

Gonzales & Associates, Inc
c/o Cyberscout
1 Keystone Ave., Unit 700
Cherry Hill, NJ 08003
DB-07884

October 13, 2023

Notice of a Data Breach

Dear [REDACTED]

Please read this letter in its entirety.

What happened?

We are writing to inform you of a security incident that may have resulted in the disclosure of your personal information. On July 14, 2023, we learned that one of our employees' accounts with SmartVault, a third-party online file sharing and document storage program used by our office, was accessed by an unauthorized user and files with your sensitive information were downloaded by said unauthorized user. We are taking appropriate precautionary measures to protect your financial security to help alleviate any concerns you may have. If we become aware of any suspicious activity in connection with your tax returns, we will notify you immediately. Conversely, if you receive any notifications from the IRS concerning your account, please notify our office right away.

What information was involved?

For Individuals: The information accessed may have included your name, gender, date of birth, telephone number(s), address, social security number, employment (W-2) information, 1099 information, as well as direct deposit bank account information, including account number and routing information (if provided to us). Further, the information may have included supporting documentation such as brokerage statements you may also have provided to us.

For Entities: The information accessed may have included your company name, Federal Employer Identification Number, address, telephone number; employee and/or 1099-recipient information; partner, shareholder/officer or beneficiary names, addresses, social security numbers; and/or other information you may have also provided to us.

What are we doing to address this situation?

Gonzales & Associates, Inc immediately instituted corrective measures to ensure that any unauthorized access to SmartVault was terminated. We also engaged a forensic IT expert to determine the information that was downloaded, which took several weeks. Following this investigation, we determined that your sensitive information was included in the data downloaded by the unauthorized user.

With the help of our IT consultants, the following steps have been taken: (1) immediate enhancements to our systems, security, and practices have been implemented to prevent unauthorized access in the future; (2) all passwords have been changed; (3) a two-step authentication has been implemented for online system access; and (4) we have engaged experts to

assist us in conducting a full review of our security practices and systems to ensure that appropriate security protocols, including network firewalls, are in place and properly functioning going forward. We will continue to work with our IT consultants to keep the firm and clients safe.

Further, we are working with the appropriate agencies on your behalf such as the IRS and State tax agencies to prevent fraudulent tax filings on behalf of our clients.

In response to the incident, we are providing you with access to **Triple Bureau Credit Monitoring/Triple Bureau Credit Report/Triple Bureau Credit Score** services at no charge. These services provide you with alerts for twelve months from the date of enrollment when changes occur to any of one of your Experian, Equifax or TransUnion credit files. This notification is sent to you the same day that the change or update takes place with the bureau. In addition, we are providing you with proactive fraud assistance to help with any questions that you might have or in event that you become a victim of fraud. These services will be provided by Cyberscout through Identity Force, a TransUnion company specializing in fraud assistance and remediation services.

How do I enroll for the free services?

To enroll in Credit Monitoring services at no charge, please log on to **<https://secure.identityforce.com/benefit/gonzales>** and follow the instructions provided. When prompted please provide the following unique code to receive services: **NFUZ6LHSER**. In order for you to receive the monitoring services described above, you must enroll within 90 days from the date of this letter. The enrollment requires an internet connection and e-mail account and may not be available to minors under the age of 18 years of age. Please note that when signing up for monitoring services, you may be asked to verify personal information for your own protection to confirm your identity.

What you can do to address this situation?

