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1.1	Attorneys for Plaintiff			
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14	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA			
15	COUNTY OF SOLANO			
16				
17	PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,	Case No. FCS047090		
18 19	Plaintiff, v.	SECOND AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION, CIVIL PENALTIES, RESTITUTION, AND OTHER EQUITABLE RELIEF		
20	PONG GAME STUDIOS	(Bus. & Prof. Code, § 17200 et seq., § 17500 et seq., & § 17539.1)		
21	CORPORATION; TALK N WIN, INC.; PREPAID TELCONNECT, INC.; PHONE-	et seq., & § 1/337.1)		
22	SWEEPS, LLC; FERNANDO DI CARLO; MICHAEL STRAWBRIDGE; JULIUS	Dept: 10, Courtroom III Judge: Honorable Michael C. Mattice		
23 24	KISS; and DOES 1-50, inclusive,	Trial Date: January 28, 2020 Action Filed: 05/20/16		
25	Defendants.			
26	Plaintiff the People of the State of California (the People) bring this action (Second			
27	Amended Complaint) by and through: Xavier Becerra, Attorney General of the State of			
28	California; Diana Becton, District Attorney of Contra Costa County; Lisa A. Smittcamp, District			
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Attorney of Fresno County; Cynthia J. Zimmer, District Attorney of Kern County; Larry Morse II, District Attorney of Merced County; Michael A. Hestrin, District Attorney of Riverside County; Summer Stephan, District Attorney of San Diego County; Krishna A. Abrams, District Attorney of Solano County; Jill R. Ravitch, District Attorney of Sonoma County; Timothy Ward, District Attorney of Tulare County; and Michael N. Feuer, Los Angeles City Attorney. The People are informed and believe and, therefore, allege:

INTRODUCTION

- 1. The American Gaming Association estimates that the sweepstakes café "industry," earns more than \$10 billion a year, through unlawful gambling operations that are located in storefronts in strip malls and commercial districts of cities and towns across the United States.
- 2. In California, before January 1, 2015, these sweepstakes cafés became synonymous with illegal local gambling dens operating under the guise of lawful promotional sweepstakes. Utilizing sweepstakes gambling software (Sweepstakes Gambling System(s)), these cafés preyed upon unsuspecting consumers who were led to believe that the games played at computer stations, in an integrated system designed and developed to mimic casino-style slot machine games, were legal promotional sweepstakes when, in fact, they were gambling games operated on illegal gambling devices.
- 3. Lured by the interactive gameplay of casino-style games, patrons paid money for the opportunity to win cash prizes. Generally, under these Sweepstakes Gambling Systems, patrons purchased an ostensible product, such as Internet time or prepaid telephone cards, and received sweepstakes entries for every dollar spent on the product. The results of the sweepstakes entries were unpredictable to the patrons and could not be altered by them. Patrons opened their sweepstakes entries to reveal, and receive cash prizes by playing the casino-style games at computer stations.
- 4. Police agencies have documented that crime rates increased in neighborhoods where these internet gambling cafes were located. Many frequenters of these cafés are on criminal probation.

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- 5. In December 2012, the California Department of Justice's Bureau of Gaming Control (Bureau) issued a law enforcement advisory warning that the Bureau "considers Internet cafés that offer these types of sweepstakes [referring to the Sweepstakes Gambling Systems] to be illegal gambling operations."
- 6. Effective January 1, 2015, the California Legislature amended Business and Professions Code section 17539.1 by expanding the number of unfair acts associated with the operation of sweepstakes to include the use of interactive electronic video monitors that simulate gambling or play gambling-themed games.
- 7. On June 25, 2015, the Supreme Court of California analyzed several Sweepstakes Gambling Systems, including one that operated software developed by Defendant Pong Game Studios Corporation, a Canadian corporation, formerly known as Pong Marketing and Promotions, Inc. and Phone-Sweeps, Inc. (Pong). The Court held that the system violates Penal Code section 330b. (*People v. Grewal* (2015) 61 Cal.4th 544 (*Grewal*).)
- 8. In response to the *Grewal* decision and the Legislature's expansion of Business and Professions Code section 17539.1, Defendants slightly modified their business model, replacing the Sweepstakes Gambling System with a new system that is, once again, designed to circumvent the law. Pong's new gambling system (New Gambling System) eliminates any pretense that the gambling is a legal promotional sweepstakes and, instead, now pretends to be a "game of skill" rather than a "game of chance."
- 9. Despite the ruling by the Supreme Court of California expressly declaring that the use of Sweepstakes Gambling Systems, including Defendants' system, unlawful, and undeterred by previous law enforcement efforts and legislative enactments designed to eliminate Sweepstakes Gambling Systems, the Defendants continue their unlawful gambling operations through the use of their New Gambling System.

