



**State of Wisconsin**  
*Department of Financial Institutions*

Scott Walker, **Governor**

Peter Bildsten, **Secretary**

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## **Who's Calling? That Debt Collector Could Be a Fake**

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) is urging consumers to be on the alert for phone calls from fake debt collectors. The would-be scammers attempt to collect money on loans that consumers never received or on loans consumers did receive but for amounts they do not owe. In other cases, the callers attempt to recover money on loans consumers received but authorization to collect the debt has not been given by the creditors.

“DFI has received calls from dozens of concerned Wisconsin consumers who have been targeted by these callers,” DFI Secretary Peter Bildsten said. “They often use high-pressure, threatening tactics in their attempts to dupe consumers. In some cases, they may be armed with personal information such as a bank account number.”

DFI issued these tips for consumers who are suspicious of a caller who is attempting to collect debt over the phone:

- **Ask the caller for his name, company, street address, and telephone number.** Tell the caller that you refuse to discuss any debt until you get a written “validation notice” through the U.S. mail. The notice must include the amount of the alleged debt, the name of the collection agency, the name of the creditor you allegedly owe, and your rights under the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act.
- **Stop speaking with the caller.** If you have not been provided a written notice from the collector, refuse to speak with the caller. If you continue to receive calls, hang up on the caller or do not answer subsequent calls.
- **Do not give the caller personal financial or other sensitive information.** Never give out or confirm personal financial or other sensitive information such as your bank account, credit card or Social Security number unless you know who you’re dealing with. Scam artists such as fake debt collectors can use your information to commit identity theft.
- **Contact your creditor.** If the debt is legitimate – but you think the collector may not be – contact your creditor about the calls. Share the information you have about the suspicious calls and find out who, if anyone, the creditor has authorized to collect the debt.
- **Report the call.** Contact the Department of Financial Institutions ([www.wdfi.org](http://www.wdfi.org) or 800-452-3328), the Federal Trade Commission ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or 877-382-4357), or the Federal Bureau of Investigation ([www.IC3.gov](http://www.IC3.gov)).

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