



State Attorney  
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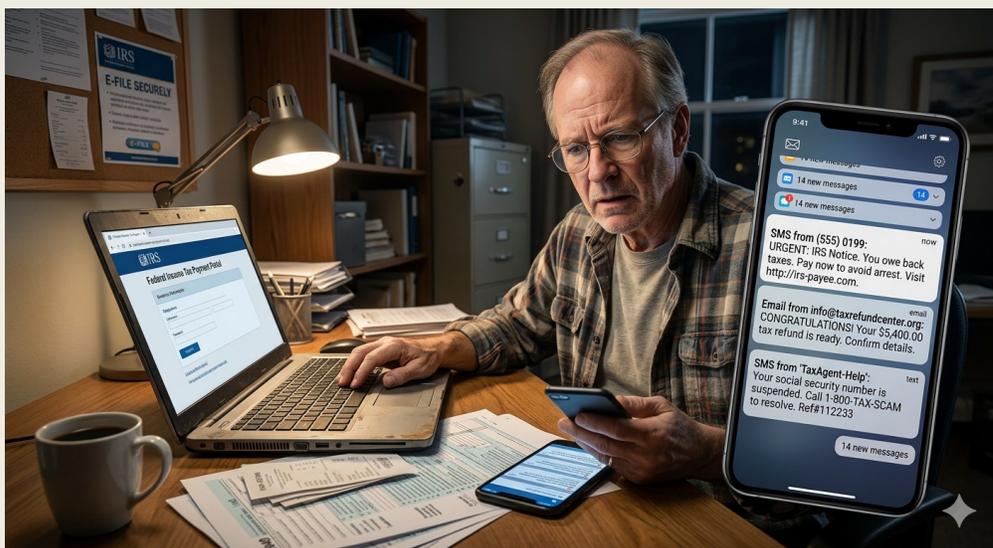


State Attorney William Scheiner

# The Monthly Brief

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Gemini illustration

## Scammers prey on tax-season stress

Tax-filing season is ramping up, and so too are the tax scams designed to prey on stress and confusion.

Signaling things to come, fake tax-themed websites nearly doubled in late 2025 and continued rising into early 2026, preparing to cash in on the annual crush of filings, refunds and payments, McAfee Labs warns.

Three of the top predicted scams this year, according to the IRS, and how to protect yourself:

**Email/text impersonation:** Scammers send fake IRS emails or texts with urgent demands, links, or QR codes leading to bogus sites that steal your data.

*Protect yourself:* Never click unsolicited links or attachments. Verify claims directly on IRS.gov, and report suspicious messages to phishing@irs.gov.

### Unsolicited help setting up IRS online

**accounts:** Criminals posing as IRS representatives reach out to “help,” then collect sensitive information during account setup and gain control accounts and refunds.

*Protect yourself:* The IRS advises taxpayers to create accounts directly through IRS.gov, not through unsolicited links. IRS.gov includes contacts for official help.

**AI-enabled phone scams:** Fraudsters use voice-cloning tech, robocalls, or spoofed IDs to mimic IRS agents, threatening arrest for delinquent taxes or demanding immediate payment.

*Protect yourself:* Hang up immediately — the IRS initiates contact via mail, not urgent calls. Don't share personal info or pay via gift cards/wire transfers.

Nearly one in five  
Americans say they've  
lost money to a tax scam

Victims lost an average  
of \$1,020

## Beware ‘pay yourself’ scheme on Zelle

Florida banks and credit unions are warning again about scams involving payment apps, especially Zelle.

A typical come-on: You receive an urgent text or call from someone claiming to be from your bank’s fraud department. They warn you of a “suspicious transfer” and instruct you to “reverse” the transaction by sending money to yourself via Zelle. In reality, you are sending funds to a scammer’s account. The money is often gone forever once you hit “send.”

How scammers pull it off:

**Enrollment hijack:** When a scammer calls you pretending to be your bank, they simultaneously attempt to enroll their own bank account in Zelle using the phone number or email address they used to contact you.

