



[Just in Time for the Holidays: A New E-Mail Scam](#)

Yesterday [Jim Calloway](#) of the [Oklahoma Bar Association's Management Assistance Program](#) reported a new variation on e-mail scams. This latest fraud attempts to induce lawyers to collect \$300,000 in back child or spousal support. The lawyer is retained and the obligor pays using a cashier's check. Sound good so far?

The lawyer deposits the check, time passes, then he or she wires the proceeds. Unfortunately, the obligee and obligor are in cahoots and the cashier's check is forged.

In previous posts, I warned that [Oregon lawyers have fallen victim to these scams](#). Your ongoing vigilance is required, because scammers will always find ways to make you think the transaction is legitimate, like claiming they were referred by the [Lawyer Referral Service](#). Keep your guard up!

Do not:

- Accept the client's explanation that you can only communicate by e-mail because of the time difference or lack of a translator
- Assume the collection effort is legitimate because the debtor appears to be a real business based in your state
- Trust debtors who send you a check before you have taken any steps to collect the debt on behalf of your client
- Believe scams only originate from foreign sources
- Presume the Lawyer Referral Service vetted the legitimacy of the client before undertaking the referral
- Take for granted that cashier's checks or money orders are automatically safe

Do:

- Trust your instincts. You know the old adage: if it seems too good to be true....
- Recognize that scammers impersonate legitimate businesses

- Appreciate that the debtor (your opposing party) and the creditor (your client) may be conspiring together to take your money
- Join the [Oregon Attorney General's Oregon Scam Alert Network](#)
- Follow the suggestions in *Check Scams Target Lawyers* available on the [PLF Web site](#). Select *In Brief*, then choose the November 2008 issue.
- Also see [Lawyers Beware: Avoiding the Scams](#)

How to Spot Scams

For tips on how to spot the latest scams, take the [Fraud Test](#), sponsored by the National Consumers League, or visit the [National Fraud Information Center](#). Keep your spam filter up-to-date, as some lawyers have been fortunate enough to screen out these fraudulent schemes altogether.

If You Think You're a Victim

If you think you've been targeted by a counterfeit check scam, report it to the [Federal Trade Commission](#) and the [U.S. Postal Inspection Service](#). The FTC enters consumer complaints into the [Consumer Sentinel Network](#), a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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