

## Denver federal lawsuit says PetSmart discriminates against blind

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PetSmart

Six blind people including two from Colorado have filed a federal lawsuit in Denver against PetSmart claiming the company doesn't have simple equipment to protect their privacy, forcing them to give their debit card PINs out loud.

PetSmart uses touch-screen keypads the blind cannot operate, which opens blind people up to possible identity theft, according to the lawsuit filed on behalf of the plaintiffs including the National Federation of the Blind.

A message left with PetSmart corporate headquarters seeking comment was not returned immediately on Wednesday.

Failing to provide "inexpensive" tactile keypads is discriminatory, the lawsuit says.

"Blind customers are forced to sacrifice the security of their debit card PIN by sharing it with PetSmart employees or using another less desirable form of payment," the lawsuit says.

[Blind people are just as concerned](#) about the security of their financial accounts and information as their sighted peers, said Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind.

"Nor is it an answer to say that we can pay with cash or a credit card instead; blind people must have all of the same options for payment as the sighted as a matter of equal treatment, and the benefits of using debit cards, such as the ability to receive cash back, apply equally to the blind," Riccobono said.

Dishon Spears, a Colorado resident and NFB member, said blind people cannot shop at PetSmart in the same way that sighted customers can.

" [This is discrimination](#), whether or not PetSmart intends it that way," Spears said in a statement.

Attorneys representing the plaintiffs include Kevin Williams, head of the Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition Legal Program in Denver; Jana Eisinger and Douglas Lambalot of the Martinez Law Group, with offices in Denver and New York City; and Scott LaBarre of Denver.

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