

NATI NEWSWIRE

SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

Getting to know Illinois' new laws

by *andrea hahn, the southern*

Most of the laws that became effective Monday, Jan. 1, don't prohibit or further restrict the behavior of average Illinois citizens. Many of the laws are designed to protect rights, health and property, and some of them won't even be noticed by most Illinois residents.

Identity theft

A law Madigan hailed as a tool to help protect against identity theft allows consumers to put a security freeze on their own credit reports. A security freeze prohibits credit bureaus from releasing a credit report without the consumer's permission. Because it is almost impossible to open a new line of credit without a credit report, this law should reduce the opportunities for identity thieves to open new accounts in someone else's name.

To place a security freeze on your credit report, send a written request to:

TransUnion, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834

Equifax, Equifax Security Freeze, P.O. Box 105788, Atlanta, Georgia 30348

Experian, PO Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013

Credit bureaus have up to three days to "thaw" your freeze. If you know you will be opening a new line of credit, plan ahead.

Consumers can limit the "thaw" by specifying what agencies may have a credit report - for example, a specific store or auto dealership. There may be a fee to place or lift a freeze. The fee should be @ \$10 per transaction. Those who "facilitate identity theft" by not destroying documents with personal information about other people are guilty of a misdemeanor on a first offense, a felony on a second.

Registered sex offenders

More information will be required from registered sex offenders, including the publication of their license plate numbers. All registered sex offenders must submit a DNA sample and will have to register every 180 days rather than once a year. Certain sex offenders will be subject to electronic monitoring throughout parole. The statute of limitations is amended in sexual assault cases, giving victims three years rather than two in which to report the crime. Registered sex offenders and those convicted of identity theft are not allowed to change their names.

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MAN ARRESTED IN NEVADA ON FRAUD CHARGE ORDERED HOME TO BOSTON

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LAS VEGAS --An Andover man accused of bilking elderly residents out of \$2 million and spending it on cars and gambling was ordered Friday to return to Massachusetts for a federal court appearance on Monday.

John A. Baldo, 38, was released without bond. He's scheduled to appear in U.S. District Court in Boston on Monday. Baldo was arrested at the Las Vegas airport on Thursday. He faces wire fraud charges.

Prosecutors allege Baldo cheated several elderly people in Massachusetts and Connecticut out of \$2 million that he spent on luxury cars, jewels, \$5,000-a-day visits to a local strip club and gambling trips to Las Vegas.

Baldo represented himself as a certified financial advisor and beginning in late 2005 talked his victims into liquidating their assets to put the money into an annuity account he said would guarantee them generous income, prosecutors said.

An 88-year-old man in Storrs, Conn., gave Baldo \$1.6 million, and his 85-year-old brother, who also lives in Connecticut, gave him \$200,000, prosecutors allege. They say he also stole \$200,000 from a 63-year-old Rockport woman.

Prosecutors said he spent more than \$150,000 for a Mercedes, more than \$100,000 for a Range Rover, and nearly \$60,000 for a BMW. He allegedly spent almost \$300,000 gambling.

He was a regular customer at the Cabaret Lounge in Peabody, where he was known for giving dancers \$100 bills and spending about \$5,000 a day, according to a sworn statement by FBI Agent Melissa Valera. ■

Funding Opportunity for your Program

RMS and NATI provide funding opportunities for Triads, Domestic Violence organizations, and other projects. To participate, RMS requests that your organization collect used cell phones and contact them at:

911CellphoneBank.com or terrih@sheriffs.org

RMS pays for shipping phones to them and returns usable cell phones to: law enforcement, senior programs, and domestic violence organizations—to provide cell phones to those in need in your community. Salable phones are recycled, with funds being returned to your organization. Contact RMS or NATI today.

Indiana gets \$21 million over 5 years for senior alternatives

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) -- The state has received a \$21 million federal grant to be used over the next five years to pay for home health care, assisted living and other services needed by senior citizens moving out of nursing homes, the state's human services chief said Friday.

The Family and Social Services Administration received the funds from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to mark the success of a Division of Aging program called Options that was created to offer seniors alternatives to traditional nursing, Secretary Mitch Roob said.

Alternatives such as home health care, assisted living, adult foster care, and adult day services allows seniors to maintain some independence in their living while having access to services they may need.

"The home-based or community-based care model is the future, and although nursing homes will always be appropriate for some seniors, we are finding that more and more seniors enjoy the independence of community-based care," Roob said in a prepared statement.

Roob announced the grant Friday during the dedication of a new adult day services center in Indianapolis.

FSSA announced last June that it was implementing a law passed in 2003 that required it to make home- and community-based long-term care for elderly and disabled as accessible as nursing-home care. www.southbendtribune.com

Suthers Wants Bills to Protect Elderly, Children

(CBS4) DENVER Attorney General John Suthers is working with state lawmakers to protect two vulnerable populations -- the elderly and children. The first bill would criminalize the embezzlement of money and assets from an at-risk adult or a child by a person in a position of trust. It would prevent caregivers and family members from improperly using resources. Suthers also announced House Bill 1127 which adds more reporting for sex offenders.

"The new law will require all sex offenders in the state of Colorado to register any e-mail address, screen name or chat room identity with the state before they use that address or ID online," Suthers said. He hopes the change will also help Web sites, including MySpace, block sex offenders. Both bills have bipartisan sponsors. © MMVII CBS Television Stations, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Mutual Benefits chief gets 20 years in billion-dollar scam

By Vanessa Blum sun-sentinel.com

MIAMI -- A federal judge sentenced the former president of Fort Lauderdale investment firm Mutual Benefits Corp. to 20 years in prison on Friday for his role in a scheme prosecutors say bilked investors out of nearly \$1 billion.

Peter Lombardi, who pleaded guilty to securities fraud in October, said he was sorry for the harm he caused investors.

"I'm doing everything I can to assist the government in this investigation," he said.

U.S. District Judge Paul Huck agreed to postpone Lombardi's imprisonment until April so he can continue to help prosecutors investigating the case.

"His ability to remain out is critical to the ongoing investigation," said prosecutor Andrew Levi.

Lombardi, 56, is one of two individuals who has pleaded guilty in connection with the criminal investigation of Mutual Benefits. Prosecutors could request a sentence reduction for Lombardi in exchange for his assistance.

The firm, which was shut down in 2004, purchased life insurance policies from terminally ill and elderly people for less than face value and sold shares in the payouts to investors.

Such deals, known as viaticals and life settlement contracts, become profitable if the insured individual dies within a particular period of time. Prosecutors contend that Lombardi and his accomplices cheated the firm's almost 30 million investors by using false projections of how long the insured people would live and understating the risk of the investments.

Only five percent of the policies purchased by Mutual Benefits actually matured within the time predicted, according to prosecutors.

In December, Dr. Clark Mitchell pleaded guilty to signing off on bogus life expectancy estimates for some of those insured by the policies. Prosecutors said Lombardi served as nominal head of Mutual Benefits to hide the involvement of other principals with criminal and regulatory infractions on their records that could have raised red flags.

Lombardi admitted that he lied to investors about the firm's track record and led investors to wrongly believe their investments had a level of risk comparable to a bank certificate of deposit, or CD.

In reality, Mutual Benefits operated like a massive Ponzi scheme and secretly used new investors' funds to pay premiums on old insurance policies, prosecutors said.

As part of his plea deal Lombardi agreed to cooperate with prosecutors in an ongoing investigation of the company. He agreed to pay \$7.5 million to settle a civil fraud suit brought by the Securities and Exchange Commission in 2004 and additional suits brought on behalf of investors.

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