

Attorney General Bruning urged Nebraska seniors to be wary of those looking to exploit news about the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the federal health care law, also known as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Since the ruling, the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Mediation Center has received multiple reports or complaints of scam calls made to Nebraska Medicare recipients.

Claiming to be from the government, callers tell victims that under the new health care law, they are required to verify or update personal information.

Neither these calls nor these claims are legitimate.

"If you get a call from someone who claims to be from the government asking for your personal information, hang up. It's a scam," said Bruning. "The government and organizations with which you do business will not ask for personal information in an unsolicited phone call."

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), as soon as the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the health care law was made, these scam calls began nationwide.

Here's how the scam works:

Scammers may use various ploys to trick victims into giving up personal information. The caller might have the routing number of the recipient's bank account, and then use that information to get the victim to reveal the entire account number.

Other times, they may ask for "verification" of credit card numbers, Social Security numbers, Medicare ID or other personal information.

Once it is given, scam artists can use the victim's personal information to commit identity theft.

The information may be used to make fraudulent credit card purchases, debit checking accounts, open new accounts, write fraudulent checks, or take out loans in the victim's name.

Tips to avoid this and other Medicare scams:

- Never provide confidential information over the phone, unless you initiate the phone call.
- Remember - your Medicare number is your Social Security number and can be used to perpetrate identity theft.
- Don't carry your Medicare card with you unless you are going to the doctor many times a week.
- If you believe you have given personal information to a scammer, report the theft to law enforcement and place security freezes on your credit reports.
- If you lose your Medicare card, put a freeze on your credit. In addition, contact the Social Security Administration and request your number be flagged for fraud.

For more information, visit www.ago.ne.gov or call the Attorney General's Office Consumer Hotline at (800) 727-6432.