

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 25, 2004, 11:00 a.m. CT

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State Officers Tout New Law that Cracks Down on Improper Legal Services

LINCOLN – Attorney General Jon Bruning and Secretary of State John Gale are cracking down on individuals who improperly offer legal services to Spanish-speaking Nebraskans as a result of LB 315, which took effect July 16.

The legislation targets the use of the Spanish term “notario publico” by a notary public who is not an attorney. Notario publico is the literal translation from English to Spanish of notary public. However, in Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, a notario publico must be an attorney or have other specialized training that allows the person to practice law. A notario's legal authority in those countries goes well beyond that of a Nebraska notary.

Under LB 315, improperly representing oneself as a notario publico is now a Class III misdemeanor punishable by up to three months in jail and/or a \$500 fine. Offenders also risk the revocation of their notary license by the Secretary of State.

Notaries public are licensed by the Secretary of State and enforcement of the law is carried out by the Attorney General.

“The unauthorized practice of law by some notaries is not only unacceptable, it is now a criminal act,” Attorney General Bruning said. “The new legislation affords us the opportunity to hold accountable criminals who prey on Spanish-speaking Nebraskans. This is an important part of a much larger effort by the Attorney General's Office to protect Nebraskans from fraud.”

Secretary Gale said: “We asked the Legislature for this prohibition after hearing of cases of fraud from the public. I will revoke notary licenses that are being abused. We hope that by educating Nebraska's Spanish-speaking population on the difference between a notary public and a notario publico, we can curb the unauthorized practice of law by some notaries.”

Attorney General Bruning advises those Spanish-speaking Nebraskans who have been victimized by a notary posing as a notario publico to contact the Secretary of State's Notary Public Office, the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division and/or Latino Outreach Coordinator Renee Martinez-Junck, who holds office hours in Omaha and South Sioux City, at 402-471-2682 or 800-727-6432.

For additional information on the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, visit www.ago.state.ne.us.

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