

## The Attorney General's Office Encourages You to Give, But Give Wisely

### **Please Give**

During a time when there are fewer resources to go around, our charities need support more than ever. Charitable organizations provide a large and diverse array of services which benefit our communities. All of them rely, to a varying degree, on the generosity of donors. Massachusetts residents are historically generous. The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office encourages you to give, but to give wisely.

### **Give Wisely**

In these challenging economic times, it's more important than ever to manage your money wisely. This includes making an informed decision when giving a donation to a charitable organization. Charitable donations are important to the economy and society because they provide funding for important causes and community services. However, consumers should always do a little homework before donating to charity. One of the most important considerations is to determine how much of your donation is actually going to the service or cause you care about.

One strategy utilized to raise money is telemarketing. While telemarketers are sometimes volunteers or employees of the charity, they can also be professional solicitors that are paid by the charities to raise funds on their behalf. The Attorney General's Office encourages residents to ask the telephone solicitor how much of every dollar will go directly back to the charity.

### **The Truth about Professional Solicitation**

There are no laws regulating the percentage professional fundraisers have to give back to the charity and often there is little oversight over professional solicitors. On average, less than half the money raised through paid solicitors is actually given to the charity. **Of every dollar that a professional solicitor raised for a charity in 2008, only 41 cents went to the charity.**

### **It's Still a Business**

Professional solicitation is an industry and its function is that of any other business – to make money. Professional solicitors are hired to raise money for charities; they are not employees of the charities or volunteers. Often they are trained to use opaque language that may confuse or even deceive potential donors in order to solicit donations.

### **Empower Yourself**

**In order to maximize the value of your donation, it is generally better to avoid donating money via telemarketing solicitations altogether.** Never feel obligated to donate money to anyone who calls you. You should select the charities you would like to donate to – do not allow them to select you.

### **Hang Up the Phone, or Ask for a Written Request**

If a person calls you on the phone soliciting on behalf of a charity, it is entirely reasonable for you to ask for written materials and you should never be afraid to simply say "no thank you." You should never feel miserly for refusing to donate through a professional solicitor. It is generally more beneficial for the charity if you donate directly to them because a larger percentage of your money goes directly to the charity and its cause.

## **The Path to Informed Giving**

If you are passionate about a certain cause, or would like to donate to a specific charity, there are ways to do so that will maximize the value of your contribution.

Do some research to find charities that support the cause important to you. Look online for local chapters of charities and contact them directly to determine the best way to contribute so that the largest percentage of your donation goes directly to the cause.

**If you are unsure whether a charity is deserving of your support**, contact the AGO's Non-Profit Organizations/Public Charities Division at (617) 727-2200, ext. 2101, to find out if the charity and its fundraiser are registered to operate in the Commonwealth.

The public can also access the financial reports of charities on our website. The Public Charities Annual Filing Document Search can be found at [www.mass.gov/ago/charitiesreports](http://www.mass.gov/ago/charitiesreports).

The Attorney General Office also posts online the names, locations, and contact persons of charitable organizations that consistently fail to register or file reports with the office as required by law. The website postings of those delinquent charities can be found at [www.mass.gov/ago/noncompliant\\_charities](http://www.mass.gov/ago/noncompliant_charities).