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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures Conviction of Fraudster Who Targeted Seniors

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier's Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a conviction of a man who operated a fraudulent investment scheme. Bernard Joseph McBride, Jr. told his victims that his company, Tutela Mining, Inc., owned and operated a gold mine in California. In total, McBride collected more than \$575,000 from victims.

"My office is ensuring that criminals can't get away with defrauding Florida's seniors," said **Attorney General James Uthmeier**. "Thanks to Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Jonathan Bridges and Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Joshua Dockus, working with our law enforcement partners, we ensured this con man stays behind bars."

The defendant offered victims, many of which were seniors, the opportunity to invest in his sham company and receive guaranteed returns on their investments in either gold or cash. McBride and co-conspirators convinced the senior victims to empty their retirement accounts for these investments.

According to the investigation, bank records and testimony showed that the defendant never owned or operated a gold mine. The money collected from victims went to pay the defendant and his family members, who worked no-show jobs at the company. McBride also used the funds on personal expenses, such as paying for his stepdaughter's wedding.

McBride was found guilty on one count of grand theft over \$100,000 and two counts of grand theft over \$20,000 but less than \$100,000. McBride faces up to 60 years in state prison.

The Office of Financial Regulation and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigated the case.

Scammers and fraudsters often target senior victims. To avoid falling victim to fraudulent schemes, Attorney General Uthmeier offers the following tips to older Floridians:

- Beware of high-pressure tactics used by callers or solicitors;
- Consult with trusted family members or friends about any suspicious calls, emails, or requests for information;
- Do not provide personal information to anyone you do not know;
- Monitor financial accounts regularly for any suspicious activity and
- Be cautious of suspicious emails or links in text messages.

Attorney General Uthmeier's office provides many resources to help seniors learn how to spot and avoid falling victim to scams. The Attorney General's Office's Scams at a Glance program offers free, easy-to-share brochures covering many new or typical schemes. Topics range from grandparent scams to contractor fraud and more. To view the resources, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ScamsAtAGlance.

Floridians can report possible scams to Attorney General Uthmeier's Office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visiting MyFloridaLegal.com.

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