

# DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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## PRESS RELEASE

Date: 29 May 2018

To: Daily Item, News Item, WKOK

Re: Alleged scam - Fictitious organizations in Northumberland County (PA) and Los Angeles, California

### Details:

1. A 46 year old Milton resident named David Huff recently informed the District Attorney's Office that he received a voicemail on 14 May 2018 from a man named "Isaac" claiming to be a representative of "The Process Service Department of Northumberland County." The caller told Huff he was about to be served with important legal documents.

2. The caller asked Huff to return his call at 855-984-0924. Suspecting a scam attempt, Huff decided not to return this call. *(This phone number is associated with other scam attempts in the US).*

3. On 16 May 2018, Huff received another voicemail. This call came from a woman identifying herself as "Renee Thomas" (from the same process service department), informing Huff that they were unable to serve the documents. Thomas asked Huff to call her back at 855-467-9210. Again, Huff decided not to return the call. *(This number is also associated with other scams)*

4. On 17 May 2018, Thomas called Huff at his workplace and repeated everything she said in the earlier message. When Huff asked her what this was about, Thomas provided Huff with a case number and told him to call 855-467-9210 for details. Huff called the phone number provided. A man answered the phone identifying the company as "Joseph & Associates." After Huff provided the case number to this man, Huff was transferred to an individual named Dan Walker who told Huff they were trying to collect a debt in the amount of \$ 2,518.00. Walker told Huff this debt stemmed from an unpaid credit card bill in 2004. *(Huff admitted having a credit card debt in 2004 but said debt was much smaller in amount. He also stated he previously resolved that debt).*

5. Walker said, “I assume you would like to settle this out of court?” He also told Huff doing so will save him lawyer’s fees and court costs. Huff told Walker he couldn’t come up with the money. Walker then asked Huff to make a monetary offer and he would decide if the offer was acceptable.

6. Huff decided to test the alleged scammer by offering to pay \$1,000 in order to settle the matter. Walker agreed to this amount and immediately asked Huff to provide his bank account information. Huff refused to provide that information and told Walker he suspected a scam. Huff then asked Walker to send him a “validation letter” along with the firm’s license number. Walker complied and forwarded a (legitimate appearing) validation letter to Huff’s e-mail address. Huff told Walker he still suspected a scam and advised him he will not be getting any money from him. Walker then terminated the call by hanging up. *(The content of the letter was written on letterhead from a company called Joseph & Associates in Los Angeles, CA.)*

7. On 22 May 2018, a woman (believed to be Renee Thomas) called Huff’s workplace and spoke to his boss and a co-worker. This woman informed them that her “process service department” works in conjunction with the Northumberland County Sheriff’s Office. She also said they have the authority to detain Huff because he was not being cooperative. Huff never called them back and hasn’t heard from anyone since.

8. The District Attorney’s Office placed a phone call to the Better Business Bureau (BBB) in Los Angeles County (CA) who stated the Los Angeles street address (indicated in the notice to Huff) consists of virtual office space. The BBB was not familiar with a company called Joseph & Associates from Los Angeles. Contact was then made with the company who owns the virtual office space in Los Angeles and they denied having a business client (or renter) named Joseph & Associates at that specific Los Angeles address.

9. Chief Deputy Curtis Cooke of the Northumberland County Sheriff’s Office confirmed the Sheriff’s Office was not familiar with a company called Joseph & Associates in Los Angeles (CA). Cooke was equally unfamiliar with a local organization called the “Process Service Department of Northumberland County.”

10. The District Attorney’s Office wishes to inform residents that this scam involves the use of well written, authentic-looking notices on official company letterhead with dates, case numbers, account numbers, etc.

11. Residents are further advised that phone calls involving threats to detain, arrest or incarcerate people for unpaid debts are excellent indicators of a scam attempt.

*Note to Media – The intended victim in this case (David Huff) permitted the use of his name and age in this press release.*