

Office of the Attorney General

Attorney General Conway Warns Kentucky Consumers about Utility Bill Payment Scam

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Contact Information: Shelley Catharine Johnson
Deputy Communications Director
502-696-5659 (office)

Attorney General Jack Conway warns Kentucky consumers not to fall victim to a new identity theft scam involving the payment of utility bills. In this latest scam, fraudsters claim that President Obama will pay consumers' utility bills for one month through a new federal program.

"Although there are government programs that provide home energy assistance, this is not one of them," General Conway said. "This is a scam designed to gain access to a consumer's personal and financial information and to steal their identity. Never provide your Social Security number or sensitive personal information to someone you do not know."

Scam artists are using in-person solicitation, flyers, social media, phone calls and text messages as part of this multi-state scheme. Consumers are told that President Obama has approved special funding through the Federal Reserve Bank for utility bill assistance. The scam artists then solicit personal information such as a Social Security number from the victim and provide them with a fraudulent bank routing number to use when paying their utility bills online.

Customers who use this number are led to believe that their utility bills are paid and even receive payment confirmation notices. Payments are later rescinded as a result of the fake account numbers.

General Conway's Office of Consumer Protection has received no complaints from consumers about this scam and is not aware of any victims in Kentucky. Victims have been reported in California, Illinois, Tennessee and Texas.

Residents who are in need of home emergency assistance may be eligible for financial help through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which is administered in Kentucky through the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and Community Action Agencies across the state. For additional information on the Kentucky LIHEAP program visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dfs/liheap.htm> or call 1-800-456-3452.

Tips for Protecting Against Identity Theft

- Never give out personal information unless you initiate the contact or know the person or company with whom you are dealing.
- Do not disclose your credit card number to an online vendor unless it is encrypted and the site is secure.
- Do not write your Social Security number or telephone number on checks or credit card receipts.
- Shred documents that contain personal or financial information such as bank statements, credit card applications, store receipts or utility bills.
- Check your credit report at least twice a year and report any mistakes to the credit reporting agency in writing.

For more tips on how to protect yourself against identity theft or what to do if you are a victim of identity theft, please visit <http://ag.ky.gov/civil/consumerprotection/idtheft/>. For additional assistance, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-888-432-9257 or you may file a consumer complaint online at <http://ag.ky.gov/civil/consumerprotection/complaints/>