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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Asks for Continued Social Distancing for First Responders



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is encouraging Floridians to continue social distancing to protect law enforcement officers and medical professionals on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the past few weeks, far too many heroes in these essential professions have contracted COVID-19—some fatally.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “My heart goes out to our law enforcement officers and medical professionals risking their health and safety to fight this pandemic. While most Floridians are obeying the statewide stay-at-home order, some are abandoning the advice of health experts—forcing law enforcement into more face-to-face encounters than necessary.

“Sadly, several of these heroes have already succumbed to this highly-contagious disease and even more have been exposed and are in quarantine. Please remember that your actions, no matter how harmless they seem, may have unintended consequences far beyond anything you can imagine. Listen to our health experts, obey the stay-at-home order and help ease the burden on those risking their lives for us every day during one of the worst pandemics in modern history.”

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, President of the Florida Sheriffs Association said, “During this pandemic, it is critically important for all Floridians to take the advice of our medical experts. We need to socially distance ourselves to stop the spread of this deadly disease. Sheriffs strongly encourage you to stay home to stay safe. Your actions today will save lives tomorrow.”

Temple Terrace Police Chief Kenneth Albano, President of the Florida Police Chiefs Association

said, “Police Chiefs throughout the state are of course very concerned for their Police Officers as well as all other Law Enforcement and First Responders as we all continue to serve the public through this unprecedented crisis in our state and across our nation. We are steadfastly committed to protecting our communities, while at the same time fully aware of the increased risks of exposure it places on our own lives.

“We ask the public to help us by adhering to the Executive Orders issued by Governor Ron DeSantis, as well as those orders issued by other local government officials across the state. Remember to wash your hands frequently, practice appropriate social distancing and to demonstrate patience and appreciation for the efforts and sacrifices of everyone. We are all in this together and together, we will overcome this most difficult and trying time.”

On April 4, the Broward Sheriff’s Office announced the passing of Deputy Shannon Bennett due to COVID-19. The very next day, the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office announced that Sergeant Jose Diaz Ayala lost his battle to COVID-19 and other underlying health issues. On April 7, three Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Deputies performed CPR on a civilian who tested positive for COVID-19. The Deputies were put under a 14-day quarantine.

On March 9, Governor Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency in Florida due to the COVID-19 virus. On April 1, the Governor issued a statewide stay-at-home order. Violating an emergency declaration in Florida carries a maximum sentence of 60 days in jail and a $500 fine. Violations are enforced by local law enforcement.