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Taxpayers' Watchdog Promotes Hotline Through Television PSAs

RALEIGH, NC – October 16, 2007

State Auditor Leslie Merritt announced the statewide promotion of Auditor's fraud, waste and abuse Hotline through a series of television Public Service Announcements (PSAs). During October 15 – November 11, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) will run two separate PSAs in all major television media markets across North Carolina. State law requires the State Auditor to periodically publicize the Hotline.

"The OSA is the 'taxpayers' watchdog' and our Hotline has proven to be an effective tool at detecting inefficiency and exposing fraud in State government," said State Auditor Leslie Merritt.

Both PSAs give viewers a picture of OSA's function as the "taxpayers' watchdog" in State government. The first PSA has a general theme of fraud, waste and abuse while the second PSA focuses on identity theft and instances of social security number fraud. OSA chose the State Agency for Public Telecommunications to handle production and placement of the PSAs. The PSAs can be viewed on the web at www.watchdogNC.com.

"I believe the Hotline is a mechanism where taxpayers can recoup money lost to fraud, waste and abuse," said State Auditor Leslie Merritt. "The cost of publicizing the Hotline will be returned through additional tips leading to additional investigations," Auditor Merritt continued.

While State law prohibits the use of a political candidate's name, voice or image in taxpayer funded PSAs during an election year, State Auditor Leslie Merritt chose to uphold a higher standard by not using taxpayer money for any self promotion, even if allowable by law in 2007.

"The focus of these ads is where it should be: on good citizens giving good tips to OSA investigators. There isn't any room for self-promotion," said State Auditor Leslie Merritt.

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