



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**SC Department of Consumer Affairs  
SC Secretary of State Mark Hammond**

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Holiday Shopping Series: Avoiding Fake Charities**

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) and the South Carolina Secretary of State's Office are encouraging consumers to do some research this holiday season and only give to legitimate charities. The following tips can keep consumers' hard-earned money out of the hands of criminals:

- **Seek out a charity that needs your support.** Be cautious of groups that may approach you. Get more information on a particular charity by visiting the SC Secretary of State's Office at [www.sos.sc.gov](http://www.sos.sc.gov) to search on a particular charity or by calling 1-888-CHARITI (242-7484).
- **Donate to well-known charities.** Watch out for charities that have sprung up overnight. They may mean well, but lack the infrastructure to provide assistance. Do not assume a charity is legitimate based on its name. Some phony charities use names that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate organizations.
- **Who's Calling?** If you receive a call from a professional solicitor, they must disclose the following at the time of the call:
  - that he/she is a paid solicitor;
  - the name, location and purpose of the charity; and
  - the registered, true name of the professional fundraising organization for which he/she works.
- **Know where the money is going.** Ask what percentage of your contribution goes to the charitable cause. Find out their mission and history. Don't be afraid to ask for details in writing.
- **Do not provide personal or financial information to cold callers.** This includes your Social Security number, credit card and bank account numbers. Scam artists can use this information to commit fraud. When in doubt, hang up!
- **Do not give or send cash.** For security and tax record purposes, contribute by check or credit card. Write the official name of the charity on your check.

**About the Secretary of State's Office**

The Division of Public Charities regulates charitable organizations and professional fundraisers pursuant to the Solicitation of Charitable Funds Act and in 2015 began regulating the registration and financial reporting of certain nonprofit organizations wishing to conduct raffles in the State. There are approximately 10,000 charitable organizations, and 2,000 professional fundraisers registered with the Division.

**About SCDCA**

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit [www.consumer.sc.gov](http://www.consumer.sc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-800-922-1594.

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