



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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[www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov)

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## **CONSUMER ALERT: Beware of Scammers During Nationwide Giving Tuesday**

AUSTIN – Today, Texas celebrates Giving Tuesday, a nationwide day of giving for charitable causes. In light of common holiday scams and fraudulent charities, the Office of the Attorney General offers these crucial DOs and DON'Ts for Texans who want to give during the holiday season:

- Research and plan your giving to ensure your donations will do good.
  - DO use [these organizations](#) to help you research charities.
- Consider how you will make your donation and be careful how you pay.
  - DON'T give donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money to an unknown organization.
  - DO be safer and donate by credit card or check.
  - DO keep a record of all donations and review statements closely to make sure you're only charged the amount you agreed to donate.
  - DO make sure you know who is receiving your donation before clicking a link to donate online.
  - DO read [Donating Through an Online Giving Portal](#) for more information.
- Keep scammers' tricks in mind
  - DON'T let anyone rush you into making a donation.
  - DON'T fall for the trick of being thanked for a donation you never made.
  - DON'T fall for a 'sound alike' charity.
  - DO be aware that scammers can change caller ID to make a call look like it's from a local area code.
  - DO be aware that scammers make a lot of vague and sentimental claims but give no specifics about how your donation will be used.
  - DO know that guaranteeing sweepstakes winnings in exchange for a donation is not only a scam, it's illegal.

Consumers can report scams and fraudulent charities to the attorney general's Consumer Protection Division by calling toll-free 1-800-621-0508 or by filing an online complaint at [www.texasattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov) or [FTC.gov/complaint](http://FTC.gov/complaint).

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## On Giving Tuesday, Attorney General Becerra Provides Donation Tips and Resources to Avoid Scams During the Holiday Season

SACRAMENTO – California Attorney General Xavier Becerra today, in recognition of Giving Tuesday, provided tips and released a video <

"As Californians come together for the greater good, scammers are ready to capitalize on the charitable intent of donors during the holiday season. It is important that we each do our homework and only donate to legitimate and trustworthy organizations," said Attorney General Becerra. "The California Department of Justice is dedicated to protecting charitable assets and donors from deceptive or misleading solicitations. Help us do that by taking the necessary steps to ensure that your donations get into the right hands."

### Donation Tips

- \* **Check Registration Status:** Charities operating in California and telemarketers soliciting donations in California are required to register with the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts. They are also required to file annual financial reports. Before you donate, make sure to confirm that the charity is registered and up-to-date with its financial reporting. The Charitable Trusts database is currently undergoing maintenance. During this time, you can still check the registration status of a charitable organization by downloading and reviewing Charity Registration Reports. These reports are updated monthly on the Registry Reports web page at [.](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_www.oag.ca.gov_charities_reports&d=DwIF-g&c=uASjV29gZuJt5_5J5CPRuQ&r=3TMCvhvrc-3kZgm5mNsFe2Nv0WZgMjR5_2Q2eRb75FI&m=cAXZXEL8h_uNy8ho0C-WINgDBcHZXmx8AkUQEkmPYx8&s=lKh17FqMoSfTznzCv_p7e4CeDdX_dwoT4C23ofptkYc&e=)

- \* **Give to Organizations You Trust:** Do your research before giving. Review the charity's purpose and find out how the charity spends donations. How much is spent directly on the charitable cause? How much goes to overhead and employee compensation? Research charities in your community and support those charities that make a positive impact.

- \* **Don't Be Pressured by Telemarketers – Ask Questions Before Donating:** If you receive a call from a telemarketer, ask for the name of the fundraising organization, whether it is registered with the Attorney General's Office, the name of the charity benefitting from the solicitation, how much of your donation will go to charity and how much to the telemarketer, and the direct telephone number of the charity. If the telemarketer tells you the donation is for your local animal shelter, hospital, school, police, firefighting or other public safety agency, check directly with the benefitting organization to confirm that it authorized the solicitation and will actually benefit from your donation. Don't fall for pressure tactics or threats. Remember you have the right to reject the donation appeal and if you feel pressured or threatened, just hang up.

- \* **Be Cautious of "Look-Alike" Websites:** These fraudulent websites may have a slightly different web address (URL). Similar looking URLs are sometimes purchased to lure in would-be donors. These sites may ask for personal information or install harmful material onto your device.

\* **Watch Out for Similar-Sounding Names and Other Deceptive Tactics:** Some organizations use names that closely resemble those of well-established charitable organizations to mislead donors. Be skeptical if someone thanks you for a pledge you never made. Check your records.

\* **Be Wary of Social Network Fundraising:** If you are planning to donate through a social network solicitation, find out what percentage is going to the charity, whether you will be charged a fee, or if a percentage of your donation will be paid to the platform website.

