AARP Montana

SENATE FINANCE AND CLAIMS
EXHIBIT NO. 5
DATE 3-10-05
BILL NO. SB 238

March 10, 2005

TO: Senator Mike Cooney and Members of Senate Finance and Claims Committee

FROM: Ed Eaton, Volunteer Advocate, AARP Montana

RE: Support of SB 238 and SB 239

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record my name is Ed Eaton, volunteer advocate for AARP and its 143,000 members in Montana.

In 2002, AARP Montana conducted Consumer Fraud Survey of our members that revealed 39% believe they have been a victim of consumer swindle or fraud. This is almost double the response to a similar national survey where 21% said they have been a victim of a major swindle or fraud. A mere 14% of the victims reported the crime to a state agency and 58% of victims only told friends or family so they wouldn't be targeted by a similar crime.

We think this legislation is especially important because the survey also revealed that nearly one in five said were a victim in the areas of insurance products (19%). When asked what business or group they felt most likely to mislead or take advantage of them, 32% of them named insurance companies.

In the last year, AARP and the Montana Senior Citizens Association traveled with the State Auditor's Office putting on over two dozen senior fraud seminars and 22 law enforcement trainings throughout the state. The events were extremely successful at educating consumers about financial fraud. In one case, a person who attended a seminar kept a relative from sending a $20,000 check to a fraudulent business. While we were able to reach over 1300 citizens in the seminars, more work needs to be done.

Please support SB 238 and 239, which fund essential steps toward both reducing insurance and securities fraud and assuring that if fraud is committed people will know how to get relief.

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