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## State of Utah Department of Commerce

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### MEDIA ALERT

**"Utah Division of Consumer Protection and Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs join Federal Trade Commission and 50 States to Combat Charity Fraud targeting U.S. Veterans and Service Members"**

*"Operation Donate with Honor to educate public on charity fraud nationwide."*

(For immediate release...)

**SALT LAKE CITY, Utah** - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce and Gary R. Harter, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs announced today that the State of Utah, through a joint campaign with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) titled "Operation Donate with Honor", is reminding Utah consumers who wish to support military veterans through charitable giving to donate wisely. The Utah state agencies are joining the FTC, law enforcement officials and charity regulators from every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam and Puerto Rico in announcing a sweeping new donor education campaign.

"Veterans gave their lives to protect our American freedoms. Now it is our turn to honor them by making sure our Utah donations go to reputable charities and organizations who will truly benefit their lives," stated Francine A. Giani, Executive Director, Utah Department of Commerce. "Take time to find out who is asking for your donation and how they will spend your dollars towards veterans. Our Division of Consumer Protection has the information to verify your money is going to a registered charity."

Every year, grateful Americans repay the sacrifices made by those who serve in the U.S. armed forces with contributions to charities that promise to deliver needed help and services to veterans and service members. Most of these charities live up to fundraising promises, but a few attract donations by lying about help and support not actually delivered. In the process, they harm not only well-meaning donors, but also the many legitimate charities engaged in important and vital work on behalf of veterans and service

members.

“Operation Donate with Honor” was developed by the FTC and the National Association of State Charity Officials (NASCO), the association of state offices charged with oversight of charitable organizations and charitable solicitations in the United States. The initiative pairs enforcement actions with an education campaign, in English and Spanish, to help consumers recognize charitable solicitation fraud and identify legitimate charities. This includes a new video that highlights tips on how to research charities on giving wisely to veterans organizations which you can view here <https://commerce.utah.gov/video-veteran-charities.html>.

“Men and women who serve in the United States Military are selfless in their service as they defend our freedoms and liberties. Many people want to honor that service and make donations to foundations, organizations, and groups focused on military members, veterans, and their families. Though there are many charitable organizations that perform amazing work and positively impact veterans, there are some that use and exploit your generosity and their service and sacrifice for their own financial gain. We ask that before you donate to these groups that you perform due diligence to ensure the validity of your charity of choice, ” advised Gary Harter, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs.

Veterans fundraising fraud schemes target potential donors online, via telemarketing, direct mail, door-to-door contacts, and at retail stores, falsely promising to help homeless and disabled veterans, to provide veterans with employment counseling, mental health counseling or other assistance, and to send care packages to deployed service members. Many schemes solicit nationwide.

The national education campaign being announced today is intended to help potential donors, regardless of where or how they choose to donate, learn how to spot fraudulent and deceptive solicitations and make sure their contributions actually benefit veterans and service members.

The Utah Division of Consumer offers the following tips to review before you donate to any charitable organization.

### **Consumer Tips for Wise Charitable Giving**

1. Don't rely on a sympathetic sounding name to make a donation.
2. Ask for the charity's name, website, and physical location.
3. Ask how much of any donation will go to the charitable program you want to support.
4. Check with the Utah Division of Consumer Protection to see if they are registered at [https://dcp.utah.gov/consumerinfo/veterans\\_charities.html](https://dcp.utah.gov/consumerinfo/veterans_charities.html)
5. Search the charity's name online with the word "scam" or "complaint" to see what other people say about it.
6. Check out the charity's ratings at the Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Watch, or Charity Navigator.
7. Never pay with cash, a gift card, or by wiring money.
8. Consider paying by credit card, which is the safest option for security and tax purposes.
9. If you wish to file a complaint, go to this link with the Division of Consumer Protection <https://dcp.utah.gov/complaints/manual.html>

### **Federal Trade Commission Resources**

Donors and business owners can find information to help them donate wisely and make their donations count at [FTC.gov/Charity](https://www.ftc.gov/charity).

#### For consumers

[Donating Through an Online Giving Portal](#)

[Giving to Organizations That Help Military Service members and Their Families](#)

[Giving to Charities That Help Veterans Charities](#)

#### For businesses

[Online Charitable Giving Portals](#)

[Tips for Retailers: How to Review Charity Requests](#)

For more information on the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs click here <https://veterans.utah.gov/>

For more information about the Utah Division of Consumer Protection click here <https://dcp.utah.gov/>

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