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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DON'T FALL FOR PHONY TEXTS FROM GATEWAY BANK

RALEIGH, NC – June 9, 2011 – Consumers who receive a text message from Gateway Bank or any bank saying that their card has been deactivated should not respond because it's a scam, Attorney General Roy Cooper said today.

"Thieves are using these messages to get your information so they can steal your money," Cooper warned. "If you get one of these phony texts, don't respond."

According to consumers who've received them, the texts say, "GATEWAY BANK ALERT: Your CARD starting with 4138** has been DEACTIVATED." The message then includes a phone number to call. Consumers who call the number are asked to provide their debit card number, expiration date and PIN. The thieves then use that information to make new debit cards.

The thieves have used as many as 10 different phone numbers in the text messages, including ones that start with North Carolina area code 919 and Virginia area code 804. Consumers who've called the numbers listed and provided their information have noticed withdrawals from their accounts at ATMs in Van Nuys, California. Gateway Bank reports that \$100,000 in fraudulent debits have been made by the scammers so far.

Debit card holders who have responded to the texts should contact Gateway Bank immediately at 1-800-523-4175 to block their cards. Gateway Bank has branches throughout North Carolina, including in Raleigh, Cary, Wilmington, Plymouth, Kitty Hawk and Elizabeth City.

The Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office first alerted Cooper's Consumer Protection Division to the scam after consumers in that area began getting the texts. Cooper's office is currently working with cell phone providers to try to trace the origin of the texts.

To spot and avoid text message scams, remember:

- Banks do not communicate with customers about problems with their account by text message.

- Never provide your account number and PIN to anyone who contacts you, even if they claim to be with your bank.
- Don't share your PIN with anyone, period.

These text messages are a variation on the phishing scam. Con artists also use emails and telephone calls to try to collect personal information.

“Criminals pose as legitimate businesses and claim there’s a problem with your account so they can steal your identity,” Cooper said. “You can outsmart the crooks by refusing to take the bait.”

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For more information about the Town of Wake Forest, contact Public Information Officer Bill Crabtree at (919) 435-9421 or bcrabtree@wakeforestnc.gov.