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HB 425

March 8, 2005

TO: Senator Wheat and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Del Lonnquist, Volunteer Advocate, AARP Montana

RE: Support of HB 425

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, for the record my name is Del Lonnquist, representing AARP Montana and its 143,000 members in Montana. Our members continue to be concerned about fraud and support strengthening consumer protection role of government.

We support of HB 425 for one important reason: it is more effective to place the responsibility of consumer protection, especially of telemarketing fraud and do not call programs, in an agency that can take strong enforcement actions. Seniors who have been victimized by telemarketing schemes and other consumer scams need the resources of the Attorney General's office to resolve these often tragic cases.

During this past summer AARP co-hosted Senior Fraud Summits around the state. The summits revealed a troubling lack of understanding of where to go for help when seniors have been victimized by fraud. Most reported they would call their county attorney's office for find help. The Attorney General's relationship with county attorneys is an important link to working on these cases and preventing fraud.

We support HB 425 and hope you will support it as well. Montana consumers, especially seniors who are regularly targets of fraud, deserve the strongest enforcement and protection we can offer them. Thank you for this opportunity to support HB 425.