

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DON'T BE FOOLED BY BOGUS PHONE CALLS, STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE WARNS; SCAMMERS POSE AS COURT OFFICIALS, SEEK INFORMATION

LANSING, MI, December 13, 2006 – It may sound legitimate: a phone call from a court official about jury service, threatening legal action and asking for Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, or other confidential information.

But it's only a scam that could lead to identity theft and fraud, warns the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), the administrative agency of the Michigan Supreme Court.

On Tuesday, the Grand Rapids Press reported that callers posing as Barry County juror coordinators tried to get their targets' birth dates and Social Security numbers. The bogus officials threatened their targets with arrest warrants for failing to appear for jury duty, saying that providing the personal information would clear up the matter, according to the Grand Rapids Press.

State Court Administrator Carl L. Gromek said the Barry County incident "is typical of this type of scam. The caller claims to be a court official and states that the targeted person has failed to report for jury service. The caller then threatens the target with prosecution unless he or she provides a Social Security number, financial information, or other confidential data."

But the only way Michigan state courts contact prospective jurors is by mail, Gromek said. "Be aware: prospective jurors can call courts, but courts don't initiate those calls. And courts never call prospective jurors to get their financial information."

Gromek urged the public to be on guard, noting that similar calls have been reported in other states. "Don't give the information, but report these calls to the police and to the court the caller claims to represent," he said. "In addition to the potential for identity theft, it's a crime for anyone to falsely pose as a court official."

To avoid becoming the victim of a telephone scam, remember the following:

- Courts do not contact citizens by phone regarding jury duty. Be suspicious if a person calls claiming to be a court official or staff person.
- Be skeptical if you are told, "In order to avoid prosecution for missing jury duty, you must provide your social security number now so we can verify your information."
- Be suspicious if the person pressures you for immediate action or refuses to send written information for you to review.

- Never give out your bank, credit card, or social security information over the phone to someone who calls you.
- If you are uncomfortable, hang up, even if the caller threatens prosecution.
- Report suspicious calls to local police.

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