



May 26, 2011

\*\*\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*CONSUMER ALERT\*\*\*\*\*

**MADIGAN WARNS CONSUMERS OF INCREASE IN LOTTERY SCAM REPORTS**

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today alerted Illinois consumers to an alarming rise in reports to her office of lottery scams. Callers — particularly seniors — report being conned out of thousands of dollars through scams promising they've won lottery and sweepstakes prizes.

"Every day scam artists busily work the phones and mail to con people — too often seniors — into believing they've just won something big," Attorney General Madigan said. "The only big thing these seniors get if they respond is a hit to their bank accounts. Too often victims lose thousands of dollars to lottery and sweepstakes scams."

Madigan said con artists pose a variety of convincing stories to get consumers' money, but they use a common tactic by forcing consumers to first wire money to the scammer to then supposedly claim their lottery or sweepstakes prize. This method largely prevents consumers from recouping their lost funds and makes the scam largely untraceable.

The best defense? Consumers should simply hang up the call or throw out the letter when contacted, Madigan said.

"If you receive a call or letter from someone you don't know or haven't met telling you, 'You've Won,' hang up or throw it out," Madigan said. "Don't stay on the phone, don't read more. Just Hang Up or Throw it Out!"

Attorney General Madigan detailed common warning signs of these scams for consumers:

- **You do not know the caller**, where they are calling from or what they want from you.
- **The caller requests personal information**. Any time a stranger asks you for your bank account number, Social Security number or other personal information, it is a clear sign of identity theft. Never give personal or financial information to a stranger.
- **The caller promises a big award**. Scammers try to lure you in with promises of unexpected riches such as a large sum of money, a vacation or a "get-rich-quick" investment scheme. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- **You must pay first**. It is illegal for someone to require an up-front payment to claim a lottery or sweepstakes prize. Scammers will often tell you that you must wire money out of state, or even out of the country, to obtain your winnings. Never wire money to a stranger. Wiring money is just like sending cash — scammers will get the money quickly, and you won't get it back.

Madigan said consumers should consider placing their phone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry to block most unwanted telemarketing calls. Register your home phone or cell phone online at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) or by calling 1-888-382-1222 (TTY 1-866-290-4236) from the phone number you wish to register.

The Attorney General also urged consumers who have fallen victim to a scam or want to report a scam to contact her Consumer Fraud Hotline:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438

Springfield 1-800-243-0618

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