JURISDICTION

10. The People bring this action pursuant to Business and Professions Code section17200 et seq. (Unfair Competition Law) and Business and Professions Code section 17500 et seq.(False Advertising Law).

11. Jurisdiction and venue are proper in Solano County. Defendants have transacted their Sweepstakes Gambling System business in Solano County as well as in the counties of Contra Costa, Kern, Fresno, Merced, Riverside, Sonoma, and Tulare and throughout the State of California. Defendants have also transacted their New Gambling System business in the counties of Solano, Riverside and Tulare, and throughout the State of California.

DEFENDANTS

- 12. Defendant Pong is a Canadian company that designs, markets, sells, and licenses its Sweepstakes Gambling System and the New Gambling System in California for the purpose of conducting illegal gambling.
- 13. Defendant Talk N Win, Inc. (Talk N Win) is a Florida corporation that distributes Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System to locations throughout California.
- 14. Defendant Prepaid Telconnect, Inc. (Prepaid Telconnect) is a Florida corporation that provides telephone cards to be promoted by Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System in sweepstakes cafés throughout California.
- 15. Defendant Phone-Sweeps, LLC, is a Nevada limited liability company that provides telephone cards to be promoted by Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System in sweepstakes cafés throughout California.
- 16. Defendant Fernando Di Carlo is the president of Pong, and is a resident of Ontario, Canada. Defendant Di Carlo, either directly, or by aiding, abetting, or ratifying the acts of the employees of Pong, or by aiding, abetting, or ratifying the acts of the other defendants herein, participated in, and is responsible for, the unlawful practices set forth herein.
- 17. Defendant Michael Strawbridge is the president of Talk N Win and Prepaid Telconnect, and is a Florida resident. Defendant Strawbridge, either directly, or by aiding, abetting, or ratifying the acts of the employees of Pong, Talk N Win, and Prepaid Telconnect, or by aiding, abetting, or ratifying the acts of the other defendants herein, participated in, and is responsible for, the unlawful practices set forth herein.
- 18. Defendant Julius Kiss is the managing member of Phone Sweeps, LLC, a manager and business development director of Pong, and is a North Carolina resident. Defendant Kiss,

either directly, or by aiding, abetting, or ratifying the acts of the employees of Pong, or by aiding, abetting, or ratifying the acts of the other defendants herein, participated in, and is responsible for, the unlawful practices set forth herein.

- 19. The defendants identified in paragraphs 12 through 18, above, may be referred to herein collectively as "Defendants."
- 20. Whenever reference is made in this Second Amended Complaint to any act of any of the Defendants, that allegation shall mean that each of the Defendants acted individually and jointly with the other Defendants.
- 21. Any allegation about acts of any limited liability company, corporation, or other business shall mean that the limited liability company, corporation, or other business did the acts alleged through its managers, officers, directors, employees, agents, or representatives while they were acting within the actual or ostensible scope of their authority.
- 22. At all relevant times, each of the Defendants committed the acts, caused or directed others to commit the acts, or permitted others to commit the acts alleged in this Second Amended Complaint. Additionally, some or all of the Defendants acted as the agent of the other Defendants, and all of the Defendants acted within the scope of their agency, if acting as an agent of another.
- 23. At all relevant times, each of the Defendants knew or realized that the other Defendants were engaging in or planned to engage in the violations of law alleged in this Second Amended Complaint. Knowing or realizing that other Defendants were engaging in or planning to engage in unlawful conduct, each of the Defendants nevertheless facilitated the commission of those unlawful acts. Each of the Defendants intended to and did encourage, facilitate, or assist in the commission of the unlawful acts, and thereby aided and abetted the other Defendants in the unlawful conduct.
- 24. At all relevant times, Defendants have engaged in a conspiracy, common enterprise, and common course of conduct, the purpose of which is and was to engage in the violations of law alleged in this Second Amended Complaint. This conspiracy, common enterprise, and common course of conduct continue to the present.

25. The People are not aware of the true names and capacities of the defendants sued as Does 1 through 50, inclusive. The People therefore sue these defendants by such fictitious names. Each of these fictitiously named defendants is responsible in some manner for the activities alleged in this Second Amended Complaint. The People will amend this Second Amended Complaint to add the true names of the fictitiously named defendants once they are discovered.

