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## Missouri tracks scofflaws via pizza-delivery databases

By Kelly Wiese, Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — It's dinnertime, and you're hungry and tired, so you pick up the phone and order your favorite pizza. But you might have just landed yourself a lot more than pepperoni and cheese.

If you owe fines or fees to the courts, that phone call may have provided the link the state needed to track you down and make you pay.

That's one of the strategies of firms such as a company being hired by the Missouri Office of State Courts Administrator to handle its fine and debt collections.

David Coplen, the state office's budget director, said he discovered that pizza delivery lists are one of the best sources such companies use to locate people.

"There are literally millions of dollars of uncollected fines, fees and court costs out there," Coplen said.

How much?

A sampling in January of just three of Missouri's 114 counties found about \$2 million owed to courts by people whose Social Security numbers were known, Coplen said. That finding suggests courts statewide could reap significant revenue once Dallas-based ACS gets to work this month pursuing people using phone numbers and addresses.

Databases compiled by private companies and government agencies are a key tool for firms such as ACS, Coplen said, and "one of the databases they find to be most helpful are pizza delivery databases."

"When you call to order a pizza, you usually give them your correct name, your correct address and your correct phone number," he said.

Just which pizza companies' databases might be mined is unknown.

A representative of Domino's Pizza said the company does not sell its customer information, and other national pizza chains did not respond to messages seeking

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comment.

Michael Daniels, an ACS division vice president, declined to reveal exactly which companies' databases ACS uses.

Daniels said sifting through private databases, from pizza deliveries to magazine subscriptions, is just one piece of the work the company does to help states collect more money and make the process more efficient.

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The company's clients typically see their collections rise anywhere from 33% to 100% in the first year of a contract, Daniels said.

Some details of Missouri's contract with ACS are still being worked out, Coplen said, but the company makes money on court fees by adding a surcharge to the amount a person owes. For every \$1 of a court fee it collects, ACS may charge — and keep — a maximum surcharge of 20%.

For handling the fine collection center, which processes citations such as traffic tickets that people pay without going to court, the company is paid per ticket, but the cost is tied to the amount it finds in the debt collection portion.

Coplen said having ACS pursue those who owe court fees and fines will not only bring money into the state but will teach people that when they are fined, they must pay up.

Currently, Coplen said, if an Illinois resident fails to pay a Missouri speeding ticket, a Missouri court can issue a warrant. But sheriffs' offices rarely have time or staff to drive hours away and deliver such a warrant, he said. For ACS, however, there's a financial incentive to go after such scofflaws.

Some privacy advocates say the public should be aware of how databases such as pizza delivery lists may be used.

Chris Hoofnagle, of the Electronic Privacy Information Center in Washington, D.C., said the use of such seemingly innocuous information is a common strategy.

"The unfortunate reality is even if you are very careful in protecting your personal information, you give it to any business, they can turn around and sell it," Hoofnagle said.

"The first time your baby sitter orders pizza, that pizza delivery company has your phone number, address and name, and they sell it," he added. "They don't have to tell you about it, either."

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