

Helping to Protect Seniors from Onslaught of Scams

Protecting senior citizens from financial fraud is a top priority of the State Attorney's Office, as the latest data show older Floridians are increasingly being ripped off.

According to the FBI, scammers swindled over \$3.4 billion from the elderly in 2023, a nearly 11% increase from the prior year. The Sunshine State ranked second in the nation for the financial exploitation of those over 60, totaling nearly \$294 million in reported losses.

We have a dedicated prosecutor who specializes in fighting these crimes, and we continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners and area agencies to hold offenders accountable.

Now is the time to stay vigilant and not let yourself become a victim. Here are some important tips to follow to beat the scammers:

- Instead of mailing personal checks, or sending personal information in the mail, use verified digital payment methods.
- Do not buy gift cards for someone you have never met, for any reason.
- Do not talk on the phone to strangers, or follow their instructions.
- If anyone on the phone or in email or text says "You're a winner," but to claim your prize you need to send some money, or gift cards or Bitcoin – it is a scam.
- If someone claims to represent a government agency or a bank or credit card company, and says you have been a victim of fraud, do not believe them! There is no way for any of these real entities to know that you are a victim.
- Be on guard against Caller ID spoofing. Cybercriminals can deliberately alter information appearing on your phone display to hide their identity and pretend to be your bank.
- Watch for caregiver theft and fraud – trust but verify your home aide caregiver.

Here is some helpful contact information if you believe you have been exploited:

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office non-emergency line: 561-688-3000.

Palm Beach County Division of Consumer Affairs: 561-712-6600 or 888-852-7362

Florida Attorney General's fraud hotline: 1-866-9NO-SCAM, or MyFloridaLegal.com.

FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center: IC3.gov; 1-800-CALL FBI; tips.fbi.gov.

Gift card fraud: Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.FTC.gov.