

# the IG Connection



A newsletter brought to you by the Division of Inspector General  
Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller, Pinellas County, Florida

April 2018



**KEN BURKE**

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
AND COMPTROLLER

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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**FRAUD ALERT**

**SIGN UP TODAY** and receive free alerts when a document with your name is recorded in Official Records. Protect yourself from fraud. **CLICK HERE.**

## GET IN TOUCH:

**Write:**  
Public Integrity Unit  
Division of Inspector General  
Fraud Hotline  
510 Bay Avenue  
Clearwater, FL 33756

**Call:**  
(727) 45FRAUD  
(727) 453-7283

**Fax:**  
(727) 464-8386

**E-mail:**  
fraudhotline@mypinellasclerk.org

**Internet:**  
 www.mypinellasclerk.org  
 www.twitter.com/pinellasig  
 www.facebook.com/igpinellas

## 2017 Top Reported Fraud

Since 1997, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has collected tens of millions of reports from consumers about fraud, identity theft, and other consumer protection topics. The FTC maintains the reports recorded in the Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book (Data Book). During 2017, Sentinel received nearly 2.7 million consumer reports, which the FTC has sorted into 30 top categories.

The Data Book includes complaints from 2.68 million consumers, a decrease from 2016 when 2.98 million consumers submitted reports about fraud, identity theft, and other types of consumer concerns. Despite the decline, consumers reported losing a total of \$905 million to fraud in 2017, \$63 million more than in 2016. In 2017, the top states reporting fraud were Florida, Georgia, and Nevada. Michigan, Florida, and California had the most reports about identity theft per capita.

Although reports about debt collection scams declined between 2016 and 2017, it remained the top consumer complaint category, reaching about 23 percent of all complaints. The high number of debt collection scam reports was due in part to reports submitted by a data contributor who collects complaints via a mobile application.

Identity theft was the second biggest category, making up nearly 14 percent of all the consumer complaints. Credit card fraud was the most common type of identity theft reported by consumers.

Tax fraud was the second most common type of identity theft reported by consumers despite falling by 46 percent since 2016.

Imposter scams were the third most common consumer complaint. Consumers reported losing a total of \$328 million to imposter scams, substantially more than any other type of fraud. Imposter scams involve someone pretending to be a government official, technical support representative, a loved one in trouble, or someone else, in order to gouge consumers. Nearly one in five consumers who reported an imposter scam indicated they lost money to the fraud.

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## Florida

According to the 2017 Data Book, Florida ranked first among all states in the reporting of fraud and other losses per 100,000 of population. Florida consumers submitted 208,443 notifications of fraud to the FTC. The total value of the frauds reported in Florida to the FTC was \$54.7 million. The median loss per occurrence was \$428.

The top three reported frauds for Florida in 2017 were debt collection (41%), identity theft (13%), and imposter scams (9%). Florida identity theft ranked second among all states with 149 per 100,000 of population (31,167 reports). Florida's top three metropolitan areas per 100,000 of population for reported fraud were Homosassa Springs (1,156), Ocala (827), and Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater (824).

The Division of Inspector General (IG), Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, offers several means for employees and citizens to report allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse of County resources. Additionally, the IG Guardianship section accepts allegations of fraud and waste related to the Guardianship cases.

**Phone:** (727)-45FRAUD (453-7283)

**Fax:** (727) 464-8386

### Online Forms:

<https://public.co.pinellas.fl.us/clerk/emailform/ReportFraud.jsp> (Fraud)

<https://public.co.pinellas.fl.us/clerk/emailform/ReportFraudGuard.jsp> (Guardianships)

### Address:

Public Integrity Unit  
Division of Inspector General  
Fraud Hotline  
510 Bay Ave.  
Clearwater, FL 33756

Source: Federal Trade Commission, 2017 Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book

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## IG Staff Accomplishments

Congratulations to the IG Staff on earning the following professional designations:

### Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (CFE)

**Ava Sadowska**, Assistant Inspector General  
**Jason Stanley**, Inspector General II



*Way to go!*

### Association of Inspector General Certifications

#### Certified Inspector General (CIG)

**Melissa Dondero**, Assistant Inspector General  
**Ava Sadowska**, Assistant Inspector General

#### Certified Inspector General Investigator (CIGI)

**Mary Beth Makrianes**, Inspector General II  
**Robert Poynter**, Inspector General II

#### Certified Inspector General Auditor (CIGA)

**Corey Atha**, Inspector General I