



THE PORTNOFF REPORTER

SPRING 2023

Getting Chronic Delinquents to SPRING into Action (and Start Paying on Time)



With Spring showers come beautiful Pennsylvania flowers!

While most property owners pay their taxes and utility fees on time, there is always a subset of the population that has the financial means to pay but simply chooses to go delinquent. This is not the situation where someone is unable to pay due to financial hardship. This is a property owner who has the financial ability to pay but sees a benefit in delaying payment until a later date that is convenient and financially beneficial for the property owner.

Portnoff Law Associates has been able to help its municipal clients find a way to incentivize these chronic delinquents to not only pay their outstanding obligations, but to start paying future bills on time! By collecting delinquent accounts under Pennsylvania's Municipal Claims and Tax Liens Act, municipalities, school districts and municipal authorities are able to shift the reasonable costs of collection to the delinquent property owner. By shifting collection fees, chronic delinquents will now be shouldering

additional costs that they easily could have avoided by paying on time. The benefit of keeping this money in their pocket will no longer exist when they ultimately will be paying more money than had they simply paid the original bill on time.

A significant percentage of PLA's clients have seen a reduction in the number of delinquent accounts from the date that PLA was initially hired to start collecting. For PLA's school district clients, 87% saw a reduction, with one school district reducing the number of delinquent accounts by 70%. This means that there was a very large percentage of the population that had the financial ability to pay but was simply choosing not to. By shifting the costs of collection and creating strong incentives to pay the delinquent accounts, PLA's municipal clients are able to increase their *current* collection rates. Chronic delinquents will quickly learn that the municipality is serious about collecting its delinquent accounts, and the benefit of delaying payment will no longer exist.



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In Person

Mar.
2023

Portnoff attorney Kevin Buraks gave a presentation at the 68th Annual Pennsylvania Association of State Business Officials (PASBO) Conference at the Kalahari Resort on the topic: “A Better Way to Collect Delinquent Real Estate Taxes.”

Apr.
2023

Attorney Buraks will be presenting an education session titled “Legal Update on Pennsylvania’s Delinquent Collection Laws” at the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) 2023 Annual Conference on April 24 at 2:45 p.m. at the Hershey Lodge.

If you are interested in having Portnoff Law Associates make a presentation at your next conference or event, please contact us at (800) 561-7989.

By The Numbers

87 %

87% of PLA’s school district clients saw a reduction in the number of delinquent real estate tax accounts between the first year that PLA was hired and the end of 2022. Over 54% of these clients saw a reduction exceeding 20%, with one school district reducing the number of delinquent accounts by 70%! PLA collects delinquent tax accounts for over 10% of Pennsylvania’s public school districts.

Hello Cumberland County!

Portnoff Law Associates is excited to have its first clients in Cumberland County! PLA was hired by Lower Allen Township to collect its delinquent trash fees, and the Lower Allen Township Stormwater Authority to collect its delinquent stormwater fees. Cumberland County represents the 26th Pennsylvania county in which PLA collects delinquent municipal accounts.

Local Event Ideas



Heinz PicklesBURGH Festival

Pittsburgh, PA

July 21-23, 2023

The Heinz PicklesBURGH festival is all about the celebration of pickles! Over 40 vendors will be showcasing their pickle-inspired drink and food options. This event has been voted the #1 best specialty food festival in America. Check out the huge flying Heinz pickle balloon while tasting pickle beer and trying on pickle themed merchandise. The event will take place July 21–23 and is sure to be fun for the whole family! For more information, go to: www.picklesburgh.com.

Grove City, PA

A Weekend Destination

Grove City is a small town in a rural area of Mercer County located an hour north of Pittsburgh. There are many businesses and events to keep visitors busy for a weekend getaway. The Borough will be hosting the 32nd Annual Grove City Strawberry Days from June 9-11, 2023. Strawberry Days is held each year at Memorial Park and live entertainment is scheduled for each day. Local organizations provide food booths for the event, with the most popular being the Grove City Marching Band Boosters’ French fry booth and the Amish donut trailer. Once you have wandered through the various vendors and food booths at Strawberry Days, head out of town on Route 208 towards the Grove City Premium Outlets. At the outlet area you will find hotels, stores, restaurants, and the Keystone Safari Zoo. The zoo has a walk-through portion with trails, as well as a drive-through safari, with animal food available for purchase. Beyond the outlet mall on 208 is the Wendell August Forge that crafts handmade metal works of art. Their items range from bookmarks to plates and Christmas ornaments. Each piece is masterfully created from an original die of the artwork, and a tour of the crafting area is available. Enjoy a weekend away in Grove City PA!

