

Scam Claiming that Consumers Can Access Unpaid Social Security to Pay Debts Could Prove Costly

For Immediate Release: August 16, 2017 || Contacts: Jan Kruse, jkruse@nclc.org (617) 542-8010 || Lauren Saunders, lsaunders@nclc.org

Consumers are facing late fees and other charges after scam videos instruct them to pay bills using bogus account information

WASHINGTON - A number of online videos and forums are instructing consumers to attempt to pay their bills using Federal Reserve Bank routing numbers and their Social Security numbers as their account number, according to a fraud warning from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. The Federal Reserve has received and rejected a number of these attempts, resulting in canceled payments, returned item fees from their banks, late fees, and other fees.

Consumers do not have bank accounts with the Federal Reserve holding their unpaid Social Security funds, and those funds cannot be accessed by consumers. Federal Reserve routing numbers are used for sorting and processing payments between banks. They do not provide banking services for individuals nor are funds held with the bank under individual's Social Security numbers. Consumers making online or e-check bill payments cannot use Federal Reserve routing numbers.

Consumers should be aware of this "too good to be true" scheme and recognize any video, text, email, phone call, flyer, or website describing how to pay bills using information other than their own bank or credit card account number as a scam.

Law enforcement is aware of this scheme, and the Federal Reserve Banks are cooperating with law enforcement in their investigations.

###

Since 1969, the nonprofit **National Consumer Law Center®** (NCLC®) has used its expertise in consumer law and energy policy to work for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the United States. NCLC's expertise includes policy analysis and advocacy; consumer law and energy publications; litigation; expert witness services, and training and advice for advocates. NCLC works with nonprofit and legal services organizations, private attorneys, policymakers, and federal and state government and courts across the nation to stop exploitative practices, help financially stressed families build and retain wealth, and advance economic fairness.