AG Balderas Joins FTC and 50 States to Combat Fraudulent Charities that Falsely Claim to Help Veterans and Service Members

Albuquerque, NM – Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas joined the Federal Trade Commission and law enforcement officials and charity regulators from every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam and Puerto Rico in announcing “Operation Donate with Honor,” a sweeping new donor education campaign to help donors spot and avoid fundraising solicitations that falsely promise their donations will help veterans and service members. The new campaign is being released in conjunction with announcements of new and recent law enforcement actions by the FTC and many states.

“Every year, grateful New Mexicans 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,” said Attorney General Hector Balderas. “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.”

The New Mexico Office of the Attorney General is currently conducting a charities compliance sweep across New Mexico, making sure that all charities are properly registered and legally sound. Since the beginning of the year, the NMAGO has dissolved 12 out-of-compliance charities, and has filed suit against six more. The sweep is continuing this month, with July focused on veterans’ charities. So far, more than 30 charities have come into full compliance in the last calendar year, alone.

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.

When donating to charity, among other things, Attorney General Balderas advises:

- Ask for the charity’s name, website, and physical location;
• Ask how much of any donation will go to the charitable program you want to support;

• You can check if a charity is registered with the NM Attorney General’s Office [HERE](#);

• Search the charity’s name online with the word “scam” or “complaint.” See what other people say about it;

• Never pay with cash, a gift card, or by wiring money; and

• Consider paying by credit card, which is the safest option for security and tax purposes.

• Have local organizations that you already give to, so that when a telemarketer calls, you can say “I already gave to….” instead of telling people “No” over the phone.

• Make sure you know the full name of the organization you are giving to and not a “sound-alike.” Many times there are scams that use similar names to legitimate charities.

• If you make a pledge over the phone, ask for the information about the charity in writing before you give, that way you can do thorough research before you send money.

• Know where your money goes - ask the person on the phone whether they work for the charity or if they are a professional fundraiser, and if they are a professional fundraiser, how much of what they solicit actually goes to the charity.

• If you only give to local charities, ask the solicitor how much of what you donate stays in New Mexico.

• Never give into high-pressure pitches. A legitimate charity will give you information and more than one opportunity to give. Take your time to decide where to send your hard earned money.

Donors and business owners can also find information to help them donate wisely and make their donations count at [FTC.gov/Charity](#).

If you think you may have been a victim of charities fraud, you can file a complaint with the NM Attorney General’s Office [HERE](#).