Working with Residents in Need

Over the past 30 years of working with property owners, PLA has learned that most property owners want to pay their delinquent accounts, but often just do not know how to do so in a manner that works for them and the municipality to whom they owe a debt. We understand that these are people who have run into hard times, as many Americans have recently. In some situations, these property owners may be neighbors, family members and constituents of the clients we represent.

It is in these situations where Portnoff Law Associates excels. PLA's exemplary customer service, coupled with the multitude of payment tools we offer to property owners, means that your constituents will not only be offered a payment opportunity that works for both the municipality and the property owner, but that this payment opportunity will be offered in a manner that is respectful and courteous. Our staff is trained to be able to identify which tools may work best for which property owners and will share this information with your residents. If we believe that a property owner might possibly qualify for our hardship program, we will either send the property owner a hardship application or will direct them to our website where an application can be completed and submitted. Under the hardship plan, it is the property owner's ability to pay that dictates the amount of the monthly payment. We also will work with the property owner on the timing and length of the plan.

If a property owner's residency or income situation does qualify for hardship consideration, there are other tools we can offer. The majority of PLA's clients have set balance thresholds and allow for graduated payment plans up to 6 months. When payment plan thresholds are established, PLA will include those parameters in the initial notice of delinquency and fee shifting mailed via certified mail to the property owner. The letter advises the property owner how much the payment plan will be per month, and when payments should begin. This method of establishing payment plans without the property owner having to contact our office is a tool that has become popular with property owners and effective in bringing in more money for our clients.

The good customer service that we provide to property owners is reflected in the fact that PLA regularly receives notes of appreciation from the very people from whom we are collecting delinquent accounts. These thank you notes are typically from property owners who benefitted from PLA's payment plans and hardship program.

Finding the perfect law firm to partner with to collect your delinquent utility fees and real estate taxes can be a daunting task. Will the firm understand the needs of your community? Will your constituents be treated fairly? Will the most vulnerable members of your population be met with respect and understanding? Portnoff Law Associates can answer yes to each of those questions and many more.

New Clients- PLA was hired by 20 new clients in 2022:

Bethlehem Township Municipal Authority	Newtown Township, Delaware County, Municipal Authority
Catasauqua Borough	Pennsbury School District
Central Bucks School District	Radnor Township School District
Chester Water Authority	Ridley Township
East Goshen Township	Robesonia Borough
Forks Township	Salisbury Township
Greenfield Township Sewer Authority	St. Clair Borough Sewer Authority
Logan Township	Swatara Township Stormwater Authority
Lower Burrell City	Tatamy Borough
Lower Makefield Township	Whitemarsh Township

Hiring Portnoff

Portnoff Law Associates represents over 200 municipalities, school districts and municipal authorities across 26 Pennsylvania counties. PLA's proven collection process can be tailored to meet your specific collection needs and we are available to meet with you to discuss the benefits of our services. If you are interested in learning more about how PLA can help maximize your delinquent collections at minimal cost to your municipality, please contact us at (800) 561-7989 or kburaks@portnoffonline.com.



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PORTNOFF LAW ASSOCIATES HELPS ITS MUNICIPAL CLIENTS BRING IN MORE REVENUE THROUGH THE ENHANCED COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS, WHILE PROVIDING DELINQUENT PROPERTY OWNERS WITH MORE PAYMENT FLEXIBILITY AND OPTIONS.

With over 30 years of collection experience, Portnoff Law Associates represents over 200 municipalities, school districts and municipal authorities across 26 Pennsylvania counties in the collection of delinquent:

- Real Estate Taxes
- Sewer Fees
- Abatement of Nuisance Charges
- Trash Fees
- Water Bills and Tapping Fees
- Stormwater Fees



Michelle Portnoff, President
Portnoff Law Associates

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