

**VETERANS AND SENIORS COMMITTEE**  
**OF THE**  
**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**  
**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Veterans and Seniors Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on June 10, 2013.

**Members Present:**

Legislator Stern - Chairman  
Legislator Anker - Vice-Chair  
Legislator Barraga  
Legislator Gregory  
Legislator Muratore

**Also In Attendance:**

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature  
Legislator Kara Hahn - 5th Legislative District  
Michael Pitcher - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay  
Paul Perillie - Aide to Legislator Gregory  
Kevin LaValle - Aide to Legislator Muratore  
Tom Ronayne - Director of Veteran's Services  
Nancie Byrne - Sergeant #797, SCPD, Domestic Violence/Elder Abuse Bureau  
Terrance Buckley - SCPD  
Rick Brand - Newsday  
All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken and Transcribed By:**

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Okay. Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the Committee on Veterans and Seniors. Please rise and join us in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Barraga.

*(\*Salutation\*)*

I'd ask all of us to please remain standing in a moment of silence as we keep all our brave men and women fighting for our freedoms overseas in our thoughts and prayers.

*(\*Moment of Silence Observed\*)*

Thank you.

Okay. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for being with us. We do not have items on the legislative agenda today, but we do have some special guests with us. Let's start out with Director Ronayne.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Good afternoon. Thank you, as always, for your invitation to join you today. I didn't realize I was a special guest; I thought I was a regular.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Always special.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

I've actually got very little to report on today. I just wanted to essentially bring you up-to-date on where we are with a few of our programs. Once again, I'll go to the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans PTSD Peer Support Program. It has been continuing to be an extraordinary success. We are extremely proud of the progress that the program has been making. There is tentatively scheduled a conference for the end of this week in Albany that will have representatives of all 11 counties who are now participating in the program meeting for the purpose of, really, the seven new counties meeting with the four original counties on the pilot program to annotate to them what it is that we have done, provide our template, our vision of what our program has been, and counsel them on how we think it would best serve them to go forward.

We fully understand that the needs in different localities and different regions differ. We don't expect that our model is going to apply universally, but we think that through a combination of sharing our model for successes in certain areas and certainly sharing our lessons learned for things that maybe didn't go as well as we would have liked, we're hopeful that we can assist these other counties in -- if we can get them to be half as successful as Suffolk County has been, they'll do well. We're very, very happy with this, and, you know, we look forward to the conference, and we look forward to an ongoing dialogue with these other seven counties who are joining the program newly this year.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Director, is there a particular agency that that meeting is going to be under? Who's coordinating that meeting and anything that's going to be coming out of it?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

The meeting was called by Senator Zeldin's office. Senator Zeldin has been the point at the New York State level for the coordinating and guiding this program. Each county has thus far elected to

approach the program slightly differently. Some counties are running the program as we are in Suffolk County through the County's Veterans Service Agency. Other areas are doing it through their health department or their office of mental health and hygiene. Some offices are doing it directly; some offices are contracting out to community providers as we have done with a part of the program here in Suffolk. So there's a broad range of approaches to the program at this point; and, again, I don't know that there's any necessarily one right or wrong answer to the approach. I think each locality has to identify what their population, what their own demographic and what their own population most needs. So, again, to the extent that we can assist in helping them go forward and finding success, we're -- you know, we're excited about the prospect about being a part of it at that level, and I certainly will keep you informed as we go forward when we return from that conference, you know, what the outcome of it was.

I'm hoping -- I have invited -- we haven't been taken up on the offer yet, but I have invited for the next gathering of all 11 counties that we hold that in Suffolk County, we would be happy to host it here and expose some of these outer counties to areas of attraction, things on Long Island that some upstaters -- much to my surprise, there are folks in some of these agencies in parts of upstate New York who have never been to Long Island, so hopefully we can bring them down here and encourage them to bring back some news of how wonderful it is out here in Suffolk County and have a dual benefit to a conference being held down here.

That is the -- we've had a couple of -- a couple of fairly interesting cases recently. Obviously, I can't get into individual specifics, but there was one case where our coordinator, Tim Strobel, had called me on a case. We had a veteran who had -- he had relapsed. He had fallen back into his drug use and he had disappeared from his home for several days. There was some belief as to where he was, what neighborhood he was in, and a few of us went out with the assistance of some of Suffolk County's finest from the 1st precinct. While we weren't able to locate him initially, apparently word did circulate in the community that there were a group of folks out there looking for a veteran by his physical description. We got a call very, very early the next morning that he had heard of that. As a result, he felt -- you know, he was moved by the fact that somebody cared enough to come out and look for him. He returned home. We went out and met with him, transported him to a facility, and he's presently in a program and doing well. So little cases like that in and of themselves, they may not sound like much, but there are real successes. We don't know where this guy might have wound up had somebody not outreached to him. So those are the kinds of successes that we're looking for and we're hopeful will continue.

Beyond that, we have now -- I'll move onto the next item. We have now moved into the new satellite office in Brookhaven Town Hall. The office opened last Monday for its first day. We were present at Brookhaven Town Hall Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of last week. As I had previously reported, the schedule will be Monday, Wednesday, Friday. The alternate week will be Tuesday, Thursday, then Monday, Wednesday, Friday; Tuesday, Thursday; and so on. We did have some communication mostly by telephone. Brookhaven is doing a mailing. They're doing a postcard mailing to all of the veterans who are on their real property tax list. That's in excess of 10,000 mailings or 10,000 pieces, so we're hoping that that will stimulate activity in that office. We did meet with Supervisor Romaine, and he has agreed that the physical location of the office on the third floor down the hall from the Supervisor's Office is not really ideal for access to the general public coming into the building, so they are going to move us to a new office down on the first floor, and we're hopeful that with the relocation of the office and some appropriate signage, coupled with the mailings and so forth, that this will become a successful venture.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**  
Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**

I think it's great we're able to combine services, because I think the County has so many incredible services, and, of course, you deserve a lot of credit for really keeping those programs going.

I'm just wondering as far as -- you know, I attended a few of the vet chats that Brookhaven Town had for their vets, and it was located at the Rose Caracappa Center in Mount Sinai. Would that be a consideration as far as a location for a vets center? Because I know Bald Hill is a little hard to access sometimes, but, again, maybe the Rose Caracappa may not be centralized enough. Just a suggestion.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

For our purposes right now, we intend to stay at the Town Hall. We just don't have the resources to be branching out into the community and going to the senior centers and the community centers. There is talk in Brookhaven and some of the various 501s and veterans service organizations have been partnering and doing things throughout the Town of Brookhaven. In fact, there's are -- there's a new location in Ronkonkoma that is being referred to as the "veterans activity center." They have a -- they house a food pantry. I was at an event yesterday. I was told yesterday that their food pantry now is in excess of 20,000 pounds of food, so they encourage veterans to come by and take advantage of that. They also have a clothing pantry.

