Aug 6, 2026

Contact Communications

Phone (850) 245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Charges Six Defendants in Multi-Circuit Organized Retail Theft and Racketeering Scheme

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Attorney General James Uthmeier announced charges against six individuals for their roles in a sophisticated multi-circuit organized retail theft and racketeering enterprise that stole merchandise from major retailers across Florida and funneled the proceeds through an online fencing operation that generated millions of dollars.

“This criminal enterprise systematically stole from Florida retailers and exploited homeless people from shelters to convert stolen merchandise into gift cards,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier**. “Organized retail theft is not a victimless crime—it raises prices for every consumer and harms honest businesses. Thanks to the Polk County Sheriff’s Office for their leadership on the investigation. Through our Organized Retail Theft Task Force, we will dismantle these rings and hold the participants accountable to the fullest extent of the law.”

Between on or about May 14, 2020, and April 26, 2022, Ethel McCaskill, 58; Rochelle Jarrett, 39; Sharon Thomas, 57; Drianna Thomas, 31; Tawanda Ellison, 37; and Taccara Gillyard, 37, conspired and participated in a continuous pattern of racketeering activity involving theft and dealing in stolen property.

The group targeted stores including HomeGoods, TJ Maxx, Marshalls, Dick’s Sporting Goods, Michaels, Burlington Coat Factory, Ross, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Golf Galaxy; members of the group stole high-value merchandise. They would then recruit homeless people to return the stolen items without receipts in exchange for store gift cards. The recruits were often paid only a small amount or given food, after which the gift cards were collected by the defendants.

The gift cards were sold for cash to Taccara Gillyard, who uploaded and resold them online. Records revealed that Gillyard obtained more than $3.1 million in gift card sales through Raise.com between 2014 and June 2021, along with more than $140,000 from GiftCash and eBay. During the charged period of the scheme, Gillyard had no traditional source of income, made frequent large cash ATM withdrawals consistent with payments to co-conspirators, and frequently visited the casino. Investigators linked specific gift cards from the thefts and returns directly to her accounts.

The thefts and fraudulent returns occurred across the Fifth, Sixth, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fifteenth, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Judicial Circuits, including Lake, Marion, Pasco, Pinellas, Alachua, Orange, Polk, Manatee, Sarasota, Hillsborough, Palm Beach, Brevard, Seminole, St. Lucie, and Martin counties.

The defendants face the following charges:

- Conspiracy to Engage in Racketeering (F.S. 895.03(4)/777.011), a first-degree felony—all six defendants
- Organized Scheme to Defraud ($50,000 or more) (F.S. 817.034(4)(a)1/777.011), a first-degree felony—Ethel McCaskill, Rochelle Jarrett, Sharon Thomas, Drianna Thomas, and Taccara Gillyard
- Dealing in Stolen Property (F.S. 812.019(1)/777.011), a second-degree felony—Ethel McCaskill, Rochelle Jarrett, Sharon Thomas, Drianna Thomas, and Tawanda Ellison
- Dealing in Stolen Property (F.S. 812.019(1)/777.011), a second-degree felony—Ethel McCaskill, Rochelle Jarrett, Sharon Thomas, Drianna Thomas, and Taccara Gillyard

If convicted as charged, McCaskill, Jarrett, S. Thomas, and D. Thomas face up to 90 years in the Florida Department of Corrections, while Gillyard faces up to 75 years, and Ellison faces up to 45 years.

This investigation was led by the Polk County Sheriff's Office, with support from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Office of Statewide Prosecution.

The case will be prosecuted by Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Stephanie Pizarro and Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Lauren Rice in the Tenth Judicial Circuit.

###