



News Release

Attorney General Robert E. Cooper, Jr.

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Tennessee Attorney General issues caution against college “financial aid” pitch

The state deadline for college financial aid is quickly approaching, and state officials are asking parents and students to beware of official-looking letters promising student financial aid information for a fee.

Attorney General Bob Cooper and Division of Consumer Affairs Director Mary Clement are urging Tennesseans to be wary of potential financial scams designed to steal personal information and/or cash. The alert is being issued because the state has learned that students and parents of university students have been receiving letters urging them to pay \$50 or more to apply for financial aid. Tennesseans can get information free from the school’s financial aid office or online.

The letters often have government-like seals, personal information about where the student attends school, and warns of quickly approaching deadlines. Moreover, these are also being sent out while schools are working with students and families in establishing aid for the following academic year. The deadline to file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form to be eligible for the Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSAA) is Feb. 15, 2010 and the deadline for Tennessee Hope Scholarships is September 1, 2010. For more information, visit the website at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

“These businesses send letters that appear as if they are affiliated with a university, when in fact they are not,” Attorney General Cooper said. “Companies like these are trying to gain a student’s or parent’s trust simply to make money for a service the parent or student can obtain for free.”

“We encourage students and parents to work closely with their universities’ financial aid offices and verify the source with the school before giving money or their personal information to anyone claiming to provide financial aid, funding or information about financial aid.” Director Clement said. “Students should never have to pay money to get a scholarship or information about financial aid.”

Consumers may call the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-342-8385 (toll-free inside Tennessee) or (615) 741-4737, or may visit www.state.tn.us/consumer if they have additional questions or want to file a complaint against a company for deceptive tactics.