But, again, more significantly to me, it is now also one of our new meeting locations for the Joseph P Dwyer Peer-to-Peer Program. They've provided us with a secure space, a room in there that we have access to that we can use for our purpose and meet on a weekly or greater-than-weekly basis, if we choose, at no cost to the County or to the program. And that's another example of the synergy that can exist between public-private. These veterans service organizations, the 501s who are doing, in some cases, great work in the communities and the County by thinking outside of the box and creating opportunity. Not only does it serve us in terms of logistics and programmatic benefit, but, you know, the benefit to the veterans is -- remains to be seen, but I think it's going to prove to be exceptional.

**LEG. ANKER:**

I think it's, again, a great partnership between governments. I also wanted to mention the Military Kids Fun Day at Cornell Extension Farm. I caught the very tail-end of that, but that was a wonderful event.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

I wasn't able to be there. We did provide some literature. We actually exchanged literature, and we did -- Legislator Stern and I were actually at an event with them on -- during the Month of the Military Child at the Monster Mini Golf, and they were great. The 4-H folks were there, and they had some great information available that they were also willing to carry some of our information over to that event, and, you know, we're big supporters of their program. They go to an issue that we're always interested in exploring further, and that is not always necessarily outreaching directly to our veterans but to their families, to the spouses, to the parents, to the children and the grandchildren because, I'll speak for myself, as a veteran, sometimes we don't see the forest through the trees. We become part of a program, we're aware of a service, and we might not necessarily appreciate initially the value of it. But when it's presented to us by our family members and our loved ones, we sometimes apply a different perspective to it, and it's very, very -- it's a very successful strategy. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it's very helpful in terms of us being able to accomplish some of the things that we're hopeful to be able to accomplish.

**LEG. ANKER:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Muratore.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Tom, is the office open in Brookhaven in the town hall?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

The office is open. This week it will be open Tuesday, Thursday; next week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday and so on, alternate weeks.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

First floor, it's on the first floor?

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

It's still on the third floor. They're preparing a new office for us. The first floor office will be prepared on -- sometime in early July, but the office on the third floor is presently open and operating.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

Okay. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Anybody else for the Director? All right. Director, thanks so much for being with us and exciting time, a lot of great things going on. We look forward to sharing many successes with you.

**DIRECTOR RONAYNE:**

Thank you very much. And I would just invite all of you, if you haven't received your mail invitations yet, on Thursday, the 20 of June, we have the annual Korean War Veterans Association ceremony at Armed Forces Plaza, 6:00 p.m., and as always every year, it'll be followed by that great barbecue that they always host.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you.

Okay. We are very pleased to have two special guests with us today at our committee, Sergeant Nancie Byrne, commanding officer of Suffolk County Police Department Domestic Violence Elder Abuse Bureau and Officer Terrance Buckley, Suffolk County Police Department. Important information for all of us and so welcome to you both. Thank you for being with us.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Well, first let me say thank you very much for the invitation to come and speak to you here today about this important topic. I was asked to come here to speak about elder abuse issues, so I did prepare a brief PowerPoint where I was just going to go over with you adult abuse, types of abuse, what it is that we, the police department, do in cases like this, and also what it is the public can do if they were to come across such an incident.

So, first, I guess we must start with what is elder abuse, and basically that's intentional actions causing harm or possibly creating a risk of serious harm to a vulnerable elder. Normally, it's someone, what we find, is that usually is someone who is in a trustful relationship with that elder. One thing that I must mention, here in Suffolk County and also in New York State, we use the age of 60, which I know is very upsetting to people. I have friends who get upset every time I do say

that, but that does vary from state to state and jurisdiction to jurisdiction, so the one issue that we've run across the availability of statistics, as far as elder abuse is concerned, it's very difficult -- it's difficult to come up with statistics because of that. Everyone is kind of using different ages and whatnot.

But one of the studies that I did come across that I thought was important to bring up here today is the link with domestic violence, that basically the vast majority of abusers were family members, and they came up with a number of approximately 90 percent, which I thought was rather stunning. And here in Suffolk County, we do see that trend as well, that the vast majority of complaints that come through my office normally are domestic related as far as domestic relationships are concerned.

One other brief statistic that I came across in another study, family members who abuse drugs or alcohol or who have a mental or emotional illness or feel burdened by their caregiver responsibilities abuse at higher rates than those that do not, and again that's one thing that we are seeing. My unit does review domestic incident reports on a daily basis, every domestic incident report that is completed here in Suffolk County. And we are seeing more and more of a trend of adult children -- and when I say "adult children," 30s, 40s, 50s -- who are caring for elderly parents, and we're finding a lot of the drug-alcohol abuse and mental illness, whether or not they're back in the home because of the current state of affairs as far as financial considerations, or is it just that that's the way it's always been and the child never really went off on their own; kind of hard to say at this point, but we are finding that to be an upward trend as far as that type of relationship, and basically that elder abuse can effect people of all socioeconomic status, ethnic racial backgrounds, religious backgrounds, and both men and woman are affected.

This term here, "vulnerable adult abuse," the unit that I'm in charge with, although it's termed the "Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse Bureau," we really do investigations based on this definition, the vulnerable adult abuse, and I have down there with a little asterisk "APS Guidelines," and I'll get into that a little bit further in the presentation, but basically the investigations that we conduct are when you have someone 18 years of age or older who, because of a physical or mental impairment cannot care for themselves. So it may be an 18-year-old paraplegic, or it may be a 90-year-old person who has dementia. It's a much more broad definition.

The types of abuse, the only difference here as compared to most other domestic violence-related calls is the financial exploitation piece, which I'll get into. But the types of abuse that we see, physical emotional, sexual, and then allegations of neglect. Physical abuse, the one thing that really stands out in my mind as something that really makes it more of -- it brings a unique challenge to these cases, is when we're dealing with a victim that is lacking mental capacity; then we're looking at a situation much like some domestic violence cases, where we don't have a willing complainant. We have to look at more of an evidence-based prosecution because we don't have a victim who can tell us what's happening. Maybe there's just some bruising that we now have to look and say, Okay, what was it that was alleged to have happened that caused the bruising, and does that make sense with what we're seeing; the age of the bruising; does the story that the caregiver gave line up with what we're seeing. So it does make for a more complicated investigation when we're dealing with someone who is lacking capacity.

