

- Ask if the solicitor is a volunteer or a paid fundraiser.
- Ask how much of your donation will actually go to the charity and how much will be spent on fundraising expenses.
- Ask who will benefit from your donation.
- Don't assume when you hear "police" or "firefighter" or "veteran" in an organization's name that your donation is going to the local police or fire department, or to a local veterans' organization.
- Call your local police or fire department to verify whether donations will benefit the department. If not, report the solicitation to local law enforcement and the Attorney General's Office: <http://ag.ca.gov/charities/forms/charitable/ct9.pdf>
- Do not hesitate to ask for written information about the charity's programs and finances before giving.
- Ask if your contribution is tax-deductible.
- Never give your credit card number or your bank account information before you have reviewed all information about the charity and made a decision to donate.
- Always write a check payable to the charity so you have a record of your donation.
- Consider giving to local charities you can visit and whose programs you can see.

## Don't make a donation if...

- You feel uncomfortable or pressured to give. It's okay to hang up the phone.
- The solicitor says there is an urgent need for an immediate donation.
- The solicitor wants to send someone to pick up your donation.
- The solicitor won't answer your questions or refuses to send you written materials describing the charity's programs and finances.
- The solicitor becomes angry or threatens you.
- You are promised special treatment by law enforcement for your donation.

If any of these things happen, just hang up the phone and report the call to local law enforcement and the Attorney General's Office: <http://ag.ca.gov/charities/forms/charitable/ct9.pdf>



# Fundraising Appeals

**for Police, Firefighters and Veterans**

**Check It Out Before You Give**

*Facts & Tips*  
**For Donations**

**EDMUND G. BROWN JR.**  
**Attorney General**  
**State of California**

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## Fundraising appeals for police, firefighters and veterans

Californians are generous contributors to charity and are more likely to make a donation to firefighter, police and sheriff, and veterans' organizations than to any other kind of fundraising appeal. While donors often think their gift will help local police, firefighters, or veterans, that often isn't true.

Here are some facts about these appeals to consider:

- Police, fire, and sheriff's departments and governmental veterans' agencies do not solicit contributions.
- Having "police" or "firefighter" or "veteran" in a name doesn't mean that police officers, firefighters, or veterans are members of the group.
- Fraudulent organizations use these words in their name because they know people are more likely to make a donation.
- Most of these solicitations are made by commercial fundraisers, who are paid for their services. Solicitors may say they are police officers, firefighters, or veterans. More often, though, they will say they are working "with" them.
- A claim that the organization has local ties does not mean the money will be used locally.

- A charity should have written information about what it does and where your donated funds will be used. It's wise to get this written information before agreeing to make a donation over the telephone.
- Not all donations are tax-deductible. Some associations are formed to benefit members, and donations are not tax-deductible unless solicited for programs that benefit the community, such as summer camps or fire safety programs for schools.
- Some commercial fundraisers have been known to list their phone numbers in the name of the charity so that donors calling that number think they are talking directly to the charity instead of a paid solicitor.
- California law requires commercial fundraisers to identify themselves as such at the beginning of the solicitation and to disclose, if asked, the percentage of the donation that will go toward the commercial fundraiser's fundraising expenses. If you make an oral request for this information, it must be disclosed *immediately*.
- Some fundraising contracts provide for a flat percentage return to the charity after deduction of the fundraiser's expenses, which may be higher than 80%. In many cases only a tiny percentage of your donation will actually get to the charity.
- Some fundraisers seek to mislead donors by beginning with a "thank you" for past contributions, when in fact you've never donated before.
- Commercial fundraisers must be registered with the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts before soliciting contributions in California.
- While receipts given to donors may prominently display the organization's FEIN (federal employer identification number), this does not mean the organization has tax-exempt status.
- Some fundraisers threaten that emergency services will be denied unless a donation is made. THIS IS UNTRUE. Report such calls to local law enforcement and the Attorney General's Office: <http://ag.ca.gov/charities/forms/charitable/ct9.pdf>
- Some fundraisers will offer decals and claim that the donor won't be given traffic citations if the decal is placed in a car window. THIS IS UNTRUE. Report such calls to local law enforcement and the Attorney General's Office: <http://ag.ca.gov/charities/forms/charitable/ct9.pdf>

## Before you give, check out the charity

- Do not give to a charity you know nothing about.
- Is the charity registered in California? Is the fundraiser registered? Search the Attorney General's website: <http://ag.ca.gov/charities/>