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Page 1 of 2

AG WARNS CONSUMERS TO BE WARY OF SECTION 8 HOUSING SCAMS

(MONTGOMERY)— Attorney General Luther Strange warns consumers who are seeking Section 8 housing assistance to be wary of fraudulent solicitations and websites. The Federal Trade Commission reports that such scams are taking fees and personal information from unsuspecting victims.

The false websites are very convincing replicas of registration sites for Section 8 waiting list lotteries. The top search results for online waiting lists are often bogus sites that look very real, labeled as Section 8 and perhaps with an Equal Opportunity Housing Opportunity logo. They ask for fees and personal information such as one's Social Security number. Then they take the money and information and disappear, often providing the personal information to identity thieves.

Not only have victims lost money and personal information, but they also have lost a place on a legitimate Section 8 waiting list. Most people don't realize they've been scammed until after the waiting list is closed.

Other false websites list Section 8 properties that supposedly are available. These properties are available to rent if you pay the first month's rent via wire transfer or a prepaid card. While the properties might exist, the ads are fake. If you pay, you just lose your money.

Consumers should know there is no fee to register for a Section 8 waiting list. In reality, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8 program gives funding to local government housing authorities. The local authorities issue housing choice vouchers to help people find housing in privately-owned rental units. For information on the Section 8 waiting list lottery, contact your local housing authority. Again, there is no fee to register.

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Attorney General Strange offers these tips to avoid a Section 8 lottery scam:

- Contact your local housing authority to find out how to register for the Section 8 waiting list lottery. You'll find their email and phone number on the HUD website, which is HUD.gov, with the information to contact your local public housing authority listed at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts. Follow their instructions to complete the registration.
- Housing authorities **do not** charge fees, and they will not reach out to you by phone or email to suggest that you join a waiting list. A housing authority also will never ask you to wire money or pay with a prepaid card. Those are sure signs of a scam.
- Protect your Social Security number and other personal information, such as credit card numbers, as you would cash. Do not give them out on a website you find through a search.

Consumers who see these kinds of scams should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) through its website at <https://www.ftc.gov/complaint>, or by email to HUD at Hotline@HUDOIG.gov . For information, call the FTC at 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357), or HUD's Public Housing Authority at (800) 955-2232.