

# Philly lawyer buys billboard in war with bank

- [SAM NEWHOUSE](#)

Lawyer paid \$25,000 for the billboard ad.



A billboard reading "Santander: The Bank that Robs You", was unveiled Friday morning along the northbound and southbound lanes of I-95 in Fishtown, Philadelphia, on Nov. 4, 2016.

*Charles Mostoller*

*Photo:*

Thousands of commuters driving through Fishtown during the weekend were exposed to the latest tactic in a Philadelphia lawyer's ongoing fight against Santander Bank.

At 6 a.m. Friday, a billboard went up over I-95 near the interchange with I-676 that looked just like an ad for Santander Bank.

Same color. Same logo. Different message.

"Santander: The Bank That Robs You," the electronic billboard reads, with "Paid for by peruto.com" in fine print below.

"It may get me sued, but I'm in it to win it," said Philly defense attorney Chuck Peruto, who is suing Santander over what he claims is fraud, while picketing outside Santander under the Clothespin in Center City on Friday around noon. "They robbed me."

Santander declined to comment on Peruto's billboard.

Peruto plunked down \$25,000 for the billboard after months trying to find an advertising company willing to let him put it up. A company agreed to accept his billboard idea only after he agreed to accept all legal liability related to it, he said.

Peruto said he took out a \$1.9 million loan in 2012 for a real estate investment. When he paid the loan back early several months ago, he was hit with a \$267,400 penalty—more than ten times what he expected based on reviewing the paperwork, he said.

After months of failing to make headway, Peruto took to the streets as he sued the bank. He has [been picketing various Santander branches for weeks](#).

Peruto's lawsuit was filed in the Court of Common Pleas, but was shifted over to federal court, where it was dismissed by a judge last month. Peruto is appealing that decision.

"Santander has prevailed in this case in the trial court," a Santander spokeswoman said via email. "This case is entirely without merit and we will continue to defend ourselves vigorously and pursue all legal options."

Peruto groused on Friday that the federal judge dismissed his suit without a hearing or any testimony.

He now claims the paperwork that articulates the complex mathematical formula for calculating early repayment penalties wasn't even in the documents he reviewed when he agreed to the loan's terms.

He said that document was added just before he sent his son, with power of attorney, to sign the final paperwork. He said he had no idea his son was signing off on papers he had not reviewed.

"They don't have my signature on it. Nothing," he said. "They snuck that in there. That was not in there before."

Peruto said the amount he was fined was equivalent to years of savings.

Peruto has hit the streets with flyers and friends carrying picket signs outside Santander branches 10 times so far, he said. He claims sheriffs in Media, Pennsylvania, threatened to arrest him for protesting, but he wouldn't back down.

Peruto already paid the penalty, but he wants it back. Even then, he said he'll keep crusading against the bank.

"After they pay me, I'm not stopping. No," he said. "Everybody in the world should be aware of what they do."