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Secretary of State Marco Rubio, flanked by U.S. State Department Counselor Michael Needham, left, and U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, meets with the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to the United States in Washington on April 14. KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

Uthmeier touts big success in busting scams

Austin L. Miller
 Ocala Star-Banner
 USA TODAY NETWORK

Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier made a stop in Marion County on April 14 to tout the inroads his office is making in combating scams and returning close to \$1 billion to Floridians.

Joined by Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods, his team and other state officials, Uthmeier said investigators have recovered a little more than \$800 million for taxpayers and victims who have been cheated by criminals overseas using various fraudulent means.

Of that sum, the attorney general said a little more than \$20 million came from the Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit, whose investigators are providing justice and relief to victims.

The theme of the event was Recovering Funds for Floridians.

Some of the scams use bitcoin, cryptocurrency and dating websites, with perpetrators asking for money for investments. He urges potential victims to resist the temptation and remember the old saying, "If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is."

"We're not going to tolerate it. We're going to protect you," Uthmeier said.

Local affected

Uthmeier said a portion of the victims are seniors.

Locally, the attorney general said a victim was scammed out of more than

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Lebanon-Israel peace talks begin

U.S. blockade continues, includes 10K troops

Christopher Cann, Michael Loria and Francesca Chambers
 USA TODAY

Secretary of State Marco Rubio was optimistic and urged patience as peace talks between Israeli and Lebanese dip-

lomats began in Washington on April 14.

"Our hope here, and I know this will be a process, all of the complexities of this matter are not going to be resolved in the next six hours, but we can begin to move forward to create the framework," Rubio told reporters before the parties began discussing possible ways to end the conflict.

The United States and Israel say Lebanon was not included in the two-week

ceasefire agreed to with Iran, and Israel has carried out strikes in Lebanon against Iranian proxy group Hezbollah since the ceasefire began.

Hezbollah launched strikes on Israel in solidarity with Iran after the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in strikes at the start of the war.

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Politics looms over potential court retirement

Vacancy would allow for fourth Trump appointment

John Kruzel
 REUTERS

WASHINGTON - When Donald Trump was asked about the prospect of conservative Justices Samuel Alito or Clarence Thomas retiring, the Republican president voiced his support for the U.S. Supreme Court's two oldest members to remain on the bench.

"I hope they're going to be around a long time," Trump told reporters on Feb. 20 after the duo sided with him in a dissent to the court's 6-3 ruling striking down his sweeping global tariffs. "I hope they're going to stay healthy. They're great people."

Alito, 76, and Thomas, 77, have given no public indication that they are planning to leave their lifetime posts on the nation's top judicial body. They did not respond to questions from Reuters about whether they intend to retire this year.

But discussion among experts about a possible vacancy has increased as the two men draw closer to the average age of retirement for Supreme Court justices since 2000 - about 80 years old - and with the November midterm elections looming.

Any vacancy would give Trump the opportunity to make a fourth appointment to the court. The last president to appoint four justices was Republican Richard Nixon, who served from 1969 to

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Five Supreme Court justices have retired this century, while three have died in office.

OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

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