

# Jury Service Scam Toolkit

NCSC 5/13/2015

## Statement of Problem: Jury Scams Impact Local Courts

On January 16, 2015 the U.S. Courts issued a press release to warn the public concerning jury service scams that had been identified by a number of U.S. District Courts.<sup>1</sup> However, this was not the first jurisdiction to notify the public about this growing problem. On December 4, 2014, Alabama's Attorney General Luther Strange issued a similar warning.<sup>2</sup> It has also been reported in the media that Oklahoma's Attorney General Scott Pruitt issued a similar warning in October of 2014.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs issued an alert on June 23, 2014.<sup>4</sup> State courts have also made efforts to alert their residents to this scam. On February 7, 2014, the Judicial Branch of Indiana issued a press release.<sup>5</sup> There have also been an enormous number of local level press releases from trial courts addressing juror scams within their jurisdictional limits.

The characteristics of these juror scams are fairly consistent nationally. The fraudster calls the target and identifies himself/herself as a member of local law enforcement. The target is told that there is a pending warrant for their arrest for failing to appear for jury service but they can avoid a custodial arrest by promptly paying a fine. They are told the payment is required as soon as possible and they are directed to buy a prepaid money card in a specified amount. In some cases the fraudster will stay on the line with the target during the entirety of the criminal event. This is done presumably to ensure that the target is unable to contact friends or family who may dissuade them from purchasing a prepaid money card. Once the prepaid money card has been purchased, the target is told to give the fraudster the number and codes. The fraudster then converts the codes into cash or merchandise.

Every state has criminal laws which prohibit this type of scam. However, the nature of these scams makes them difficult for law enforcement to timely detect. First, the targets are given very little time to react and alert enforcement or their local jury manager. Second, the fraudsters use prepaid cell phones to make the calls. As a result, law enforcement has almost no ability to track down the perpetrator through an investigation of the cell phone number used. Second, the fraudsters use specific prepaid money cards that they know are hard to back track. The net effect is that for the fraudster this is a very low risk crime making it attractive. Additionally, although

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. District Courts press release titled, [New Year, Old Juror Scam](#), January 16, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Press release titled, [AG Strange Warns of Jury Duty Scam](#), December 4, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> KFOR TV, [Officials warning Oklahomans of jury duty scam](#), October 22, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> WSPA TV, [State Warns of New Twist in Jury Duty Scam](#), June 23, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Press release titled, [Fake jury duty calls should be directed to police](#), February 7, 2014.

it is possible that there have been prosecutions of fraudsters involved in this scam, internet searches have not revealed any and they are certainly uncommon if any do exist.

There are certainly a wide variety of scams that target seniors or the public generally. What makes the jury service scam particularly troublesome is not the dollar amounts that the fraudsters are able to obtain. Rather, it is the fraudulent usage of the authority of the courts, which could tarnish the credibility of legitimate court orders and summonses.

## **Jury Service Scam Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jane Doe, 555-000-0000, [jdoe@court.org](mailto:jdoe@court.org)

March 1, 2015

Alpha County Superior/Circuit Court Warns the Public about a Jury Service Scam

There have been several recent reports of jury service scams in ABC and XYZ neighboring counties. Residents should be aware that the court will NEVER contact a person via telephone or email and demand payment of a fine to avoid being arrested for failing to appear for jury service, unless that fine was ordered by a judge in the person's presence. People who fail to appear for jury service may receive a letter from the court with a date to appear in court and explain to a judge why they failed to appear. Alternatively, a law enforcement officer may notify people that they must appear in court at a specific date and time to explain why they failed to appear. However, only a judge can require people to pay a fine for failing to appear for jury service and this can only occur after a person has been given the opportunity to explain themselves in open court.

People who have received a suspicious phone call or email demanding payment of a fine for failing to appear for jury service should promptly contact law enforcement at \_\_\_\_\_ or Jane Doe, Jury Manager at \_\_\_\_\_.

There have been a large number of reported cases of jury service scams around the county and as a result a number of jurisdictions have issued warnings. On January 16, 2015 the U.S. Courts issued a press release to warn the public concerning jury service scams that had been identified by a number of U.S. District Courts.<sup>6</sup> However, this was not the first jurisdiction to notify the public about this growing problem. On December 4, 2014, Alabama's Attorney General Luther Strange issued a similar warning.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. District Courts press release titled, [New Year, Old Juror Scam](#), January 16, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Press release titled, [AG Strange Warns of Jury Duty Scam](#), December 4, 2014.

