



State Attorney
18th Judicial Circuit
Brevard and Seminole County



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The Monthly Brief

Volume 13 Issue 5

May 2025

Get the Pet You Pay For

Considering buying a pet to keep you company?

Scammers are posting ads, particularly for puppies, pretending these precious pooches are for sale, the Federal Trade Commission warns.

You might see these ads online or on streetcorners — sometimes advertising purebred puppies for a few hundred dollars when they often cost thousands — urging you to act fast. The scammer hopes the puppy photo they posted will be irresistible and draw you in, and they'll insist you pay for it up front. But if you pay, not only will you never see that puppy (who might not even exist), but you might also never see that money again.



If you're thinking of getting a furry friend for yourself or a loved one:

- **Do some research.** Search online for the name of the seller or business and words like “review,” “scam,” or “complaint.” See what others are saying.
- **Watch how you're asked to pay.** Only scammers say you must pay with gift cards, a payment app, cryptocurrency, or a wire transfer service like Western Union or MoneyGram since it's hard to get your money back.
- **Consider a local rescue or animal shelter.**

Moving? Heed These Red Flags

Watch for these warning signs of a rip-off before signing a contract with a mover:

- Answering the phone as “moving services” or something generic rather than saying a specific company name
- Refusing to provide a written estimate or offering an estimate without assessing the scope and quantity of household goods
- Claiming the final estimate will be provided upon loading the goods
- Supplying blank or incomplete estimates or contracts for approval and signature
- Requiring a large, up-front deposit or payment in cash.

Understand and Avoid Romance Scams

Romance scams are a growing threat that exploits emotional vulnerabilities to steal money and personal information. They typically begin on social media dating apps advertised by email. Fraudsters create fake profiles with stolen photos and fabricated identities, often posing as attractive professionals or military personnel.

They target consumers, especially seniors, building trust over weeks or months through frequent, affectionate communication via texts, calls, or emails. Scammers may claim to live far away, avoiding in-person meetings with excuses like travel or work commitments.

Then, the scammer introduces a crisis — medical emergencies, business failures, or travel issues — requesting urgent financial help. They often ask for payments via wire transfers, gift cards, or cryptocurrency, which are difficult to trace.

Protection tips:

- **Verify identities:** Use reverse image searches to check profile photos and insist on video calls to confirm identities.
- **Guard personal information:** Never share financial details, passwords, or sensitive photos with online contacts.
- **Be skeptical of sob stories:** Question urgent requests for money, especially for emergencies or travel.
- **Consult trusted contacts:** Discuss relationships with family or friends before sending money.

Law & Order News



Brevard Chiefs Name Price 'Prosecutor of the Year'

Assistant State Attorney **Rebecca Price** has been named Prosecutor of the Year by the Brevard Association of Chiefs of Police.

Price's work in 2024 included 12 jury trials that resulted in convictions and prison sentences for crimes including robbery with a firearm, child molestation, domestic violence with strangulation, battery on a person 65 years or older, and attempted second-degree murder.

"My primary goals in this job are to seek justice for victims and protect the community," Price said. "I can go to sleep at night and know I've done something to make Brevard County a safer place to live."

Price is assigned to its career-criminal and firearms unit where she prosecutes repeat offenders and violent career criminals.

State Attorney William Scheiner
with ASA Rebecca Price



Prosecutors Convict Molester, Earn Justice for Melbourne

Brevard County prosecutors sent a sex offender back to prison for life for molesting a 10-year-old Melbourne girl. A jury found **DOUGLAS L. RYAN**, 34, guilty of lewd or lascivious molestation of a child based on a case mad by Assistant State Attorneys Elizabeth Garvey and Christine Babb.

Police arrested Ryan in 2023 after the girl confided in her school teacher that Ryan forced himself on her in a mobile home off West Eau Gallie Boulevard. It was Ryan's second offense.

"It's justice for the community because he will never get near another child again," Garvey said.

Death Sentence Sought in Titusville Murder

The State Attorney's Office will seek the death penalty for **DAVID A. BARBER**, charged with kidnapping and murdering **Jessie Kirk**, 72, of Titusville in March. Our notice lists multiple aggravating factors in this especially heinous case:

- The capital felony was committed for pecuniary (financial) gain.
- The crime was "especially heinous, atrocious, or cruel."
- The homicide was committed in a "cold, calculated and premeditated manner without any pretense of moral or legal justification."

Life Sentence for Killing Biker, Good Samaritan in Sanford

A Sanford man who struck and killed a motorcyclist on S.R. 46 then did a U-turn and mowed down a Good Samaritan who stopped to help will spend his life in prison for the two deaths.

MICHAEL KRAFT, 40, was sentenced April 16 to five concurrent life sentences for killing **Vincent Russo**, 73, and **Jenica Campbell**, 39, in March 2021.

A Seminole County jury convicted Kraft in March of two counts of DUI manslaughter, two counts of vehicular homicide, and two counts of leaving the scene of an accident involving death.

At trial, Assistant State Attorneys **Stewart Stone**, **Rich Coln** and **Sarah Mian** presented evidence that Kraft was under the extreme influence of methamphetamine at the time of the incident.

"It was an appropriate, legal sentence that matches the horrific nature of the crime," Stone said.

HOA-Hating Arsonist Gets 12 Years for Burning Longwood Condo Complex

A man who set his Longwood condominium complex ablaze out of anger at his homeowners' association was sentenced to 12 years in prison followed by 15 years' probation.

A Seminole County Jury found **MARC L. HERMANN**, 56, guilty of arson of an occupied structure following a trial presented by Assistant State Attorneys **Sha-Kiah Walker** and **Donovan Wagner**. Hermann had owed about \$28,800 in unpaid dues and fees to the association. His unit had been foreclosed upon and sold at auction by the HOA.