



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Senator Lanza Offers Tips to Donors Supporting Hurricane Sandy

ANDREW J LANZA January 3, 2013

### **Tips to Donors Supporting Hurricane Sandy**

**NEW YORK** – As millions of dollars pour into charities to assist victims of Hurricane Sandy, Senator Andrew Lanza today offered the following tips for donors supporting relief efforts.

**Check Before Giving.** Donate to charities you are familiar with, or that have experience assisting in disaster relief. Review information about the charity before you give. Check the Attorney General’s website – [www.charitiesnys.com](http://www.charitiesnys.com) – for financial reports of charities, or ask the charity directly for its reports. Confirm that the charity is a tax-exempt organization. The following websites contain helpful information to evaluate charities:

- American Institute of Philanthropy - [www.charitywatch.org](http://www.charitywatch.org)
- Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance - [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)
- Charity Navigator - [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)
- GuideStar - [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)

**Ask How Your Donation Will Be Used.** Check how the charity plans to use your donation, including the services and individuals your donation will support. Confirm that all of your contribution will be used for Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, and whether you are able to

restrict your gift to that purpose. Find out what the charity plans to do with any excess donations. Avoid charities that make emotional appeals but are vague in answering your questions. Be wary if an organization will not provide written information about its charitable programs and finances upon request. Any legitimate organization will be glad to send you this information.

**Before You Text A Contribution.** Check the charity's website or call the charity to confirm it has authorized contributions to be made via text message. Keep in mind that donations via text messaging may not reach the charity until after your phone bill is paid. It may be faster to contribute directly to the charity.

**Don't Give Cash.** Give directly to the charity, either by check made payable to the organization or through the charity's website.

**Be Careful About Personal Information.** Avoid giving credit card or personal information over the phone or by text message. In all cases, make sure you are familiar with the organization to which you give such information and check to see that the fundraising campaign is legitimate.

**Avoid Unsolicited Spam Emails.** These formats are usually not associated with legitimate charities. Check the Department of Homeland Security tips, such as Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Attacks that are posted at <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-014.html>

**Report Suspicious Organizations.** If you believe an organization is misrepresenting its work, or that a scam is taking place, please contact the Attorney General's Charities Bureau at [charities.bureau@ag.ny.gov](mailto:charities.bureau@ag.ny.gov).

**Charities Bureau to Extend Filing Deadline**

The IRS is granting extensions of time to file IRS Form 990 to organizations affected by Hurricane Sandy and whose original or extended time to file was from late October to January 31, 2013. Those organizations will have until February 1, 2013, to file with the IRS.

The extension is automatic for organizations located in the counties designated by the IRS. To find out which counties have designated by the IRS, please consult <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Help-for-Victims-of-Hurricane-Sandy>. Organizations that have been affected by Hurricane Sandy but are not located designated counties must call 866-562-5227 to request an extension from the IRS.

The Charities Bureau will grant the same extension of time to file Form CHAR500 and required attachments to any organization that is entitled to the IRS extension. If an organization is entitled to an extension by the IRS, it must request a similar extension from the Charities Bureau, by sending an email request to [charities.extensions@ag.ny.gov](mailto:charities.extensions@ag.ny.gov). Email requests for extensions must contain the name of the organization, its Charities Bureau registration number and its Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) in the subject line. For example, the subject line should read:

**Re: ABC Charity, NYS Reg No. 01-23-45, EIN 12-3456789**

The body of the email must include the filing period for which the extension is being requested and confirmation that the organization is located in one of the designated counties or, if not, it has otherwise been granted an extension by the IRS.