It has also been reported in the media that Oklahoma's Attorney General Scott Pruitt issued a similar warning in October of 2014.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs issued an alert on June 23, 2014.<sup>9</sup> State courts have also made efforts to alert their residents to this scam. On February 7, 2014, the Judicial Branch of Indiana issued a press release.<sup>10</sup> There have also been an enormous number of local level press releases from trial courts addressing juror scams within their jurisdictional limits.

## Jury Scam Poster

The Washington Administrative Office of the Courts developed a very high quality poster titled, "Protect Yourself Against Jury Duty Scams." They graciously authorized the National Center for State Courts to reprint the poster and make it available to courts nationally. It is suggested that judges, court administrators, and jury managers consider placing the posters in locations in their communities so that the general public will see them. As seniors are frequently targeted by jury service scams, special emphasis should be placed on areas they congregate in local communities. Suggested locations for the posters are senior centers, recreation centers, city/town halls, social services buildings, libraries, etc.

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<sup>9</sup> WSPA TV, [State Warns of New Twist in Jury Duty Scam](#), June 23, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Press release titled, [Fake jury duty calls should be directed to police](#), February 7, 2014.

## Sample Editorial By Circuit Court Judge Jane Doe

It has come to my attention that a disturbing trend nationally has been reported in the neighboring counties of XYZ and ABC County. Fraudsters posing as law enforcement officers have contacted local residents and indicated to them that there is a warrant for their arrest pending for failing to appear for jury service. The targeted individual is told that they need to go buy a money card immediately and pay a fine to avoid being arrested. County residents should be aware that the court will never contact you via telephone and ask you to pay a fine for failing to appear for jury service. If you do fail to appear for jury service, it is possible that you may be required to appear in court and explain your lack of attendance to a judge. If the judge hearing this matter does not believe that you have a satisfactory explanation for failing to appear, the judge may order that you pay a fine. This can only happen in open court and in your presence.

People who have received a suspicious phone call or email demanding payment of a fine for failing to appear for jury service should promptly contact law enforcement at \_\_\_\_\_ or Jane Doe, Jury Manager at \_\_\_\_\_. By promptly alerting the authorities, you can help stop a disturbing fraudulent trend.

There have been a large number of reported cases of jury service scams around the county and as a result a number of jurisdictions have issued warnings. On January 16, 2015 the U.S. Courts issued a press release to warn the public concerning jury service scams that had been identified by a number of U.S. District Courts.<sup>11</sup> However, this was not the first jurisdiction to notify the public about this growing problem. On December 4, 2014, Alabama's Attorney General Luther Strange issued a similar warning.<sup>12</sup> It has also been reported in the media that Oklahoma's Attorney General Scott Pruitt issued a similar warning in October of 2014.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs issued an alert on June 23, 2014.<sup>14</sup> State courts have also made efforts to alert their residents to this scam. On February 7, 2014, the Judicial Branch of Indiana issued a press release.<sup>15</sup> There have also been an enormous number of local level press releases from trial courts addressing juror scams within their jurisdictional limits.

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<sup>13</sup> KFOR TV, [Officials warning Oklahomans of jury duty scam](#), October 22, 2014.

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## **Handout for Seniors (on a 4 x 9 card)**

The concept would be to have these in senior centers, drugs stores, etc.

### **BEWARE OF JURY SERVICE SCAMS**

Jury Service Scams Frequently Target Seniors

Don't Buy a Money Card to Pay a Fine for Missing Jury Service

If you were summoned for jury service and failed to appear, you may be contacted by the court.

If this happens, a judge may ask you for an explanation for why you missed jury service.

However, the court will never contact you and ask you to pay a fine for missing jury service with a money card to avoid being arrested. If you have received a call asking for payment of a fine for missing jury service, contact your local court identified below or contact local law enforcement promptly.

LOGOS

## **Audio Public Service Announcement**

This is Jane Doe, Circuit Clerk of XYZ County. Have you or a loved one been contacted by a law enforcement officer demanding immediate payment of a fine for missing jury service? Please be aware that if you missed jury service, the court will never ask a law enforcement officer to collect a fine from you. If you receive a suspicious phone call of this nature, please promptly contact your local court administrator Jane Doe at \_\_\_\_\_ or XYZ County Sheriff's Department at \_\_\_\_\_. With your assistance, we can stop these criminals from perpetuating fraud on the public.