Emotional abuse, basically name-calling, intimidation, threats. I would say if we have a situation where we're being told that threats are being made towards someone, then I would say that we may be looking at some type of criminal investigation. However, the majority of the emotional abuse cases that we run into, if it's strictly name-calling and intimidation, sometimes it's very hard to show that it's, in fact, a criminal case, and sometimes the best thing that we can do is to maybe take a step in there with Adult Protective Services and remove the victim from the abusive situation because not all abusive situations are necessarily criminal situations.

Sexual abuse cases, any nonconsensual sexual contact, and anyone who does not have mental capacity to make that decision cannot legally consent. So if it's a person with mental disability or defect, even if they were a willing participant in some kind of sexual conduct, it could, in fact, be a criminal case.

And I separated neglect into two separate sections, what we term "active neglect," and the key here in this definition is the willful failure. One thing I will point out with that, "willful" basically meaning "knowingly." So if it's a situation where they are unable to provide for themselves, maybe it's a financial situation where they don't have the money to put food in the refrigerator or to put the heat on, maybe it's a situation where the caregiver themselves lacks the capacity to know that it's a neglectful situation that they're putting their loved one in. When I say "willful," this is someone who willingly has the access and the knowledge and chooses to neglect an elder or a vulnerable adult, and there are some good examples there.

Passive neglect is more of a non-willful failure of a caregiver to fulfill caretaking functions. Many times, this does not turn out to be a criminal situation. A lot of times, it's just that somebody didn't know any better. If it's a situation where we can show that a reasonable person that anyone -- we use that reasonable person standard -- should have known better, then maybe we're looking at a situation that's criminal, but if it's strictly that they didn't know any better and a reasonable person might not have known any better, then we're not looking at a criminal situation.

And then financial exploitation. One thing that we do find with the financial exploitation is that this does seem to be, the majority of the time, the underlying issue when we have physical -- some kind of physical abuse or a neglect situation. A lot of times it comes down to the fact that, especially if we're dealing with family members -- let's just say it's the adult child that I talked about earlier; maybe they never moved out on their own. They can't even take care of themselves, much less an aging parent, and basically that parent has always given them a roof over their head, maybe financially supported them their whole lives. And it gets to the point where maybe that elder now needs too much care, but that caregiver does not want to give up that position of being the caregiver because if that person goes into a nursing home, the home, the finances, everything goes with that person, and now that leaves the caregiver out there with no resources. And I have written here just a few different forms of financial exploitation.

One of the things that we like to point out when we're giving lectures to the public is this power of attorney because it is a very powerful document, and it's something that can be very beneficial and helpful if it's done appropriately, but it's also one of those things that can be greatly abused. So I have on here, basically, power of attorney, you're basically giving someone legal authority, basically, to manage all of your financial and legal matters, and if it's a, what we call a "durable power of attorney," as soon as that is signed, it's effective. So it's not as though the person needs to lose capacity before I -- let's just say myself -- could act on their behalf. It can be done immediately. So we do sometimes that we may have a situation where someone is losing capacity, and then someone tries to get them to sign a power of attorney, which, of course, legally can't be done if they lack capacity, but you don't need an attorney to have this done. You can go right down to Staples and you can grab the forms there and just have a notary public sign off on it. So we always recommend that if anybody is looking to do this to certainly use an attorney just to try to avoid situations like that.

And then a little bit about what my unit does. We actually have two major responsibilities. The investigative portion of what we do is investigating these vulnerable adult abuse investigations, but we also do domestic violence outreaches. We review every day all domestic incidents that are completed here in Suffolk County and make sure we refer them to the right agencies if a referral needs to be made. And we also go out -- we go out on every strangulation incident just to double

check with the victims that everything is okay and that no further incidents have occurred; and, really, any domestic violence situation that needs our attention, we can go out on. We have a lot of discretion, as far as that's concerned. And the good thing about pairing these two things together, as I had mentioned before, a lot of times, these elder abuse or adult abuse investigations are domestic-violence related, so there is that crossover.

We get our cases from Adult Protective Services, and the way that works here in Suffolk County, it's not like child abuse where you call a 1(800) number up in upstate New York and then it trickles down. There's actually a local number that members of the public can contact, and basically if they receive a referral, Adult Protective Services, and there's any kind of criminal allegation to it, they then send that referral over to my office, and we make an unannounced home visit jointly with Adult Protective Services, and it works out really well. My unit is -- I have four police officers that work for me. We're all in plainclothes. The nice thing about the way we're working with Adult Protective Services is if we get in there and we decide that it is, in fact, not a criminal situation, at least Adult Protective Services is there now and they can offer whatever resources are available for that person, maybe help them get out of that abusive situation, so we've had some really good results with that.

My police officers are just police officers. They are not detectives, so if there's anything that comes across our desk that is a felony, we would either hand that over to a precinct detective squad, or we work closely with the white collar crimes unit of the district attorney's office, and they're a great resource for these financial cases because they do have forensic accountants on staff, and that's their thing, and they've been wonderful to work with.

And then just some of the reasons, if we do run across a situation where we have a victim who does have capacity to make decisions, some of the barriers that we run into as far as why, maybe, the victim does not want to pursue any kind of charges. And, again, I usually say -- or I used the domestic relationship situation because that's normally what we're looking at. But, you know, this person, let's just say they're bedridden. They are completely dependent upon that abuser for all their daily needs. We had a situation where we had a victim who was bedridden and basically told us that, "I was told if I called the police that that dirty diaper would stay on me for days." I mean, you're talking about a lot of control here that that abuser has over the victim. They may be being threatened with going into a nursing home, and I have to say I've been in some nursing homes with some family members who have had to be placed, and some of them are beautiful places. Some of them are not so beautiful, but the way these abusers make it out to be as though these are horrendous, hellish places that you do not want to go to, so they really make it a very fearful situation for the victim.

And they also may not want to alienate their caregiver. Maybe the only person they have in this world is that son or that grandson or that daughter, so that's another reason why they -- maybe they would not cooperate with an investigation, and afraid of retaliation. And, also, a lot of these situations where we're dealing with somebody who may be bedridden is that they're very isolated, and again, that abuser may have complete control as to who comes and goes in that home; that's one of the tactics that they use.

As far as orders of protections are concerned, if it's a situation where it's a family member, we certainly can advise that victim to go to family court if there's a family offense involved to get an order of protection. If, however, it's not a family relationship, then charges would have to be pursued in criminal court for that person to get an order of protection. In Adult Protective Services, it's done very rarely, but if we have a situation where someone is completely bedridden and they cannot get to family court and they don't want to pursue charges because, of course, that is an option for them. Adult Protective Services can go on their behalf to get that order of protection, so, again, that's where that relationship is very important.

