

## The Price of Admission: FTC Alleges Ticketmaster Rigged the Show

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September 26, 2025

In a sweeping 84-page complaint, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)—joined by seven state attorneys general—has filed suit against Live Nation Entertainment and Ticketmaster, alleging a years-long scheme of deceptive ticketing practices that cost consumers billions. The FTC is seeking civil penalties and monetary relief, alleging violations of the FTC Act and the Better Online Ticket Sales Act. The case is pending in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

According to the September 18, 2025, **complaint**, Ticketmaster allegedly:

- Enabled brokers to bypass ticket limits using thousands of fake accounts and proxy IPs.
- Turned a blind eye to violations, profiting from inflated resale prices and triple-dipping on fees.
- Advertised misleading ticket prices, hiding mandatory fees until checkout—fees that added 24% to 44% to ticket costs. The lawsuit alleges that from 2019 to 2024, consumers spent over \$82.6 billion on Ticketmaster tickets, with \$16.4 billion in hidden fees alone.
- Provided brokers with a software program called TradeDesk to support brokers in aggregating and reselling tickets at a markup.
- Avoided implementing effective fraud prevention, fearing it would hurt revenue.

The lawsuit alleges violations of Section 5(a) of the FTC Act; The Better Online Ticket Sales Act; multiple state consumer protection laws (Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nebraska, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia).

The allegations paint a picture of an online ticketing marketplace tilted heavily in favor of brokers and the platform itself, to the detriment of ordinary fans. By allegedly enabling brokers to evade ticket limits through fake accounts and proxy servers, Ticketmaster is accused of facilitating large-scale bulk purchases—making it harder and more expensive for consumers to buy tickets at face value. The FTC contends that these practices not only fostered an artificial scarcity but also drove significant markups in the resale market, which Ticketmaster then profited from through additional service fees.

The complaint highlights how TradeDesk, the proprietary software offered to brokers, streamlined the aggregation and rapid resale of high-demand tickets, reinforcing the company's dominant position. Rather than curbing these tactics, the FTC claims Ticketmaster prioritized revenue over fair access, allowing deceptive tactics to persist unchecked.

The FTC and the state attorneys general allege not just a pattern of anti-competitive behavior, but a deliberate effort to obscure true costs and limit consumer choice. In response to the mounting scrutiny, Live Nation and Ticketmaster have previously asserted that they comply with all applicable laws and that their fees and practices are consistent with industry standards. They argue that many fees are driven by artists, venues, and third-party resellers, and have pointed to investments in anti-fraud technology. But the lawsuit suggests these measures were either ineffective or insufficiently enforced.

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In 2024, the Justice Department and 29 attorneys general have also filed a separate antitrust **suit** seeking to break up Live Nation and Ticketmaster

### **Client Action Recommendation**

This case could reshape how ticketing platforms operate, especially regarding transparency, broker access, and consumer protection. If your business touches live events, entertainment, or e-commerce, this lawsuit is worth watching. If your business sells tickets, services, or products online, now is the time to:

- Audit your checkout process for fee transparency.
- Evaluate third-party reseller relationships for compliance risks.
- Ensure fraud prevention tools are active and effective.
- Monitor regulatory developments that may impact platform-based sales.

If you have questions about how this development may impact your organization, please contact your Miller Canfield attorney or one of the authors of this alert.