

LOTTERY SOLICITATIONS ARE ILLEGAL

*“Congratulations! This is to inform you on the release of the
INTERNATIONAL PAYOUT SERVICES PROGRAM...
Among the 126 participating finalists playing 6000 full tickets....
from a pool of Fifty Million Dollars in cash,
your ticket number drew the lucky numbers.
Your number has been approved for a lump sum payout of
ONE MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS...!”*

Sounds great? It's a fraud!

Each year hundreds of North Dakotans get offers to play the lottery in places like Canada, Germany, Australia, and Spain. But should you trust a company that knowingly breaks the law? These solicitations violate U.S. law, which prohibits the cross-border sale or purchase of lottery tickets by phone or mail. It is **illegal** for any foreign lottery – legitimate or not – to use the U.S. mail to solicit customers!

Scam operators – often based in Canada and other foreign countries – use the telephone, direct mail and e-mail to entice US consumers to buy chances at high-stakes foreign lotteries. These lottery scam artists are tough to catch because they are based out of the country and move their offices often.

Recently, the lottery scam artists have been sending “checks” to lottery “winners” to cover the cost of duties, taxes, attorney fees or insurance. The letter instructs the “winner” to deposit the cashier’s check and wire the fees to a third party, often in a foreign country. The cashier’s check turns out to be counterfeit, but by then the money has already been wired and there is no way to recover the funds. The counterfeit check is returned to the bank as unpaid - and the bank holds the victim responsible for the phony check.

Red flags should go up if:

- someone asks you to pay for something that they claim you have won;
- anyone asks you to wire a payment to a foreign country
- you receive a certified check to cash in on your winnings.
- You are instructed not to tell anyone about the prize.
- You did not enter a lottery, but you won!

The Attorney General’s office suggests consumers call the Consumer Protection Division at 701-328-3404 or toll-free 1-800-472-2600 **before** sending any money in response to these types of notices, and offers the following tips:

- **DON’T** be fooled by e-mails, letters or calls claiming you have won a prize in a contest or lottery you don’t remember entering. If you didn’t buy a ticket, you cannot win a prize. Cyber-lotteries, claiming to have selected the winner’s e-mail address at random, are all scams.
- **NEVER** send or wire any money – for fees, taxes, or anything else – before you receive the prize. Legitimate contests and lotteries do not make winners pay anything out of pocket in order to collect the prize. And the US Government does not collect customs duties, taxes, or other fees before the winner receives the prize.

If you receive a lottery solicitation, your best bet is just to hang up or delete the e-mail. Postal authorities are following the paper trail. If you receive a lottery solicitation in the mail, give it right back to your carrier.