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

A. Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System

- 26. Beginning on a date unknown to the People, but within the four years preceding the filing of this action, and continuing until approximately January 1, 2015, Defendants have provided Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System to sweepstakes cafés in Solano, Fresno, Kern, Riverside, Sonoma, and Tulare Counties, and elsewhere in California. Such sweepstakes cafés used and operated Defendants' Sweepstakes Gambling System to conduct illegal gambling as alleged below. Defendants provided Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System to sweepstakes cafés for substantial and valuable monetary consideration in the form of a percentage of the sweepstakes cafes' revenues derived from illegal sweepstakes gambling.
- 27. Under Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System, sweepstakes cafés sold, among other things, prepaid telephone cards (telephone cards). The sale of telephone cards at the sweepstakes cafés was promoted by offering sweepstakes to their patrons. When patrons purchased telephone cards, or more time on their existing cards, they received 100 sweepstakes points for each dollar spent on prepaid telephone time. Thus, a patron purchasing \$20 in telephone time would receive 2,000 sweepstakes points with the purchase. Patrons used their points to play gambling-themed sweepstakes games at the computer terminals provided at the sweepstakes cafés. Patrons accessed the gambling-themed computer sweepstakes games by swiping their telephone cards into an electronic card reader at the computer terminal or manually entering the account number shown on the back of the telephone card at the terminal keyboard.
- 28. Under Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System, when the computer sweepstakes games were displayed at the terminal, the patron was presented with a number of slot machine-style and

other gambling games. The patrons selected, based on available increments (such as 25, 50, or 100), how many points to risk on each play. The patron either lost the points played, or was awarded winning points, which the system tracked and displayed on the screen. If the patron finished with a positive number of winning points, the points were redeemable at \$1 per 100 points at the register. For example, 2,400 winning points would result in a cash prize of \$24 being paid to the patron. Within each pool of sweepstakes entries, prizes ranged from \$0.01 to \$4,200 (based on redeemable points won). Patrons could not predict whether they would win redeemable points. Patrons not wishing to play the sweepstakes games could ask the cashier at the sweepstakes café register to reveal an immediate result, and pay any cash prizes to the patron.

- 29. Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System was an integrated system using a private network of computers and servers. The main server was located in Canada and was electronically connected to the servers in the sweepstakes cafés. The server in each sweepstakes café was, in turn, electronically connected to each of the numerous computer terminals that patrons used at the sweepstakes café to play the gambling-themed sweepstakes games.
- 30. Throughout California, under Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System, patrons of sweepstakes cafés paid money, operated computers at the cafés, and by element of hazard or chance or other unpredictable outcome to the user, became entitled to receive money, credit or other valuable prizes in violation of Penal Code sections 330a, 330b, 330.1, 320, 321, 322, and, after January 1, 2015, were clearly an unlawful practice under, *inter alia*, Business and Professions Code section 17539.1. Defendants, each and all of them, have directly received revenues from these illegal activities or have a received percentage a percentage of the net profit of California sweepstakes cafes operating Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System.

B. Pong's Seasonal Gambling System

31. On January 1, 2015, Business and Professions Code section 17539.1, subdivision (a)(12) came into effect, prohibiting the use of any method intended to be used by a person interacting with an electronic video monitor, "to simulate gambling or play gambling-themed games in a business establishment that . . . implements the predetermination of sweepstakes cash

- . . . or otherwise connects a sweepstakes player or participant with sweepstakes cash, cashequivalent prizes, or other prizes of value."
- 32. Business and Professions Code section 17539.1, subdivision (a)(12), however, exempts game promotions or sweepstakes that are conducted, "on a limited and occasional basis as an advertising and marketing tool that are incidental to substantial bona fide sales of consumer products or services and are not intended to provide a vehicle for the establishment of places of ongoing gambling or gaming."
- 33. Beginning on or about January 1, 2015, and continuing until approximately March 31, 2015, in response to the new legislative enactment described above, Defendants rebranded their gambling operations by claiming that Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System was now being conducted on a limited and occasional basis (Seasonal Gambling System).
- 34. Defendants misled patrons into believing the Seasonal Gambling System complied with all applicable laws through, *inter alia*, posting the sweepstakes rules in cafés.
- 35. Defendants created their Seasonal Gambling System to provide the perception of legal compliance while Defendants continued to maintain and operate ongoing unlawful gambling and gaming operations.
- 36. Apart from the claimed limited duration, the actual operation and interactive gameplay of Pong's Seasonal Gambling System mirrored that of Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System described in paragraphs 26 through 30, above, and was operated in violation of Penal Code sections 330a, 330b, 330.1, 320, 321, 322, and Business and Professions Code section 17539.1. Defendants, each and all of them, have directly received revenues from these illegal activities or have received a percentage of the net profit of California sweepstakes cafés operating Pong's Seasonal Gambling System.

