

# Be Aware Of Scams That Are All Around

The digital era has its benefits. People from all over are able to connect almost instantaneously. Computers have made fast work of many tasks that once took hours or days to complete. Information or even funds can be shared at the click of a button.

But for all of the benefits technology has provided, there is a darker side to the connectivity of the modern world. What has become easier for the general public also has become easier from those looking to take advantage of others.

Scams and internet crimes are now commonplace. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that a record \$16.6 billion in losses due to scams were reported to them in 2024. The Pew Research Center indicates 73 percent of adults in the United States have experienced some kind of online scam or attack.

The office of Ken Paxton, the Attorney General of Texas, reports various ways to recognize scams, and that spotting these tactics can help people avoid being taken advantage of.

- Someone contacts you. When a party contacts you first, you can't be certain of their legitimacy. Also, email addresses and caller ID can be faked.

- Easy money is offered. Many scammers dangle a promise of some sort of financial gain, whether it's a prize or an easy loan. These are usually too good to be true.

- Personal information is requested. Be on alert any time someone asks for personal information, whether it's a bank account number or other identifying information. You could become a victim of identity theft.

- A request for money up front. If someone requests money to pay off a debt or to receive a prize, it is likely a scammer trying to take your money.

There are many

types of scams, and the following are some prominent ones.

- Counterfeit merchandise: A scammer can replicate the look of a legitimate retailer's website. Purchasing items online through a link may lead you to a counterfeit site selling merchandise that is not legitimate and/or will not even arrive.

- Charity and disaster fraud: Charity fraud scams typically emerge in the wake of a natural disaster or another sudden, tragic event. Scammers may target generous individuals through email, social media posts, crowdfunding platforms, and cold calls. Never donate to charities you have not verified as legitimate.

- Cryptocurrency investment fraud: Scammers convince victims to deposit more and more money into financial investments using cryptocurrency. These investments are fake and all the money is under control and stolen by overseas criminal actors, says the FBI.

- Bogus debts: You may receive a message or threatening correspondence that demands payment on a debt that you haven't heard of. These scams work because some people are scared and take the bait. Legitimate creditors will produce proof of an actual debt.

- Home repair scams: Unsolicited companies may offer a "limited-time deal" and rope you into having a job done with "materials left over from another job." Be very cautious in these scenarios, as they may take money and run.

- Emergency scams: These are sometimes called Grandparent Scams because they often target the elderly. A criminal may claim to be a friend or family member in dire need and request money. Some scammers sound like the person a senior knows thanks to technology that enables them to do so.

Scams are a continuous problem and everyone needs to be on their guard. Safeguard your personal information and avoid paying out any money without first conducting thorough research.

## Rep. Gooch Appointed To Leadership Position On Southern Energy Board

State Representative Jim Gooch has been appointed Treasurer of the Executive Committee for the Southern States Energy Board (SSEB), an interstate organization that aims to foster collaboration and innovation in energy and environmental policies, programs, and technologies across the south. Gooch chairs the Kentucky House's Committee on Natural Resources and Energy and represents Kentucky's 12th House District, which includes Crittenden, McLean, Union, and Webster counties.

"We are truly at a crossroads with energy in America today and the SSEB plays a major role in determining our future. This appointment is both an honor and a responsibility that I will continue to approach with great care and commitment," Gooch said. "Serving in a leadership role on the board allows Kentucky to have a strong voice in shaping regional energy policy and ensuring our priorities are represented at the table."

Gooch was first appointed as an alternate member to the SSEB under Governor Steve Beshear in 2013. He was ap-



pointed as the House member in 2017 and reappointed in 2019 by Governor Matt Bevin.

Gooch is recognized on the state and national level as an outspoken advocate of Kentucky's coal industry and champions comprehensive energy initiatives.

"Kentucky coal fueled the economic growth and industrial prosperity of the 20th century, lighting homes, powering factories, and sustaining communities across the Commonwealth. We intend to honor that legacy by making sure Kentucky remains an energy leader in the 21st century, with coal continuing to play a

vital role in delivering affordable and reliable power," Gooch said.

The Southern States Energy Board promotes clean energy solutions, fosters collaboration among industry and governmental leaders, and supports research and development initiatives. The board is dedicated to advancing effective energy and environmental policies that strengthen economic growth and competitiveness across the South. Its membership includes governors and state legislators from sixteen southern states and two U.S. territories, as well as a presidential appointee.

Speaker David Osborne added, "I'm extremely pleased to see Chairman Gooch appointed to a leadership position on the Southern States Energy Board and appreciate his willingness to represent our state's and his district's priorities in this role. By working collaboratively with other southern states, we can promote innovation, protect our communities, and pursue practical energy solutions that balance reliability, affordability, and environmental stewardship."

## Audit Results Released For WC Sheriff

State Auditor Allison Ball today released the audit of the 2024 financial statement of Webster County Sheriff William Braden. State law requires the auditor to annually audit the accounts of each county sheriff.

In compliance with this law, the auditor issues two sheriff's reports each year: one reporting on the audit of the sheriff's tax account, and the other reporting on the audit of the fee account used to operate the office.

Auditing standards require the auditor's letter to communicate whether the financial statement presents

fairly the receipts, disbursements, and excess fees of the Webster County Sheriff in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The sheriff's financial statement did not follow this format. However, the sheriff's financial statement is fairly presented in conformity with the regulatory basis of accounting, which is an acceptable reporting methodology. This reporting methodology is followed for all 120 sheriff audits in Kentucky.

The auditor noted no instances of noncompliance. The

auditor also noted no matters involving internal control over financial reporting and its operation that were considered to be material weaknesses.

The sheriff's responsibilities include collecting property taxes, providing law enforcement, and performing services for the county fiscal court and courts of justice. The sheriff's office is funded through statutory commissions and fees collected in conjunction with these duties.

The audit report can be found on the auditor's website.



MEMBERS OF THE Webster County High School cheerleading squad are pictured here as they performed a routine during a recent basketball game.

THE SEBREE BANNER

USPS 487-880  
Published Each Wednesday Morning

Anthony L. Catlett  
Editor and Publisher

Entered as periodical matter at the post office in  
Sebree, Kentucky

-- Member --  
Kentucky Press Association

Subscription  
Rates  
Webster County  
and Adjoining  
Counties  
\$30.00  
Elsewhere in  
Kentucky - \$32.00  
Out of State  
\$36.00

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