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November 14, 2017

**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: CONSUMERS WHO LOST MONEY TO SCAMMERS USING WESTERN UNION SHOULD FILE CLAIMS FOR REFUNDS**

**Chicago** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that people who sent money to scammers who requested payment through Western Union's money transfer system may now file claims to get their money back.

People who sent money to a scammer using Western Union between Jan. 1, 2004 and Jan. 19, 2017 may qualify to receive a refund. Madigan said people will have until Feb. 12, 2018 to file claims to request refunds through a fund administered by the Department of Justice's Victim Asset Recovery Program. According to Madigan, Illinois residents may be eligible to receive as much as \$20 million in refunds.

"Western Union knew scammers were stealing from people and did not do enough to protect people," Madigan said. "I encourage Illinois residents who think they are eligible to file a claim before Feb. 12."

The \$586 million fund is part of a settlement Madigan and the attorneys general of 49 other states and the District of Columbia reached with Western Union in January 2017. Madigan and the attorneys general launched an investigation into Western Union after receiving complaints from consumers who used the company to wire money to scam artists. The attorneys general alleged that Western Union was aware of how scammers used its payment system to steal from people and failed to take sufficient steps to protect people from these scams. Examples of the scams include phony lottery or prize winnings, phony family emergency scams, IRS scams and romance scams. The common thread in all of the schemes is that the scammer tried to catch people off guard by creating a phony urgent situation that they claimed required people to immediately wire money to the scammers.

As a result of that investigation, Western Union agreed to do more to protect its customers from third-party scammers and to discipline agents who fail to follow anti-fraud protocols.

Illinois residents who have already reported being a victim to Madigan's office, Western Union, the FTC or another government agency may receive a claim form in the mail. The forms were mailed Monday and will detail the steps consumers should take to file a claim to receive compensation. People who do not receive a form in the mail but believe they may be eligible to receive compensation through the fund, can obtain more information or file an online claim by visiting the Western Union Remission [website](#) or by calling 1-844-319-2124. All completed claims forms must be mailed back to the settlement administrator by Feb. 12. It could take up to a year before eligible consumers receive a refund and depending on the number of consumers who file claims, the refunds may be a percentage of the amount consumers lost.

Madigan encouraged Illinois residents who have questions to contact her Consumer Fraud Hotline at 1-800-386-5438 (Chicago), 1-800-243-0618 (Springfield), or 1-800-243-0607 (Carbondale).

Springfield Bureau Chief Elizabeth Blackston is handling the settlement for Madigan's Consumer Protection Division.

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