

GIVESMART!



SOS

Office of the Secretary of State
Corporations & Charities Division

Whether you are asked for donations over the phone, by mail, or on social media, the Washington Secretary of State (SOS) and Attorney General's Office (AGO) urge you to do your homework and "give smart." By taking a few simple steps, you can identify how much of your donation will go toward the intended cause and how much may go to administrative expenses, fundraising costs, or elsewhere. You can also learn how to spot and avoid scams. Informed decisions will help you "give smart!"

Charitable Solicitations Act

Charities and commercial fundraisers must abide by Washington's Charitable Solicitations Act, RCW 19.09.

With a few exceptions, charities and commercial fundraisers must register with the SOS prior to fundraising in Washington State. These entities must self-report updated financial and other information each year.

The Act establishes requirements that charities and commercial fundraisers must abide by. For example, charities and commercial fundraisers:

- Cannot make false, deceptive, or misleading representations.
- Are required to provide consumers with the Secretary of State's toll free number, 1-800-332-4483, and website, www.sos.wa.gov, to obtain additional financial information when asked.

The AGO can bring actions against charities or commercial fundraisers that don't comply with the Charitable Solicitations Act.

What is a commercial fundraiser?

Commercial fundraisers are individuals or entities that solicit or collect donations on behalf of a charity — for a fee.



Commercial fundraisers keep some of your donation

On average, 50 percent of money donated through a commercial fundraiser goes to the charity. The other half goes to the commercial fundraiser. Some commercial fundraisers may keep as much as 85 percent of your donation.

If you don't want to pay a commercial fundraiser, contact the charity and see if you can make a donation directly to it.

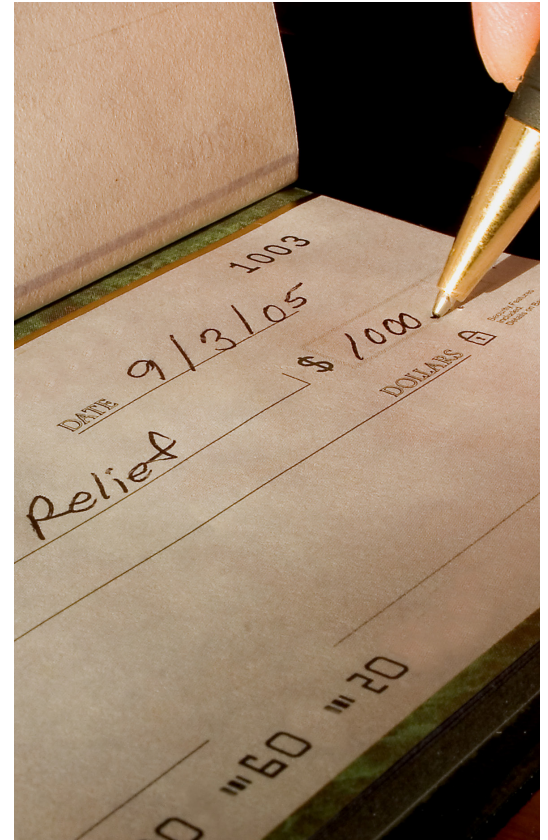
By law, if you inquire if the solicitor is a commercial fundraiser, he or she must tell you. You can also check the Commercial Fundraiser Activity Report at www.sos.wa.gov/charities/cfr.aspx. This report provides the latest financial information for commercial fundraisers.

Commercial fundraisers keep an average of 50% of donated funds.

Source: <http://1.usa.gov/1rcYwFU>

Tips to “give smart”

- Don't give into high-pressure solicitations that demand you make an instant commitment.
- Do your research before giving.
- Check to see if the charity is registered with the SOS at www.sos.wa.gov/charities/.
 - If the organization is registered, you can review a summary of its tax status and financial records, among other things.
 - If the organization is not registered, or you would like further information, contact the SOS Charities Program at 1-800-332-4483.
- Check the charity's rating at Better Business Bureau: www.give.org. More resources for donors can be found at <http://www.sos.wa.gov/charities/ResourcesforDonors.aspx>.
- Call the charity directly to make sure it has authorized the solicitor to collect donations on its behalf.



Signs it's a scam

It is likely a scam if a solicitor:

- Demands donations using aggressive tactics or deadlines.
- Only accepts cash donations or checks made out to them.
- Can't explain what your donation will be used for, when it will be allocated, how it will be distributed, and what percentage of the donation benefits the cause directly.
- Claims to be a new charity providing relief after a recent natural disaster, and can't backup any claims made in solicitations.

Need more information, or to file a complaint?

For further general questions, call the Secretary of State's Charities Program at 1-800-332-4483.

To file a complaint about a charity or commercial fundraiser, visit the Attorney General's website at www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint.

Tired of harassing charitable solicitation phone calls?

Ask the solicitor to place you on their internal do not call list. Even though charitable solicitors are exempt from the National Do Not Call Registry, Washington state law requires all organizations to not call you for one year if you ask.

