

## DON'T GET DISCOURAGED!

Most charitable groups are committed to helping solve society's problems; they fill the gaps where government cannot meet all of a community's needs. The few mail and telephone solicitations that are scams must not discourage you from donating to charities.

If you do not want to deal with telephone and mail solicitations, simply contribute to a worthwhile group in your own community, or to a charity you know well through friends or relatives. Learn the facts first before you contribute.

### How can you recognize "bogus" charities? Watch for these warning signs:

**B**ills or invoices are sent to you even though you never pledged money to the organization.

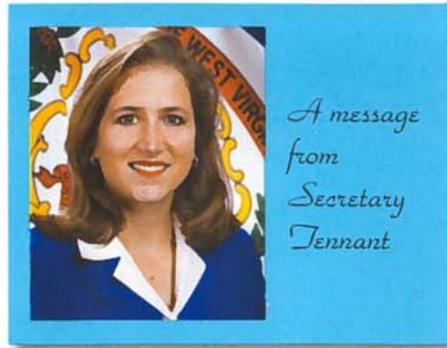
**E**vasive, vague, or unresponsive answers to specific questions about the charity and how money is used.

**W**ords making up a charity's name that closely resemble a more well-known charity.

**A**llowing you no time to consider your pledge; they insist on collecting your donation immediately.

**R**efusal to answer questions about where your money will go or refusal to send information about the charity.

**E**motionally appeals and high-pressure tactics to get you to make a quick decision or feel guilty about not contributing.



Dear Fellow West Virginians:

As West Virginians we are always willing to help our neighbors in their time of need. It's one of the many things that make West Virginia great. Whether it's sheltering the homeless, funding medical research, rebuilding a flooded community or making sure no child is hungry, your efforts are always needed and appreciated.

Unfortunately, there are dishonest individuals and organizations that prey on the generosity to help a neighbor in need. As Secretary of State, I will work diligently to prevent a fraudulent charity to benefit from your efforts and hard earned money.

The Secretary of State's Office registers and collects information on various charities that operate in West Virginia. The information in this brochure will help you find facts about a charity and determine if it is credible before you give. Please feel free to call my office at 1-866-SOS-VOTE or visit us online at [www.wvsos.com](http://www.wvsos.com). Thank you for your continued efforts of helping our neighbors in need.

Sincerely,

Natalie E. Tennant  
Secretary of State

## BEFORE YOU WRITE THAT CHECK

- ✓ **DEMAND** information in writing from the public safety organization or charity, including financial information.
- ✓ **CONTACT** the organization directly to verify where and how your money will be used. Do not rely on the solicitor's answers to your questions.
- ✓ **CALL** the Charities Division at the Secretary of State's Office to check out the information. For charities or professional fundraisers, call 1-866-SOS-VOTE. You can also check our website at [www.wvsos.com](http://www.wvsos.com).

## CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE! ✓

You may be surprised by the amount of information on charitable organizations that you can find with just a few clicks of your mouse. Our website lists not only general facts such as a contact, address and phone number for each organization, but also a description of each charity plus financial information including the amount of donations spent on management, fundraising and charitable programs. To look up a charity, just go to <http://www.wvsos.com/cslist/index.aspx>.

### Secretary of State's Office Charities Division of Business & Licensing

Bldg. 1, Suite 157-K  
1900 Kanawha Blvd. E.  
Charleston, WV 25305  
1-866-SOS-VOTE  
1-304-558-8000  
[charities@wvsos.com](mailto:charities@wvsos.com)  
[www.wvsos.com](http://www.wvsos.com)

# Lend a hand...



## KNOW the FACTS before you give to charity

Natalie E. Tennant Secretary of State

## Pop Quiz: TRUE or FALSE?

- 1** In West Virginia, most charities that solicit donations are required to be registered with the Secretary of State's Office.
- 2** Charities are required to make their financial records public.
- 3** Under the law, professional fundraisers are only allowed to receive 75 percent or less of the donations they solicit for a charity.
- 4** All donations to public safety groups, such as law enforcement or firefighter organizations, are tax deductible.
- 5** The best source of information about a charity and its money is the solicitor who calls you.



## Pop Quiz Answers HOW DID YOU SCORE?

- 1** **True** - Under West Virginia law, most charities must be registered before they solicit contributions.
- 2** **True** - To obtain a charitable solicitation registration the charity must submit financial information to the Secretary of State's Charities Division where it is open to public review.
- 3** **False** - Fundraisers can retain any amount of solicited funds as long as they abide by the contract with the charity. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that states cannot regulate the amount fundraisers receive.
- 4** **False** - Most public safety groups that are registered with the Secretary of State's Charities Division are under a special category with the IRS that does not allow tax deductions.
- 5** **False** - The solicitors are trained to get a donation; they may not know very much about the group they are calling for, and they may not want to share information about how your money will be used. Their job may depend on how many contributions they collect.



## GETTING TOUGH ON TELEMARKETERS

Some charities and public safety organizations employ fundraisers to solicit funds through telemarketing calls that may interrupt your dinner and family time. These fundraisers are in the business for profit; they may even take a higher percentage of your donation than they reveal over the telephone. You may be shocked to learn that in some cases less than ten percent of your donation remains with the charity.

## TO AVOID TELEMARKETING TRICKERY

- ✓ Get the exact name of the charity and the fundraiser that is calling for the charity.
- ✓ Ask if the caller is being paid by a fundraising company.
- ✓ Ask if the charity and the fundraiser are registered with the Secretary of State's Office. Call the Charities Division to verify the answer, or go online.
- ✓ Find out where and how your donation will be used and what percentage goes directly to carry out the charitable purpose described by the solicitor.
- ✓ Ask if your contribution will be tax deductible.
- ✓ Keep this list and a note pad by your telephone to write down the answers to your questions.

