



## OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE

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## CHARITABLE GIVING

Consumers and businesses are frequently approached by individuals for donations to charitable organizations. Many times individuals have not heard of the charity and are concerned whether the organization is legitimate.

Currently, paid solicitors contracted by a charity to perform telephone solicitations are required to be registered with the Division of Consumer Protection. If you are contacted through a telephone call to donate money to a charitable organization that is unfamiliar to you, contact the Division of Consumer Protection to check their registration. If the company is not registered, they are soliciting illegally.

The best way to insure that your donation goes to a worthwhile cause is to only give to those charities with whom you are familiar. Below are some tips that can help you give wisely:

1. Do not judge a charity solely on its name. Some solicitors deliberately use names similar to that of some better known organization. For example, there are many groups soliciting funds for law enforcement organizations and may not be affiliated with local or state officers. In fact some of these groups are "for profit" and are not actually charitable. Check into the organization more thoroughly before giving money.
2. Evaluate the appeal for your donation. A good speaker's dramatic urgency can be hard to resist. Pay close attention to the content of the appeal not how it is said. It is this content that should provide the basis for any decision to give.
3. Many solicitors are volunteers or employees of the charity. Some charities hire a fundraising firm. Ask about the financial arrangements between them and the charity. In many cases, the charity receives only a small percentage of your contribution.
3. Ask specific questions when you are asked to contribute money to an event. Who are the participating organizations and are they aware of this undertaking? Ask for a list of these organizations so you can call and check.
5. Don't be pressured and give in to a snap decision. If you are not immediately convinced to contribute, then ask them for a way to contact them if you decide to contribute in the future.
6. Always make your contribution by check or credit card (but be careful about giving out your credit card number over the phone). Cash donations are impossible to track and hard for the charity to protect.

*The material in this handout represents general legal principles. The law is continually changing; although the information in the handout was current as of the date it was drafted, some provisions in this pamphlet may have changed. It is always best to consult an attorney about your legal rights and responsibilities regarding your particular case.*