

CONSUMER ALERT

May 27, 2005

CONSUMERS WARNED TO WATCH FOR BOGUS “HOSPITAL FUND DRIVE”

BISMARCK –Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem is warning North Dakota consumers and hospitals of a scam soliciting funds for a nonexistent “capital improvement fund drive.”

A scam artist recently contacted a Devils Lake family falsely stating that Mercy Hospital was conducting a capital improvement fund drive. The individual, who had a southern accent, contacted the family member of a current patient, indicating that the patient was receiving excellent care at the hospital, and asked how much the family member wanted to contribute to the fund. The caller asked for a credit card number.

“Con artists obviously are attempting to prey upon family members of hospital patients at a time when they are most vulnerable. A legitimate healthcare facility or nonprofit organization would never contact family members of patients with a request for contributions to the hospital in such circumstances,” Stenehjem said.

Parrell Grossman, Director of the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division, says that the Attorney General’s Office is working with the North Dakota Healthcare Association to warn consumers and prevent these bogus solicitations. “Consumers receiving one of these calls should never provide bank account, credit card account, or other financial or personal confidential information,” Grossman said.

Consumers or hospital personnel with questions or concerns should report any suspicious calls to the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or the North Dakota Healthcare Association at 701-224-9732.