C. Pong's New Gambling System

37. On June 25, 2015, the Supreme Court of California issued its decision in *Grewal*. The decision analyzed several Sweepstakes Gambling Systems as used at sweepstakes cafés in Kern County. Two of the sweepstakes cafés at issue used software developed and provided by Pong. The Court found that all of the sweepstakes gambling systems at issue, including Pong's

Sweepstakes Gambling System, violated Penal Code section 330b. (*Grewal, supra*, 61 Cal.4th at pp. 549, 566.) In so holding, the Court determined the operation of Pong's Sweepstakes Gambling System—and effectively the Seasonal Gambling System—clearly fell "within [Penal Code] *section 330b, subdivision (d)'s* definition of a slot machine." (*Ibid.*, italics added.)

- 38. In response to the *Grewal* ruling, Defendants abandoned their pretextual sweepstakes business model and modified their unlawful Sweepstakes Gambling System and Seasonal Gambling System by adding a purported skill element after the patron plays Defendants' slot-machine style games to create their "New Gambling System." The "skill element" consists of a cursor moving horizontally across a color bar that the patron must stop at a position on the color bar to determine the percentage of cash prizes a patron is to receive prior to cashing out their gambling winnings.
- 39. Defendants have misled patrons into believing that the New Gambling System complies with all applicable laws through, *inter alia*, posting a notice in their gambling establishments falsely asserting that their New Gambling System is in compliance with California law.
- 40. Under Defendants' New Gambling System, the purchase of points is no longer tied to the purchase of another product. Instead, patrons purchase game credits that are provided on a game account card with a unique PIN number that enables them to play the gambling-themed games at the computer terminals located throughout the café.
- 41. Defendants' New Gambling System operates in two parts. Under part one, in a manner almost identical to the Defendants' Sweepstakes Gambling System, patrons access the gambling-themed games by entering their account number and PIN number on the graphical keypad at a computer terminal. Once their account is accessed, patrons select which gambling-themed game to play and determine how many credits to wager on the game. The patron either loses the credits played, or wins credits, which the system tracks and displays on the screen. Patrons cannot predict whether they will win credits.
- 42. Under Defendants' New Gambling System, if the patron wins credits playing the interactive gambling-themed games, he or she goes on to part two of the system to redeem his or

her credits for cash. If patrons lose all of their credits in part one, they have nothing to redeem in part two of the system, and their gambling session is over.

- 43. Under part two of the New Gaming System, if patrons won credits during part one, they may redeem their cash prizes through a purported "skill" exercise involving a moving cursor that travels horizontally across several vertical color bars on the computer screen. Each vertical color bar corresponds to a specific percentage indicating how much of the "potential win" will be converted into the patron's "actual win." To stop the cursor and determine the amount of the redeemable cash prize, the patron must push a graphical button before the allotted time expires. Usually, 25 seconds is the allotted time period for this exercise to be performed. If the patron stops the cursor in the middle area of the color bars, the patron redeems 100% or 110% of the credits awarded in part one for cash. The minimum percentage of credits that patrons can redeem, if they simply push the graphical button during the 25-second period, is 55% of the credits won in part one. If the time expires before the patron pushes the graphical button, the patron will receive 0% of the "potential win" and is unable to redeem any cash prize.
- 44. Defendants' New Gambling System is an integrated system using a private network of computers and servers. The system consists of a local manager server and computer terminals that patrons use to play the gambling-themed games.
- 45. Irrespective of the purported skill element in part two of the system, the element of chance predominates in the New Gambling System. The potential win from part one directly results from the payment of money to play gambling-themed games with outcomes determined by chance or other means unpredictable to the patron. Without a potential win of credits from gambling in part one, no further play can be had, nor can any prizes be won in part two. A patron's right to potentially win prizes in part two is itself a thing of value that is awarded in part one.
- 46. Moreover, almost any patron can easily complete part two's cursor exercise in the 90% to 110% cash-redemption range. And, if patrons simply push the graphical button during the 25-second period allotted for the cursor exercise, they will redeem a minimum of 55% of the

