, while the rest of the participants will end up \$5,000 poorer."

Nixon cautioned Missourians to stay away from pyramid schemes, reports of which have come from different areas of the state in recent months, including the Kansas City and St. Louis areas and from towns in east central and southeast Missouri. The pyramid scheme also is known as the Women's Empowerment Network, The Dinner Club, The Original Dinner Club and The Breakfast Club, but Nixon stressed the scheme is not limited to those names.

This summer, Nixon obtained a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction against several operators of the pyramid scheme in the Kansas City area, as well as an order freezing any assets obtained through the pyramid.

Nixon said these newest schemes often are in the form of a dinner party, with participants entering at the "soup and salad" level and paying \$5,000 to the person at the top, or "dessert," level. Entry-level participants move up to the "entree" and "dessert" levels as more participants come in at the lowest level. Nixon said those terms may vary from scheme to scheme.

Nixon said his office also is looking into reports that some pyramid participants are claiming that the schemes have received approval from the Attorney General's Office. Such claims are patently false, he said, and are typical of the claims by operators of pyramid schemes.

Nixon's lawsuit asks the St. Louis County Circuit Court to issue an order finding that Bright and Mechura have violated Missouri law and prohibiting them from further violations. Nixon also is asking the court to freeze any assets the two defendants gained through the scheme and to order them to pay appropriate restitution, penalties and costs.

He encouraged anyone with information about the reported "gift-giving" pyramid schemes or any other pyramid scheme to call the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-392-8222.

---

Learn more about illegal [pyramid schemes](#).



Missouri Revised Statutes