And emergency situations, we tell members of the public, obviously, call 911. If it's a situation where they feel that someone is in imminent danger, call 911. They can also contact Adult Protective Services, and, again, this way, whatever resources are needed, whether it's a criminal or a noncriminal outcome, Adult Protective Services has already been put into the loop.

For nonemergency situations, we say to notify Adult Protective Services, and then, you know, they can certainly notify my unit, and we go out on what we call outreaches. Sometimes we get phone calls from members of the public who are concerned about their elderly neighbor and something's just not right over there. We can go out. We're in plainclothes; this way we're not alarming anybody. We're not -- you know, maybe the neighbor, they don't want the neighbors to know what's going on there, that the police have shown up and arrived, so at least we're not in a marked unit. We can go out and check on that victim.

And then also we utilize VIBES as a resource because they do, in fact, have an elder abuse counselor on staff. She works several days during the course of the week over at Adult Protective Services. And Office for the Aging, if it's a situation where the person has capacity to make decision and they're just looking for additional resources, Office for the Aging is another referral that we like to give out.

So, like I said, I just wanted to give a brief overview. I hope that's what you were looking for here today, and, obviously, I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Gregory.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for coming here today and making a presentation. What, I guess, from your experience, what would you, I guess, recommend as, like, a best practice? Because you always -- my office, you know, every now and then, we hear stories and you always read in the paper about an elderly person who has been victimized, as you stated, by family. So, like, in a situation where there's a parent whose children live out of state and there's no -- I guess the parent may have friends, you know, in the community but no living relatives to take care of them. What would you recommend to kind of protect against some of these abuses, you know, over some strange caregiver coming in and taking advantage of your elderly parent?

**MS. BYRNE:**

For someone who lives out of state and not local?

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Yeah. Like, for me personally, you know, my -- I have a twin brother. He lives out of state and my parents do live here, but say if we both lived out of state, I'd be concerned, as I'm sure others are. My parents are getting up in years, you know, what's going to happen if they were in a situation, you know, some people may be able to move or move their parents in, you know, with them, but when there's a case when they're not able to do that, what kind of safeguards are there?

**MS. BYRNE:**

Very difficult. It's a great question sir. As far as finances are concerned, because normally, like I said, that's -- if there are no finances there to be taken advantage of, then normally we don't see the person coming in from the outside who just wants to abuse the elder. Normally, it's based upon those finances. So I would say if it's a situation where, maybe, oversight could take place where, with online banking now, maybe the relative from out of state could at least keep an eye on the account. If they see something that doesn't look quite right and then all of a sudden, the elderly relative is saying, Well, yeah, this new person is coming into my life; I have this new friend who

lives down the street and kind of takes care of me, that may be enough for at least the family to kind of come check and see what's going on. So usually I would say if you could keep a good eye on the finances, that's normally the starting point.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

That's that incentive for these predators.

**MS. BYRNE:**

I would say so, right. And when you're dealing with family members abusing elderly family members, there's also that financial component but there's also an emotional tie there as well. So I would say if you're a stranger coming into the situation, normally the abuse takes place because of the official.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Okay. We've had a constituent of mine who's come to our office for years, I mean, you know, 20 years, in and out of the office, and one of her children, he passed. He was like up in his age, he was like 58 years. He finally passed away, and for years we've been trying to get her to, you know, you need to separate yourself from your son, he's been in and out of jail, he's taken advantage of her, not necessarily abuse but he has cars in her name, stuff like that, not necessarily abuse. But, you know, every now and then, we'll get stories like this where we try to guide people and refer them to the appropriate offices and stuff, but it's scary as a child. You know, you want to make sure your family members are protected, and it's sad to see this goes on more than it should. It shouldn't have happened at all, but, you know, it seems to be a lot more frequent than we actually think.

**MS. BYRNE:**

And we do see that a lot, where victims are willing participants in the abuse, so to speak, where they willingly let the person keep coming back home even though they're in and out of jail, willingly will give them the money even though they're spending the money on heroin and not on the food that they were supposed to go out and buy, and that's very difficult to combat. Basically what we in touch with the court at vibes who if it's a safe environment if the abuser doesn't live with that victim otherwise they do telephone call and it's really just getting that person to the point where they see what we see.

**LEG. GREGORY:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

How many cases are you handling on an annual basis? What would be your present caseload for, say, last year?

**MS. BYRNE:**

On average, we're handling probably about, from Adult Protective Services, on average, five to seven a month. I would say the vast majority, sir, turn out not to be to criminal in nature because they are very difficult cases to prove. But a lot of times, just our sticking our foot in the door, doing the interviews, letting them know that somebody's watching, a lot of times will stop the behavior even if we can't prove it to be criminal.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

What kind of a trend do you see in terms of the number of cases that you're called in to participate in?

**MS. BYRNE:**

I would say it's pretty steady. I haven't seen a major increase nor a decrease. It's been steady. I've been in the unit now since 2005, so, yeah, I'd say it's been pretty steady.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

And is it by far the majority of cases are where there is, although there might be some physical abuse, there's the financial exploitation component that's a part of it. How many, approximately, percentage of cases where there is some type of abuse, mostly financial exploitation, where there's a physical component to it?

**MS. BYRNE:**

I don't have a statistic, obviously, available for that, but what I will say it really run it is gamut. I mean, we had a situation where we do have the young, competent people as well. We had a woman who suffers from multiple sclerosis, and she really can't walk, and it was a situation where she spilled a cup of coffee. Her husband is an alcoholic, abusive person, verbally abusive and then at one point when she spilled the cup of coffee, she dragged herself down to the floor to try to clean it up, and he decided to step on her and kick her. And here's somebody who's not elderly. She's -- there's no financial component. That's the emotional tie that I was talking about before. So it's not necessarily always financial, and because the types of people that we're dealing with so much vary so much, it's very hard to pin that down to a number.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

It's difficult where those cases are such that, say, a parent, a vulnerable parent won't press charges against a child for whatever reason. Those kinds of cases where you can't proceed with the criminal prosecution, any idea how many cases might be resolved in some other way, through the court system, civilly, say, with APS taking over and commencing a guardianship proceeding; do you see that happening?

**MS. BYRNE:**

We do. The guardianship proceedings, it's something that they take very seriously over in APS for good reason because, really, by going for guardianship, you're taking away all that person's civil liberties, so they really don't do it very often. Normally, what they try to do is see if maybe there is somebody out of state, another family member who can maybe help with placement or taking control of the situation. For them, guardianship is really the last, last resort, and I know the judges have been very tough with coming down with a decision to actually go in there with a guardianship in place.

As far as their numbers, I don't know how many cases because usually those don't come our way necessarily, or we've already handled it, and then it goes forward for the guardianship proceedings, so I don't know what the outcomes are on that, but sometime just the order of protection through court helps.