\* **Protect Your Identity:** Never give your Social Security number or other personal information in response to a charitable solicitation. Never give out credit card information to an organization unfamiliar to you. Some organizations sell or rent their donor lists to other organizations, including organizations that are not charities. Review the charity's privacy policy to find out if your information will be shared with outside companies.

For more information on how to protect yourself and your donations, check out our donation tips webpage at [Complaints against charities can be filed using our charity complaint form, which you can find on our website at](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_oag.ca.gov_donations&d=DwIF-g&c=uASjV29gZuJt5_5J5CPRuQ&r=3TMCvhvrc-3kZgm5mNsFe2Nv0WZgMjR5_2Q2eRb75FI&m=cAXZXEL8h_uNy8ho0C-WINgDBcHZXmx8AkUQEkmpYx8&s=eQag6elxEeCVAtZhJNhYz_GNVu8QPPszFMS6daT1uP8&e=<https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_oag.ca.gov_donations&d=DwIF-g&c=uASjV29gZuJt5_5J5CPRuQ&r=3TMCvhvrc-3kZgm5mNsFe2Nv0WZgMjR5_2Q2eRb75FI&m=cAXZXEL8h_uNy8ho0C-WINgDBcHZXmx8AkUQEkmpYx8&s=eQag6elxEeCVAtZhJNhYz_GNVu8QPPszFMS6daT1uP8&e=> .</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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# State of Maryland AGENCY NEWS

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## Maryland Attorney General and Secretary of State Offer Guidance for Donors This Giving Tuesday

**BALTIMORE, MD (December 1, 2020)** – Giving Tuesday this year comes with an increased sense of urgency and need. Many more Marylanders are experiencing hardship and turning to nonprofit organizations for basic needs and support. As a result, many of us may feel compelled to donate. For those that do choose to make a donation this Giving Tuesday, Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith advise consumers to be vigilant and donate wisely.

“Emergencies such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic often bring out the best in people, with neighbors helping neighbors,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Unfortunately, these uncertain times also can bring out the worst in people, particularly those seeking to profit from the misfortune of others. I strongly urge Marylanders to research a charity before donating, and avoid any charity or fundraiser that does not provide information on how donations are used.”

“Thanks to reputable charities, suffering is mitigated, and hope is restored. That said, scam artists abound! They lure us with their charm and heartbreaking stories. They can spin a tale faster than spiders can weave a web! Before you know it, they scam hard earned cash from their unsuspecting prey. As we encounter the convergence of the pandemic and the upcoming holidays we urge donors to keep your antennae up and be on the alert for scam artists who may find their target using a double whammy of the pandemic and the holidays as a way to fleece you from your hard-earned cash” cautioned Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith.

Here are some tips on how to avoid a charity scam this Giving Tuesday and all year round:

- Do some research before you give. Visit an online resource such as Charity Navigator ([www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)) that can give you in-depth information on thousands of

charities. You can also search the name of a charity online to see if it's been reported as a scam. Search the name of the charity plus "complaint," "review," "rating," or "scam." If you find red flags, it might be best to find another organization.

- Just because your friend on social media posts about a charity doesn't mean it's legitimate. Do your own research using the tools described here. Call or contact your friend offline and ask about the post and what they know about the charity.
- If a telemarketer calls you asking for a donation by phone, don't agree to give right away. Ask questions first, such as how much of your donation goes to the program, how the organization carries out its mission, what percentage of money it collects is used for program services, whether contributions are tax-deductible, and how much goes to fundraising and administration. Ask the caller to send you information by email or mail before you decide. (If they refuse, this is a red flag that the "charity" may not be legitimate and they are trying to scam you.)
- Watch out for names that only look like well-known charities – but aren't. Fake charities are hoping that you mistake them for the real deal. Pay close attention to the name and their logo (if they use one), and make sure that the charity you are donating to is the one you intended to give to.

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division offers tips on giving wisely and can be found here [.http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/CPD%20Documents/Tips-Publications/147.pdf](http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/CPD%20Documents/Tips-Publications/147.pdf).

Together with the Attorney General's Office, the Secretary of State's Office works to ensure that charitable contributions go to qualified charitable organizations and are used for their intended purpose. The Maryland Secretary of State registers and regulates charitable organizations and their professional solicitors who operate in Maryland. Current Maryland law mandates that charities are registered with the Secretary of State and reveal to the public their financial and programmatic activities. You can search the Maryland Charities Database found here: <https://sos.maryland.gov/Charity/Pages/SearchCharity.aspx> to see if a charity is registered in Maryland.

If you think that you have been a victim of a charity fraud or scam, contact the Office of the Secretary of State, Charities and Legal Services Division by email: [DLInvestigations\\_SOS@maryland.gov](mailto:DLInvestigations_SOS@maryland.gov) or telephone: [410-974-5534](tel:410-974-5534).