Cyberscout has been retained to help you with any questions or problems you may encounter, including assisting you with obtaining a credit report and placing fraud alerts on your accounts. A fraud alert tells creditors to contact you before they open any new accounts or change your existing accounts. If you choose not to use these services, we strongly urge you to do the following:

If you choose to place a fraud alert on your own, you will need to contact one of the three major credit agencies directly at:

Experian (1-888-397-3742)
P.O. Box 4500
Allen, TX 75013
www.experian.com

Equifax (1-800-525-6285)
P.O. Box 740241
Atlanta, GA 30374
www.equifax.com

TransUnion (1-800-680-7289)
P.O. Box 2000
Chester, PA 19016
www.transunion.com

Also, should you wish to obtain a credit report and monitor it on your own:

- **IMMEDIATELY** obtain free copies of your credit report and monitor them upon receipt for any suspicious activity. You can obtain your free copies by going to the following website: **www.annualcreditreport.com** or by calling them toll-free at 1-877-322-8228. (Hearing impaired consumers can access their TDD service at 1-877-730-4204.
- **Upon receipt of your credit report**, we recommend that you review it carefully for any suspicious activity.
- Be sure to promptly report any suspicious activity to Gonzales & Associates, Inc

We also encourage you to do the following:

- We strongly recommend you be vigilant in reviewing your bank account and brokerage statements, as well as free credit reports, to monitor your accounts for unauthorized activity.
- We suggest you change your passwords on all bank and brokerage accounts, and have a conversation with your bank(s) regarding the monitoring they can provide.
- You may also obtain a free copy of your credit report online, whether or not you suspect any unauthorized activity on your account, at one of the above three major credit agencies or at www.annualcreditreport.com, by calling toll-free 1-877-322-8228, or by mailing an Annual Credit Report Request Form (available at www.annualcreditreport.com) to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA, 30348-5281.
- You also have the right to place a security freeze on your credit report at no cost to you. A security freeze is intended to prevent credit, loans and services from being approved in your name without your consent. To place a security freeze on your credit report, you need to make a request to each consumer reporting agency. You may make that request by certified mail, overnight mail, or regular stamped mail, or by following the instructions found at the websites listed below. The following information must be included when requesting a security freeze (note that if you are requesting a credit report for your spouse, this information must be provided for him/her as well): (1) full name, with middle initial and any suffixes; (2) Social Security number; (3) date of birth; (4) current address and any previous addresses for the past five years; and (5) any applicable incident report or complaint with a law enforcement agency or the Registry of Motor Vehicles. The request must also include a copy of a government-issued identification card and a copy of a recent utility bill or bank or insurance statement. It is essential that each copy be legible, display your name and current mailing address, and the date of issue.

Equifax Security Freeze

P.O. Box 105788
Atlanta, GA 30348
[https://www.freeze.equifax.com/
Freeze/jsp/SFF_PersonalIDInfo.jsp](https://www.freeze.equifax.com/Freeze/jsp/SFF_PersonalIDInfo.jsp)

Experian Security Freeze

P.O. Box 9554
Allen, TX 75013
[https://www.experian.com/
freeze/center.html](https://www.experian.com/freeze/center.html)

TransUnion (FVAD)

P.O. Box 2000
Chester, PA 19016
[https://freeze.transunion.
com](https://freeze.transunion.com)

- We also suggest you contact the IRS about getting an Identity Protection PIN to use with your Social Security Number for heightened security. You can do this by going to <https://www.irs.gov/identity-theft-fraud-scams/get-an-identity-protection-pin>.
- You can also obtain more information from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and your local Office for the Attorney General about identity theft and ways to protect yourself. The FTC has an identity theft hotline: 877-438-4338; TTY: 1-866-653-4261. They also provide information on-line at www.ftc.gov/idtheft. You can obtain the contact information for your State Attorney General's Office at naag.org.
- If you suspect identity theft, report it to law enforcement, including the Federal Trade Commission at <https://www.identitytheft.gov/#/> and the State Attorney General's Office at naag.org.

For more information

We are committed to helping those people who may have been impacted by this unfortunate situation. Protecting your information is incredibly important to us, as is addressing this incident with the information and assistance you may need.

Representatives are available for 90 days from the date of this letter, to assist you with questions regarding this incident, between the hours of 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Please call the help line at 1-800-405-6108 and supply the fraud specialist with your unique code listed above.

The protection and privacy of our clients' information has always been a top priority for our firm. We extend our deepest apologies for any inconvenience this incident may have caused you.

Sincerely,

Gene A. Gonzales

Gene A. Gonzales
Shareholder