

# NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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SCDCA Media Contact: Alice Brooks, 803.734.4190

1.800.922.1594 (toll free in SC)

Email: [scdca@scconsumer.gov](mailto:scdca@scconsumer.gov)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Department of Consumer Affairs Says Don't Get Jury Rigged!

**Columbia, SC** – Jury scams have been around for at least five years, but forwarded emails indicate that they may be making a return appearance. This scam is a simple variation of identity theft ploys.

Scammers call claiming to be an officer of the court. He or she tells you that you have failed to report for jury duty and that a bench warrant has been issued for your arrest. The FBI, warning as early as 2005, calls this “social engineering.” The scam’s bold simplicity may be what makes it so effective, according to the FBI warning.

“Victims are often caught off-guard when frightened by something as unexpected as the threat of arrest,” said Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator of the SC Department of Consumer Affairs. “They may unwittingly give up sensitive information under these circumstances.”

FBI officials report that even when victims protest that they have not received a jury summons, the scammer attempts to verify the victim’s social security number and/or birthdate in order to “clear up the matter.”

Another twist on the scam happens when the con artist offers a “solution” to the missed jury date: a fine, payable by credit or debit card, right over the phone. It’s a very simple scam that puts people on the defensive, then reels them in with the promised of a clean slate.

Protecting yourself is simple: **Never give out personal or identifying information** to a telephone caller in a conversation that you did *not* initiate.

- Local or even federal court workers will not telephone to ask for personal information.

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#### About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit [www.scconsumer.gov](http://www.scconsumer.gov).

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- Don't give out bank account, social security, or credit or debit card numbers whether it be to someone trying to sell you something or someone claiming to be from a bank or government agency.
- Examine your bank and credit card statements carefully every month. Challenge any unauthorized charges.
- Get your free credit report annually ([www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)) and clean up any errors.

South Carolina consumers have the best protection of all: freeze your credit with each of the three credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion). This can be accomplished for free, thanks to South Carolina's Financial Identity Fraud and Identity Theft Protection Act. Once you have been sent your Personal Identification Number (PIN), your credit may be thawed in as little as 15 minutes. Freezing and thawing can be done as much as the consumer desires, and always at no charge.

For more information on this scam or on freezing your credit, contact the Public Information Division at 803.734.4190, toll free in SC at 1.800.922.1594, or online at [www.sconsumer.gov](http://www.sconsumer.gov). The Department also has posted a YouTube video on the subject of freezing your credit: <http://bit.ly/KPzga>.

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