



U. S. Department of Justice

Jason R. Coody
United States Attorney
Northern District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

United States Attorney's Office
Northern District of Florida
(850) 216-3845
USAFLN.Press.Office@usdoj.gov
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U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA **TAKES PART IN JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S WIDE-RANGING EFFORTS** **TO PROTECT OLDER ADULTS**

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA – The Justice Department announced today the results of its efforts over the past year to protect older adults from fraud and exploitation. During the past year, the Department and its law enforcement partners tackled matters that ranged from mass-marketing scams that impacted thousands of victims to bad actors scamming their neighbors. Substantial efforts were also made over the last year to return money to fraud victims. Today, the Department also announced it is expanding its Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force to amplify efforts to combat scams originating overseas.

"We are intensifying our efforts nationwide to protect older adults, including by more than tripling the number of U.S. Attorneys' offices participating in our Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force dedicated to disrupting, dismantling and prosecuting foreign-based fraud schemes that target American seniors," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. "This expansion builds on the Justice Department's existing work to hold accountable those who steal funds from older adults, including by returning those funds to the victims where possible."

"Given our large elder population, Florida experiences far too many instances of fraud against unsuspecting, vulnerable seniors," said U.S. Attorney Coody. "With the assistance of our dedicated law enforcement partners, we are committed to investigating and vigorously prosecuting those who seek to steal the hard-earned savings of our senior citizens."

During the period from September 2021 to September 2022, Department personnel and its law enforcement partners pursued approximately 260 cases involving more than 600 defendants, both bringing new cases and advancing those previously charged.

This past year, as part of this effort, the Northern District of Florida successfully prosecuted multiple defendants who victimized older adults, including: Jeremie Saintvil, who was [found guilty following a jury trial](#) of bank fraud, making false statements to a federally insured financial institution, aggravated identity theft, and making false statements to a federal agency

and eventually [sentenced to 17 years in federal prison](#) for fraudulently using the identities of elderly residents of senior living facilities to submit multiple false applications for COVID-19 relief program loans; Scott Haines, a former Santa Rosa County Sheriff's deputy who [pled guilty to federal and state charges](#) stemming from his involvement in and misuse of the real property management and finances of an elderly woman and is currently awaiting sentencing; and Trevor Green, who pled guilty to embezzlement by a credit union employee and was sentenced to 33 months after using his position to steal almost \$275,000 over a two-year period from dormant accounts of credit union members who were 65 or older.

The Department also highlighted three other efforts: expansion of the Transnational Elder Fraud Task Force, success in returning money to victims and efforts to combat grandparent scams. The Department announced that as part of its continuing efforts to protect older adults and bring perpetrators of fraud schemes to justice it is expanding the Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force, adding 14 new U.S. Attorney's Offices. Expansion of the Strike Force will help to coordinate the Department's ongoing efforts to combat largest and most harmful fraud schemes that target or disproportionately impact older adults.

In the past year, the Department has notified over 550,000 people that they may be eligible for remission payments. Notifications were made to consumers whose information was sold by one of three data companies prosecuted by the Department and were later victims of "sweepstakes" or "astrology" solicitations that falsely promised prizes or individualized services in return for a fee. More than 150,000 of those victims cashed checks totaling \$52 million, and thousands more are eligible to receive checks. Also notified were consumers who paid fraudsters perpetrating person-in-need scams and job scams via Western Union. In the past year, the Department has identified and contacted over 300,000 consumers who may be eligible for remission. Since March of 2020 more than 148,000 victims have received more than \$366 million as a result of a 2017 criminal resolution with Western Union for the company's willful failure to maintain an effective anti-money laundering program and its aiding and abetting of wire fraud.

Over the past year, the Department pursued cases against the perpetrators of "grandparent scams," otherwise known as "person-in-need scams." These scams typically begin when a fraudster, often based overseas, contacts an older adult, and poses as either a grandchild, other family member or someone calling on behalf of a family member. Call recipients are told that their family member is in jeopardy and is urgently in need of money. When recently sentencing one of eight perpetrators of a grandparent scam indicted under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, a federal judge described such scams "heartbreakingly evil." The Department is working with government partners and others to raise awareness about these schemes.

Reporting from consumers about fraud and fraud attempts is critical to law enforcements efforts to investigate and prosecute schemes targeting older adults. If you or someone you know is age 60 or older and has been a victim of financial fraud, help is available the National Elder Fraud Hotline: 1-833-FRAUD-11 or (833) 372-8311. This Department of Justice Hotline, managed by the Office for Victims of Crime, is staffed by experienced professional who provide personalized support to callers by assessing the needs of the victim and identifying next steps. Case managers will identify appropriate reporting agencies, provide information to callers to assist them in reporting or connect them with agencies, and provide resources and referrals on a case-by-case

basis. The hotline is staffed seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Eastern. English, Spanish, and other languages are available. More information about the Department's elder justice efforts can be found on the Department's Elder Justice website, www.elderjustice.gov. Some of the cases that comprise today's announcement from the Department are charges, which are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](http://www.uscourts.gov) website. For more information about the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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