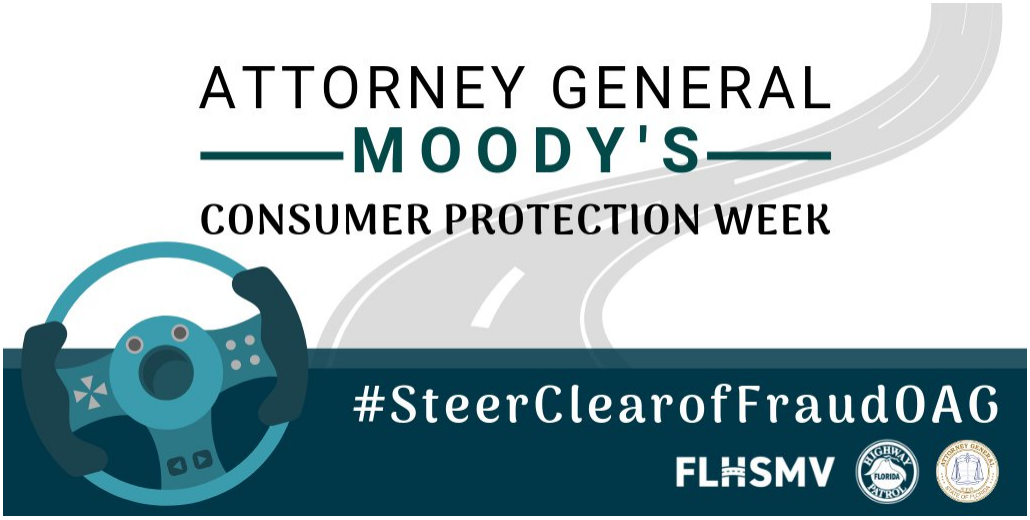
Date August 09, 2019

Attorney General Moody's Week In Review - Aug. 9, 2019



Automotive fraud scams drivers out of their hard-earned money and makes our roadways less safe. Nationwide, odometer rollbacks alone are responsible for an estimated $1 billion in lost value annually. These illegal rollbacks also prevent drivers from pursuing important maintenance and service work necessary to keep vehicles running safely.

To curb automotive fraud in Florida, this week, I partnered with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to launch #SteerClearofFraudOAG. This week-long awareness campaign is designed to provide Florida drivers information and resources to help them avoid becoming a victim of automotive fraud.

We launched the statewide campaign in Jacksonville, announcing more than $1.2 million in restitution to Florida drivers whose liens were not paid off on vehicles traded into a local dealership.

The million dollars in restitution is a result of our Consumer Protection investigation into Riverside Chevrolet. During the course of our investigation, the dealership was sold to new owners who worked with investigators and customers to resolve these matters. The previous owners are now permanently barred from owning, operating

or managing an automobile dealership in Florida.

Our office also enforces Florida's Lemon Law. Since the program's inception in 1989, we have recovered more than $476 million in value for Florida drivers through Lemon Law arbitration.

These are just a few examples of the great work our attorneys and investigators are doing every day to protect drivers. Please check out the #SteerClearofFraudOAG campaign on Twitter by clicking here.

Working together, we will build a stronger, safer Florida.



In The News

Buying a Used Car? "Steer Clear Of Fraud" Aims To Help, Bay News 9

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Jacksonville car dealership forced to pay more than one million in alleged defrauding scheme, Action News Jax

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A Florida attorney general alert on beating a $1 billion per year car sales fraud, Miami Herald

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Erasing the extra miles: What you need to know about odometer fraud, WJXT Jacksonville

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Odometer fraud is more common than most people think, Consumer Affairs

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‘Shifting into high gear’: Ashley Moody targets automotive fraud, Florida Politics

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Florida officials issue tips, warn consumers about tag renewal scams, WJXT Jacksonville

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His $1.2 million scam targeted retirement funds. He got that — and 24 years in prison, Miami Herald

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Online scam pretends to be tech support, on the rise, FOX 35 Orlando

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Medicaid Fraud Control Unit Arrest Four In North Florida, WFSU Public Media

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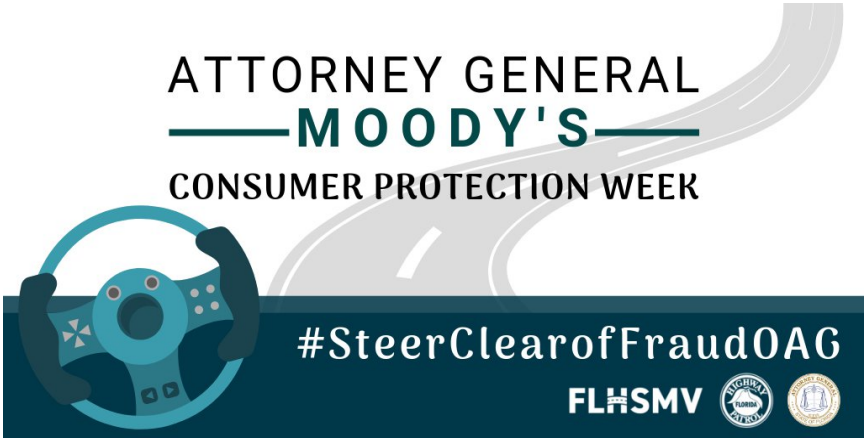
Protecting Floridians

