

Give & Take:

Consumers, Contributions, and Charity

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Federal Trade Commission and National Association of State Charities Officials Will Hold a Conference Exploring Consumer Protection Issues and Charitable Solicitations

Comments, Research, Original Papers, and Participation Sought

March 21, 2017

Federal Trade Commission
CONSTITUTION CENTER
400 7th St. SW, Washington DC 20024

Deadline for submissions: February 17, 2017

Americans are among the most generous people in the world, contributing more than \$373 billion to charity in 2015. Per capita giving by U.S. adults rose to \$1,101, while household giving averaged \$2,124. Not only are consumers giving more, but evolving marketing practices and new technologies have introduced different ways to solicit financial support from charitable consumers. The Federal Trade Commission, the nation's federal consumer protection agency, and the National Association of State Charities Officials, the association of state offices charged with oversight of charitable organizations and charitable solicitations in the United States, are partnering to convene a conference to examine how evolving and new solicitation practices on behalf of charitable causes impact individual giving decisions.

The conference will feature panel discussions with leading stakeholders -- regulators, academics, practitioners, charity watchdogs, donor advocates, and relevant members of the profit and nonprofit sector. Discussions will focus on consumer protection concerns arising from charitable solicitations and charitable giving, with a particular emphasis on the experience and perspective of donors and, importantly, donors across different communities including seniors, millennials, Latinos and African Americans. Any person may submit written comments on the topics to be addressed at the conference. To be considered for discussion at the conference, comments and papers must be received on or before **February 17, 2017**.

Original research, surveys, and legal or academic papers are welcomed. **Particular research areas of interest include, but are not limited to:**

1. **How Are Donor Solicitations Evolving in the Digital Age?**

What will fundraising look like in the future as demographics and technology change? How is the advent of email, online payment platforms, internet search engines, social media, globalization, and "big data" affecting charitable solicitations and donor choices? What are the possible risks and benefits to donors arising from new forms of charitable solicitation and improved targeting of donor groups? Do these new forms require altering policy frameworks for protecting donors?

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2. What Do Donors Expect When They Contribute?

Do donors expect their contributions to be used exclusively or primarily for purposes described in the charitable solicitations to which they responded? How do donors view spending on fundraising costs and other overhead? Do donor expectations vary in response to the type of solicitation?

3. What Information About Charities Do Donors Find Helpful?

Do donors research a charity or cause before making a donation? How often? What information is important to them and where do they look for it? Can new technologies improve donor education? What role should charities, watchdog groups, and others play in donor education and how can they be more effective?

4. Discovering and Reporting Possible Deceptive Charitable Solicitations: When do Donors Act?

How do donors find out that a charitable solicitation may be misleading? To whom do they report their concern and what do they report? What kinds of problems go underreported? What can be done to increase donor reporting of problematic charitable solicitations?

5. How are Consumer Purchasing Choices Influenced by Promises of Charitable Support or Social Benefit?

Increasingly, traditional for-profit companies, as well as new forms of for-profit entities organized to generate both profit and social benefit, are promising consumers that purchases of goods or services will benefit charitable causes. How important to individual purchasing decisions are these representations? When are consumers misled? What information is available to consumers about the benefit to charity of any purchases of goods or services and is it sufficient?

6. What are Best Practices in Terms of Charitable Solicitations, Information and Accuracy?

What current or prospective models exist in the United States or abroad to enhance consumer protection in the area of charitable solicitations?

Research papers may be submitted to consumergiving@ftc.gov and will be posted to the FTC's public website. Paper submissions should be sent to: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite CC-5610 (Annex B), Washington, DC 20580, or delivered to: Federal Trade Commission, Office of the Secretary, Constitution Center, 400 7th Street, SW, 5th Floor, Suite 5610 (Annex B), Washington, DC 20024. Paper submissions should reference the conference title, Give & Take: Consumers, Contributions, and Charity, both in the text and on the envelope. The deadline for submitting research papers is February 17, 2017. Members of the public may also submit comments for the workshop online. [Give & Take: Consumers, Contributions, and Charity] The public comment period will remain open until May 1, 2017.

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Interested parties are also invited to submit requests to be panelists or recommend topics or panelists for inclusion on the agenda. Disclosing funding sources promotes transparency, ensures objectivity, and maintains the public's trust. If chosen, prospective panelists will be required to disclose the source of any support they received to carry out the research being presented. Prospective panelists should submit a statement detailing their expertise on the issues to be addressed and contact information, no later than December 30, 2016. Such requests and recommendations should be submitted electronically to consumergiving@ftc.gov (link sends e-mail).

The conference is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Constitution Center, 400 7th St., SW, Washington, DC 20024. A detailed agenda will be published at a later date. Information about reasonable accommodations is available on the conference website.

Contact Information

MEDIA CONTACT:

Office of Public Affairs
202-326-2181

FTC STAFF CONTACTS:

Tracy Thorleifson
Northwest Region
tthorleifson@ftc.gov
Janice Kopec
Bureau of Consumer Protection
jkopec@ftc.gov

NASCO CONTACT:

Alissa Gardenswartz
Deputy Attorney General
Colorado Department of Law
alissa.gardenswartz@coag.gov