A lot of the cases where we pursued charges, we didn't have a competent victim. It was more an evidence-based prosecution, like I had mentioned earlier. So those went through court strictly because we chose to go that route. We don't have a lot of victims who are cooperative, who are competent to make that decision, unfortunately.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Before we go to Officer Buckley, Legislator Barraga had a question.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

In my own experience with reference to, you know, our district office over the years, this is an area that's extremely complicated. There's always two sides to the story, and, in our experience, most of the time, it's an elderly person usually being taken care of by a relative; in many cases, say, a

daughter taking care of her elderly father, elderly mother, and a third party comes in and makes a complaint. They may have gone to the house, they may have seen something, something bothers them, and all of a sudden, you get involved in this issue, and then once you find out there's probably, from the caregiver's point of view, there's no amount of money that that elderly person has that's going to compensate them for all the aggravation and grief they go through to try to take care of some of these people because they can drive you crazy.

**MS. BYRNE:**

We do get some people who feel that way, absolutely.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

And, then, of course, the reverse of that is that many elderly, they are not interested in transferring any assets or anything like that. They don't want to go to a nursing home; they feel they're fine, and they're not fine, and it puts a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety and pressure on the caregiver. And then, compounding that, a third party turns around and reports them, making life even more complicated than it already is. But you said you get most of your cases from Child Protective Services?

**MS. BYRNE:**

Adult Protective Services.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Adult Protective Services.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Right, correct.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

So that's pretty clear cut by the time you get it that they strongly suspect something is wrong in that particular household.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Actually not so. Basically at the initial intake, when the intake worker at Adult Protective Services, whatever information they garner from whoever the complainant is goes on this referral and they fax it over to us immediately, so we're kind of in at the outset with Adult Protective Services prior to any investigation on their part.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

But even, you know, when I think of one or two cases we had where someone had the power of attorney, and they had the power to, you know, write a check, it's hard in a way to prove they are doing something that's criminally wrong because they'll tell you the expense is associated with taking care of this elderly person. I mean, do you have a right if they're in your home to charge them for rent if they come to live with you, and charge them for food and care and a portion of the heat and expenses, so they can usually justify the checks they are writing.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Yes, normally, sir; you are correct on that. And that's why, like I said, there are a few cases that come through, and we actually work with the white collar crimes unit of the district attorney's office, and those are really blatant, like trips to Hawaii situations. But you're right; day-to-day, if you're talking \$500 here, \$500 there, usually they can justify it.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

We've had some cases where when you take a look at the financials and the caregiver is justifying it, it's the brothers and sisters who are screaming who are not taking care of the elderly person, but they feel they're getting short-sticked by the caregiver because there's less in the estate for them when that elderly person finally passes on.

**MS. BYRNE:**

I'm smiling only because you're completely. A lot of the cases we get, it normally is as the aging parent is getting to the point where either they're just getting on in age and they think -- the family members think it may be time, they be passing away shortly; or a situation where they're probably going to end up in that nursing home where all of a sudden, yes, the other family members are stating that the caregiver is doing something inappropriately, absolutely. And that could be the case and sometimes it's just siblings fighting, and, like you said, now they want to know where the money is.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

I always find it interesting because there was that caregiver, X amount of years ago, who was the only one willing to step up to actually take care of the elderly person. The rest are living in different states, they got their lives, they don't want to be bothered, except when it comes time to take a look at the will.

**MS. BYRNE:**

As you said, very complicated situations.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Thank you.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Absolutely.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Yes, one more question, Legislator Anker.

**LEG. ANKER:**

I want to thank you for the work that you're both doing. I mean, it's so important. Just curious as far as support groups. You mentioned VIBES. Is there a specific support group for elderly abused victims?

**MS. BYRNE:**

I don't believe they've gotten to the point where they have a support group available. I know some of the senior centers do some excellent work. Whether or not they actually have official group-setting counselling sessions, I would say not. I'm not aware of one. They just have the one worker who normally independently works with the victims.

**LEG. ANKER:**

I recently attended a drug awareness meeting in Rocky Point, and they mentioned -- I think it was 90 percent of the scams or whatever have to do with family members, and you just basically have the same type of information, and it's really sad to see that. And, again, that's where the control issue comes; you think you can trust a family member, but you can't, you know, especially if there's some issues involved, mental issues or drug issues. So again thank you for your work.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Officer.

**MR. BUCKLEY:**

Good afternoon, and thank you very much for having me in today along with Sergeant Byrne. My name is Police Officer Terrance Buckley of the community response bureau out in police headquarters and I've -- it's a pleasure to see some of you again. I've worked with some of you in the past doing presentations in your districts.

I'm just going to give you a quick idea, an overview of some of the scams and crimes that target seniors in particular that we are finding out there, and this is kind of a presentation I do to -- at senior groups, senior centers, senior housing at their invitation, and we'll tell you what's going on out there, what we're finding, anyway. One of the -- unfortunately, seniors now are such a -- as we can see from Sergeant Byrne's presentation, such a vulnerable group, and they're seen by a lot of people out there in the world, not just family member but by the criminal element, as sheep way to be shorn. The bad guys know they are vulnerable; they know that some of them have money; They know some of them are maybe not cognitively as aware as they used to be; and they know they don't know how to use computers very well, a lot of them. So they get, unfortunately, these poor seniors have people coming at them from all different angles now. We have e-mail; we have people showing up at their doors, con-artists and scammers, people sending them mail and phone calls, so they are getting it from all angles, and this is what we're finding.

First group: e-mails. Many seniors do, even ones I find that don't feel comfortable using the internet or computers, they're not that savvy with the web, they will use e-mail, I find. Very, very many of them do, in fact, use e-mail. They find it is a convenience, of course, to be able to communicate with relatives who live out of state, and children and grandchildren who live all over the world, so they do use e-mail. Unfortunately, they are very often the victims of e-mail scams, and some of these take the forms of phishing scams. Not hook and line, this is "p-h, phishing" scam.

What is phishing? Phishing is just sending out e-mails to thousands of people at a time. I'm sure you've all seen them at some point: "You've won the Nigerian lottery," I'm a Liechtenstein prince, and I'm waiting to reclaim my thrown. If you just throw me some support," things like that. Those are phishing. We can all laugh at that. They seem -- obviously, they're scams, but not everybody sees them as such. The elderly sometimes don't see them as such. They can be a little gullible sometimes. "Please send money to my fund, and help me. I'll split the winnings with you," et cetera, et cetera. Very often, you'll see them, a little more seriously -- because the bad guys are getting more savvy, and it's just as people start realizing what they're doing. So now you'll see phishing scams for -- they come in the form of a UPS e-mail, and they look very, very real. UPS, FedEx, eBay, banks, Bank of America, some of the big banks, Chase Manhattan, and the e-mails will have -- the return e-mail address will say "UPS.com" or something like that. And you'll open the e-mail and you'll have the UPS logo right on there, looks legit, and if you read on, "Please, to reclaim your package," as an example, "To claim your package from UPS or FedEx, please click on the link below." And just opening the e-mails themselves don't usually do anything, doesn't usually do anything, doesn't affect your computer or make you vulnerable.