#SteerClearOfFraudOAG Initiative Continues with Tips to Avoid Tag Renewal Scams



Attorney General Ashley Moody and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles issued tips warning consumers about tag renewal scams. The tips come as part of the Attorney General's and FLHSMV's #SteerClearOfFraudOAG campaign on automotive fraud. Tag renewal scams involve company websites acting as a third-party service provider and promising to renew motor vehicle registrations quickly for a premium fee. Tag renewal scams most commonly involve companies trying to charge fees for services already provided by the FLHSMV.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Florida drivers should use caution to ensure they do not fall victim to any irreputable third-party service provider using deception to charge undisclosed or exorbitated fees. I am excited to partner with FLHSMV to help prevent tag renewal scams and raise awareness about other schemes targeting Florida drivers through our #SteerClearOfFraudOAG campaign." Read More

Mastermind of a Million-Dollar Fraud Scheme Sentenced to 24 Years in Prison



Attorney

General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a 24-year prison sentence for one of the masterminds of a million-dollar investment scheme. In May, A Broward County jury found John A. Cavallo, Jr. guilty on charges of racketeering, conspiracy to commit racketeering, fraudulent transactions, multiple degrees of grand theft and money laundering. The charges stem from an investigation into a criminal scheme involving Cavallo and other defendants defrauding victims out of more than $1.2 million. Many of the victims were seniors.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Protecting seniors is a top priority of my office, and we will not stand by while fraudsters try to drain Floridians' hard-earned retirement accounts. I am proud of the work of my statewide prosecutors on this case, and for working every day to fight fraud and protect Floridians." Read More

CONSUMER ALERT: Protect Yourself from Odometer Fraud Before Purchasing a Vehicle



Attorney General Ashley Moody and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles are advising consumers to check vehicle history before purchasing a car to guard against odometer fraud. The Consumer Alert comes as part of Attorney General Moody and FLHSMV's weeklong #SteerClearofFraudOAG campaign. Odometer fraud occurs when a scammer disconnects, resets or alters a vehicle's odometer to lower the mileage displayed on the dashboard. Lowering the mileage helps nefarious sellers profit off a vehicle for more than it is actually worth. Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Not only does odometer fraud trick drivers into paying a higher price for a less valuable vehicle, it can also prevent the driver from pursuing important maintenance and service work necessary to keep the vehicle safely running. If important mileage-based maintenance is not performed on an older vehicle, it can break down unexpectedly, potentially putting the driver and passengers in severe danger." Read More



Attorney

General Ashley Moody announced lengthy prison sentences for two heroin traffickers. Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution secured the sentencing of Marcos Deems and Sean McCann for their roles in a heroin trafficking operation. Deems and McCann were each convicted on one count of conspiracy to commit trafficking in heroin. Wednesday, Lee County Circuit Judge Bruce Kyle sentenced Deems to 25 years in prison and McCann to 20 years in prison. There is an arrest warrant out for Erik Nunez-Nino, who fled the jurisdiction of the court.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "As we fight the opioid crisis on multiple fronts, we must continue to hold responsible anyone trafficking heroin in Florida. This case is a prime example of how we are doing that. Working with our great law enforcement partners, like the Lee County Sheriff's Office, my Statewide Prosecutors are locking up drug traffickers and removing deadly opioids from Florida streets." Read More

Attorney General Moody Urges More Treatment Options to Fight Opioid Crisis



Attorney

General Ashley Moody urged Congress to remove federal barriers that are preventing health care providers from offering more treatment options for patients suffering from opioid use disorder. Attorney General Moody is joined by 39 other states' attorneys general in this nationwide effort to help expand treatment options for people fighting addiction.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Our country has been ravaged by the opioid crisis for years now, and here in Florida, we are working every day to combat opioid abuse. We need Congress to assist us in our fight by removing federal barriers that are preventing health care providers from offering more treatment options. This national crisis has ruined lives and torn apart families, and we need Congress to act with a sense of urgency to remove these opioid treatment barriers as soon as possible." Read More

ID Theft Strike Force Unit Charges 7 in Statewide Racketeering and Money Laundering Investigation



The Polk County

Sheriff’s Office Identity Theft Strike Force Unit arrested four Polk County suspects and charged three other suspects who live in Miami via warrant – all of them have been working together since January 2019 committing racketeering, money laundering, and fraud at Gap, Inc. stores in 15 different Florida counties, using stolen credit cards from Chase Bank customers.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Retail theft hurts all consumers, as businesses often must build these losses into their budgets and pass costs on to consumers. Thanks to the great work of the Polk County Sheriff’s Office and my statewide prosecutors, this organized retail crime ring is dismantled and the suspects will face justice. Criminals must know that fraud of any kind will not to be tolerated in our state, and I will continue to work with Florida’s great law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute criminals.” Read More

Events

This week, Attorney General Ashley Moody and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles kicked off the #SteerClearofFraudOAG campaign at a news conference in Jacksonville. To watch the full news conference, click here.



Attorney General Moody joined by FLHSMV officials, law enforcement and seniors who received restitution through actions by the Attorney General's Office. As part of the #SteerClearofFraudOAG campaign, Attorney General Moody announced $1.2 million in restitution for drivers whose liens were not timely paid off on vehicles traded into a Jacksonville dealership.



Attorney General Moody with Florida Highway Patrol Colonel Gene Spaulding, General Counsel Christie Utt and Major Steven Harris of Troop G.



Attorney General Moody with State Representative Cyndi Stevenson following the news conference on fighting automotive fraud.



Attorney General Moody delivering the keynote address at Charlotte County’s Fourth Annual Public Safety Appreciation Night in Port Charlotte.



Attorney General Moody with Charlotte County Sheriff Bill Prummel and State Attorney Amira Fox at the event.



Attorney General Moody with Charlotte County School Board Member Kim Amontree, State Attorney Fox, United Way of Charlotte County Board Member Leah Valenti and Shaune Freeland.

