

Date March 13, 2020

Attorney General Moody's Week In Review - March 13, 2020



This week, Governor Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency in response to the spread of COVID-19 in Florida. When the governor makes an emergency declaration, the state's price gouging laws go into effect. To help deter any price gouging related to COVID-19, I activated Florida's Price Gouging Hotline.

This is a precautionary action meant to protect consumers and there is no cause for panic. If anyone does encounter what they believe to be price gouging of an essential commodity, they should report it to the hotline by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or by visiting [MyFloridaLegal.com](https://www.myfloridalegal.com).

At this time, essential commodities include only the following items:

- Protective masks used to protect you from others if you are sick;
- Sanitizing and disinfecting supplies, such as hand sanitizer, gel, wipes, cleaning supplies for surface cleaning and all commercial cleaning supplies; and
- All personal protective equipment, including gowns, booties, gloves and other protective gear.

Floridians can also report concerns about pricing of essential commodities to my office using our new price gouging reporting app NO SCAM. The app can be downloaded on Apple and Android smartphones for free.

For instruction on how to use the app, click [here](#).

For tips on reporting possible price gouging, click [here](#).

We are monitoring the COVID-19 situation in Florida very closely, and my Consumer Protection Division's rapid response team is ready to immediately respond to allegations of price gouging.

Be on the lookout for scams and guard against possible gouging, but remember, the best thing

you can do right now is heed the advice of health experts—wash hands regularly and stay home if you are ill.

If every Floridian takes steps to guard their health and prevent the spread of this new virus, we can reduce the impact of COVID-19. Let's work together to build a Stronger, Safer Florida.



In The News

Ashley Moody activates price gouging hotline amid coronavirus scare, Florida Politics

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Florida Price Gouging Hotline activated during state of emergency, NBC 2 Fort Myers

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Coronavirus in Florida: Price gouging hotline activated for cleaning supplies, WFLA Tampa

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Were you just scammed in the coronavirus crisis? Report price-gouging on this new hotline, Miami Herald

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Coronavirus Prompts Florida To Activate Price Gouging Hotline, WUSF Public Media

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Coronavirus: Florida's Price Gouging Hotline activated, Action News Jax

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Ashley Moody Issues Consumer Alert About Spring Break Scams, Florida Daily

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Protecting Floridians



Attorney General

Ashley Moody announced the arrest of an individual on charges of Medicaid provider fraud. Teresa B. Moore is accused of engaging in a systematic scheme to fraudulently bill the Medicaid system, including billing for services not rendered and submitting false claims of approximately \$49,500. The Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office arrested Moore in Louisiana and will extradite Moore back to Florida.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Because of the diligent efforts of our Medicaid Fraud investigators, this fraudulent scheme bilking the Medicaid program out of thousands of dollars has been thwarted, and the person responsible will face justice. My Medicaid Fraud Control Unit has worked hard to investigate and bring charges against those who would abuse and misuse the Medicaid program. Thanks to my MFCU, this woman, who fraudulently billed more than \$49,000 to Medicaid, will now be brought to justice." [Read More](#)

Pinellas County Woman Arrested for Exploitation of an Elderly Person



Attorney General Ashley Moody announced the arrest of a Pinellas County woman for exploiting a senior citizen out of thousands of dollars. Following an investigation by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, the Tarpon Springs Police Department arrested Anne Marie Barnes. Barnes allegedly obtained funds unlawfully from a disabled relative living in a nursing home.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This case reminds me of why I'm dedicated to protecting seniors. This woman, who was entrusted with her own relative's care and finances, abused that power to pad her own pockets. I'm disgusted, and I'm proud of my Medicaid Fraud Control Unit for their hard work in bringing this criminal to justice." [Read More](#)



Matthew Harrell

has been sentenced for his role in organizing and managing a health care fraud scheme that stole millions in Medicaid funds in Georgia, Louisiana, and Florida.

Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Exploiting children's personal information to steal public resources is not only reprehensible, it is illegal. This criminal even directed his employees to conceal his scheme by creating fake documents to support his fraudulent billing—of millions of

dollars—to Medicaid. This man will now serve an extended sentence in prison.” [Read More](#)

Attorney General Ashley Moody

NEWS ALERT



Attorney General

Ashley Moody is thanking state lawmakers for passing legislation to curb the teen-vaping epidemic. The Florida Senate passed SB 810 late Thursday. The legislation now heads to Governor Ron DeSantis's desk for his signature. SB 810 will usher in key changes to state laws aimed at reducing minors' access to vaping products in Florida.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "As I learned last summer during my statewide fact-finding mission, vaping is taking over our schools and addicting our kids. That is why I took swift action—launching a teen-vaping investigation in Florida involving some 20 companies and leading a multistate investigation into JUUL. I also began working with state lawmakers last year on changes to help curb the youth vaping epidemic, and I was elated to see this vital legislation passing its final stop in the Florida Legislature.

"I want to thank Senator Simmons, Representative Toledo, Senator Flores and each and every member who voted in favor of this bill to protect Florida's children. As I said after announcing my fact-finding mission, we cannot stand idly by while the next generation becomes addicted to nicotine. Our legislative leaders agreed, and I am proud of the swift action they took to stop underage vaping and protect our children." [Read More](#)

Attorney General Ashley Moody

NEWS ALERT



This week, Florida

House Bill 813 passed unanimously on the floor of the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “I’m grateful for Representative Lawrence McClure and Senator Doug Broxson for their leadership on HB 813. I’m committed to protecting seniors from fraud, and this bill helps us in that mission by safeguarding vulnerable investors. We build a stronger, safer Florida by fighting fraud.” [Read More](#)

Events

This week, following the state of emergency declaration from Governor Ron DeSantis regarding the coronavirus impacting Florida, Attorney General Moody activated the state's Price Gouging Hotline. Attorney General Moody met with Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Jared Moskowitz and EOC staff about Florida's efforts to stop price gouging related to COVID-19.



Attorney General Moody speaking with News Service of Florida television reporter Tom Urban about the Price Gouging Hotline and how Floridians can report coronavirus-related scams.



Attorney General Moody meeting with state attorneys hosting the Grease & Grits Breakfast in the Florida Senate Office Building for state workers.



Attorney General Moody with state attorneys Phil Archer, William Cervone and Jack Campbell at the Grease & Grits Breakfast.



Attorney General Moody welcoming Florida House Pages to her State Capitol office in Tallahassee.



Attorney General Moody surprising a group of students on the steps of Florida's Historic Capitol in Tallahassee.

