



Laura Hinojosa

Hidalgo County
District Clerk

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Sheriff & District Clerk Warn Public Of Jury Duty Scam by Law Enforcement Impersonator/s

Edinburg, Texas – Hidalgo County Sheriff Eddie Guerra and Hidalgo County District Clerk Laura Hinojosa are warning the public about a scam to extort money from Hidalgo County residents. Criminals, posing as county court or law enforcement officials, are calling victims to collect fines for failing to appear for jury service. In most cases the impersonator(s) instruct their victims to pay the “fine” by using prepaid debit cards. Victims are further instructed to provide the card number and 3-digit card security code located on the back of the card, all while the impersonator remains on the line with the victim. The victims are then directed to the courthouse where a supposed court official will remove the warrant for arrest as a result of the payment.

“This is extremely unfortunate for our constituents, particularly those who have fallen victim to this scam and have suffered monetary loss as a result of this criminal activity,” said Hinojosa. “Our office will generally send a failure to appear notice by mail or reschedule jurors if necessary before taking any action. We encourage potential jurors to contact our office directly should they have any doubts or inquiries regarding the jury process. We further encourage residents to be extremely cautious when any payment demands are made over the phone and report the incident immediately.”

The law does provide for a fine of \$100 to \$500 for failing to appear for jury service; however, no county court or law enforcement official will ever contact potential jurors over the phone to demand they make a payment. Only through normal court proceedings can a judge order a potential juror either be arrested or pay a fine for failing to comply with the law.

“The Hidalgo County Sheriff’s Office encourages any victims of this “jury duty scam” to report the incident immediately with the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction over the address they reside in,” said Sheriff Guerra. “We want to let the community know that we are concerned about their financial well being and we advise against sharing any information over the phone that may be used for a financial transaction, whether it be credit card/debit card numbers, checking account information, or cash card information, etc. The Hidalgo County Sheriff’s Office does not collect fines for violations of contempt of court or for failure to appear to jury duty over the phone.”

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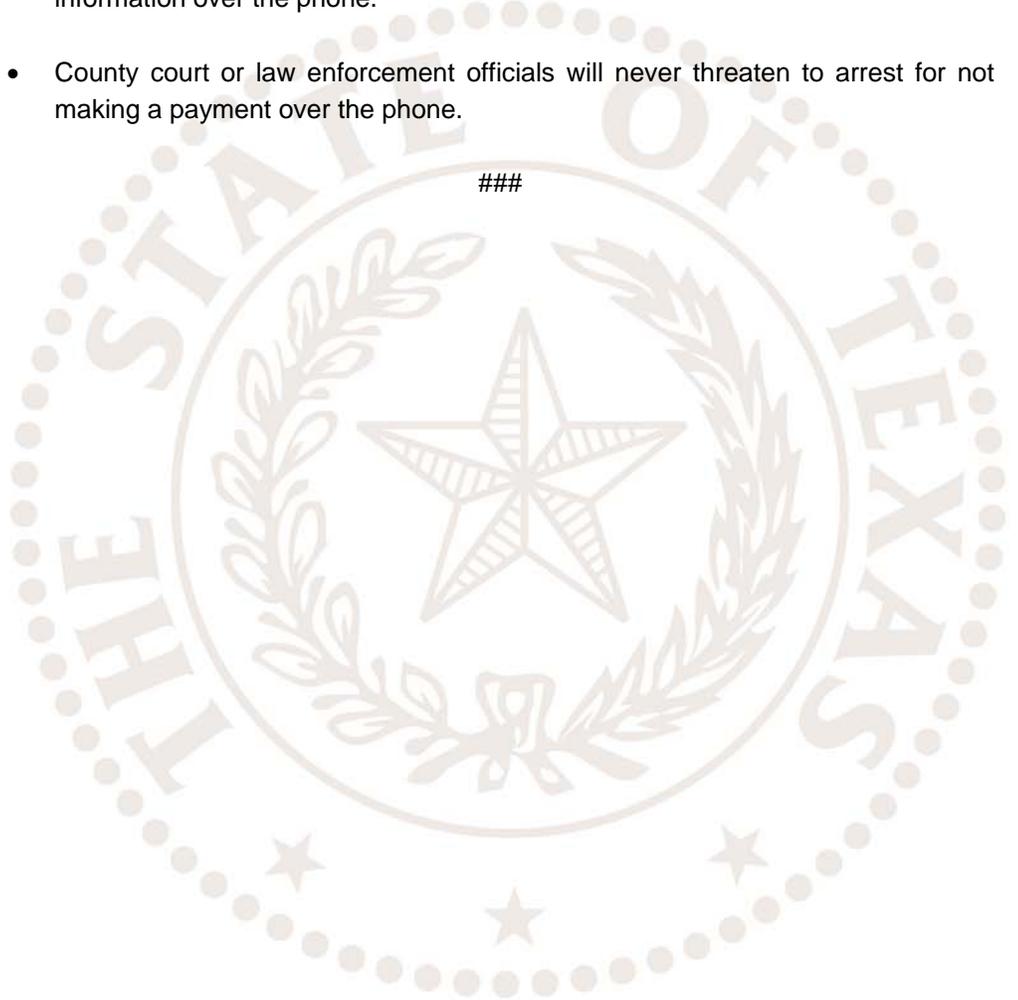
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County residents are urged to be vigilant and refuse from paying a jury fine over the phone from anyone claiming to be a county court or law enforcement official and immediately report the incident by contacting local law enforcement. You can greatly contribute to helping stop this type of criminal activity by reporting similar incidents.

To avoid becoming a victim of these scams you should remember:

- You can only be ordered to pay a jury fine by a judge through court proceedings.
- County court or law enforcement officials will never ask for credit, debit or card information over the phone.
- County court or law enforcement officials will never threaten to arrest for not making a payment over the phone.

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