



State Attorney  
18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit  
Brevard and Seminole Counties



State Attorney William Scheiner

# The Monthly Brief

Volume 14 Issue 4

April 2026

## Beware the 'recall refund' trap

Product recalls are common, but scammers are now using them to stage a new kind of digital ambush. In this scheme, you receive an urgent email or text claiming a product you recently purchased — anything from a space heater to a baby stroller — has been recalled due to safety hazards. The message warns of immediate danger and offers a “hassle-free refund” if you simply click a link to provide your details.

Sometimes, the messages appear to come from trusted retailers like Amazon, Costco, or Walmart. Often, they don't mention a specific product you bought, but instead cite a made-up order number or other information to make the message seem legit. Just click a link to see what it was.

Don't bite.

These links often lead to phishing sites designed to harvest your Social Security number and banking information, or they may secretly install malware on your device. While legitimate recalls do happen, official companies rarely reach out via unsolicited text messages demanding sensitive data for a payout.

Other times, the scammers simply want your money and will ask you to pay a so-called processing fee to get your refund. Legitimate government agencies and honest companies will never ask for that.

### How to stay safe

**Don't click any links:** Treat any unsolicited, urgent-seeming text message about an urgent product recall as a red flag.

**Go to the source:** If you get a recall notice, visit the retailer or manufacturer's official website or the Consumer Product Safety Commission at [cpsc.gov](https://www.cpsc.gov) to verify the recall in its searchable database.

**Keep your info private:** A real refund process rarely requires your full Social Security number. If a site asks for high-level personal data to process a small refund, close the tab immediately.

**Register your products:** Mail in the registration cards that come with your appliances or gadgets, or register them on the manufacturer's official website. Legitimate recall notices are sent directly to registered owners via mail or official email.

**Beware upfront-fee requests:** Besides requests for bogus fees, any instruction to pay via gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency is a sure sign of a scam.



Gemini/AI illustration

## PRIZE SCAMS

### Didn't enter? Then you didn't win

If you get a call or email saying you've “won a prize,” why not do whatever the caller or writer instructs to claim it?

Because it's most likely a scam — especially if it's for a contest you didn't enter, says the Federal Trade Commission.

The FTC in March reported a surge in random calls and texts claiming victims have won cash, cars, or electronics. Before the lucky recipients can claim their prizes, however, they must pay taxes, processing fees, and shipping and handling charges.

The scammers use artificial urgency — claiming it's a “limited time offer” — to stop you from thinking clearly. They often insist on payment methods such as gift cards, cryptocurrency or wire transfers, all of which are untraceable.

Bottom line: If they say there's a charge to get your prize, it's a scam. If you pay, you'll end up losing money instead of winning anything.

### Protect yourself

**Never pay to play:** A real prize is always free. If you are asked to pay taxes or fees upfront, it is a scam, the AARP Fraud Watch Network reports.

**Verify independently:** If a message claims to be from a real company, find their official phone number yourself. Never use the contact info provided in the suspicious message.

**Resist the rush:** Scammers use urgency to stop you from thinking clearly. If they demand you act “now” or keep the win a secret, hang up immediately

**Protect others:** Report fraud online at [Reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://www.reportfraud.ftc.gov).

# Law & Order News



## Brevard chiefs name Babb 'Prosecutor of the Year'

Assistant State Attorney Christine Babb has been named Prosecutor of the Year by the Brevard Association of Chiefs of Police.

Babb's work in 2025 included seven jury trials that resulted in convictions and prison sentences for defendants charged with such crimes as second-degree murder; aggravated battery with a firearm; burglary; lewd or lascivious molestation of a child; escape from jail; and sale or delivery of drugs.

"Giving the victims closure, justice and peace of mind so they can move forward – that's definitely what keeps me going," Babb said.

The prosecutor praised the police detectives and patrol officers she has worked with to secure guilty verdicts and put dangerous felons in prison.

"It's definitely all their hard work on the front end that makes trying a case possible," Babb said.

A graduate of Nova Southeastern University's law school, Babb joined the State Attorney's Office for the 18<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit in 2016 and was soon recognized as misdemeanor prosecutor of the year. She advanced to the felony trial division and today serves as a career-criminal and firearms specialist prosecuting repeat offenders and violent career criminals.

"Christine's work made our community safer," State Attorney William Scheiner said. "Christine took on a leadership role in her division in 2025, and the variety of her cases was notable."



## Three indicted for gang-retribution murder in Sanford

The Seminole County Grand Jury indicted three men March 10 for assassinating the brother of a gang member who had testified against another member in a 2025 murder trial.

DAMARIOUS D. COFIELD, 31, now faces the death penalty for first-degree premeditated murder with a firearm for shooting La-Don Ja Quan Williams, 22, on West 14th Street in Sanford on Nov 1. Williams' older brother served as a prosecution witness against Thallas Inman, a gang leader who was sentenced to life in prison in October for the automatic-rifle ambush that killed an 18-year-old in a car at a Sanford apartment complex. Investigators believe Williams' murder was meant to serve as retribution and a warning.

The Grand Jury also indicted MOSES MITCHELL III, 30, and JAMARLON L. GREEN, 30, for first-degree premeditated murder for helping Cofield plan and carry out the hit on Williams.

The Grand Jury's indictment of Cofield and Green includes enhanced charges for gang-related murders. Both belong to a Sanford area street gang affiliated with a national Haitian-American criminal organization.

The victim, Williams, hadn't done anything himself to incite the gang members. All three defendants are being held without bond at the Seminole County jail.

## Man charged for shooting death of Melbourne girl, 2

A Palm Bay man has been indicted for the fatal shooting of a two-year-old south Melbourne girl and the attempted killing of her grandparents in August 2025.

The Brevard County Grand Jury indicted CLIFFORD O. LONG, 37, on March 31 on one count of first-degree premeditated murder, two counts of attempted first-degree murder, and one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Melbourne Police investigators say Long entered the family's house on Poplar Lane on August 29, shot grandmother Alicia Hayes in a hallway and shot the little girl, Bles'syn Lightner, and grandfather Haywood Hilton as they played in a bedroom.

Bles'syn died from a single, close-range gunshot to her forehead. Hayes and Hilton were treated for serious wounds at Holmes Regional Medical Center.

Long emerged as a suspect during months of investigation by Melbourne Police detectives. He matched the grandfather's description of the shooter as a tall, thin, light-skinned black male with a head shaped "like a football."

## Palm Bay man sentenced to life for sexual battery on child

A Palm Bay man was sentenced March 18 to life in prison for raping a female relative. A jury found RONNIE DAVIS, 48, guilty of sexual battery on a child by a person in familial or custodial authority. The case for prosecutors Andrew Joy and Christine Babb hinged on sworn testimony by Davis' victim.

"The victim was brave to testify and stand up to her abuser," Joy said. "The jury found her testimony so powerful that they agreed the defendant was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt."