

Got a call or letter about “surplus funds”? Verify it in 15 minutes.

A public-records checklist for Illinois former homeowners and heirs · Free · Every step uses an official source · September 2026

Why you are getting calls. When an Illinois home sells at a court-ordered foreclosure auction for *more* than the loan balance, the difference is a **surplus** that belongs to the former owner (735 ILCS 5/15-1512). The sale record is public, so recovery companies, attorneys and claim buyers all read it and call the same people. **Several calls usually mean the money is real. None of them means you must use that company.** Scammers copy the same script — so check, don’t trust.

#	Check	Where (all free)	Pass if...
1	Write down what they said	Company name, county, case number , property address, sale date, what you are “owed,” what they asked for.	They give a case number on the spot. Refusal = stop.
2	Find the case	Clerk of the Circuit Court of the county (Cook: online case search; Lake, Will, McHenry: the Circuit Clerk). Look for the <i>Report of Sale and Distribution and Order Approving Sale</i> .	The case exists, in your (or your relative’s) name, at that address.
3	Confirm a surplus exists	In the Report of Sale: sale price vs. judgment balance.	Sale price was higher than the judgment. If lower, there is no surplus.
4	Verify the company	Illinois Secretary of State business entity search (apps.ilsos.gov); if they say “attorney,” the ARDC lawyer search (iardc.org); reviews + BBB.	Registered name matches the agreement; real office; a person answers. Courts, the Clerk, the Sheriff and the Treasurer never call to sign you up.
5	Read the terms	Their written agreement — before any work.	Nothing upfront · one contingency fee in writing · the court pays you · you keep the right to file yourself · no deed, blanket power of attorney or undisclosed buyout.
6	Decide — and report if needed	ReportFraud.ftc.gov · Illinois Attorney General Consumer Fraud Hotline 1-800-386-5438.	Any check failed → send nothing, report. All passed → the money is probably real and it is yours either way.

Probably legitimate if...

- ✓ A home you or a relative owned went through a court foreclosure and was sold
- ✓ Caller states public facts (county, case number, address, sale date) and needs *no* SSN, birth date, bank or ID to “look you up”
- ✓ The sale price beat the loan balance (you had equity)
- ✓ Nothing upfront; one written contingency fee; told you can file yourself
- ✓ Company found at the Secretary of State
- ✓ Never claimed to be the court or “the government”

Walk away if...

- ✗ Any upfront “filing,” “processing” or “release” fee
- ✗ Gift cards, wire transfer or crypto
- ✗ “Today only” / “the money disappears in days”
- ✗ Won’t give the case number
- ✗ Wants your SSN, bank login or ID photos on first contact
- ✗ Links in texts or emails to “claim” or “verify” funds
- ✗ A deed, blanket power of attorney, or buyout of your whole claim without the amount on record
- ✗ A property you never owned

You can do this yourself. The surplus is claimed by petition in the same foreclosure case. Illinois Supreme Court Rule 113(h) provides a form *Petition for Turnover of Surplus Funds*; Cook County publishes form **CCCH 0317**; Illinois Legal Aid Online (illinoislegalaid.org, “Collecting a surplus after a foreclosure sale”) explains the steps free. A lawful company can still be a poor deal — compare its fee and terms against filing on your own.

Two special cases. *Tax-sale “surplus equity” calls:* Illinois’ new fund (Public Act 104-0553, effective July 10, 2026) is claimed by petitioning the court that issued the **tax deed**; no county office calls to register you, there is no county claim form as of September 2026, and nobody needs to pay to join the *Kidd v. Pappas* class action. *Money already with the State Treasurer:* search and claim free at icash.illinoistreasurer.gov; the Treasurer never charges or calls; finder fees are capped at 10% and agreements within 24 months of transfer are void (765 ILCS 1026).

Free call check. Tell us what the caller or letter said and we will check the public record and tell you whether a real surplus case exists in your name — whether or not you use us. lakeshoreassetrecovery.com/verify-surplus-funds-call-illinois · 773-270-9629 · info@lakeshoreassetrecovery.com
Lakeshore Asset Recovery LLC, 10 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago, IL. Not a law firm, not a government agency, not class counsel. We are a recovery company and we also contact former owners found through public records. You may be able to recover surplus funds yourself at little or no cost. General information, not legal advice; does not accuse any company of wrongdoing. Sources: 735 ILCS 5/15-1512; Ill. S. Ct. Rule 113(g)–(h) (eff. 12/1/2020); 765 ILCS 1026; 35 ILCS 200/21-302 as amended by PA 104-0553; Cook County form CCCH 0317; FTC consumer alert 3/30/2026; Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County fraudulent-text warnings, 9/2026; Illinois Legal Aid Online.