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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** April 22, 2011  
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**Consumer Fraud Alert –Local Senior Targeted in Lottery Scam**

One Humboldt County senior was recently the target of a lottery scam that depleted her family savings.

The victim received numerous phone calls over a month's time informing her that she had won the lottery. Initially she was told the winnings totaled \$850,000 and later the amount was raised to \$1.2 million dollars. The only requirement, the caller explained, was that the resident wire \$3,000 to an overseas account to cover the taxes and miscellaneous fees. The call was a scam and unfortunately, because the victim sent her funds to a foreign bank, the money is untraceable and her losses non-recoverable.

According to Humboldt County District Attorney's Office Investigator Mike Losey, these types of scams are not uncommon and often victims fail to report them out of embarrassment. "But these can really look like legitimate calls," Losey said. "When people want to believe they've won the lottery, a trip or other significant prize, scammers capitalize on that."

Residents should be wary of all phone calls or mail received that claims the recipient has won a prize and directs them to send money to cover taxes or other fees. "A legitimate company or organization will not require a winner to pay out money to claim a prize, and if you think it is legitimate, the company or organization will verify the winnings by mail rather than over the phone. Legitimate winners can address tax consequences independently when they file their tax returns," Losey added.

Losey urges all Humboldt County residents who suspect they have been a victim of consumer fraud to call the Humboldt County District Attorney's Office Consumer Fraud Division at (707) 445-7411.