

Written Testimony by Clifford Gay

COMMITTEE: Business & Commerce

TIME & DATE: 8:00 AM, Tuesday, February 22, 2011

PLACE: E1.016 CHAIR: Senator John Carona

SB 488 Van de Putte Relating to criminal background checks on users of online dating services and to disclosures of online dating safety measures; providing a civil penalty. (INTERNET DATING SAFETY ACT)

My name is Clifford Gay and I am here representing myself as a Texas Senior Citizen.

I am here in favor of SB 488.

Being a Texas Senior Citizen who is divorced and looking for someone to date, I would feel safer if the online dating service had screened out dating prospects who had (1) felony offenses, (2) registered sex offenders, and (3) family violence offenses.

Here is an article that illustrates how vulnerable some Texas Senior Citizens are (taken from "Experts warn seniors about scams" by Vincent T. Davis - Express-News 11/09/2010)

The message at a seminar for seniors Monday afternoon was straight to the point: Look out for scams targeting them and their neighbors.

That was the topic elder law attorney Kelly M. Cross and Bexar County sheriff's Deputy Sandy Atherton offered to 52 seniors gathered at Morningside Ministries at The Meadows.

Cross covered the first half of the Gray Collar Crime session, explaining financial exploitation, financial abuse and national exploitation.

She said financial abuse is one of the fastest-growing crimes, with estimates of losses reaching \$3 billion. Cross said 60 percent of financial abuse is committed by adult sons and that nationwide exploitation is underreported, under-investigated and under-prosecuted.

She said most seniors are in denial they have been scammed.

"Eighty percent of identity crime isn't reported because it's embarrassing," Cross said. "They don't tell family because they're worried their independence will be reduced."

She said financial abusers fit two profiles: opportunists and predators. Cross described opportunists as people without criminal histories who could be a son or daughter.

"People start with good intentions," Cross said, "then believe they deserve the elder's assets."

She said predators try to be a "new best friend," and fill a void by talking about shared interests.

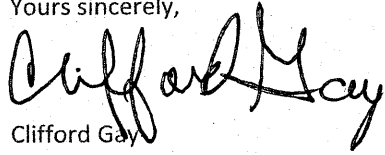
Atherton told the group about a scratch-off lottery ticket scam that touts a \$10,000 win. He said the scammers say they're not from Texas and can't cash the ticket, but if the senior gives them \$2,000, they'll split the cash.

The small print says the prize may be claimed at "Ya Mama's House!" or by a form supplied by the "tooth fairy."

"Is that cold-blooded?" he asked. "You better believe it is, but it works."

Therefore, I recommend SB 488 Relating to criminal background checks on users of online dating services be favorably voted out of the Business & Commerce Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clifford Gay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "C".

Clifford Gay
15700 IH35 S /PO BOX 67
Buda, Texas 78610