



**OFFICE OF  
STATE TREASURER  
DENISE L. NAPPIER**

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# NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **CONNECTICUT JOINS UNPRECEDENTED LAWSUIT TO RECOVER \$8 MILLION IN UNCLAIMED WESTERN UNION MONEY TRANSFERS**

*Nappier says state is one of 44 now seeking return of unclaimed assets to rightful owners*

State Treasurer Denise Nappier said today that Connecticut has joined 43 other states in a "first of its kind" lawsuit to force New Valley Corp., the former issuer of Western Union money orders, to return \$8,645 million owing to 31,980 purchasers or payees of unclaimed money transfers.

"New Valley has an obligation to turn over these funds so they can be returned to the rightful owners. This could mean thousands of dollars for Connecticut residents, and we believe state unclaimed property laws require such action. Our goal, as the custodian of unclaimed assets in Connecticut, is to reunite people with their money," Nappier said. "This lawsuit has the same goal."

New Valley Corp. was previously known as the Western Union Telegraph Company, which issued the well-known Western Union Money Transfer, a means by which money could be telegraphically sent to persons in distant places. Frequently these transfers are used by individuals unable to open bank accounts or sending money to relatives in foreign countries. Money transfers can go unclaimed either because the recipient fails to cash the payment or the sender fails to receive the refund for an undelivered money transfer.

Every state has a law providing that unclaimed funds must be turned over to the state for safekeeping until the rightful owners can be located. In Connecticut, the Treasurer's Office has that responsibility, and during the past two years has returned more than \$18 million in unclaimed assets to rightful owners or heirs.

On November 15, 1991, New Valley was forced into bankruptcy in a case in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Newark, New Jersey. In the bankruptcy, Western Union Financial Services Inc. was sold to First Financial Management Corp. The money received from the sale was sufficient to pay all of New Valley's creditors 100% of the monies owed. Notwithstanding, the lawsuit charges New Valley Corp. never gave notice to the more than 31,000 missing owners of money transfers that it was holding \$8,645,000 owing to them resulting from money transfers issued prior to January 1, 1990.

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The Federal Bankruptcy Code required New Valley to make a reasonably diligent effort to ascertain the identity of persons to whom it owned money and to give them notice of their claim. The lawsuit alleges that the company did neither.

“New Valley made no effort whatsoever to notify either the specific individuals named in their records, or the public in general, of the existence of these assets, thus denying them the opportunity to claim their money,” Nappier said.

If the unclaimed money order proceeds are eventually released, they would go to Connecticut’s unclaimed property program for return to people in Connecticut who either purchased or were the payee of the original money orders.

Treasurer Nappier’s office earlier this year launched a new outreach initiative in an effort to alert people to the existence unclaimed assets being held by the Office. More than 42,000 claims are being processed as a result. More information on the program can be obtained on the internet at [www.nameitandclaimit.org](http://www.nameitandclaimit.org).

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