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## **U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TAKES PART IN LARGEST-EVER NATIONWIDE ELDER FRAUD SWEEP**

*Attorney General Focuses on Threats Posed by Technical-Support Fraud*

**LAS VEGAS, Nev.** – Attorney General William P. Barr and U.S. Attorney Nicholas A. Trutanich today announced the largest coordinated sweep of elder fraud cases in history, surpassing [last year's nationwide sweep](#). The cases during this sweep involved more than 260 defendants from around the globe who victimized more than two million Americans, most of them elderly.

“Crimes against the elderly target some of the most vulnerable people in our society,” Attorney General William P. Barr said. “But thanks to the hard work of our agents and prosecutors, as well as our state and local partners, the Department of Justice is protecting our seniors from fraud. The Trump administration has placed a renewed focus on prosecuting those who prey on the elderly, and the results of today’s sweep make that clear. Today we are announcing the largest single law enforcement action against elder fraud in American history. This year’s sweep involves 13 percent more criminal defendants, 28 percent more in losses, and twice the number of fraud victims as last year’s sweep. I want to thank the Department’s Consumer Protection Branch, which led this effort, together with the Department’s Criminal Division, the more than 50 U.S. Attorneys’ offices, and the state and local partners who helped to make these results possible. Together, we are bringing justice and peace of mind to America’s seniors.”

“Our goal is to reduce crime against Nevada’s seniors,” said U.S. Attorney Trutanich. “Each year an estimated \$3 billion is stolen or defrauded from millions of American seniors. The U.S. Attorney’s Office has actively pursued and continues to pursue criminals who prey upon and exploit Nevada’s seniors. I commend the tremendous efforts by our partners who work tirelessly every day to bring justice for our seniors.”

Edgar Del Rio, 51, of Las Vegas, pleaded guilty to conspiring with others to defraud more than \$1.5 million from senior citizens using a prize promotion scam. Between May 2011 and February 2018, Del Rio and others carried-out a direct-mail prize scam targeting seniors. The mailings misled victims to believe they would receive a large sum of money, if they paid a small fee. He faces up to 20 years in prison at the May 30, 2019, sentencing hearing.

Patti Kern, 49, of Henderson, was charged by a criminal information for her involvement in the same prize promotion scam as Del Rio. She is scheduled to plead guilty on March 14.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office has a designated Elder Justice Coordinator to help prevent crime by educating seniors about scams and other threats. The District of Nevada has a customized strategy to protect seniors and coordinates prosecutions with state and local partners.

The Department took action in every federal district across the country, through the filing of criminal or civil cases or through consumer education efforts. In each case, offenders allegedly engaged in financial schemes that targeted or largely affected seniors. In total, the charged elder fraud schemes caused alleged losses of millions of more dollars than last year,

putting the total alleged losses at this year's sweep at over three fourths of one billion dollars.

The charges are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Since President Trump signed the bipartisan Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act (EAPPA) into law, the Department of Justice has participated in hundreds of enforcement actions in criminal and civil cases that targeted or disproportionately affected seniors. The Justice Department has likewise conducted hundreds of trainings and outreach sessions across the country since the passage of the Act.

The Department's Elder Justice Initiative published its Elder Abuse Guide for Law Enforcement (EAGLE) last year. EAGLE contains helpful information for prosecutors, including overviews of state and local law as well as best practices for evidence collection, interviewing older adults, and for documenting elder abuse. EAGLE is free and available to every law enforcement officer in the country.

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