

Beware of Phony Debt Collectors

In August 2009, the Better Business Bureau issued a [nationwide alert](#) warning consumers about phony debt collectors threatening to arrest them for not repaying a payday loan. I decided to investigate a little further after the daughter of a bankruptcy client called after receiving one of these phone calls.

The phony debt collector called my client's daughter from the following phone number: (323) 332-1091. The person answering the phone sounded like he was from an overseas call center and claimed to be an attorney named Steve Austin with the "Riverside County Criminal Defense Office". When I asked for his bar number and street address, "Mr. Austin" stated that his bar number was confidential and the address he gave me was in Los Angeles. Riverside is in a completely different county than Los Angeles, which was another warning sign that this was a scam.

"Mr. Austin" claims to be any attorney, but he is not admitted to practice law in California. He does claim, however, to be admitted to practice law in Texas and Florida. The claims of the caller do not withstand scrutiny.

It is not uncommon for debt collectors and scammers to use false information or make illegal threats in order to collect a debt. If you are in Southern California and have been a victim of a phony or a harassing debt collector, please call me now at (619) 448-2129 to get information about dealing with these people to help put your mind at ease.

About the Author: [Carl H. Starrett II](#) has been a licensed attorney since 1993 and is a member in good standing with the California State Bar, the San Diego County Bar Association and the [National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys](#). Mr. Starrett practices in the areas of [bankruptcy](#), [business litigation](#), [construction](#), [corporate planning](#) and [debt collection](#).