



## #BIZSCHEMESOS: HELPFUL TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM SCHEMES

Mississippi is home to more than 260,000 small businesses, with more than 33,000 formed in the last year. The thousands of new small businesses formed in our state each year are targeted by schemes looking to take advantage of the new business owners.

We've teamed up with the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) to promote the #BizSchemeSOS education effort. The initiative encourages the public, business owners, and future entrepreneurs to keep the Secretary of State's Office as the primary, trusted contact for all business-related needs to avoid business schemes and other fraudulent practices or activities. Our website is a valuable resource where individuals can find helpful, accurate, and up-to-date information on business services laws, filings, requirements, and more.

One of the most frequent and yet successful business schemes in Mississippi involves misleading solicitation mailings to new businesses. These mailings are effective because they appear to be official government documents, instructing businesses to submit payment to the company mailing them for assistance in meeting state filing requirements. In most cases, the business owner does not owe any fees or need the document the solicitation is offering to provide. Mississippians are urged to recognize the signs of deceptive mailers as they may do the following:

- ! Appear similar to a government form.
- ! Require a fee.
- ! Cite specific Mississippi statutes.
- ! Contain a due date for your response.
- ! Contain a "Customer ID Number" that does not match a number given to you by a State or Federal Agency.
- ! Contain a warning regarding the instructions to complete the form.
- ! Contain your business entity's actual business ID number and date of formation, as reflected in the Secretary of State's business records.
- ! Contain fine print that says something similar to "not affiliated with any government or state agency."

If you receive a letter that appears to be from the Secretary of State's Office but tells you to pay a fee to a third party, the letter is likely a scheme solicitation. **If you're not sure about whether you owe the fee, please contact our Business Services Division at [CustomerService@sos.ms.gov](mailto:CustomerService@sos.ms.gov) or 601-359-1633 before you pay.**

Please note, if another state agency oversees a particular business service, the Secretary of State's Office will always direct the individual to the correct office.