



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.

From Addabbo's Constituent Files: Teamwork Saves Howard Beach Resident From Mail Fraud

JOSEPH P. ADDABBO JR June 12, 2012

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Sweepstakes Scheme Used Irish Postage, Los Angeles-Based Company, Phony Processing Fee Check Drawn on Oregon Bank

Queens, NY, June 8, 2012 -- NYS Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr., a member of the Senate's Committee on the Aging, warns seniors in his district that they should be wary of mail notifications asking them for "processing fees" in the thousands of dollars to facilitate fraudulent "international sweepstakes prize winnings" originating overseas or using distant banks or processing companies based thousands of miles away.

The Senator's Howard Beach district office was recently visited by a local senior resident, who wishes to remain anonymous, explaining that she received an "official notice" early in May which was stamped in Ireland, that she was a 2nd prize winner in "the USA Mega draw (under the international sweepstakes)" held in March. The mailing went on to say she won \$245,000, and included a check in the amount of \$4,685. The check was "provided to help you pay for the processing fee." The senior citizen knew this didn't seem right and went to Senator Addabbo's nearby office to have his staff check with the bank where the processing check was drawn.

According to Addabbo, his staff made a few phone calls to check out the information provided in the constituent's mail notice from "Coast Capital Financial Services" showing a Los Angeles address. They discovered the bank where the processing fee check was drawn, while reading it was from a Keybank in Portland, Oregon, drawn on the account of Dongwha USA Inc., a business also in Portland, Oregon.

Explained Addabbo, "My staff and I found that while the bank and the Dongwha USA Inc. name and account number in Portland, Oregon, were real, as was the claim agent's name, another phone call turned up a related company phone number in British Columbia, Canada. We reported the mail scheme to the State Attorneys General in both Oregon and New York."

"Increasingly, we're seeing primarily seniors being targets of mail, phone or email fraud. In this Internet age, there is information about people that these scammers may be able to obtain in order to make contact with a specific resident, including your address, phone number, even your age--that's how they try to take advantage of seniors. What they're really hoping to do is to drain your bank accounts," Addabbo warned. He went on to advise seniors and others that "if something seems too good to be true, and you don't recall entering any such sweepstakes, then it is probably a scam. Never give strangers who contact you any personal or financial information. We've even heard of a phone scheme where a caller identifies himself as a Census agent to get your information. The Census is only done every 10 years and within definite time limits that are widely publicized. The 2010 Census is long over; don't believe such callers."

Concluded Addabbo, "We were so glad to be able to tell our constituent she was so right to trust her instincts and check with us first before she lost her lifetime savings to these scammers. Seniors--be on the alert for anyone trying to take what you've spent a lifetime building up--don't let them do it. Throw out all such mail notices that you've won any kind of sweepstakes that you don't recall entering or those that ask for personal information." The Senator encourages all constituents who receive suspicious mail to contact his office.

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