

# Protecting Senior Texans



By **Greg Abbott**  
Attorney General of Texas

Serving and Protecting Senior Texans is a top priority of my administration. Since May is Older Americans Month, it's a good time for us all to increase our efforts to honor and care for Texas Seniors.

Fraud against seniors is more widespread and devastating than most people realize. My Consumer Protection Division recently filed several lawsuits to stop companies from using deceptive practices targeting seniors.

The companies sent out letters that appeared to be official government documents and demanded a fee from seniors who wanted to file for an "elderly tax freeze." The service is free through your local tax office.

We will not tolerate schemes that target seniors. Scam artists tend to spend money as fast as they steal it, so it is hard for seniors to get their money back once they've been taken. That is why my office is committed to communicating with seniors all over Texas in a number of ways.

My agency issues On-Line Senior Alerts, writes columns like this one and works with media across the state to warn seniors about frauds and scams.

Con Artists threaten, trick and cajole seniors into an ever growing number of scams, including foreign lotteries, phony sweepstakes, and bogus debt collection schemes. Currently, we are warning seniors to be extremely cautious about where they obtain information about the new Medicare discount cards. Fraudsters are already trying to swindle seniors with fake cards and other unscrupulous attempts to cash in on the new Medicare benefits.

My office has also launched a public awareness campaign to help teach seniors how to protect themselves from the latest scams. It's called "JUST HANG UP." It's a critically important message, but easy to remember. If a telemarketer calls, don't even listen to their sales pitch. "JUST HANG UP."

In addition to our outreach to seniors, we also have a terrific senior on our staff, Nancy Gresham, who is our point person on senior issues. Nancy travels around the state speaking on issues of concern to Senior Texans. Nancy partners with law enforcement to set up local crime prevention programs such as Triad. A Triad brings together seniors, law enforcement and senior providers to share information about fraud and crime prevention in local communities.

While outreach is one of our most important tools, my office also investigates and prosecutes criminal

abuse and neglect of residents in nursing homes. Earlier this year, my Medicaid Fraud Control Unit arrested six nurses in a sweeping nursing home abuse case. Two others surrendered to authorities. The felony charges stem from conduct investigators unearthed during a lengthy investigation, including severe abuse and neglect of elderly patients, including two deaths, and forgery of government records to obtain controlled prescription, allegedly for personal use.

I am determined to crack down on fraud, abuse and neglect against seniors. I am also committed to preventing seniors from being victimized in the first place. Once these crimes have been perpetrated, the damage is hard to repair. I hope you will join us, starting now, during Older Americans Month, in protecting senior Texans.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

### PROTECTING SENIOR TEXANS

File a complaint about a nursing home:  
Department of Human Services  
(800) 458-9858  
[www.dhs.state.tx.us](http://www.dhs.state.tx.us)

For more information on senior issues or for hard copies of Senior Alerts:  
Office of the Attorney General  
(800) 252-8011  
or e-mail [nancy.gresham@oag.state.tx.us](mailto:nancy.gresham@oag.state.tx.us)

Sign up online to receive  
Senior Alert E-mails:  
[www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us)

Report abuse or neglect of a resident in a Medicaid-funded facility:  
Medicaid Fraud Control Unit  
Office of the Attorney General  
Telephone: (512) 463-2011  
Fax: (512) 320-0974  
E-mail: [mfcu@oag.state.tx.us](mailto:mfcu@oag.state.tx.us)

For Nursing Home Ombudsman assistance and benefits counseling:  
Texas Department of Aging  
Area Agencies on Aging  
(800) 252-9240  
[www.tdoa.state.tx.us](http://www.tdoa.state.tx.us)



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

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