

# Solicitation by Law Enforcement Organizations



*Answers to your questions  
about solicitation  
of donations  
by law enforcement  
organizations*





Over the years, the Texas Department of Public Safety has received numerous complaints and questions about fundraising by law enforcement associations soliciting contributions.

Some organizations solicit funds using names similar to those of the DPS and its divisions. For example, some groups include in their names the terms "Texas Rangers," "State Troopers," "Texas Highway Patrol" or "Department of Public Safety." While some officers may be members of these associations on their own time, these groups are not affiliated with the DPS. They raise money to fund their own programs, some of which may benefit officers and their families.

**The Texas Department of Public Safety receives funding from your tax dollars. DPS does not solicit donations from private citizens.**



These law enforcement associations cannot imply that they are part of the DPS, and they cannot imply that the money they raise will go to the DPS. They must provide names, street addresses and hotline num-

bers where you can call for more information about the groups soliciting contributions.



Under the law, telemarketers for public safety organizations cannot legally imply that they are peace officers, unless they are. And they cannot use

names, symbols or statements that are similar to those used by the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Rangers or other police agencies in a manner that is intended to confuse or mislead a person being solicited.

Breaking this solicitation law is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$4,000, a jail term not to exceed one year, or both the fine and confinement. Civil penalties include a fine of up to \$2,500 for an individual violation and up to \$10,000 for multiple offenses.

If you are contacted by a group you believe is misrepresenting itself as part of the Texas Department of Public Safety, contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Texas Attorney General's Office at 1-800-621-0508.

For more information on making charitable donations, please call your local Better Business Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission at (202) 326-2222.

***Keep in mind these points before giving money to any charitable organization:***

- Always request written information on the charity asking you for money. By law, telemarketers must provide the charity's name, street address and phone number. Also, they must tell you the names and job titles of the callers and their supervisors.
- Ask how your donation will be distributed. How much will cover administrative cost? How much actually will go the program you wish to support?
- If the money is solicited by a professional fund-raiser, ask how much of your donation the fund-raiser will keep.
- Call the charity to ask whether the organization is aware of the solicitation and has authorized the use of its name.
- Listen carefully for similar sounding names. Some fund-raisers use names closely resembling those of known, respected organizations.
- Know the difference between "tax-exempt" and "tax-deductible." Tax-exempt organizations do not have to pay taxes, but that doesn't always mean that your donation is tax-deductible. Ask for a receipt showing the amount of your contribution and the portion of your donation that is tax-deductible.



- Under Texas Law, telemarketers cannot call your residence between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m. on weekdays or Saturdays.

Telemarketers cannot call your residence before noon or after 9 p.m. on Sundays.

- Refuse to respond to high-pressure appeals. Any legitimate charity will be happy to wait to receive your donation if you decide to give.

- Check with the Texas Attorney General's office and your local Better Business Bureau to see whether any complaints about the charitable organization have been filed.

- You also can check with the Philanthropic Advisory Service of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, 4200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 800, Arlington VA 22203-1838, (703) 276-0100.

*<http://www.bbb.org>*

- Check with the Texas Secretary of State's office to see whether the charity is registered and whether the solicitor is bonded as a telemarketer.

- You can remove your telephone number from many national telemarketing lists by writing to: Telephone Preference Service, c/o Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008.