

Scam Alert: Do Not Pay Callers Who Threaten to Arrest You Or Claim To Be Affiliated With The Court

Residents of the Middle District of Florida continue to receive fraudulent phone calls or emails claiming that they have an arrest warrant or face a similar adverse situation due to a failure to appear in federal court. The scammer may claim the individual missed jury duty or has been charged with a crime. The scammer may tell the victim that he or she can avoid arrest or other negative consequences by making a payment, which may include purchasing a prepaid card and then giving the card number to the scammer. The scammer may also ask for payment via Venmo, Zelle, or cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin.

The scammer may sound convincing and use real information about the victim; real court addresses; and real names of law enforcement officers, court officials, and federal judges to make the scam appear more credible. The scammer may even "spoof" the phone number on caller ID so that the call falsely appears to be from a court or government agency, including local sheriff's offices.

These phone calls are not from the U.S. District Court or the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Florida, the U.S. Marshals Service, or other law enforcement agencies. No one should provide the scam caller with any personal information, credit card numbers, prepaid card numbers, cryptocurrency, or other money. Do not pay them! Here are the facts:

1. **A request for payment to avoid arrest is fraudulent.** The scammers may refer to this as "preemptive bail." No such thing exists in federal court.
2. The court will always send a jury summons by U.S. Mail.
3. A prospective juror who disregards a jury summons will be contacted through the mail or email by the court clerk's office and may, in certain circumstances, be ordered to appear before a judge. Such an order will always be in writing and signed by the judge.
4. A decision to impose a fine will not be made until after the individual has appeared in court and been given the opportunity to explain his or her circumstances. If a fine is imposed, it will be in open court and reduced to writing.
5. Neither the court nor law enforcement will demand payment over the phone or via email.
6. Neither the court nor law enforcement will demand a gift card number to satisfy an obligation or request payment via Zelle, Venmo, or cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin.

7. The court does not have a kiosk to accept payments. Neither the court nor law enforcement will instruct someone to make payment at a kiosk.

If you received a scam phone call or email and wish to verify whether you have been summoned for federal jury duty or have been otherwise ordered to appear in court in the Middle District of Florida, please contact the [Clerk's Office](#).

Resources:

[Media Release: U.S. District Court and U.S. Attorney's Office Warn Public of Jury Duty Scam \(PDF\)](#)

[Press Release: New Scam Uses Fake Court Documents, Fake Government Correspondence, and False Charges Under COVID Relief Programs to Solicit "Preemptive Bail" Payments](#)