

February 12, 2026

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Broken Hearts, Empty Bank Accounts: Attorney General Sounds Alarm on Online Romance Scams

(Montgomery, Ala) – Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall urges Alabamians to use extreme caution when using online dating platforms. Bad actors do exist on these sites looking to exploit the lonely and vulnerable for money. The Attorney General urges individuals using online dating sites to exercise caution against scammers who seek to cultivate false emotional bonds before soliciting money.

“Behind the screen is often not a soulmate, but a scammer,” Attorney General Marshall said. “These predators play the long game, building emotional trust only to drain bank accounts and vanish without a trace. By the time victims realize the truth, the money is usually unrecoverable. If something feels wrong, trust your instincts and call our office right away. Acting quickly can make all the difference.”

A romance scam occurs when someone pretends to be a romantic partner online using a fake identity. They build an emotional connection to gain trust, then use that trust to manipulate the victim, usually for money or personal information. This type of exploitation will include manipulating the victim into sending money and sensitive information. 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.

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

- Never 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 or financial assistance to be in a relationship.
- Always put profiles pictures in a search engine to do a reverse image search for reused or fake 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.

