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A large, bold, black number 29 is centered within a white rounded rectangular frame. The frame is defined by a thick black border that curves at the corners. The number 29 is rendered in a thick, sans-serif font.

You know you've been the consumer watchdog reporter for a long time when you

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sorts that would track this sort of thing, like the Better Business Bureau, the state Attorney General's office and cybersecurity professionals — uncovered nothing.

Except for a surreal conversation with a Federal Trade Commission staffer, who also has come to think like a con artist, during which he and I plotted scams that we would run if we weren't already so well paid.

That none of the swindle experts have heard about anything brewing doesn't mean con artists won't try to get your money or personal information. We may not know about them until the next day — or a month later when the money from that estate fund you wired legal fees to still hasn't arrived.

Expect that cash — or that hotel voucher or that or that dividend check from the copper mine you invested in or that work-from-home job guarantee — on March 32.

Meanwhile, here's why I'm going to warn you myself to watch out for potential Leap Day hocus pocus:

1. Scammers — like journalists, oddly enough — like news pegs, meaning something happening in the world onto which they can pin their con. Often, it's a natural disaster, a particular holiday season or a new pop-culture phenomenon. They'll throw "Leap Day" in the e-mail subject line or at the start of a phone conversation. You're intrigued — and they've got you.

2. The clock is ticking, an important element in swindles is the high pressure; they know saying "for a limited time" catches people's attention. Feb. 29 comes around once every four years, so ACT NOW or you'll have to wait until 2020.

3. People still remember the hysteria surrounding Y2K. Sixteen years later, folks might believe that their computer or cell phone can't understand that this year, there's a Feb. 29. That means a solicitation that begins, "Did you buy your laptop in

the last three years? If so, you must [click here](#) to download this software or all your

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birthday.” Easy as pie. Either it’s a mass e-mail (The odds of a person being born on Feb. 29 are one in 1,461, so a scammer sending out tens of millions of e-mail will find some Leap Day babies.) or they pulled all the Feb. 29-ers from a public-records birthday Web site.

6. The old tradition of Feb. 29 being the day women traditionally asked men out on dates is a clarion call for con artists whose milieu is romance scams. Usually, it’s the ladies told to be wary of men trying to win their their affections, only to ask for money that they’ll never get back again. But for Sadie Hawkins scams, it’s the guys who need to be leery.

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