



State Attorney
18th Judicial Circuit
Brevard and Seminole County



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The Monthly Brief

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Is that charity appeal legit? How to check it out

Generosity strengthens our communities, but fake or poorly run charities take advantage of that spirit every year. We recommend some quick online research and pointed questions to make sure your donation supports a legitimate cause.

The Florida Sheriff's Association and Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services share these tips:

Verify registration: Confirm a charity is registered to operate in Florida on the state's **Check-A-Charity** tool at csapp.fdacs.gov or by calling **1-800-HELP-FLA**. You can also view its financial reports including how much goes to programs versus overhead.

Check online for red flags: Google the charity's name plus "scam" or "fraud" to uncover complaints. Consult independent evaluators like Charity Navigator or BBB's Wise Giving Alliance for ratings on efficiency and accountability.

Ask callers questions: Inquire how funds will be used, the solicitor's affiliation, and request mailed info or a financial summary. Legitimate groups provide details without pressure. Hang up if they sound evasive or press for immediate payment.

Make only secure online donations: Look for indicators that the charity's website is secure, such as a web address that begins with "https:" (The "s" stands for secure).

Beware unsolicited calls or texts: Visit the charity's official website (often ending in .org) on your own to confirm details.

Report suspicions: If something feels off, file a complaint with FDACS at 800helpfla.com or call your local sheriff's office to protect others.



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Fast answers online

Charity Navigator

Charitynavigator.org

Search for charities that match your passions, view their ratings, and get addresses for donating directly.

Charity Watch

Charitywatch.org

Search background information and A-F ratings on all types of nonprofits compiled by independent watchdog.

5 Hacker-Proof Tips for Safer Online Holiday Shopping

Follow these best practices while online shopping for gifts or that perfect party outfit:

Shop only on secure sites. Look for "https://" and the padlock icon in your browser's address bar. The Federal Trade Commission warns that missing these signals means your data travels unencrypted — easy pickings for interceptors.

Review statements weekly, at least. Three-quarters of victims who make such checks catch the fraud within seven days and often succeed in recovering funds, the nonprofit Identity Theft Resource Center reports.

Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) on your online shopping accounts. If you haven't accepted 2FA, it's time. Even if your credentials leak, hackers would still need your phone or authenticator app to receive a one-time security code to charge your account.

Sign up for real-time transaction alerts from your bank or credit card company. Such alerts via email or app notification allow you to immediately detect and report unauthorized charges such as online purchases or large withdrawals. Spot a \$1 "test" charge? Freeze the card via your bank's app before the big theft hits.

Avoid using public Wi-Fi while making online purchases. The hotspot in your airport or favorite coffee shop may be convenient, but the FBI says attackers create fake networks to sniff card details. Use cellular data or a trusted VPN (NordVPN, ExpressVPN) instead.

Law & Order News



From left: Chief Assistant State Attorney Stacey Salmons, Assistant State Attorney Cody Vincitore, Misdemeanor Division Chief Dave Whateley, and ESGR volunteer Pamela McGee

State Attorney's Office recognized for backing staff in U.S. Guard, Reserves

State Attorney's Office leaders in Seminole County have been honored for their support of staff who also serve in the U.S. National Guard and Reserve. Chief Assistant State Attorney Stacey Salmons and Misdemeanor Division Chief Dave Whateley recently received the Patriot Award for their support of Assistant State Attorney Cody Vincitore, a chief yeoman in the U.S. Navy Reserve. The award is presented by the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Committee, an office of the U.S. Defense Department.

"When I've had to take off for military service, the answer is always, 'We'll figure it out – go on what you have to do,'" Vincitore said. "It makes my job easier, and it makes it easier to be in the Guard and Reserve when the nation calls."

Jury OKs death penalty for killer of girlfriend who refused abortion

A Seminole County jury voted 11-1 on Oct. 30 to sentence DONOVAN L. FAISON, 23, to death for killing his pregnant girlfriend and their unborn son after she refused to get an abortion. The same jury convicted Faison Oct. 27 of first-degree murder with a firearm, killing an unborn child, and burglary with a firearm for shooting Kaylin Fiengo, 18, as she sat in her car at a Sanford park in 2022.

Assistant State Attorneys Stewart Stone, Domenick Leo and Anna Valentini asked jurors to vote for the death penalty based on aggravating factors described in state law.

"You may and should consider the cold, calculated, premeditated nature of this killing," Stone told jurors. "This was an execution-style killing."

A judge will make the final decision on Faison's sentence after another hearing Dec. 5.

Prosecutors convict man who pulled gun at beachside Taco Bell

A man who threatened Taco Bell servers with a gun in Satellite Beach after they asked him to speed-up his order now faces decades in prison for firearm violations.

Brevard County prosecutors convicted BRIAN A. BAJANA, 41, on Oct. 31 of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Assistant State Attorneys Nader Hatoum and Francis DeMuro showed jurors evidence including three handguns obtained from Bajana's bedroom under search warrants. A witness connected one of those guns to the incident at Taco Bell.

In a second case more focused on the armed threats at Taco Bell, Bajana pled no-contest Oct. 27 and was convicted of aggravated assault with a firearm, possession of a firearm by a person subject to a protective order for domestic battery, and another count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

For the convictions in both cases, Bajana could spend more than 30 years in prison. His sentencing has been scheduled for Dec. 3.

N.Y. man convicted in Brevard for sex videos with runaway girl

A man who shot nearly a dozen phone videos while having sex with a 13-year-old runaway in Titusville has been convicted of lewd and lascivious battery plus 22 child porn-related charges.

A Brevard County jury found Devin White, 41, guilty as charged on Oct. 14 based on evidence presented by prosecutors Sara Flenniken and Dakota Fraley. White, a resident of the Bronx, New York, faces a potential sentence of life in prison at a hearing Nov. 6.

After his arrest May 13, a warranted search of White's mobile phone revealed the 11 videos.