



State of Maryland AGENCY NEWS

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Caution Urged By Maryland Secretary of State and Attorney General When Donating During #GivingTuesdayNow

ANNAPOLIS, MD—Maryland's Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith and Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh warn individuals to watch out for possible scam charities and deceptive practices when donating during #GivingTuesdayNow on Tuesday, May 5, 2020. The #GivingTuesdayNow event was specifically designed to encourage giving to charities responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Con artists take advantage of emergencies, like the coronavirus pandemic, to fleece individual donors from their hard-earned cash," cautioned Secretary Wobensmith.

When, and if, charities plea for donations in response to the coronavirus, Marylanders may feel a tug at their heart strings to help out. Be vigilant and donate wisely is the cautionary guidance offered by Maryland's Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith and Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh for those who choose to donate.

"Marylanders are generous and readily step up to help neighbors around our state and around the world," said Secretary Wobensmith, who warns citizens to research charities before donating, especially to unknown or little-known charities.

"Be sure you know who you are giving to, and remember it is best to give directly to well-established, reputable charitable organizations," cautions Attorney General Frosh.

Charities who solicit money in Maryland must register with the Office of the Secretary of State before they can begin to solicit money. Check our website to confirm if a charity is authorized to raise money in Maryland: <http://sos.maryland.gov/Charity/Pages/SearchCharity.aspx>.

Recognize red flags. Ask questions. Be suspicious of any charity that won't answer your questions. Here are some red flags that should help you question whether a charity is worthy of your support:

- Did the organization refuse to send you written material or financial information?
- Did the solicitor offer to send a person to collect your contribution?
- Did the charity send you an invoice or statement that indicates a payment due for a contribution you never pledged?
- Does the organization's name and logo closely resemble another charity with a similar purpose?

The Office of the Secretary of State registers and regulates charitable organizations that solicit charitable contributions in Maryland. Together with the Attorney General's Office, the Office of the Secretary of State works to ensure that charitable contributions go to qualified charitable organizations and are used for their intended purpose.

For more tips on how to give wisely, Marylanders can visit the Maryland Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division publication [Consumer's Edge Charitable Giving Tips](#).

The Office of the Secretary of State maintains a public registry of charitable organizations authorized to solicit in Maryland. For more information and to search the registry, please visit the [Secretary of State's charities database](#).

Con artists abound. The Secretary of State's Office investigates complaints about charity fraud. If you think you've been the victim of a scam, report it by contacting our Investigations Unit by email at dlinvestigations_sos@maryland.gov or by phone at 410-260-3859 or 800-825-4510.

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