



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

Sen. Borrello Hosts Fraud Prevention Events for Seniors in Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties

GEORGE M. BORRELLO August 19, 2021

| ISSUE: **FRAUD PREVENTION, SCAMS, SENIOR CITIZENS**



BELMONT & OLEAN – Sen. George Borrello hosted fraud prevention workshops in Allegany and Cattaraugus counties to help senior citizens protect themselves from scams and identity theft.

Sen. Borrello teamed up with the Center for Elder Law and Justice, the New York Attorney General’s Office, and the sheriff’s offices and offices for the aging in both counties for the events.

“The ironic thing is that as we were planning these events, my own father, who is a very savvy 80-year-old, received a scam letter telling him he won a worldwide \$4.5 million lottery. To collect, he had to send in 5 percent of the total,” Sen. Borrello said. “These scams are pervasive and run by professional con artists. Our seniors have worked hard their entire lives and saved up so they can

enjoy their retirement. I'm glad we were able to offer them tips to avoid scams and protect themselves."

Karen Davis, Senior Consumer Frauds Representative for the Attorney General's Buffalo Regional Office said the number of scam calls to her office skyrocketed during the pandemic. She said everyone needs to take steps to protect themselves from identity theft and never give out personal information to someone they don't know.

Kathleen Kanaley, from the Center for Elder Law and Justice, said con artists try to trick people into believing they have to provide personal information immediately in order to prevent something dire from happening. She said one very active scam right now involves people getting fake Norton computer virus warnings. When they click on the fake pop up, it installs malware on their computer giving scammers access to their information.

"The most important thing to remember is that you should never give any personal, identifying information like your Social Security number over the phone or computer," she said.

She said phone scam red flags include being asked to send gift cards to provide payment for anything, requests to confirm personal information such as your social security number, bank account number or credit card number and requests to send money.

Sen. Borrello said technology has made it easier for scammers to target and take advantage of people.

"According to data from the New York State Comptroller, identity theft increased 85 percent during 2020. That's more than four times the level from just 10 years ago," Sen. Borrello said. "The good news is that help is available. I want to thank everyone who worked with my office to hold these fraud prevention clinics, including Kathy Kanaley, Karen Davis, Anita Mattison, Director of the Allegany County Office for the Aging; Cattaraugus County Department of the Aging Director Cathy Mackay, Allegany County Sheriff Rick Whitney and Cattaraugus County District Attorney Lori Rieman."

Senator Borrello urged people to report scams to their local law enforcement as well so investigators can track down the scammers and warn others.

"I know people are sometimes reluctant to come forward. Older adults are less likely to report fraud because of shame or concern that family members will think they are unable to manage their own affairs," Senator Borrello said. "There is no shame in being a victim. These are professional con artists and they can fool anyone."

If you think you or a family member may have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Center for Elder Law and Justice at (716) 853-3087, or visit their website at: elderjusticenyny.org. You can also call the NYS Attorney General Consumer Helpline at 1-800-771-7755 or visit:

www.ag.ny.gov/consumer-frauds-bureau/identity-theft.

You can also call the Allegany County Office for the Aging at (585) 268-9390, or the Cattaraugus County Department of the Aging at (716) 373-8032. Senator Borrello said folks can also call his office at (716) 664-4603 or at (716) 372-4901 to report suspected fraud.

The fraud prevention events were held Tuesday at Genesee Valley Central School in Belmont and Thursday at the John Ash Community Center in Olean.

###