What the goal of these e-mails is is to have you click on the link. Once you click on the link, you expose your entire mailbox, your entire e-mail contact list, your security information, your passwords, et cetera, et cetera. Some of the more sophisticated ones can actually get into your bank accounts, et cetera. They can find your mortgage, whatever property the seniors may have. They can find ways to get into the equity in their homes, things like that. So what we tell them is don't click on the link. If you're really curious and you want to open the e-mail, go ahead; usually it's okay. Once you read into it a little bit, if you didn't order anything, you're not expecting

anything from UPS or FedEx or anything like that, it's probably nothing. People are saying, "Well, maybe somebody sent me a package. Let me see what this is all about. Maybe I got a gift coming my way." Don't do it. We tell them don't do it. It's a scam. If they really want to get you, they'll get you.

Another one we found recently is eBay. They will get e-mail from eBay, eBay logo on it and everything. It says, "Your purchase of the Arnold palmer golf clubs is complete. We just need you to -- your account will be charged \$2,000 for your purchase." Of course, people read that and they're like, I didn't buy anything from eBay; what is this? And now they start panicking because they're thinking, my bank account, I'm going to get hit for \$2,000. This is a mistake. And, of course, Helpful Phishing Scam guy will put in the e-mail, "But if you feel this is an error, please click on the link below and we'll be happy to rectify the situation for you." So, of course, you're panicking, "Let me click on the link to sort this out," boom, they got you. It's a scam, it's a phishing scam. That's a very common one.

Sometimes they'll want you to enter your passwords or your Social Security number for identification purposes. "We just want to make sure this is not you or we have the right person. Could you just re-enter your passwords for your bank accounts or your online transactions, whatever it is you're doing, or enter your Social Security number, that's very helpful," and some people do it. And once they do that, of course, it makes them very vulnerable to identify theft, which is a whole 'nother realm of criminality. We have an identity theft unit up in police headquarters now, which I wish I could say is getting less casework, but they're getting a lot more casework as time goes by, unfortunately.

So that's basically e-mail and phishing scams. We try to let the seniors know, please, whatever you do, don't click on the links. And, of course, the criminals doing these scams, they are not people down the road. We can go find out they are not sitting in Rocky Point or Bay Shore or Amityville. They are in Lagos, Nigeria; they're in Shanghai, China; they're in Moscow, Russia; they're not so easy to track down, unfortunately. So it's a worldwide phenomenon, unfortunately.

Another phenomenon we're seeing now is trying to get seniors to send money in various ways. As we just discussed, one of them is e-mail, "Please send the money..." You may get -- if your e-mail account list has been hacked or gotten into, some of you may have gotten one. I know I have. It will be an e-mail from a friend saying, "Dear Whoever, I'm in London, and I have been mugged. Please, we went to the embassy and they can't help us. Can you please send the money? Sent it to this Western Union account," and it'll be from a friend. The return e-mail address will be one of your friends or acquaintances, and they want you to send money to this Western Union account, and, of course, you'll be scammed out of your money immediately. Your friend is not in London or Moscow or wherever, but once your account's been hacked and you've panicked and say, "Oh, let me help out my friend," unfortunately it's too late, the money is gone. And many of us are savvy to this type of activity, but seniors, again, are vulnerable. They don't know, they don't get it, and they think they're helping their friend out. By the time the dust settles and they've been scammed, the money's gone, and we don't know who got it.

Another one is a letter. Here's an example. I know you can't see it from where you're sitting, but a gentleman in Saint James at a senior group -- want to pass around? Sure. Please take look. It's not all e-mail and phone calls. It's sometimes the good old-fashioned way, still send letters through the post. This is a letter that a gentleman up in Saint James gave me not too long ago. It was sent to his house. It's addressed to his deceased wife, and it's letter from the European -- the Spanish lottery Commission. "You've won...", and it looks, at first blush, it looks like a halfway legit letter. Any of us are like, Maybe not, I wouldn't send money to this, but if you're a person who is a little up in age, maybe a little cognitively-impaired, you might think twice, "I've won how many Euro? Whoa." And it's basically the same thing. Just the bottom of the letter, they want you to

write down all your, very helpfully, write down all your information, Social Security number, banks accounts, et cetera, et cetera, and sent it off to Madrid, Spain. And as you could see, it actually is from Spain. There's a Spanish postal stamp on there. And if you send it off to Madrid, you'll get your Euros in due course, I'm sure. It's the same thing except it's not an e-mail, it's a letter, just trying to get the folks to send -- put their information down and send it to the bad guys.

And if they send out 20,000 of these or 1,000, if they get a few, it's a big score for them. They don't care. It's the cost of doing business. You know, most people are going to throw them right in the garbage, but those that don't, elderly folks who are maybe experiencing financial problems of their own, here's a chance to win some money, and they'll do it and next thing you know, they're out of their money, unfortunately.

This is a big one now. What we have now is the "relative who is in trouble" phone call. This is a phone call that we're finding, not just a friend in London. We actually did a press release on this because it's becoming so prevalent. What this is, you'll get a phone call at home, and it's going to say -- it takes various forms, but the most common one we're seeing is, "I'm Joe Smith. I'm with the U.S. Embassy," and they'll always use some very, horribly troubled part of the world. "I'm in Damascus, Syria or Tehran, Iran," some real troubled -- Baghdad -- and, "We have your grandson here, and he's been arrested, and they're going to drag him off to prison. The cops are beating him right now, and if you send money now, I'm pretty sure I can help, but you gotta send it, now, now, now." It's always now, now, now. Don't question it. Never mind what my name is; I'm trying to help you out.

They'll want the person, usually an elderly person, to send the money immediately, again usually to a Western Union office where they can pick up the funds in whatever part of the world they're in, and the goal of this type of call is to scare the person, induce panic, kind of the same thing with the banks, make you think -- the e-mail with the banks, make you think you are going to lose money that way. This one is to scare you that your grandson or child is in trouble at some horrible -- horribly blighted part of the world, and if you don't send the money now, they'll say something like, "Oh, they're taking him -- they're putting handcuffs on them right now. They're dragging him down the hall. Send the money now, and I can get him out."

