



# Department of Justice

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## U.S. Attorney Milhiser Urges Public to Remain Vigilant, Alert and Report Frauds, Scams Related to COVID-19

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – U.S. Attorney John C. Milhiser, Central District of Illinois, is reminding the public to be aware and alert to individuals and entities that prey upon people’s anxieties and fear surrounding the current public health crisis, particularly those most vulnerable, to illegally benefit themselves.

“We are fortunate to live in communities of people who are generous and caring toward others; however, there are those who use crisis situations to exploit and incite people’s fear and vulnerabilities to do harm,” stated U.S. Attorney Milhiser. “It is a top priority of this office, in partnership with our local, state and federal law enforcement counterparts, to detect, investigate, and prosecute anyone who attempts to take advantage of the anxieties and uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic to defraud others. Remain vigilant and report suspicious activity to law enforcement.”

If you see attempted fraud of others or if you or a loved one become a victim of such fraud, please report it to the **National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF)** hotline: 1-866-720-5721, or email: [disaster@leo.gov](mailto:disaster@leo.gov) The NCDF serves as a national clearinghouse for the Department of Justice to receive and coordinate complaints with federal, state and local law enforcement authorities.

Throughout the country, U.S. Attorney’s Offices have received reports of individuals and businesses engaging in a wide range of fraudulent and criminal behavior, including the following examples:

- Robocalls making fraudulent offers to sell respiratory masks with no intent of delivery;
- Social media scams fraudulently seeking donations or claiming to provide stimulus funds if the recipient enters his or her bank account information;
- Sales of counterfeit or fake testing kits, cures, ‘immunity’ pills, and protective equipment;
- Fraudulent offers for free COVID-19 testing to obtain Medicare beneficiary information that is used to submit false medical claims for unrelated, unnecessary, or fictitious testing or services.

“It is a top priority to find these bad actors, stop them, prosecute them, and protect the citizens of Central Illinois,” stated U.S. Attorney Milhiser.

Each U.S. Attorney’s Office in the country, in accordance with recent direction from U.S. Attorney General William Barr, has appointed a Coronavirus Fraud Coordinator. Assistant U.S. Attorney

Ryan Finlen has been appointed to serve in this capacity for the Central District of Illinois. AUSA Finlen is coordinating with federal prosecutors in the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Northern and Southern Districts of Illinois, along with the Illinois Attorney General's Office, the Illinois State Police, Illinois State's Attorneys, federal agencies, and local law enforcement to mobilize and work together to uncover COVID-19 fraud schemes and other criminal activity associated with this public health crisis.

The Department of Justice has also prioritized the investigation and prosecution of individuals and entities that attempt to hoard massive amounts of vital medical items and engage in price gouging which inhibits the government, health care professionals, and the public from implementing critical life-saving measures and practices to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A task force has been established with members from across federal law enforcement and every U.S. Attorney's Office to develop effective enforcement measures and coordinate nationwide investigation and prosecution of these illicit activities.