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For Immediate Release

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District Attorney Warns of Lottery Scam Aimed at Veterans, Senior Citizens

Suspects Used Official San Diego County Seal on Correspondence

District Attorney [Bonnie Dumanis](#) today warned the public about a lottery scam that uses the official San Diego County seal and appears to be targeting veterans and senior citizens. The District Attorney's Office is investigating the scam and is asking additional victims to come forward to report it.

“These scammers are using the legitimacy of a government seal to prey on vulnerable seniors who served their country. They’re stolen at least one couple’s hard-earned savings in a brazen example of financial elder abuse,” Dumanis said. “It can be embarrassing for people to come forward once they realize they’ve been duped, but we want to help victims and hold these heartless scam artists responsible for their crimes.”

District Attorney Investigators say a retired San Diego couple, 83- and 79-years old, received several phone calls telling them they had won as much as \$2.5 million in a lottery, but they needed to send insurance, and state and federal taxes before the winnings could be deposited in their bank account.

As proof of the lottery win, the couple received a faxed letter that included the official seal of the County of San Diego, as well as a photocopy of a check in the amount of \$2.5 million made out to them. The letter thanked the victims “for their service” and said the lottery winnings would be deposited into their Navy Federal Credit Union Account once the taxes were paid.

As a result, the couple sent money grams and made bank transfers totaling more than \$20,000 to various individuals, believing the money was required to receive the lottery winnings. Eventually, the couple provided their credit union account information and a Social Security number in order to allow the winnings to be transferred to their account. Instead, the criminals cleaned out the couple’s savings account, stealing an additional \$3,000.

"False lotteries are a common scam" said Deputy District Attorney Paul Greenwood. "Seniors can protect themselves by always starting with the assumption that any telephone call or letter promising a prize is indeed fake, especially when there is a request for monies to be paid up front for taxes or other charges."

To keep your finances safe from scams, the District Attorney's Office offered these tips: sweepstakes and overseas lotteries are phony; screen your calls before answering; don't be afraid to hang up on the perpetrator; don't let emotions cause you to react immediately to a phone call, letter or email; always check with a professional adviser. When people have been scammed once, their phone numbers and information are sold to other scam artists. Consider changing your phone number to avoid an onslaught of predatory phone calls.

Additional victims of this scam, or other suspected financial elder abuse can report it at (619) 531-3245. ***Members of the public are asked to call only if you have sent money to one of these scams and have not already reported it to a law enforcement agency. When you call, please be prepared to leave your name, contact information (including home address) and specifics about the suspected scam.***

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