

Important Notice

The Rhode Island Public Defender has been informed of a scam involving people posing as representatives of this office. The scam, often referred to as the grandparent scam, begins with a phone call indicating that a family member or loved one has been arrested and is in need of bail money. The scammer then asks the family member to wire money for the bail.

This is not something that employees of the Rhode Island Public Defender would ever ask you to do. So please remember:

1. The Rhode Island Public Defender does not deal with money in any way.
2. Anyone representing themselves as a member of the Rhode Island Public Defender and asking for money is a scammer.
3. While our employees may contact you to tell you how to post bail or even how much bail must be posted they are never permitted to take money in order to post bail for clients and will never ask you to send money.
4. You should not send any money if a person representing themselves as a member of this office asks for you to send them money. You should report this immediately to the Rhode Island Public Defender (401) 222-3492 and to the Rhode Island Attorney General's consumer protection unit (401) 274-4400.

REMEMBER NO LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT AGENCY WILL ASK YOU TO WIRE MONEY TO THEM IMMEDIATELY. THE RIPD WILL NEVER ASK YOU TO SEND MONEY.

*Victims of wire transfer scams may now apply for compensation through the U.S.
Department of Justice's Victim Asset Recovery Program*

Rhode Islanders who were deceived into sending payments to scammers using Western Union's wire transfer service may now apply for compensation from a \$586 million fund administered by the Department of Justice's Victim Asset Recovery Program, Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin announced.

This fund is related to a multistate settlement between 51 attorneys general and Western Union that was first announced in January. Rhode Island residents may be eligible to receive compensation if they were a victim of a fraud-induced transfer using Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017.

"Whether it's an elderly relative, a friend or a neighbor, we probably all know someone who has been victimized by a clever scam artist. Far too many Rhode Islanders have lost money through scams involving bogus lotteries and contests, fake stories about emergencies involving relatives, or pleas for help from phony love interests, and a large percentage of these wire transfers were done through Western Union. That's why I am pleased to see Western Union step up and provide restitution to scam victims, as well as implement new controls to identify potential scams and stop them from occurring," said Attorney General Kilmartin.

"I was proud to join other attorneys general in resolving a multistate investigation involving Western Union and its subsequent agreement to a settlement, and I encourage as many victims as possible to pursue this process of getting their hard-earned money back," added Kilmartin.

Rhode Islanders who reported to Western Union or to the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office that they had been the victim of a scam using Western Union may receive a claim form in the mail. The claim form will be sent by the settlement administrator in the next two weeks. The form will contain instructions explaining how consumers may file their claim to receive compensation.

If you do not receive a claim form in the mail but believe you may have an eligible claim, please visit <http://www.westernunionremission.com> or call 1-844-319-2124 for more information on how to file a claim. All completed claims forms must be mailed back to the settlement administrator by February 12, 2018. The form will not ask for your bank account or credit card information or seek any payment from victims. Any such request for money or financial information is not from the program and should be reported to our office.

The Attorney General's Office encourages Rhode Islanders to reach out to our Consumer Protection Unit by e-mail at consumers@riag.ri.gov or by calling (401) 274-4400 if they have questions or concerns.