



Dear Friend:

America is a very compassionate nation – donating nearly \$300 billion to charities last year. With

the many problems affecting the world today, it is in the public's giving nature to reach out to those less fortunate. Thoughtful contributors deserve to know that their donations actually go toward charitable work. That is why New York works so hard to protect the public's generosity from individuals who seek to deceive under fraudulent circumstances or for questionable causes.

New York State law requires that organizations that solicit money directly from the public register with the Department of Law. The law secures your right to know how much money these organizations raise and how your contributions are being used, including salaries and administrative expenses.

This brochure outlines the law governing charities and other causes in New York State, and provides some helpful "do's and don'ts" that you should consider before contributing.

Very truly yours,

Patrick M. Gallivan
59th Senate District

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan

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Helpful Contacts

New York State Office of the Attorney General Charities Bureau

www.charitiesnys.com/home.jsp
(212) 416-8401

Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance

www.bbb.org
(703) 276-0100

Charity Navigator

www.charitynavigator.org
(201) 818-1288

GuideStar

www.guidestar.org

BEFORE YOU GIVE...



Important Information from

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan



WWW.GALLIVAN.NYSENATE.GOV

The “DO’s And DON’Ts” of Giving Money to Charity

DO’S

DO ask to see identification for both the solicitor and the organization, including the organization’s registration number.

DO ask how much of your contribution goes toward the solicitor’s salary or commission.

DO ask how much of your contribution goes toward fundraising and administrative expenses, including the salaries of the organization’s directors and employees.

DO ask for written literature, and read it!

DO ask how much the organization itself is to receive if it is selling a product or service.

DO ask whether your contribution may be tax deductible.

DO be suspicious of anyone who can’t respond to your questions satisfactorily.

DON’TS

DON’T be afraid to ask questions.

DON’T give to an organization you know nothing about.

DON’T let yourself be pressured into contributing.

DON’T feel obligated to give a contribution on the spot — you can always mail a contribution after receiving more information.

DON’T give because the solicitor gives you a “sob story.” This approach is usually the sign of phony and unscrupulous operators.

DON’T be fooled by an impressive name or one that closely resembles the name of a respected or legitimate concern.

MAIL SOLICITATION

Mail solicitations are often accompanied by a trinket or “gift” which you are told you can keep if you contribute. Federal law states that, unless you asked for the item, you are entitled to keep it without making a donation. In addition, all solicitation literature mailed in New York State must clearly indicate that you may obtain a copy of the charity’s annual financial report filed with the Department of Law (Attorney General).

CHARITY REGISTRATION

Most organizations in New York State that engage in charitable activities and/or solicit charitable contributions are required to register with the Attorney General’s Charities Bureau. Under New York State Law, charity is defined very broadly, and includes purposes such as cultural programs, education, poverty relief, promotion of health and research to cure disease and other purposes that are meant to benefit the community. Although most charitable organizations are required to register, some – including religious organizations, parent-teacher associations, membership organizations that do not solicit contributions from the public, certain educational institutions and government agencies – are exempt from registering. Depending on the nature of their activities and whether they solicit contributions from the public, other organizations may also be exempt from registration. If an organization is unsure as to whether it is required to register, it can refer to the Office of the Attorney General Charities Bureau’s Request for Registration Exemption for Charitable Organizations (Schedule E) or contact the Charities Bureau staff

at: charities.bureau@ag.ny.gov or (212) 416-8401. Federal tax law requires that annual reports be on file and available for public

TELEPHONE SOLICITATION

When solicited by phone, avoid committing yourself on the first call. If the charity sounds worthwhile, ask to be sent more information, including a description of the charity’s programs, its state registration number and a copy of its financial report. Take some time to consider your gift when you are not under the pressure of a telephone solicitation and obtain the charity’s mailing address to mail your donation. Beware of giving out your credit card number over the phone, and never give your checking account or Social Security number.

If you choose to use your credit card, be sure to check your statement to confirm that the amount you verbally pledged is the same amount as what is actually billed to you.

BE ADVISED

- Some solicitors will name prominent individuals or elected officials and suggest that they are affiliated with or supportive of their cause. Ask for Proof.
- Much of your contribution may go to pay “commissions” to a paid solicitor. Ask if the solicitor is a volunteer or a paid fundraiser so you have an idea of how much of your contribution actually goes to directly supporting the cause.
- Some not-for-profit organizations are actually “lobbying” corporations. Obtain a full list of the positions of the organization and a description of its activities at the local, state and national levels.