

JUST HANG UP

WILLETTE MILLER

BUCHANAN DAM, TEXAS

LOST \$84,000 TO

TELEMARKETERS



EACH YEAR, many senior Texans lose millions of dollars to scam artists who operate by phone. These criminals tell victims that they have won a multi-million dollar lottery or sweepstakes prize. They then ask consumers to wire thousands of dollars in up front “taxes” and handling fees before the prize can be sent. The prize never arrives. The money is lost forever. Some seniors have lost their life savings this way. Don't be next. Just hang up.

Contact the Office of the Attorney General
at (800)252-8011 or
www.oag.state.tx.us.



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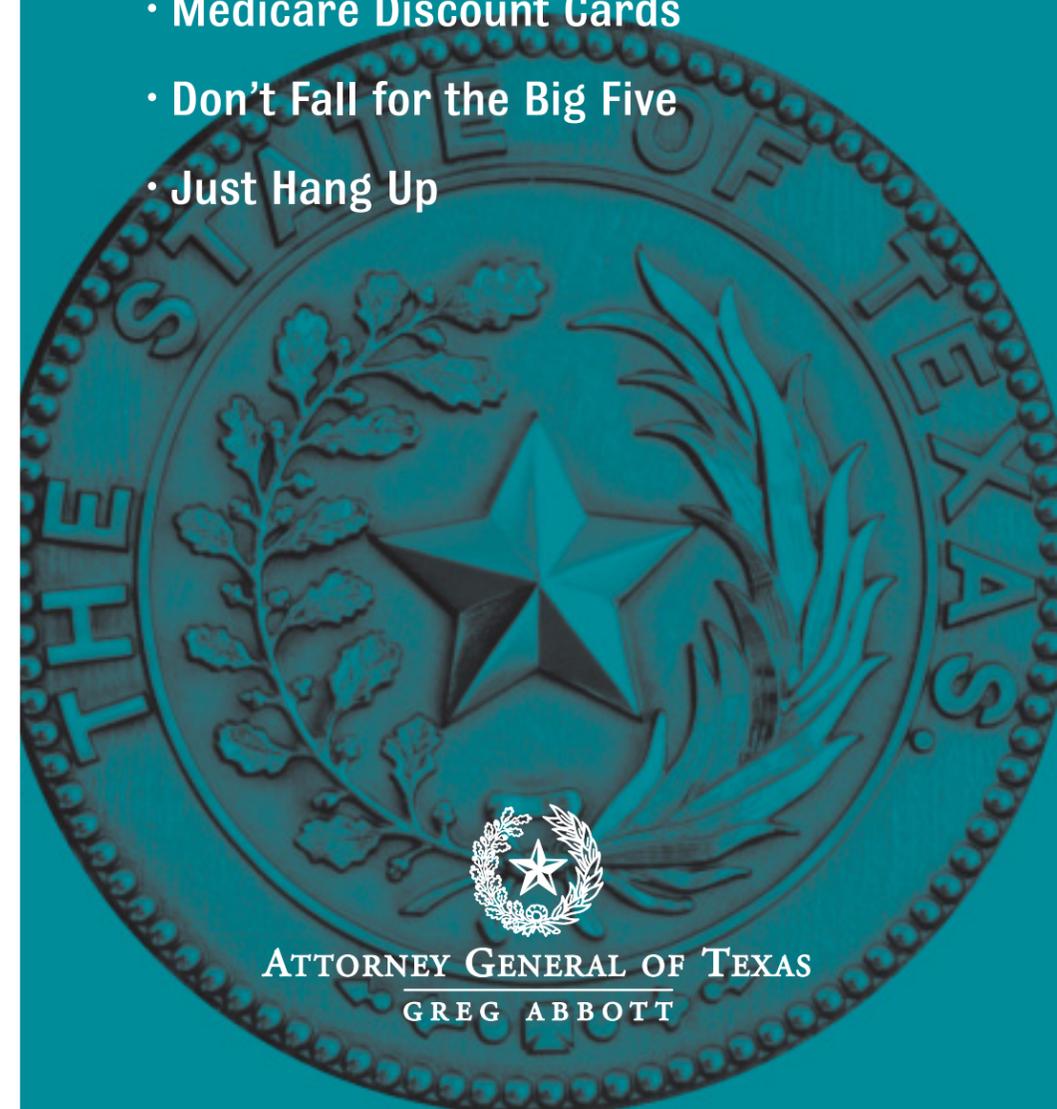
SENIOR ALERT

newsletter

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ★ SUMMER 2004

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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

Medicare Discount Cards – Don't Let the Crooks Cash In!

