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## **DOOR TO DOOR VACUUM SALESMAN JAILED**

BISMARCK – A door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman who victimized elderly North Dakotans has been ordered to serve a six month jail term for contempt of court arising out of the illegal sales. Terrance Gourneau of Bismarck also was ordered to pay \$29,047.78 in restitution, fees and penalties. Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem brought the action after Gourneau violated a court order earlier this year requiring him to stop selling in North Dakota. Judge Bruce Romanick sentenced Gourneau following a hearing in Burleigh County District Court.

Gourneau had a history of preying on seniors, often arriving at their homes uninvited and staying until he sold a vacuum cleaner at several times over retail value. Stenehjem received numerous complaints in his consumer protection division. The complaints came mostly from female consumers over the age of 65, with half of the complaints from victims 80 years or older.

“Many of the victims were senior women who lived alone on fixed incomes,” said Stenehjem. “They often felt that Mr. Gourneau would not leave until they wrote a large check. He misled his victims into believing they were buying new machines when his inventory actually consisted of trade-ins from previous victims. He also failed to notify consumers of their right to cancel the sale within 15 days, which is required under state law.”

Stenehjem urged senior consumers and their families to be aware of scams that target the elderly. “We are fortunate here in North Dakota to have a vibrant senior population that is a great asset to our state. Unfortunately, bad actors looking for a quick buck, often view seniors as vulnerable targets for their illegal practices. My office will continue to aggressively prosecute those who take advantage of seniors and will seek jail time where appropriate. But it is important also for seniors and their families to be aware of these scams, talk about them, and avoid them.”