conducting, or aiding and abetting the conduct of, banking games on devices, in violation of Penal Code section 330; and

k. Violating Business and Professions Code section 17539.1, subdivision (a)(12), by offering for use a method of playing sweepstakes intended to be used by patrons interacting with electronic video monitors to simulate gambling or play gambling-themed games in sweepstakes cafés that: (i) directly or indirectly implemented the predetermination of sweepstakes cash, cashequivalent prizes, or other prizes of value, or (ii) otherwise connected patrons playing the games with sweepstakes cash, cashequivalent prizes, or other prizes of value.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

FALSE OR MISLEADING ADVERTISING – SWEEPSTAKES GAMBLING SYSTEM (BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTIONS 17500 ET SEQ.)

- 54. The People re-allege paragraphs 1 through 53, and incorporate these paragraphs by reference as though they were fully set forth in this cause of action.
- 55. From a date unknown to the People, Defendants, acting directly or indirectly, with intent to induce members of the public to purchase illegal gambling software and devices, to pay for the use of the devices, or to operate the devices to illegally gamble, have made or disseminated or caused to be made or disseminated to the public and to prospective or actual licensees of their software, untrue or misleading statements including, but not limited to the following:

The operation of personal computers by the public using Defendants' Sweepstakes Gambling System at sweepstakes cafés to pay money to win valuable prizes on the basis of chance or other unpredictable result was a lawful sweepstakes to promote the sale of telephone cards;

56. At the time the representations set forth in paragraph 55 were made, Defendants knew or by the exercise of reasonable care should have known that the representations were untrue or misleading.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

FALSE OR MISLEADING ADVERTISING – SEASONAL GAMBLING SYSTEM (BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTIONS 17500 ET SEQ.)

62. At the time the representations set forth in paragraph 61 were made, Defendants knew or by the exercise of reasonable care should have known that the representations were untrue or misleading.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the People pray for judgment as follows:

AS TO THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD CAUSES OF ACTION

- 1. That, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17203, Defendants and all persons who act in concert with them be preliminarily and permanently enjoined from engaging in unfair competition as defined in Business and Professions Code section 17200, including, but not limited to, the acts and practices alleged in this Second Amended Complaint;
- 2. That, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17203, the Court make such orders or judgments as may be necessary to prevent the use or employment by the Defendants of any practice that constitutes unfair competition or as may be necessary to restore to any person in interest any money or property that may have been acquired by means of such unfair competition;
- 3. That, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17206, the Court assess a civil penalty of \$2,500 against Defendants, each and all of them, for each violation of Business and Professions Code section 17200 alleged in the first, second, and third causes of action of this Second Amended Complaint in an amount according to proof, but not less than \$10 million;

AS TO THE FOURTH, FIFTH, AND SIXTH CAUSES OF ACTION

- 4. That, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17535, the Court make such orders or judgments as may be necessary to prevent Defendants from doing any of the acts alleged in the Second Amended Complaint that violate Business and Professions Code section 17500 et seq.;
- 5. That, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17535, the Court make such orders or judgments as may be necessary to prevent the use or employment by the Defendants of any practice that constitutes false advertising, or as may be necessary to restore to any person in interest any money or property that may have been acquired by means of such false advertising;

1	6.	6. That, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 17536, the Court assess a		
2	civil penalty of \$2,500 against Defendants, each and all of them, for each violation of Business			
3	and Professions Code section 17500 et seq. alleged in the fourth, fifth, and sixth cause of action			
4	of this Second Amended Complaint in an amount to be proven at trial, but not less than \$10			
5	million;			
6	AS TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION			
7	7.	7. That the People recover their costs of investigating Defendants' Sweepstakes		
8	Gambling System, Seasonal Gambling System, and New Gambling System, as operated in			
9	California;			
10	8.	8. That the People be awarded attorneys' fees where permitted by statute;		
11	9.	9. That the People recover their costs of suit; and		
12	10. For such other relief as the Court may deem just and proper.			
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16	Dated: F	February <u>19</u> , 2019 Respect	fully Submitted,	
17			BECERRA y General of California	
18	=	Sara J.		
19		T. MICH	ielle Laird sing Deputy Attorney General	
20		COLIN A	A. WOOD Attorney General	
21				
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23	Deputy Attorney General Attorneys for Plaintiff			
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