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Attorney General Warning: This Valentine's Day, Beware of Scam Artists on Dating Sites

(Montgomery) – In February, many Alabamians will use online platforms seeking companionship, yet con artists are also lurking in these forums in hopes of exploiting the lonely and vulnerable for money. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall urges individuals using online dating sites to exercise caution against scammers who seek to cultivate false emotional bonds before soliciting money.

"Romance scams prey on the most vulnerable aspects of human nature--trust, hope, and love. Predators have been known to empty bank accounts with their manipulation and lies," said Attorney General Marshall. "My office regularly receives reports of individuals falling victim to these heartless schemes. Because it is nearly impossible to recover money lost, I strongly encourage anyone who suspects they are being scammed to immediately contact my office. Our Consumer Protection Division can provide guidance before large sums of money are lost for good. It is my hope that we can educate and empower our communities to recognize the signs of online predators."

Romance scams generally occur after individuals meet on a dating site or app where they continue to communicate via email, phone, or messaging. Once building an emotional connection, scammers will begin requesting money for fabricated stories, such as a fictitious medical emergency, the need for a plane ticket to visit, or other urgent circumstances. Unfortunately, people who fall victim to a romance scam are embarrassed and frequently will not report the scam to the proper authorities. Despite the limited reporting, the Federal Trade Commission identified that in 2022, nearly 70,000 people reported a romance scam, with losses totaling \$1.3 billion.

Attorney General Marshall makes the following recommendations to help spot a romance scam:

- Do not send money to anyone you are communicating with online or over the phone.
- Do not give passwords or bank account information regardless of how much you trust this individual.
- Celebrities will not ask for money so that you all can be in a relationship.
- Use a search engine to do a reverse image search for profile pictures.



Contact the Attorney General's Office with a suspected scam at 1-800-392-5658 or visit AlabamaAG.gov. For more information on romance scams visit ftc.gov/romancescams. Or, to report a scam, visit ReportFraud.ftc.gov, or the Federal Bureau of Investigations website at ic3.gov for Internet Crimes.