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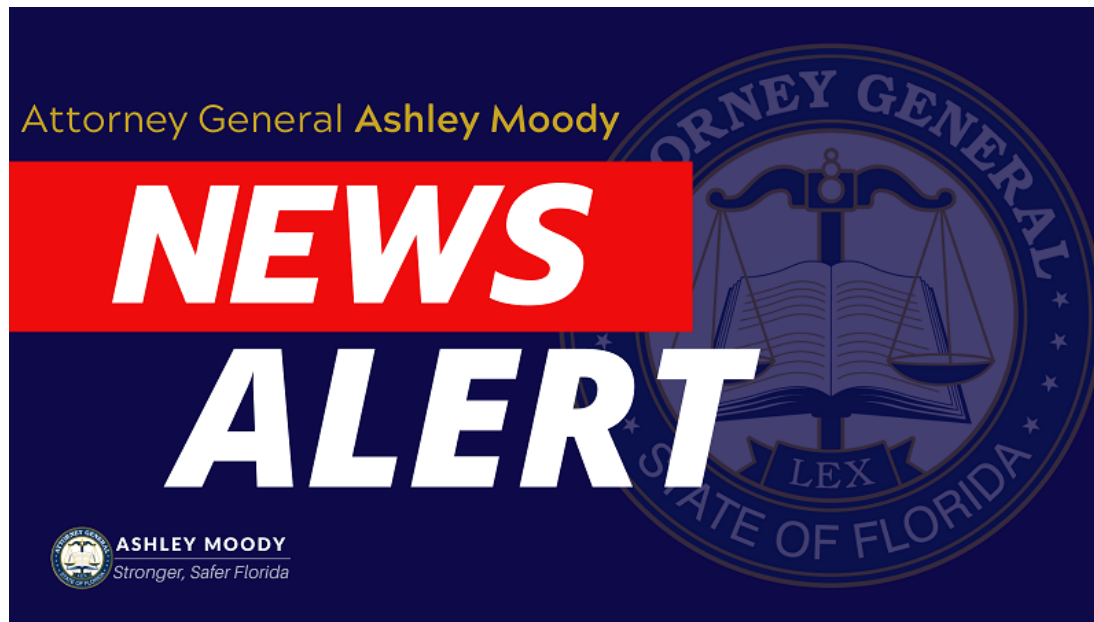
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Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

AG Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution Charges Tax Preparer with Money Laundering and Fraud for Stealing from Seniors



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution is charging a tax preparer with multiple felony counts for scheming to defraud Floridians, many of whom are seniors. The Broward Sheriff's Office arrested Ricardo Karns for using his tax preparation business to defraud at least 21 unsuspecting victims — 19 of whom are seniors. Karns operated Karns Taxes & Investments and obtained the personal identification information of nonclients and fraudulently used the information to open credit card accounts in the victims' names. Once obtaining the fraudulent credit cards, Karns used the cards at Karns Taxes & Investments, making it appear that the victims purchased the tax preparation service.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This tax preparer stole personal information to defraud Florida seniors. He tried to launder his ill-gotten gains, funneling the stolen funds through his tax business — where he spent countless hours executing his illegal scheme. Now, my Statewide Prosecutors will make sure he pays for his crimes with an extended stay at a taxpayer-funded facility."

According to the law enforcement investigation, Karns transferred funds from the fraudulent transactions conducted at Karns Taxes & Investments to a separate account or withdrew the funds in the form of cash. The investigation also revealed that some of the fraudulently obtained

credit cards showed transactions being conducted at businesses owned by Karns' associates.

Karns is charged with one count of organized scheme to defraud, two counts of money laundering, 16 counts of criminal use of personal identification information, 19 counts of grand theft of a person 65 years or older and three counts of grand theft.

OSP Statewide Prosecutors Sophia Birriel-Sanchez and Jonathan Bridges will handle the case.

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