New York’s attorney general says SiriusXM’s annoying cancellation process is actually illegal

SiriusXM is getting sued by the state of New York for making it too difficult for subscribers to cancel their plans. The suit claims that customers who want to cancel are required to chat over the phone or online with an agent who bombards them with questions and offers. “Sirius deliberately wastes its subscribers’ time even though it has the ability to process cancellations with the click of a button,” the suit reads.

Attorney General Letitia James’ office claims that SiriusXM’s own data reveals that it takes subscribers an average of 11.5 minutes to cancel by phone, and 30 minutes to cancel online. The suit is seeking damages for affected customers, as well as a $5,000 penalty to the state of New York for each violation.

“Having to endure a lengthy and frustrating process to cancel a subscription is a stressful burden no one looks forward to, and when companies make it hard to cancel subscriptions, it’s illegal,” James said in a statement. “Consumers should be able to cancel a subscription they no longer use or need without any issues, and companies have a legal duty to make their cancellation process easy.”

Clearly, some people have managed to endure SiriusXM’s cancellation process. The company reported a drop of 336,000 subscribers to its flagship satellite radio service in the first nine months of 2023.

“It’s telling that the New York Attorney General issued a press release before providing SiriusXM with a copy of the complaint,” SiriusXM spokesperson Jessica Casano-Antonellis said in a statement. “Like a number of consumer businesses, we offer a variety of options for customers to sign up for or cancel their SiriusXM subscription and, upon receiving and reviewing the complaint, we intend to vigorously defend against these baseless allegations that grossly mischaracterize SiriusXM’s practices.”

The long-term trend away from broadcast means that SiriusXM has had to get creative about its future. Aside from the alleged cancellation gymnastics, the company has invested heavily in podcasting. It bought Stitcher in 2020 for $325 million and Conan O’Brien’s production company in 2022 for $150 million, and it handed out lucrative distribution deals to top podcasts *Crime Junkie* and *Pod Save America*. Additionally, the company debuted its modernized new app last month that looks and acts much more like Spotify.

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