

Court Clerk Warns Public Of Jury Scams

Columbia County Clerk of Court P. DeWitt Cason warns residents of a nationwide identity theft scam where callers identifying themselves as jury personnel attempt to solicit personal information such as Social Security numbers and bank account information.

County court employees will never ask prospective jurors for this type of information; therefore, residents should never provide this information to anyone claiming to represent the court system.

The scams usually come as either a fraudulent email or telephone call and involve a variety of issues including jury duty, court notices, missed court dates, red light camera fees and other legal concerns. No matter the ploy, the intended outcome remains the same: to swindle money or personal information from the potential victim.

Scammers typically impersonate clerk employees, law enforcement or other government officials. They state the intended victim has missed jury duty or has other legal issues pending in Florida and must pay money or provide private information. They threaten that if money is not paid or information provided the individual will be arrested.

Some potential victims believe their numbers were targeted after applying for a job on Craigslist.

Important tips to remember:

- Jury summonses and notices to appear in court are sent by mail, never by email.
- The clerk's office does not call or email residents to request payment for missing jury duty. The office will also never request payment via any sort of prepaid debit card.
- The clerk of courts does not call or email residents to verify information related to jury duty or to notify them that they missed jury duty. Communications are only sent by mail.
- Arrest warrants are not issued for failure to report for jury duty.
- Do not open an email attachment from an unfamiliar source, and never provide personal information to an unfamiliar source, either by phone or email.
- Residents can contact the clerk's jury department directly at 386-758-1353.

If residents encounter scams, they should write down as much information about the encounter as possible, and contact the Columbia County Sheriff's Office at 386-752-9212.