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MEDIA ALERT

"Over 3,790 Utah consumers who lost money to Western Union scams have until February 12, 2018 to file refund claim with Federal Trade Commission"

"Refunds paid from \$586M settlement between Western Union and FTC over fraud-induced money transfers."

(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that the Division of Consumer Protection is reminding Utah consumers who may have lost money in scams using Western Union money transfer services that time is running out to be eligible for a refund from the federal government settlement. Consumers who used Western Union between January 1, 2004 and January 19, 2017 in money transfers that turned out to be fraudulent are eligible to apply online with the court appointed claims administrator. According to data obtained from Western Union, 3,790 Utah consumers filed complaints alleging over \$4.6M in fraudulent wire transfers. Those Utah consumers and others may be eligible for restitution through the \$586M settlement fund with the U.S. Department of Justice by filing a claim at FTC.gov/WU.

"Time is running out on the opportunity to recover lost funds. The Division of Consumer Protection encourages Utahns to visit the FTC website to be part of this historic settlement win for consumers," stated Francine A. Giani, Executive Director.

In the settlement agreement, FTC investigators found that criminals used the business reputation and wire services of Western Union to conduct schemes across the country. Some of the common scams involving wire transfers are: lottery and contest scams in which consumers are told they have won a large sum of money but must first wire money to pay required taxes or fees before receiving their winnings, grandparent scams in which a consumer believes his or her loved one is in immediate danger and needs money right away, and romance scams in which someone poses as a love interest and then soon begins asking consumers to send money for various reasons, such as medical emergencies, car accidents, muggings, emergency travel, etc. Given the high profile of the Western Union settlement with the Federal Trade Commission, state regulators urge consumers to watch out for possible piggy back schemes.

“The FTC has hired an outside firm to handle payments from the lawsuit. Please be advised that no one from the claim adjustor will contact you to request your bank account, credit card information, or ask you to pay a fee,” stated Daniel O’Bannon, Division Director. If you have questions about a claim form you receive, visit FTC.gov/WU.

The FTC \$586M settlement requires Western Union to develop and put into action a comprehensive anti-fraud program designed to help detect and prevent incidents where consumers who have been the victims of fraud use Western Union to wire money to scam artists. Consumers seeking information about the Western Union restitution is available here; FTC.gov/WU or may call 1-844-319-2124 for updates on the process and details on victim eligibility.

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