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**The Alabama Securities Commission and AARP Team to Offer “Free Lunch Seminar Monitor” Program
Older Americans Increasingly Targeted By Financial Scammers**

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA (October 14, 2008) – With fraud and scams on the rise, older Americans remain a primary target for unscrupulous individuals. The Alabama Securities Commission (ASC) is working with AARP in a new initiative designed to give individuals an opportunity to fight back against unscrupulous promoters by reporting possibilities of questionable investment practices in their communities to the state securities regulator for investigation.

Four out of five investors age 60 and over received at least one invitation to a free investment seminar in the past three years—and three out of five received six or more. The invitations often promise to educate individuals about investing strategies or managing money in retirement usually with an expensive meal provided at no cost.

This Commission’s participation in the Free Lunch Monitor Program is part of a national campaign launched by AARP and the North American Securities Administrators Association to monitor whether investors are being pressured into purchasing inappropriate or unsuitable investments.

Should an individual choose to attend a free lunch seminar, they can bring a checklist with them to help assure that both the products promoted at free investment seminars, as well as the promoters, conform to securities laws and regulations. Information from the checklists will be forwarded to individual state securities regulators for evaluation.

A recent year-long examination of free lunch seminars conducted by state securities regulators, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority found that while many free meal financial seminars were advertised as “educational,” or “workshops,” 100 percent of the “seminars” were instead sales presentations; 50 percent featured exaggerated or misleading advertising claims; and 25 percent involved possible unsuitable recommendations to attendees.

“Instead of unbiased financial education and a meal, many free-meal seminar attendees are being fed a hard sales pitch for investment products that are often unsuitable,” said ASC Director Joseph P. Borg. “We appreciate the opportunity to work closely with AARP and its membership to put unscrupulous salespeople on notice that the victimization of senior investors will not be tolerated.” #####

For more information about the Free Lunch Seminar Monitor and to download the monitor checklist, please visit www.aarp.org/nofreelunch. Or Contact: Dan Lord, Education and Public Affairs manager, (334) 353-4858; email: dan.lord@asc.alabama.gov.

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