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City Council Unanimously Approves Cryptocurrency Scam Warning Signs

San Diego, CA – The San Diego City Council voted unanimously to require warning signs at cryptocurrency ATMs, making San Diego the first city in California to pass a law protecting residents from cryptocurrency scams at automated machines.

Cryptocurrency ATMs are electronic information processing devices that can accept or dispense cash in exchange for a digital financial asset. They resemble traditional bank ATMs and are commonly found in grocery stores, gas stations, and corner stores. The California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation (DFPI) maintains a database of cryptocurrency ATMs in California. Such ATMs can have legitimate purposes. While scams using bank ATMs can often be traced and funds recovered. Crypto ATMs leave no trace, funds are not recoverable, and victims have no recourse.

The law, introduced by Council President LaCava, requires cryptocurrency ATM owners and operators to post an anti-fraud warning sign on or near cryptocurrency ATMs in the City of San Diego. Over 110 cryptocurrency ATMs and kiosks are in the City.

"This is a simple solution that can protect our most vulnerable residents from devastating financial loss," said Council President Joe LaCava. **"Warning signs will be visible to all who use cryptocurrency ATMs and kiosks."**

Following a secondary approval by the Council and the Mayor's signature, the new law will take effect on January 1, 2027. Council President LaCava and community partners will host a "Day of Action," launching education efforts to businesses and community members about the new requirement and potential scams.

“The Senior Affairs Advisory Board of the City of San Diego strongly supports Council President LaCava's action to prevent Crypto machine fraud. Signage warning consumers about Crypto fraud at the point of action—on the Crypto Kiosks—will turn victims into crime fighters and stop these scams one by one,” said Chair Gwenmarie Hilleary.

"Fraud can have devastating consequences for older adults, threatening not just their savings but their financial security and independence,” said Israel Hernandez, Associate State Director, Advocacy, AARP California. **“This ordinance is an important step toward protecting San Diegans by creating an opportunity to intervene before someone loses their money. We thank Council President LaCava and the City Council for their leadership on this issue. AARP California looks forward to working with community leaders and partners to support continued education, business engagement, and community outreach to help residents recognize scams and protect themselves."**

The 2025 Internet Crime Complaint Center report highlighted over $390 million in cryptocurrency scam losses throughout California. The County of San Diego Elder Justice Task Force (EJTF) reported $140 million in countywide scam losses from seniors. The EJTF data does not yet extract City ATM scam loss totals.

“Crypto scams are evolving quickly, and scammers are constantly finding new ways to exploit people,” Police Chief Scott Wahl said. **“This initiative is about giving our community the information they need to recognize the warning signs and protect themselves. The best time to stop a scam is before it starts.”**

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Council President Joe LaCava represents San Diego’s First Council District, which includes the communities of La Jolla, Pacific Beach, Carmel Valley, Del Mar Heights, Del Mar Mesa, Pacific Highlands Ranch, Torrey Hills, Torrey Pines, and a portion of University City west of the 1-5.