

# Unclaimed property tops \$1 billion mark

## Lee residents owed more than \$17 million



### FLORIDA WEEKLY STAFF REPORT

Florida's Bureau of Unclaimed Property recently reported that it currently holds unclaimed property accounts valued at more than \$1 billion, mostly from dormant accounts in financial institutions, insurance and utility companies, securities and trust holdings. Since the program's inception 46 years ago, the Bureau has successfully reunited owners with more than \$1 billion in unclaimed property.

Florida has \$17 million in cash to give back to Lee County residents and businesses - all you have to do is ask the state for it.

Florida Weekly reported this in April after reviewing a list of unclaimed property obtained through a public records request. It showed more than 60,000 people in Lee County alone were owed money.

And nearly all of them don't know it.

Some are for small amounts - \$30 or \$40 from an old utility deposit or forgotten bank account. The biggest single unclaimed account in Lee County: \$86,537. And there are more than 6,500 accounts for county residents valued at more than \$500.

And it's easy to check. The state has a searchable Web site.

So don't pay one of the many private investigating firms, accountants or lawyers registered with the state to file claims on behalf of residents. They can charge up to 20 percent with a maximum of \$1,000 per claim for a service the state offers free.



To claim the money, a resident or business must prove they are the owner by producing verification and complete and return forms the state sends.

It can take up to 90 days to receive payment but claims are usually handled quicker, officials said.

Go to [www.florida-weekly.com](http://www.florida-weekly.com) and click on the link labeled "Unclaimed millions" to search the state database. ■

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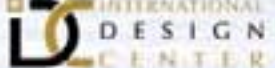

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