Without thinking about it, they send the money, and it's too late, but before they can even think, Maybe I should call my grandson and make sure he's okay, too late; the money's gone and you're not getting it back. But that's just it: They get people into the a tizzy and they don't think properly, and they send the money trying to help their relative and, boom, it's gone.

Another form we find out, getting a call saying, "Hey, I'm in a car accident with your grandson, and he hit my car, and he's got to pay, and we're going to kill him if you don't send money. We're holding him, and he damaged my Escalade. It's a real nice car, and we're going to kill him unless you send money now." Well, whoa. That's really grabs your attention, panics people. Again, they send the money. They don't have your grandson. They are scammers in another part of the world or another part of the country, but anything to induce panic or frighten people into the sending, that's the goal of the call and we're finding that.

One lady actually told me they used her grandson's name. It wasn't just a blind call. They said, "Hey, we have your grandson Joe here, and we're going to do whatever to him," or, "We're holding him. Unless you send money, we're going to kill him. If you call the cops, we're going to kill," and they actually knew the kid's name. How they knew his name, I'm not sure. We have theories about how they could possibly obtain the personal information, but once in a while, they'll throw a little added dose of realism in there and throw the kid's name in there. So then we got that going on.

A very common one that's been around for year and taking on new dimensions, home improvement scams. They've been with us for a long time. The elderly are particularly vulnerable to these home improvement scams, particularly if they're still in their own homes. You know, they're too infirmed to do the work themselves; they don't have the money -- you know, a lot of extra money to fix their houses up, so sometimes the houses do go into a slight state of disrepair. The bad guys know that, so they'll troll the neighborhood. They'll be in unmarked trucks with ladders and tools and lots of, you know, useful items on there. And they'll pull up to the door, and if they can kind of suss out that it's an elderly couple or an elderly person living there, they'll go right up to the door and say, "Hey, I couldn't help but notice that your gutters are falling down," or, "Your chimney is in bad shape. Your chimney is about to fall." Who wouldn't get panicked when they hear that? "And tell you what, for --" or, "Your roof, your roof is in bad shape. You want to get that roof fixed before the winter. That's in bad shape, that roof." Whatever it is, whatever they think they can -- whatever they notice on the house. And they'll say something to the effect that, "Tell you what. Give me -- I'll do the whole job, soup to nuts, for, you know, \$1500," and people say, "Whoa. I got estimates of five, six, seven grand." "No, no, no, no, \$1,500. Just give me money upfront for materials," cash, of course. "Give me the cash, and I will be back tomorrow with my crew, and we'll start the job." And people will say, "Oh, it's too good to be true. Of course it's too good to be true; it's not true.

They'll take whatever money the person is willing to give them as a down payment, cash, and they'll disappear. "We'll be back tomorrow 8:00, I'll get my crew of guys, and we'll start work," Well, of course, you see this coming, right? Tomorrow morning arrives, no guys, no truck, no nothing, and now the people are like, Well, who was that guy? I didn't get a card; I didn't get references; there's nothing on the side of the truck; it's a blank pickup or a van or something like that. There's nothing on there, and by the time they realize they got taken, they wait a few days, see if the guy shows up. He doesn't show up, they have nothing, and they're out the money. Very common one.

Another common one now, we're seeing more and more now, the kind of the one -- same approach. They'll show up. "Hey, I'm Joe Smith, the chimney guy," or, "I'm Johnny, three guys. Hey, you got a big oak tree in your backyard. That is a dangerous tree. I want to show you. I can take care of that tree for a low price. Let me show you what I'm talking about. That's the key. They want to get the person out of the house, lure them away from the house, out into the yard, away from the front door. "Let me show you" -- it's a fence, so today he's a fence guy. "Let me show you the fence. You got a problem back here. I'll fix this for you." The whole goal is just to get the person away from the house for five minutes; that's all they need, and their accomplice will now run into the house because no one is ever going to lock the door behind them, going into the yard; people hardly ever do that. So number two is going to run into the house while this guy is showing this person so nonsensical repair he wants to do. And they're just going to go through the house as quick as they can, grab -- right up to the bedrooms, grab jewelry, any small electronics, cell phones, laptops, anything of value. It's five minutes, they're in and out, and Mr. Helpful will take the person back to the house and will say, "Okay. Well, call me if you want the job done." They are out of there. And it's usually, it could be a long time before they even know that anything is even missing, maybe weeks, months. It's too late. It's gone. They have no idea what happened. And unfortunately, these folks target seniors because they know anyone who is cognitively impaired in any way, they are more vulnerable for sure.

We tell people look out for people posing as phone company repairmen or cable company repairmen. They're there to check your lines. "We've had a problem in the area." A gas company. People let them in. You know, they have a realistic-looking shirt. We always say get identification. If you don't feel comfortable, don't let them in. If there's any question, don't let them in. Notify somebody. Call a neighbor. Call someone you trust. "You think this is okay?" Have someone there with you when the person comes in. Or, very often, utility companies will notify people in the area when work is being done so they know what to expect. But we say if you're not comfortable,

don't let them in. Call the cable company, call the phone company, whoever you need to call. Verify that this person is in fact an employee. Ask to see ID. Don't be shy about asking to see ID.

Those are the some of the scams that we're of now and we try to let the elderly know about, just try to make them aware and not to -- these folks are out there looking to scam them. One other program we try to talk about is Operation Medicine Cabinet. I'm sure you've all seen our poster on this. Basically, this is to try to get unwanted prescription drugs out of people's houses that they are not using anymore, that are prescribed to people that have maybe passed on, people -- you know, the broken leg you got while skiing in Aspen in 1989; you know, you probably want to get rid of those medicines. They're no good anymore. What we're finding is people are going into the medicine cabinets at home, hence the name, teenagers, younger people visiting their elderly relatives are going in there and inventorying the medicine cabinet and grabbing whatever they can because they know elderly folks sometimes don't notice what's missing straight away, and these oxycodone products are worth lot of money. If the person -- if they're not taking it themselves, they can go to high schools, and it's going for a dollar a milligram in the high schools. So you got an 80 milligram pill of oxycodone, that's 80 bucks in their pocket for one little tablet.

So what we try to tell folks is if it's expired, if it's for somebody else who's not around anymore, get rid of it. We'll gladly take it off of you. Every precinct, all seven precincts have one of these strong boxes in the lobby. It's open, of course, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. No questions asked. Just go up to the desk officer, they'll give you a plastic Ziploc bag, put everything in there, and just leave it. Dump it in there and no questions asked, have a nice night.

