

SENATE JUDICIARY

Exhibit No. _____

Date 2/4/15

Bill No. HB 74

AARP Watchdog Alert

A Guide to
Common Scams
and How to
Protect Yourself

aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork

Watchdog Alerts / Tips & Resources / Free for Everyone

**FRAUD
WATCH**
NETWORK

Brought to you by **AARP**

Watchdog Alert: 13 Ways Con Artists Can Steal Your Hard-Earned Money

Identity theft, investment fraud and scams rob millions of Americans of their hard-earned money. In 2012, 12.6 million people were victims of identity theft alone—that's one person every 3 seconds.

That's why AARP is launching the Fraud Watch Network—a campaign to fight identity theft and fraud and give you access to information about how to protect yourself and your family and friends. Non-members and members alike can get our watchdog alerts, learn about active scams, and find resources about what to do to spot and avoid them. We're inviting anyone, of any age, to access our website and network of resources free of charge.

This watchdog alert explains how you can protect yourself against **identity theft, investment fraud, and other common scams.**

As part of that effort, we've developed this "Watchdog Alert: 13 Ways Con Artists Can Steal Your Hard-Earned Money"—a guide to 13 of the different cons criminals use and the information you need to be on your guard.

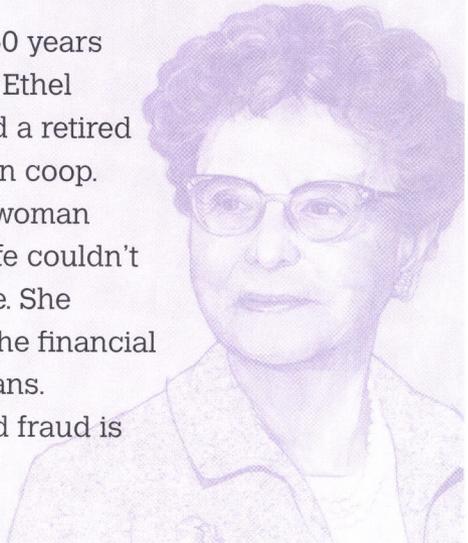


This watchdog alert includes three different types of fraud and scams: **identity theft**, **investment fraud**, and **online and offline scams**. Details about what strategies and tactics criminals use are based on hundreds of undercover fraud tapes and hours of interviews with victims and cons. The information about how to protect you was developed by law enforcement and financial industry experts.



AARP: A History of Safeguarding American's Financial Security

AARP began more than 50 years ago when its founder, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, discovered a retired teacher living in a chicken coop. She was appalled that a woman who worked her whole life couldn't even afford a place to live. She started AARP to protect the financial security of older Americans. Fighting identity theft and fraud is part of that core mission.



Identity Theft

Identity theft occurs when someone steals personal information that could be used to falsely apply for credit or for government benefits. Here are three common ways con artists steal your identity.

1 Phishing

Someone contacts you via email and says there is some problem with your bank account and you need to verify the account with a Social Security Number, bank routing number or birth date.

2 Stealing mail or sensitive documents

Personal information is taken from your trash, your office or from social media websites and used to steal your identity.

3 Bogus job opportunities

Con artists post bogus job offers on various employment websites. The scammer may use or sell your personal information provided in the job application.



Investment Fraud

4 Gold Coin Scam

You hear an ad on the radio that describes how the world economy is shaky and the only thing you can really rely on during periods of economic uncertainty is precious metals. You call a toll-free number and are pitched on buying gold and silver coins that will undoubtedly go up significantly in value. What you are not told is that the coins are being sold at a 300-500% mark up and you will lose money the minute you buy them.

5 Free Lunch

The scammer invites a hundred people to a seminar, where he or she presents an unbeatable investment opportunity. You must sign up right then and there. You can't sign up later because he or she is leaving town in two hours, and so will your money.

6 Oil and Gas Scams

Someone calls and tells you they are drilling for oil off the Gulf Coast or in Mississippi, and they have this great new technology that allows them to find oil where no one else has ever been able to drill. Ask if the caller is a registered broker and if the investment is registered with the state or the SEC. If not, don't invest.

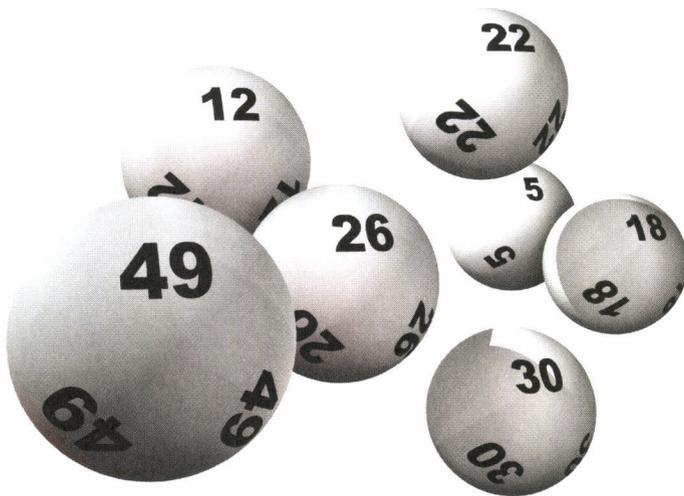


12 The Grandparent Scam

A young person calls you pretending to be your grandson or granddaughter. They tell you they have been arrested for drunken driving or they are being detained for some other reason and they need you to wire them \$3,000 or \$1,700 or some other amount to get them out of trouble. They may have gotten your grandson's name from social media or they may have just waited for you to say, "Is this Joey?" and then they continue the ruse.