**Security code trick:** To complete this enrollment, Zelle sends a real one-time security code to your phone. The scammer asks you to read this code aloud, saying it is needed to “verify your identity” or “authorize the reversal.”

**The switch:** Once you give them that code, they secretly link your contact info (phone or email) to *their* bank account instead of yours.

**‘Authorized’ transfer:** Next, when you follow their instructions to “send money to yourself,” Zelle delivers the funds to the new account linked to your info – the scammer’s. And because you initiated the transfer from your own device, banks often categorize it as an authorized transaction, making it nearly impossible for you to get a refund.

Remember, banks will never call and ask you to send money to yourself or anyone else to fix an account issue. Hang up and call your bank’s customer service number on the back of your debit or credit card to verify.

# Law & Order News



## Secretary, State Attorney warn of unlicensed contractors

State Attorney William Scheiner (left) joined Secretary Melanie Griffin (right) of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation to caution home and business owners against hiring unlicensed contractors. Unlicensed contractors expose consumers to risks including mishandled funds and substandard work that violates safety and hurricane codes. They also undercut legitimate businesses that follow state rules meant to protect the public.

Scheiner's team of prosecutors in Brevard and Seminole counties works closely with law enforcement and regulatory agencies such as DBPR to protect communities and enforce state laws. Scheiner greeted and introduced Griffin at a March 11 gathering of the Space Coast Home Builders and Contractors Association in Melbourne.

## Prosecutors convict man in Titusville carjacking spree

LANORRIS B. HABERSHAM wrecked the first vehicle he and a friend carjacked in Titusville, crashing the Ram pickup into a tractor-trailer on Interstate 95 before it rolled over into the median guardrail. In a hurry to escape, Habersham and the friend climbed out of the wreckage, pushed and punched a good Samaritan who had stopped to help them, and sped north in the man's Chevy Malibu.

Six years after Habersham's arrest in Georgia, a Brevard County jury found him guilty of carjacking on March 5, capping a four-day trial in Viera.



Prosecutors Jennifer Mostert and Sara Flenniken also convinced the jury that Habersham, 31, should be sentenced as a Prison Releasee Reoffender, a status that enables longer mandatory sentences. The judge sentenced Habersham immediately to 30 years in prison with no time off for good behavior.

Habersham's friend and co-defendant, JALEN SMITH, 32, pled guilty to carjacking in 2020 and received a 20-year sentence. Habersham's trial was delayed in part by COVID-related court closures.

The two men from Pompano Beach, Florida, launched their crime spree in Titusville on Feb. 18, 2020, by trying unsuccessfully to carjack a vehicle from a person at a BP gas station on Garden Street near I-95. Moments later, they attacked and beat a man in the parking lot of a nearby hotel, stealing his blue Ram pickup truck and leaving the victim badly injured.

They didn't get far on northbound I-95 before swerving across all lanes and crashing.

## Seminole prosecutors, detectives team up to convict career criminal

A violent career criminal now faces life in prison thanks to special efforts by Seminole County prosecutors and sheriff's detectives.

A Seminole County jury found DAMIROQUAN J. MCGILL guilty on Feb. 25 of the enhanced charge of Possession of a Firearm by a Violent Career Criminal based on evidence presented by Assistant State Attorneys Anna Valentini and Jennie Hayes. A conviction on that charge all but mandates a life sentence.



The verdict came nearly two years after McGill's arrest by detectives from the Offender Management and Intelligence Section of the Seminole County Sheriff's Office. The specialized unit identifies monitors, and disrupts criminal activity involving the most prolific offenders. McGill, 30, had violated probation from one of his prior felony convictions and dropped a gun while fleeing detectives.

"They do so many things behind the scenes to keep the community safe, and this is a perfect example," Valentini said of the sheriff's unit, which works closely with prosecutors.

To convict McGill as a Violent Career Criminal, Valentini and Hayes had to prove that he had at least three prior convictions for crimes involving physical violence or threats of it.