



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Senator Lanza Informs Residents How to Protect Themselves From Charity Scams

ANDREW J LANZA July 7, 2011

Following reports that a Long Island based charity allegedly spent millions of donor dollars on non-charitable expenses, Senator Andrew Lanza is reminding residents about several precautions they should take to avoid becoming victims of charity scams.

“Individuals donate to charities because they want to help improve the lives of others, but as we’ve seen, there are those who take advantage of that generosity for their own selfish gain. By following a few simple precautions, residents can protect themselves from scams, fraud, and dishonesty when giving to a charity and know exactly how their donation will be spent,” said Senator Lanza.

Recently, the Attorney General’s office filed a lawsuit against the Long Island based Coalition Against Breast Cancer for allegedly raising millions of dollars in charitable donations under the fraudulent guise of fighting breast cancer. According to the Attorney General’s office, the organization raised over \$9 million in charitable donations over the past five years, but spent nearly none of it on breast cancer programs.

Both the New York State Attorney General’s Office and the New York State Division of Consumer Protection advise residents to take the following precautions to ensure their donations go to legitimate and reputable charities:

- **Confirm that the charity is registered-** Search the Attorney General’s Charities Bureau Registry at www.charitiesnys.com or by calling 212-416-8401 to see if the charity is properly registered and has filed its financial reports with the Attorney General.
- **Know where your money will go-** Ask what percentage of donations will go to the cause as opposed to administrative costs.
- **Don’t be pressured by telemarketers-** Don’t fall for pressure tactics such as repeated phone calls or threats. These are signs that the organization may not be legitimate.
- **Ask for written materials-** Always ask for information in writing – be wary if an organization will not provide information about charitable programs and finances upon request. Any legitimate organization will be happy to send you information.
- **Never give cash-** Give your contribution by check made payable to the charity.
- **Guard against fake solicitations-** Be wary of unsolicited mailings, phone calls and e-mails requesting donations. Unless you have signed up to receive e-mails from a charity of your choice,

do not respond to e-mail solicitations. Don't click on any links contained in these e-mails, as you may be directed to a fake website made to look like a legitimate organization's official site. Some of these emails may ask for money to be sent to off-shore bank accounts.

- €€€ **Don't disclose personal information-** Never give your social security number or other personal information in response to a charitable solicitation. Never give out credit card information over the phone or to an organization you are not familiar with.
- €€€ **You have the right to say "No"**- Remember you always have the right to say no to any charitable request.
- €€€ **Research the charity for previous complaints-** Check with the Attorney General's office of New York State Division of Consumer Protection to see if a charity has complaints lodged against it which could raise a red flag.

Residents who would like more information about how to protect themselves from charity scams can contact the Attorney General's office at 212-416-8401 or online at www.ag.ny.gov, as well as the New York State Division of Consumer Protection at 1-800-697-1220 or online at www.nysconsumer.gov. Residents can also call Senator Lanza's office at 718-984-4073.