Date September 17, 2021

Attorney General Moody's Week In Review - Sept. 17, 2021



This week, I filed a brief in support of a suit filed by 200 City of Gainesville employees, including police officers, against the local government's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The mandate requires every city employee to be vaccinated or risk losing their job. I joined Governor Ron DeSantis at a news conference to speak out against this unlawful mandate and to voice support for our brave law enforcement officers.
This is not about whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine or not. I'm vaccinated, and I encourage every eligible Floridian to talk with their families and medical providers about receiving the vaccine. However, local governments forcing compliance by our first responders—our law enforcement—is wrong, unlawful and threatens public safety.

Following national trends, Florida is facing staffing shortages in law enforcement. Many officers have retired or left the profession, and agencies are trying to fill those vacancies. Forcing officers out of their jobs over a vaccine exacerbates the retention and recruitment issues and, frankly, makes our state less safe.

Fewer officers on patrol and on the job can lead to longer emergency response times—benefitting no one but criminals. Firing essential first responders over such a

personal medical decision is the last thing we should do—more importantly, it violates Florida law.

To read more about the brief filed in the Darris Friend, et al. v. City of Gainesville case, click here.

We've trusted our police officers and sheriff's deputies to keep us safe, and we should trust them to make personal decisions about their own safety.

As your Attorney General, know that I'm in your corner, standing up against this egregious overreach of power and fighting to build a Stronger, Safer Florida.



In The News

Ashley Moody vows fight against Joe Biden vaccine mandate, Florida Politics

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DeSantis, Moody vow to support Gainesville employees in fight against vaccine mandate, Gainesville Sun

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Attorney General Ashley Moody gives her support to city employees challenging Gainesville vaccine mandate, WTSP Tampa Bay

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10th Florida man arrested in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance fraud scheme, CBS 12 West Palm Beach

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Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody joins push against Biden admins' vaccine requirements, Orlando Weekly

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Protecting Floridians

Attorney General Moody Files Brief in Support of Plaintiffs in City of Gainesville Vaccine Mandate Case



Attorney General Ashley Moody filed a brief in support of the plaintiffs in the Darris Friend, et al. v. City of Gainesville case. Attorney General Moody's brief supports a challenge by city employees, including police officers, against the city's vaccine requirements for all municipal employees. Highlighting a police officer shortage and the likelihood that the plaintiffs will prevail, Attorney General Moody is requesting the court grant emergency relief.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Seeking a vaccine is a decision based on personal medical history and individual circumstances. It's a decision I made earlier this year after consulting with my family and medical professionals. I want more eligible Floridians to seek out information about the vaccine and make a deliberate, informed decision about their health. However, the government forcing compliance by our first responders is wrong. I am proud to stand with Governor DeSantis against this local-government overreach and in support of our law enforcement officers."
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Attorney General Moody Demands President Biden Drop Vaccine Mandate or Risk Legal Action



Attorney

General Ashley Moody and 23 other attorneys general warned President Joe Biden of potential litigation surrounding the proposed COVID-19 vaccination mandate. States are prepared to file suit following the implementation of the planned mandate on private sector employees to either get a COVID-19 shot, submit to weekly testing or be fired. The coalition of attorneys general outlined legal and policy concerns with the mandate, which will be carried out through an Occupational Safety and Health Act emergency temporary standard.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “President Biden is once again acting well beyond his authority. The federal government cannot impose sweeping vaccine mandates, and this oppressive power grab is unprecedented and unlawful. The Constitution entrusts the States to guard and protect the safety and health of our citizens. I will always fight to protect the interests of our great state, and if the president does not drop this mandate, we will take legal action to uphold the rule of law.” Read More

Ten Arrested in Pandemic-Related Unemployment Fraud Scheme



Attorney

General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution announced 10 arrests in connection to a pandemic-related unemployment fraud scheme. The Delray Beach Police Department, with the assistance of the West Palm Beach Police Department and Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, arrested Nathaniel Braxton, Tyrell Bouie, Enos Ducoste, Jean Florexil, Deontre Richardson and Devontre Richardson for active warrants relating to a CARES Act unemployment scheme. Additionally, DBPD made in-custody arrests on Roderek Baker, Roquan Baker, Jordan Lewis and Bakari Washington in connection to the scheme. Attorney General Moody's OSP will prosecute the defendants.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "I am disgusted that anyone would exploit the very real and devastating circumstances of struggling Americans to line their pockets. Thanks to the work of local law enforcement, these criminals are behind bars and will be held accountable by my Statewide Prosecutors for their despicable crimes. Let this be a warning to anyone involved in a similar scheme: if you stole money from the government, it's a good idea to consider giving it back, now." Read More



Attorney

General Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution announced the arrest of an identity thief who stole more than $22,000 from a Florida first responder. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement arrested Laquisha T. Chatfield for filing unemployment claims under the first responder’s identification. Attorney General Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the defendant.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Identity theft is a despicable crime. To think that someone would exploit a first responder’s identity is abhorrent. I am thankful for the work of FDLE and my Office of Statewide Prosecution for finding this criminal and bringing her to the front steps of justice. We will continue to work every day to protect Floridians from crime and dismantle criminal schemes.” Read More

Florida Missing Children's Day promotes child safety, celebrates everyday heroes



This year’s

Florida Missing Children’s Day ceremony was held in Tallahassee. The annual event is held to remember Florida’s missing children, recognize the state’s efforts in child protection and to educate Floridians on child safety and abduction prevention.

In 2020, more than 24,000 incidents of missing children were reported to Florida law enforcement agencies, while 34 Missing Child Alerts and 19 AMBER Alerts were issued statewide. Since its inception, 269 AMBER Alerts have been issued, including 10 so far this year. Florida AMBER Alerts have directly aided in the rescue of 77 children.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “As a mother, I cannot imagine the horrific pain of not knowing where your child is or if they are safe. My heart goes out to every family going through this tragic nightmare. As we recognize Missing Children’s Day in Florida, I want to thank all of our law enforcement agencies for their tireless efforts to return these children home. Justin and I continue to pray for the safe return of all missing children and the strength and safety of our law enforcement officers and others working to reunite families with their loved ones.” Read More

Treatment Facility Owner Sentenced To Federal Prison For Health Care Fraud



U.S. District

Judge Mary S. Scriven has sentenced Marcus Lloyd Anderson to one year and a day in federal prison for health care fraud. As part of his sentence, the court also entered a money judgment in of $323,248, which were the proceeds of the offense.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “This fraudster misused billing credentials of physicians and charged the government for services not rendered to steal from taxpayers. Thankfully, our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigators, working with federal authorities, uncovered the scheme and now, this fraudster will serve time in a federal prison.” Read More

Events

This week, Attorney General Ashley Moody joined Governor Ron DeSantis, Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis and other state leaders at a news conference to stand in support of Gainesville law enforcement officers and other city personnel against an unlawful COVID-19 vaccination mandate.



Attorney General Moody meeting with Assistant Attorney General Tyrone Martin who leads the Attorney General's Military Veterans and Assistance Program. Attorney General Moody is proud of the MVAP team, which combats fraudulent schemes against our brave military men and women. Martin served in the Marines and works tirelessly to make sure MVAP is successful. For more information about the MVAP team, click here.



The virtual 2021 Human Trafficking Summit is coming up on Oct. 5. It is free to register, and attendees will have access to hours of breakout sessions and targeted discussions on how to end human trafficking. To register, visit HumanTraffickingSummit.com.