We also do mobile events, Operation Medicine Cabinet. If there's anything going on, any kind of public event, we have a mobile box that we come out and bring it with us. We publicize as much as we can. We have mobile drop-offs, done a lot of those over the last couple years. They've been very, very successful. We've taken over -- I know it's at least 9,000 pounds of medications from this program. It's great. It's a great program, just because these folks are very vulnerable. The kids know grandma and grandpa have a lot of medications laying around. They're never going to miss them, and it's money to them, unfortunately.

And last but not least, we have the Silver Alert Program. This is -- which we run out of our office. This is to assist cognitively-impaired folks who may wander, may elope from their house, people with dementia, Alzheimer's, anything like that. The caregiver or next of kin just sends us a form, questionnaire, as much information of the person that we can get, pictures, et cetera; and we, in turn, send them a small little silver ID bracelet, and it has their name, address, it has the duty officer's -- up in headquarters, has his phone number on there, and a control number. So if the person does, in fact, elope, get away from their home -- in the old days, if they were found wandering, someone would call 911, we'd respond, nobody knows who the person is. Sometimes these folks can get really far afield from where they're supposed to be. They can wind up in Penn Station. They get on a train. They wind up in Montauk. Nobody knows who they are or where they're from.

If the responding officers from any jurisdiction can just take note of this bracelet, it has the -- they can be made aware that they're from Suffolk County, and if they call the number for the duty officer, the duty officer can tell them where they are supposed to be going back to. "That person has to go to 123 Calebs Path in Brentwood. That's where we're going to get him to," and the local police agency will make arrangements to get them back there. And it just saves the person the trauma of having to go to emergency room, sit there, be identified, et cetera, et cetera. It's a great program, and we run that. It's for other cognitive impairments as well, people who are on the spectrum of autism and things like that. It's a great system, and it's working well for us.

So I know that was a lot. Sorry. Any questions, I'll be happy to answer.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Very important information, not just important information for all of us to be aware of, but to get that information out to all of our neighbors in our communities.

Legislator Gregory. Legislator Barraga.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Good afternoon. I don't know if you mentioned it, because we've had a series of these mailings -- we've had a series of these constituents coming in who've received things in the mail, and what we've done in many cases is just taking those pieces and refer them to the United States Postal Services, which has a very good investigative unit, especially when these letters are coming in from overseas. And, as you pointed out, they are extremely sophisticated. The latest one I saw was about a week ago, which I've sent to the postal system, was an actual check. There was no doubt. Even I looked at it. There was a check made out on a Chase Bank on the west coast, \$4600. The normal theme: This is your check, it's made out in your name, just take it to the bank and deposit it, but in order for processing, send us a money order for \$1,000. So when you go to the bank, you can literally deposit this thing and then three days later, it bounces, but your thousand is gone. But it was very, very deceptive, especially for -- anybody, regardless of the age group. This looked just like a check. If I gave you this check right now, you'd think it was for \$4600 for Tom Barraga.

**MR. BUCKLEY:**

Yeah, absolutely. I'm glad you brought that our, Mr. Barraga. I have had people approach me about that too at these various functions I go to, at senior meetings and senior groups, and people have mentioned the same thing, that it's just a ruse to get you to go to the bank and deposit this and then you'll expose yourself and your financial accounts, absolutely, yeah. And when we tell people, people say, "Well, how do I know? If I get an e-mail from somebody that says "UPS" or something, how do I really know?" Very often, the English is a little twisted. Sometimes they will get the words wrong. The verbs are wrong. It's kind of tortured English, if you will, and that's sometimes an indication it's from a foreign country, and if you go to an e-mail, you can read the fine print and it will say sometimes where the e-mail originated from: India or China or places like that, or Vietnam, and they say, Okay, it will have the place of origin at the fine print at the bottom of the e-mail.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

This mailing came from the United States, though. It wasn't a foreign mailing. But it was so sophisticated and so deceptive where I could see people would really take a look at this, this check, and say, You know, this is a good check. It's made out of a branch of Chase; let me just get down there and deposit it, and I'll stop off and send the money order, I have to send right away. In three or four days, you're notified that there's no such branch, the thing has bounced, and you're \$1,000.

**MR. BUCKLEY:**

Yeah, you have bank fees as well as your own bank fee. We tell seniors, like the old days where these bad guys would wait outside the ATM for you or the bank or wait in a dark alley to take your money with a gun. You know, that still happens, but they don't have to do that anymore because you're letting them in to -- you're giving them the means -- you're giving them your money now willingly because you think it's something legit. And we tell them also, you know, e-mail, the internet, they are great, great tools, they're wonderful, but, of course, there's some people out there in the world who just look at it as a way to separate you from our money; that's all it is to them, and they use and unfortunately there's a lot of victims out there.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

I was wondering, Officer, or maybe Sergeant Byrne, in your experience, with all that you've seen

through the years, are there any particular warning signs that -- when you're having the conversation with family members or with the authorities, if anyone of us is in a situation where we have a constituent coming to us and has concerns, are there any general warning signs that you think people, family members should be aware of when they suspect some type of abuse?

**MS. BYRNE:**

So we're not discussing the mailings; you mean as far as if there's some kind of physical, emotional, financial abuse?

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Right.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Normally, what other family members or friends start to witness is the isolation. Normally it starts out as you come to visit the person, and the caregiver says, "I'm sorry. They're not feeling good today." Maybe every time they call, "I'm sorry, they're sleeping," or, "They're in the bathroom, so I can't bring them the phone right now." So normally what starts to happen with that is they isolate the victim because they don't want that victim if the victim has capacity to tell anyone what's going on. So that's normally the first thing you see is the isolation, and that's usually when we get the phone call.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Legislator Muratore.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

I would urge my colleagues to reach out particularly to Terry Buckley. I mean, this is a great program. I've used him on many occasions for all my seniors in the district, and the feedback is tremendous. He does a great, great program, so if you haven't used him, use him; and if you have used him, then you know what he's all about, but they do a great job up there. Thank you so much, Terry.

**MR. BUCKLEY:**

Thank you so much, Tom. I appreciate it.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Well, we thank you both for being with us today. Obviously important information again for all of us to bring back, and we felt it was particularly important to have you come and join us since June 14 is recognition of National Elder Abuse Awareness day, not just here but throughout the nation. So important issue to continue to raise awareness for all us to be aware of and to know who to go to in terms of our local professionals for guidance, so we thank you for being with us.

**MS. BYRNE:**

Thank you. Also, if you have any constituents who have questions on anything that we discussed, they can absolutely call our office, and we'll take the time out to point them in the right direction. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN STERN:**

Thank you to you both.

We are adjourned.

*(\*Meeting was adjourned at 1:09 p.m. \*)*