



## Inspector General Insights

**Background:** The Collier County Clerk's Administration Office requested assistance from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to conduct a preliminary review and additional examination of two envelopes that the Collier County Jury Services office received from a Collier County resident (the complainant) on March 3, 2021.

One envelope contained three "MoneyPak" -Green dot prepaid cards, and the back of the MoneyPak prepaid cards showed the area where it contained the "unique MoneyPak identification number" was scratched off, revealing the identification number. This envelope also contained a photocopy of three purchase receipts indicating each prepaid card had a value of \$300.00.

The second envelope revealed it contained two "One Vanilla Prepaid Visa Debit" cards and two original purchase receipts. Further examination of the envelopes revealed both envelopes were addressed to the Collier County Jury Services at 2491 Tamiami Trail East, Naples, FL 34112, and they were mailed on February 24, 2021. The complainant's information was on the envelopes.

**Objective:** Our review was to determine the reason for the remittance of these envelopes, as the Clerk's office does not take payment via prepaid debit cards. We suspected the complainant could be the victim of a fraud scheme.

**Observations:** The OIG conducted a query of the complainant's name which revealed his contact information. We then contacted the complainant to obtain additional information about the envelopes sent to our office.

On March 4, 2021, the OIG conducted a phone interview with the complainant. He stated that on February 23, 2021, he was contacted by an unknown suspect who left a voice mail message with instructions to return his call to a number with a local area code. The complainant stated he called the local phone number and left a voice mail message. He further stated an unknown suspect (Suspect #1) called him back and told him that there was an arrest warrant issued against him for failure to attend jury duty.

During the call, Suspect #1 presented a second suspect who introduced himself as "Chief Johnny Knotts" (Suspect #2). The complainant explained Suspect #2 instructed him to pay for an alleged outstanding arrest warrant in the amount of \$1,800.00 with prepaid debit cards. The complainant stated he then went to a pharmacy and purchased three MoneyPak - Green dot debit cards with a value of \$300.00, for a total of \$900.00.

After the complainant purchased the cards, he returned the call to the previous local phone number. When Suspect #2 answered the call, Suspect #2 asked the complainant to scratch off the MoneyPak identification number located on the back of the card, and to read the number from each of the prepaid cards. The complainant stated Suspect #2 kept him on the phone for approximately one hour and 30 minutes. The complainant indicated once he provided the identification numbers, he was given an alleged validation/confirmation number.

The complainant further stated on February 24, 2021, he called the local phone number and left a voice mail message. He stated Suspect #2 called back and requested the remaining balance of \$900.00. The complainant explained he went to two pharmacies and purchased two Visa Prepaid Debit cards in the amount of \$450.00 each. The complainant explained that he called the local phone number and provided the Visa Prepaid card numbers, expiration dates and security codes to Suspect #2. At the end of the call, Suspect #2 instructed him to attend a court hearing on Friday, February 26, 2021, and provided him with the address and instructions of where to go when he arrived at the Collier County Clerk of Courts building.

The complainant stated that after the phone call on February 24, 2021, he prepared two envelopes with the prepaid cards and corresponding receipts, and mailed the envelopes to the Collier County Jury Services office.

He stated that on February 26, 2021, he visited the Clerk of Courts building and asked for his court hearing. He indicated that the staff in the building told him there was no information relating to a court hearing issued under his name. The complainant then stated he was told there was a possibility he was a victim of a fraud scheme.

**Conclusion:** Based on the review of the documentation and information from the complainant's phone interview, the OIG made the determination to refer the case to the Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) on March 12, 2021 for possible criminal/prosecutorial consideration or any other action they deemed appropriate.

In our follow-up with the CCSO, they stated that the complainant did not return their calls, and therefore a formal incident report was not filed. The officer informed us that the CCSO Public Information Officer issued a flyer in their social media platform around this time, alerting the public of similar fraud schemes.

Total # Transactions	Amounts Audited or Reviewed	Questioned Costs	Taxpayer Savings	Description
5	\$1,800.00	\$1,800.00	N/A	Prepaid Gift Cards furnished by victim