

How can you recognize unscrupulous charities?

BEWARE!

Bills or invoices mailed to you from charities you've not pledged money to.

Evasive, vague answers to specific questions about the charity and how your donation will be used.

Words making up the organization's name that sound like a more well-known charity.

Asking for your credit card information over the phone, even after you've said "No."

Refusing to mail you additional information and requesting cash donations.

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

"South Carolinians are among the most generous people in the world, but we must guard against those who would take advantage of that generosity.

I hope this brochure will help you choose your charities wisely. Remember - give from the heart, but please give smart."

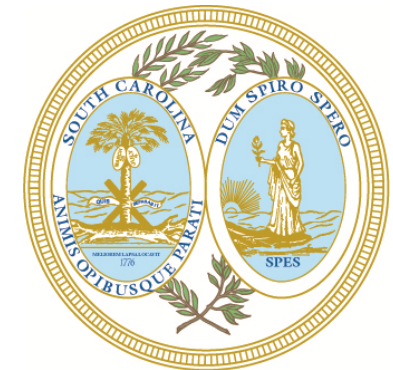


Mark Hammond
South Carolina
Secretary of State

Take the time to be informed about charitable giving. Please visit our website at sos.sc.gov. Here you can research charities that are registered with the Secretary of State's Office as required by the Solicitation of Charitable Funds Act. Available information includes the charitable organization's name, address, and a financial summary showing the percentage of expenses that are devoted toward its charitable cause.

*"Give from the heart,
but please
give smart."*

**A guide to
wise charitable giving**



Mark Hammond
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South Carolinians from all income levels respond quickly and generously when they see a true need. We all want to experience the joy of giving, to help others accomplish their goals – whether it’s feeding the poor, disaster relief, conducting medical research, supporting arts and education, or any other worthy cause.

Not all contributions, however, go directly to serve charitable causes. If you are asked for a donation, chances are that the caller is a paid, professional solicitor taking a portion of your contribution as payment for their services.

A professional solicitor must disclose to you at the initial time of solicitation:

- ☛ that he/she is a paid solicitor;
- ☛ the name of the charity;
- ☛ the location of the charity;
- ☛ the purpose of the charity; and
- ☛ the registered true name of the professional fundraising organization for which he/she works.

If you receive a phone call from a professional solicitor and these disclosures are not made, you may file a complaint with the Secretary of State’s Office by completing the [Online Charitable Solicitation Complaint Form on the Secretary of State’s website at sos.sc.gov](#).

You should also ask the following questions:

Are both the charitable organization and the professional fundraiser you are working for registered with the Secretary of State’s Office?

Charitable organizations that intend to solicit contributions within South Carolina or have contributions solicited on their behalf must register with the Secretary of State unless they qualify for a registration exemption.

Will my contribution be used for services in my local area or state?

Just because your donation is mailed to a post office box in South Carolina, or the call appears to be from a local number, does not mean your donation will be used in South Carolina.

Is my contribution tax deductible?

Contributions are tax deductible if the charity has 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service.

What percentage of my contribution goes to the charitable cause?

According to the Better Business Bureau Standards for Charity Accountability, 65% or more is reasonable amount.

Will you mail me a copy of the charity’s most recent annual financial report, as well as the professional solicitor’s current registration certification, that are filed with the Secretary of State?

These must be mailed to you within 15 business days of your request.

If you are satisfied with the answers given to the above questions, you can opt to give then, or tell the caller that you would like to further investigate their cause by researching the charity on any of the links provided at on the Secretary of State’s website at [sos.sc.gov](#).

A reputable charity will welcome your interest and will not rush you to make a contribution.

Here are some facts you should know concerning public safety fundraisers:

Public services, like firefighting and police protection, are paid for by tax dollars, not donated funds. **Therefore, even if you say “no” to making a contribution, your local law enforcement officers and firefighters will still provide you services.**

Please note:

The following are not included in the definition of “charitable organization” and do not have to register with the Secretary of State under SC Code of Laws §33-56-30:

- bona fide religious organizations; and
- candidates for national, state or local office or a political party or other groups required to file information with the Federal Election Commission or State Election Commission.

Additionally, some types of charities are exempt from registering and filing financial reports under SC Code of Laws §33-56-50. Please visit our website at [sos.sc.gov](#) for additional information.

Angels Announcement

Every year, the Secretary of State recognizes ten “angel” charities from across the state and the country that use charitable donations wisely. The list’s purpose is to encourage donors to research charities before they give. To see the most recent list of Angels, please visit our website at [sos.sc.gov](#) and look under Media/ News Releases.