13 The Foreign Lottery Scam

You receive a letter or a phone call saying you may have won a foreign lottery. All you have to do to collect your winnings is to wire money to the caller for taxes or a "processing fee." The fact is that foreign lotteries are illegal and if you have never entered a lottery, it's impossible to win.



Prevention Tips



Protect Your Social Security Number (SSN) & Personal Information

- Don't carry your Social Security card in your wallet.
- Don't print your SSN or driver's license number on your checks.
- Shred sensitive information.
- Limit the number of credit cards you carry.
- Keep copies of credit cards (front and back) in a safe place in case a card is lost or stolen.



Monitor Your Bills & Financial Accounts

- Watch for missing bills and review your monthly statements carefully. Contact your creditors if a bill doesn't arrive when expected or includes charges you don't recognize.
- Don't invest in anything you are not absolutely sure about. Do your homework on the investment, the company, and the salesperson to ensure that they are legitimate. You can look them up at finra.org/BrokerCheck and sec.gov.





Watch Over Your Credit Reports

- You are entitled to one free credit report each year from each nationwide credit bureau. To get your free report, go to annualcreditreport.com or call **1-877-322-8228**.



Protect Personal Identification Numbers (PINS) & Passwords

- Don't carry your PINS and passwords in your wallet or purse.
- Avoid using easily available information for your PINS or passwords such as your mother's maiden name, your or a family member's birth date, your SSN or phone number, or a series of consecutive numbers (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 4).
- Choose a different PIN for each account.





Protect Your Information Online

- Beware of emails that claim to come from a bank, Internet Service Provider, business or charity and ask you to confirm your personal information or account number. If you receive one that is suspicious, forward the email to **spam@uce.gov**.
- Avoid conducting personal or financial business on shared/public computers or over public wireless hotspots.
- Install the latest version of established anti-virus software.
- Make sure websites are secure, especially when shopping online. A secure website will begin with “https” not the usual “http”.



Protect Your Mail

- Call **1-888-5-OPT-OUT** or visit **optoutprescreen.com** to stop pre-approved credit card applications that a thief could steal and use to get credit in your name.
- Place outgoing mail into a locked mailbox such as a blue postal service box.
- Don't leave incoming mail sitting in an unlocked mailbox.
- Cut down on junk mail by contacting the Direct Marketing Association at **dmachoice.org**.



Be Cautious of Scams & Frauds

- Never give personal information to telemarketers who call you on the phone. To cut down on unwanted telemarketing calls, sign up for the Do Not Call Registry at [donotcall.gov](https://www.donotcall.gov) or call **1-888-382-1222**.
- Double-check references for door-to-door sales, home repair offers and other products. Verify that businesses and others who contact you are who they claim to be before you provide any personal information. If you think the request for information is legitimate, contact the company at a number you know is valid to verify the request.
- Check out a charity before donating to make sure they are legitimate at [charitywatch.org](https://www.charitywatch.org) or [charitynavigator.org](https://www.charitynavigator.org).



Resources

Fraud Watch Network

AARP Fraud Watch Network provides you with access to information about identity theft, investment fraud and the latest scams. Access online at: AARP.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

Fraud Fighter Call Center

Highly trained AARP volunteer Fraud Fighters are standing by to offer peer counseling, support and referral services to fraud victims and their family members. Call toll free: **1-877-908-3360**.

The National Association of Attorneys General

The National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) site provides contact information for all state attorneys general. Most state attorneys general welcome consumer inquiries and complaints about frauds occurring in the marketplace and many offer complaint mediation services as well. Access online at: NAAG.org.



FINRA Investor Education Foundation

This site, operated by the FINRA Investor Education Foundation, provides critical information about how to avoid investment fraud, including allowing you to check to see if a broker or a particular investment advisor is registered. It is particularly helpful in addressing a variety of investment frauds such as gold coins and oil and gas scams. Access online at: saveandinvest.org.

The North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA)

This website is where you can find your local state securities regulator, who takes complaints against brokers and dealers that may have engaged in investment fraud. Access online at: NASAA.org.



U.S. Postal Inspection Service

This site, sponsored by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, has information about how to protect yourself from mail fraud and how to identify when you've been targeted. Access online at: deliveringtrust.com.

FTC Consumer Sentinel Hotline

This is a toll-free number you can call to file a complaint against a company if you feel you have been defrauded. Call toll free: **1-877-701-9595**.

Securities and Exchange Commission

The SEC is a good resource for checking up on an investment adviser and investment products. You can also call them at 1-800-SEC-0330 if you would prefer to speak with someone by phone. Access online at: sec.gov/investor or investor.gov.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

If you have a complaint about fraudulent activity involving a bank account or service, credit reporting, debt collection, among other areas, contact the CFPB to file a complaint. File online at: consumerfinance.gov/complaint.

National Association of Insurance Commissioners

Visit the NAIC website if you want to reach a state insurance agency about an insurance product or salesperson. Find your state at: naic.org/state_web_map.

aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork

Watchdog Alerts / Tips & Resources / Free for Everyone



Brought to you by **AARP**