



Florida Action Committee, Inc.
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August 31, 2022



RE: URGENT SCAMS AGAINST PERSONS ON THE REGISTRY

Dear Sheriff [REDACTED] :

I am President of the Florida Action Committee (FAC), a 2500+ member non-profit organization that advocates for public safety and laws based on empirical research. Our focus is on the Florida Sex Offender Registry. Many of our members are on the registry.

Registrants throughout the State of Florida and across the country have been receiving telephone calls from individuals impersonating law enforcement officers, calling concerning their registration status. The scam goes as follows: The caller generally calls from a spoofed telephone number that makes it appear as though the call originates from an actual Sheriff's Office. After the caller identifies themselves as law enforcement, they inform the registrant that there is an issue with their registration (generally that they failed to provide a DNA sample, respond to an address verification or comply with a registration requirement) and a warrant has been issued for their arrest.

The caller then informs the registrant (or their family member) that their arrest can be avoided by paying the caller a "bond". The registrant is further told they cannot hang up the phone and any failure to follow the caller's instructions will result in the swat team being dispatched to the registrant's home immediately. Ultimately, the registrant is directed to purchase a stored value card (such as a prepaid debit card, gift card, or similar) and either provide the caller with the card information over the phone or meet the caller at a provided location.

As an organization that advocates for people on the registry, we post a lot of information concerning registry issues on our website. Accordingly, many people find us by simply searching the internet for Florida sex offender registry related keywords. We have posted extensively about these scams. Very unfortunately, many people find our site only *after* they have already become a victim of this scam. The numbers are not few. Hundreds of victims have contacted us after being scammed out of hundreds or even thousands of dollars. This is not a population that can afford to lose money.

Persons required to register are easy targets for the scam. First, their personal information is easily accessible from their FDLE flyer. Second, with more than 70,000 registrants on the list, there is a large pool of prospective victims. Third, because the requirements imposed on registrants are so voluminous, confusing, and often changing, the possibility of unknowingly missing something is not farfetched. Fourth, the consequences associated with unknowingly missing something are so harsh that people will risk a few hundred dollars to avoid a felony, even if the call sounds suspicious. And fifth, people on the registry are viewed as unsympathetic victims and very often when they report that they were victims of a crime targeting registrants, responding law enforcement refuses to do anything about it or even suggests it was deserved.

Scammers know that if they pursue these vulnerable, easy targets very little will be done to investigate or prosecute them. This is evident from the arrogant responses they give to intended targets who are familiar with the scam and don't fall for it, and from the fact that the scam has been allowed to persist for so many years.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is aware of this scam (see: <https://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/sops/important.jsf>) but has done very little to prevent registrants from becoming victims. A post on their website (which very few people will see) is an insufficient warning. Especially when they have access to the mailing list for the identifiable group of potential targets.

Accordingly, this organization has tried our best to prevent persons on the Florida registry from being victimized by letting them know of the existence of this scam and assuring them that no law enforcement agency or law enforcement officer will ever contact them to solicit payment of a fee over the telephone.

Unfortunately, while our reach is 2,500 members, there are more than 70,000 individuals on the Florida registry. Even if we are successful in warning each of our members, that only represents 3.5% of the identifiable victims. For that reason, we are calling on the registration offices of all Sheriffs in Florida to assist us in preventing this crime. Because all registrants are required to report, in person, to the registration office in their respective counties, this is the one common venue within your county where all registrants are legally obligated to visit at least twice per year.

We respectfully ask that you help prevent this crime by prominently posting a notice in your county's registration office warning registrants about this scam or by printing and posting a copy of this letter to make registrants and your staff aware of this scam.

I greatly appreciate your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,
/s/ Gail Colletta
Gail Colletta, President
Florida Action Committee, Inc.