While we certainly do not discourage you from supporting a police, fire, or other public safety organization, there are a few facts you should know before giving:

1. Most public safety groups are not charitable organizations.
2. Because these groups are not charitable, your donation may not be deductible on your income taxes.
3. Police and fire organizations that solicit donations, and their fundraisers, must be registered with the Attorney General's office.
4. Donations made to a public safety group are often used to fund that group's activities. Public services, like firefighting and police protection, are paid for by tax dollars, not donated funds.

IMPORTANT !!

Public safety fundraisers are not the same thing as your local police or fire departments. Even if you say "no" to donating, your local law enforcement officers and firefighters will be there to protect you.

Dear Friends:

Every year generous Michigan citizens give millions of dollars to charities that do important and wonderful work in our communities. We must all do our part to help those charities accomplish their goals – whether it's feeding and clothing the poor, conducting medical research, supporting the arts and education, or one of a thousand other programs.

As donors, we must decide among the many charities competing for our donations. Unfortunately, not all charities operate with charitable intentions. Every week my office hears of cases where an unscrupulous fundraiser or an illegal scam is steering money away from real charitable causes. Just as there are unwise purchases, there are also unworthy charities.

As Michigan's Attorney General, I'm committed to helping citizens make those hard choices. Michigan regulates and collects information on more than 4,000 charities; you can use that information to make wise choices about which charity to support.

Make this pamphlet your key to wise charitable giving.

MIKE COX
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Don't let a few bad apples sour you on giving.

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.

Learn the facts first, then please donate generously.

More questions? Please contact us:

Department of Attorney General
Charitable Trust Section

PO Box 30214
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-1152
www.michigan.gov/ag

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

www.guidestar.org
operated by Philanthropic Research, Inc., provides access to IRS 990s, the financial report most charities must file with the IRS.

Wise Giving Alliance
Council of Better Business Bureaus
www.give.org
or call your local Better Business Bureau.

DAG-008-032 (09/07)
5,000 copies printed at a cost of $827.84 or $0.17 each
Printed by the State of Michigan

CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

WISE CHARITABLE GIVING

MIKE COX
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Some charities and public safety organizations employ fundraisers to solicit funds through telemarketing calls that 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 phone. You may be shocked to learn that in some cases less than 10 percent of your donation remains with the charity.

To avoid telemarketing trickery:

1. Get the **exact** name of the charity and the fundraiser that is calling for the charity.
2. Ask if the caller is being paid by a fundraising company.
3. Ask if the charity and the fundraiser are licensed with the Attorney General's office. Call the Charitable Trust Section to verify the answer or check the Attorney General's website at www.michigan.gov/ag for a searchable list of licensed charities.
4. Find out where and how your donation will be used and what percentage of donations goes directly to carry out the charitable purpose described by the solicitor.
5. Ask if your contribution will be tax deductible.

NOTE: Keep this list and a note pad by your phone to write down the answers to your questions.

A Pop Quiz:

1. In Michigan, most charities that solicit donations are required to obtain a license from the Department of Attorney General.

   True or False

2. Charities are required to make their financial records public.

   True or False

3. Under the law, professional fundraisers are only allowed to receive 75 percent or less of the donations they solicit for a charity.

   True or False

4. All donations to public safety groups, such as law enforcement or firefighter organizations, are tax deductible.

   True or False

5. The best source of information about a charity and its money is the solicitor who calls you.

   True or False

Pop Quiz Answers HOW DID YOU SCORE?

1. ***True*** – Under Michigan law, most charities must be licensed before they solicit contributions.
2. ***True*** – To obtain a charitable solicitation license the charity must submit financial information to the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section where it is open to public view.
3. ***False*** – Fundraisers can retain any amount of solicited funds so 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. However, the Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot mislead you about that amount.
4. ***False*** – Most public safety groups that are registered with the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section are not charities.
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.

Here are some warning signs of bogus charities:

Bills or invoices are sent to you even though you never pledged money to the organization.

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

Words making up a charity's name that closely resemble a more well-known charity.

Allowing no time to reconsider your pledge; they insist on collecting your donation immediately.

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

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

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.
- **Visit** the Attorney General's website at www.michigan.gov/ag to see if the organization is licensed or registered.
- **Call** the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Section to check out the information. For charities call **(517) 373-1152**; for police or fire organizations call **1-(800) 769-4515**. The toll-free number is **only** for calls about public safety organizations.