RECENT CHANGES IN THE MEDICARE SYSTEM will provide substantial benefits to help seniors buy prescription drugs. Special discount cards will be available for NO MORE than \$30. The fee can be waived for low income seniors. All seniors should be extremely cautious about where they obtain information about this new program and in making the decision to participate. Scam artists are already trying to rob seniors by promoting bogus cards.

If someone calls you and starts talking about how to get your benefits under the new Medicare laws, **JUST HANG UP**. Medicare is a legitimate federal program. Reliable information can be obtained from a number of sources, including the Web site of the program itself, www.Medicare.gov or by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) Your health care provider, a senior center, or any one of a number of trusted sources can also help you. Don't rely on someone you don't know who calls you at home.

No one should be calling you trying to get your bank or credit card account numbers or any other personal or financial information. If you receive calls, JUST HANG UP. You will receive information in the mail from government authorized private companies who are offering Medicare-approved drug discount cards. Before giving out your Social Security number or any other information by mail, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to make sure this is a legitimate company. All discount cards approved by Medicare will have this seal:



Don't Fall for the BIG FIVE

SENIOR TEXANS ARE A PRIORITY for Attorney General Greg Abbott. One of the Attorney General's greatest concerns is that seniors need timely information to protect them from common scams. Once a person has been robbed by a con artist, it is very difficult to recover the lost money. Just knowing what the scams are is often protection enough to keep someone from losing his or her life savings. Here are five of the most common scams targeting seniors. Remember that the detailed explanations and fabrications may vary. These cons are very slick!

FOREIGN LOTTERIES. You **DID NOT** win the foreign lottery! Anytime you are asked to send money in order to collect your winnings in a lottery or sweepstakes, STOP. It is a scam. You do not have to pay an up-front fee to receive real lottery or sweepstakes winnings. Don't be persuaded or bullied by a smooth operator on the phone. Just hang up.

HOME REPAIR. Beware of unsolicited door-to-door home improvement offers. If it is a one-time offer, available only today, or a special deal on materials left over from another job, be doubly cautious. If your home needs repairs, your best bet is to call more than one reputable roofing, driveway or other home repair company in your area and check their references.

PIGEON DROP. In this old fashioned scam, the con artist approaches you about a large sum of money he has found. He needs your money to secure the cash, and you'll get a cut in return. The warning flags are: you have to put up money to get money, and a second player, pretending not to know the first one, comes in as a "lawyer" or "banker" who confirms the first con's story. They may actually show you a pile of cash. Don't believe it.

IDENTITY CRIME. Be alert about people who ask you for your social security number, bank account number or credit card number. The variety of excuses these people offer for wanting to have your personal financial information is amazing, and the explanations may be very plausible. They may say they are from the FBI or your bank, investigating possible fraud on your account. Actually, they want to COMMIT fraud on your account. Never give anyone who calls you information of this kind for any reason.

INVESTMENT SCAMS. Many Texas seniors have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in life savings by participating in investment strategies that were nothing more than Ponzi or pyramid schemes. High pressure sales pitches to invest in products such as titanium futures or currency markets lure consumers with the promise of guaranteed returns. In reality, there is no real investment, and the scam artists do little more than create bogus quarterly statements to make the victim believe that his or her money is growing dramatically.

Help us spread the word about these and other scams and schemes that target Texas seniors. And visit the new teller training page on our Web site to read about how we are partnering with banks to protect seniors from financial exploitation.



GREG ABBOTT
Attorney General
of Texas

**FOR MORE
INFORMATION
WRITE TO:**

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