



*Written Testimony of Jerry L. Sanders Jr., Sheriff
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RE: COMBATTING ROBOCALL FRAUD: USING TELECOM ADVANCES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TO STOP SCAMMERS AND PROTECT SENIORS

July 17, 2019

Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Casey, and members of the Committee, I am Sheriff Jerry L. Sanders Jr. and I serve as the Sheriff of Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee about my Office's experience with scammers using robocall and spoofing technologies.

The Delaware County Sheriff's Office experiences occasional reports from citizens about receiving scam, or "robo" calls from unknown persons.

These scams vary but the most common form is the caller claims the potential victim has missed jury duty and there is a warrant for their arrest. The caller will identify themselves as a member of the Sheriff's Office, typically using a fake name. In one recent incident, the caller used the name of an actual deputy, going so far as to use the deputy's voicemail greeting as their own. If the Sheriff's Office is able to get a number from a potential victim, calling it back typically results in no answer. On occasion, someone will answer but once they realize the call is from the Sheriff's Office and we are asking legitimate questions, they typically terminate the call.

Another aspect of this is the callers often use "spoofing" technology. This is when they are able to program the actual Sheriff's Office main number to show on the potential victim's caller ID. This is often how we find out about the calls. The potential victim - in most cases people who realized something was amiss, terminates the call and calls back using the displayed number; which is the actual office number. We will tell them that this is scam - the Sheriff's Office does not call people that we have business with; that it is either done through U.S. mail, or in most cases, in-person service by a deputy. In addition, that in no circumstance would we ever ask for information over the phone and never ask for money, or any other valuable thing to avoid obligation, or arrest.

In two separate incidents that occurred over the last several months professionals were targeted. The scammers convinced two of them that they were subject to arrest for missing jury duty. In one case, they were able to get the victim to travel to a bank to withdrawal 3,000 dollars and then on to retail

establishments where she was instructed to purchase thousands of dollars in money cards, or gift cards and ended up mailing them off. The victim's husband grew suspicions and looked on the Sheriff's page on the County website and saw the scam alert but it was too late.

In the most recent case, a similar ruse was used and they advised one of the victims, a 65 year old Doctor that he was subject to arrest for not responding to a grand jury subpoena. They too had him convinced enough that they had him on the phone for approximately an hour and had coaxed him all the way to a bank in Media, Pennsylvania from his home approximately 10 miles and about 20 minutes away, to withdraw 6,000 dollars. They advised him that he should stay on the phone, not answer or communicate with anyone and to follow their instructions. His wife in the mean-time grew suspicious and tried to call him repeatedly. When she could not reach him, she called the Sheriff's Office. With that call and information she was able to provide, we were able to contact the bank and actually intercept the victim as he was parking his vehicle and thwart the execution of the scam and saved the victim thousands of dollars.

In the most recent case the victim was approached by the Chief Deputy, who was in plain clothes and arrived in an unmarked car. When the Chief first approached, the man was skeptical as to who he was, saying that he had the sheriff's office on the phone. The caller terminated the call by the time the chief took the victim's phone. Once the victim realized what had just happened, he explained that he was chiefly concerned about his medical license and that if he were to be arrested, that would be jeopardized, as well as his position as a medical director; losing sight of the fact that this elaborate ruse, with them keeping him on the phone, running him across the county, telling him to not speak to anyone, etc... was in fact just that, a ruse. He was actually intercepted a block from the courthouse, with the building in view but instead of going in to verify, he was actually going to go to the bank and withdraw the money. He then likely would have been directed to go to a "federally authorized retailer" to purchase money, or gift cards, which he would then be instructed to give all pertinent information over the phone, and in some cases to mail them.

In the three most recent cases it is believed the scammers were able to gather personal information on the potential victims, two medical professionals and an architect beforehand, most likely from the web. This enhances the scammers ability to convince the victim that since they know much about them that the call is legitimate. This gets the victim off balance and with the threat of potential arrest and then the offer of the out - by paying a fine, they opt for that to avoid "arrest."

Frequent targets are older persons, who typically have great respect for authority and tend to be much more trusting.

These type scams circulate through the state. We will often see emails from other sheriff's offices. In response when we experience them we push out press and social media notifications to warn the public and we have a permanent alert on the county website.

Unfortunately, given the limits of manpower and resources, local law enforcement can do little to investigate these crimes to arrest. Often, trying to keep the public aware to avoid victimization is the best we can do

I was pleased to learn that Senator Casey has introduced legislation that would help train bank tellers, cashiers and others about how spot a potential scam victim and intervene to stop it. In this way, they

would serve as another line of defense – protecting our friends and neighbors from these criminals. I also think that more must be done by the telecommunications industry to stop these callers from getting through in the first place.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Committee today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.