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Northeast Florida Clerks of Court team up against property and mortgage fraud



Northeast Florida's Clerks of Court held a press conference Monday morning to promote a free service offered by Clerks to proactively protect property owners against property and mortgage fraud.

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Oct. 24, 2022 —Six Clerks of Court in northeast Florida have joined forces to urge property owners in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties to proactively protect themselves against scammers who would steal their homes, vacant land or business property through fraudulent deeds or other official records.

Clerks Stacie D. Harvey, Tara S. Green, Jody Phillips, John A. Crawford, Matt Reynolds and Brandon J. Patty today held a joint press conference launching a regional campaign to urge property owners across northeast Florida to subscribe to free property fraud alert services offered by each Clerk's office.

“Property and identity fraud are national and local problems that can have a serious impact,” said Putnam County Clerk Matt Reynolds. “By taking advantage of this service offered by the Clerk of Circuit Court and Comptroller’s Office, citizens can get ahead of fraud and protect the things we have all worked so hard to achieve.”

A key element of the partnership is a shared webpage that provides property fraud signup links in all six counties. The webpage is accessible through both www.ProtectYourFloridaProperty.com and www.ClerksAgainstFraud.com.

“Northeast Florida Clerks are united to fight property fraud across the region, as criminals don’t stop at the county line,” St. Johns County Clerk Brandon Patty said. “Through our first-ever regional partnership and shared webpage, *ProtectYourFloridaProperty.com* and *ClerksAgainstFraud.com*, we offer quick links to each of our six counties’ signup pages. It couldn’t be any easier for residents to subscribe and protect themselves against con artists and scammers who would steal their homes, land and commercial properties.”

“This collaborative effort across county lines offers citizens throughout northeast Florida some peace of mind that these thieves can be interrupted,” said Nassau County Clerk John Crawford, who recently launched the county’s new property fraud alert service. “Receiving notifications that something may be amiss is the first step to fighting back. We encourage all property owners to register for this free service that your Clerks have implemented for your protection.”

Property fraud is when someone illegally uses your property for financial gain. A common example is when a scammer creates a fraudulent document that will deed your home to them and then records that document in a county’s official records. But property owners themselves can easily discern if ownership of their home or business has been modified — if they are notified that a change has occurred.

“We live in a time where technology is a huge part of our daily lives; although helpful, it can be scary. We are now seeing instances where your home and property can be digitally stolen from you by the filing of a fraudulent deed by scammers miles and miles away,” said Baker County Clerk Stacie Harvey. “As public servants of our counties, we as Clerks must work diligently daily to stay current with the times and educate our communities. We are asking all property owners to register with their local Clerk to get electronic notifications in reference to your own property. Although the notification won’t stop the fraudulent transaction, it will give the property owners the opportunity to right the wrong before it’s too far gone!”

To combat the nationwide rise in property and mortgage fraud, identity protection companies charge monthly or annual fees to monitor your official records. But your local Clerk of Court offers a free do-it-yourself option — simply subscribe to receive alerts when an official record document is recorded in your name(s) with that office.

“We ask property owners to partner with us, as we work to eliminate the attempts to steal homes and land,” said Clay County Clerk Tara Green. “Bad actors might get away with a fraudulent filing, but an alert sent to a registered property owner will quickly follow that allows the property owner to intervene.”

Like paid commercial alert systems, the free noticing service does not prevent a fraudulent action from occurring. As a county’s recorders of deeds and mortgages, Clerks of Court document

property records but are not authorized to determine the validity of the record. The free notification service provides an early warning system for subscribers, giving them a tool to become aware of fraudulent activity that may have otherwise gone undetected. Once notified, a property owner knows to contact law enforcement, seek legal advice, or even file a case in civil court.

“Property fraud alerts give individuals and businesses the tools they need to proactively monitor recorded documents and stop property fraud at its very source,” Duval Clerk Jody Phillips said. “I greatly appreciate my fellow Clerks joining with me on the front steps of the Duval County Courthouse today as we present a united front against those who would seek to steal from our communities.”

Visit the website, accessible through www.ProtectYourFloridaProperty.com or www.ClerksAgainstFraud.com, to sign up for this free service in each of these participating counties.

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About Florida Court Clerks & Comptrollers

The Florida Constitution, which has governed Florida citizens for more than 175 years, established a Clerk and Comptroller as an elected public trustee in 1838 and established at the county level a system of checks and balances that has served the public well. The office of the Clerk and Comptroller performs a wide range of record keeping, information management, and financial management for the judicial system and county government.