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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Partners with Legislators to Target Organized Retail Theft



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is working with state legislators to address organized retail theft in Florida. Attorney General Moody held a news conference with lawmakers today in Hialeah to announce legislative efforts to help law enforcement and prosecutors dismantle retail theft crime rings. The announcement comes one week before Florida's 2022 Legislative Session begins.

Organized retail theft is on the rise nationwide, and Attorney General Moody is dedicated to ensuring Florida remains ahead of the trend to prevent retail crime waves. This session, Attorney General Moody is working with legislative leaders to ensure state laws are effective in helping prosecutors dismantle organized crime rings.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "We've seen the damage and disorder caused by brazen criminals across the country through terrifying smash-and-grab robberies, and we must continue to innovate to stay ahead of this national crime trend. Last month, I launched FORCE to bolster our efforts to stop and prevent organized retail crime in Florida and this legislative session, I will partner with state legislators to make sure our laws are effective in helping law enforcement and prosecutors stop retail theft gangs from targeting our stores."

Senator Jim Boyd said, "This legislation addresses the brazen crime of 'smash-and-grab' robberies that are on the rise. Already struggling retailers nationwide are seeing an uptick in this type of organized retail theft. It is a public safety issue that we must address to prevent these horrible actions from harming our residents and bankrupting Florida businesses."

Representative Chuck Clemons, Sr. said, “If you commit crime in Florida, you should expect to face justice and that is why it is so important that we work together this session to stay ahead of the organized retail crime trends we are seeing nationwide. As state lawmakers, it is important that we continue to work with our great Attorney General to ensure we are doing everything in our power to prevent chaos and lawlessness in Florida.”

Senator Manny Diaz, Jr. said, “I am grateful to live in a state with a forward-thinking Attorney General who is committed to spotting crime trends and preventing lawlessness from taking root in Florida. Recently, we have seen mobs ransack businesses in other states, and I will work with Attorney General Moody this session to ensure that organized retail crime members know they can’t get away with that sort of brazen lawlessness in Florida.”

Senator Ileana Garcia said, “Attorney General Moody continues to innovate how Florida fights and prevents crime. I am proud to fight alongside her this Session, as we look for better ways to investigate, prosecute and prevent gangs trying to exploit state law to avoid facing justice for massive retail theft crimes.”

Florida Retail Federation President Scott Shalley said, "Organized retail crime has increased significantly over the last two years. Criminal gangs are stealing hundreds, thousands and sometimes millions of dollars of merchandise, and they’re threatening the safety of our communities. With the leadership of Attorney General Moody, Senator Jim Boyd and Representative Chuck Clemons, and their proposed legislation, Florida is standing up to criminals and holding them accountable for their actions.”

Last month, Attorney General Moody launched the Florida Organized Retail Crime Exchange—a task force and database that allows law enforcement, prosecutors and retailers to work together to quickly identify massive, organized retail theft rings. The launch of FORCE comes as 70% of store owners nationwide report an increase in crime over the past year.

FORCE is a statewide task force and database to help spot trends, identify suspects and take down massive, organized retail theft rings. The database is designed to bridge the gap between retailers, law enforcement and prosecutors by allowing shareable, searchable information on theft incidents statewide.

To help bolster the effectiveness of FORCE, the Florida Attorney General’s Office will partner with state legislators this session to seek to remove barriers to prosecution for what is clearly organized criminal activity. Upcoming legislation will provide a targeted revision to current statutes determining the felony status for retail theft when someone steals multiple items from multiple locations in a short period of time. These changes would strengthen the laws on the books to allow prosecutors to bring stronger penalties against criminals who commit crimes across the state to avoid justice.

To learn more about FORCE, click here.