



## **Charitable Organizations Guide for Giving**

Most charities operate with integrity and honesty, but unfortunately, some do not. Being an informed giver helps to discourage fraudulent solicitations and encourages worthwhile organizations to make efficient use of their contributions.

**The following tips will help make your contributions more valuable.**

<b>Know Your Charity</b>	Never give to a charity you know nothing about. Ask for literature and read it. Ask questions. Honest charities encourage you to do so.
<b>Find Out Where Your Money Goes</b>	Ask how much of your charity dollars go for fund-raising, administrative and general expenses, and how much is left for the program you want to support.
<b>Don't Yield To Pressure</b>	Don't let yourself be pressured into giving and don't feel you have to contribute on the spot. No legitimate organization will expect you to contribute immediately. Be wary of charities offering to send a courier to collect your donation immediately.
<b>Demand Identification</b>	Ask for identification for both the solicitor and the charity. If the solicitor refuses, hang up and report it to local law enforcement authorities.
<b>Beware of The Name Game</b>	Don't be fooled by a convincing name. A crooked charity will often have an impressive name, or one that closely resembles the name of a respected organization. Especially beware of copycat businesses whose titles may differ by as little as terms like "association," "federation," "national," "American," and "foundation."
<b>Never Pay Cash--Never Give Your Credit Card Number Over the Phone</b>	When making donations, simply make a check out to the charity itself, not to the paid solicitor, and use the charity's full name. That way you have a record of the contribution and the money goes directly to the charity.
<b>Slow Down Telephone Solicitors</b>	Refuse to commit yourself on the first call. If the charity sounds worthwhile, ask for written information. A typical scheme: fast talking private companies reap enormous profits selling household goods over the telephone under the guise of helping the disabled. These products cost several times their retail value and benefit the disabled minimally, if at all.
<b>Beware of Solicitation Gimmicks</b>	Use caution when purchasing products or tickets or when receiving free merchandise. These methods of fund-raising may be legitimate, but they add costs to the fund-raising campaign which are deducted from your donations. Be especially cautious about sweepstakes which may request more money than the prize is worth, or may never even provide a prize at all.



**West Virginia Secretary of State**

**Charities Division**

**(304) 558-8000**

**wvsos.gov**

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**When in Doubt**

Contact us to find out if the charity is properly registered, and to order registration and financial information about the organization.

- Call: 304-558-8000
- Email: [charities@wvsos.gov](mailto:charities@wvsos.gov)
- Write: **West Virginia Secretary of State**  
**Charities Division**  
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