



Charitable Giving

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November 2024

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Maybe, however, it's not so great for your postal mailbox, your email in-box, your telephone (and cell phone), social media accounts, and even television. They are probably crammed with requests from nonprofit organizations who are asking for a donation. How do you wade through all that mail and figure out to whom you want to donate? Here are some tips to help you.

The first step in making charitable donations is to determine how much you want to give to charity. It's so easy when you are writing a check to a charity to overspend because the charity's mission touches your heart. You should also talk with your financial advisor about the benefit of charitable donations on your federal or state income tax returns.

How do you know if a charitable organization is a good steward of your donated money or even if it is a legitimate charity? The [IRS](#) is a big help with this. There are many articles that will help you determine the status of an organization. Keep in mind that in recent years the IRS has revoked the charitable designation for some organizations because they have failed to file appropriate reports with the IRS. If an [organization is not listed](#) on the IRS website it is not authorized to accept donations.

You can also check the status of a charity with your state. In West Virginia you want to contact the [Secretary of State](#). In Ohio you can find this information from the [Attorney General's](#) website. If you live in another state you can start with one of these offices and ask for the Charitable Law Division. Other places you can check to verify the status of a charity include [Charity Watch](#), the [Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance](#), [Candid](#), and Charity Navigator. It is important to check even local charities that you think you know well to determine how the organization operates.

There are many advantages for those who can make a large donation to a charity. If you have an [IRA](#) you can donate directly from your IRA to a charity. In the State of West Virginia you might be interested in a donation to a qualifying charity in order to receive a tax credit on your state income tax through the [Neighborhood Investment Program](#). Again, we encourage you to talk with your financial advisor about these and other opportunities.

Charitable donation requests have become a way for scammers to remove you from your money. Don't fall for these [tactics](#).

- Remember that professional solicitors must be able to provide certain information about the charity. And, don't forget that these people are getting paid. Often only a small percentage of the donation actually goes to the charity.
- Be wary when a donation check is requested to be made to an individual instead of the charity.
- The caller requests a credit card number or bank account information when you are not expecting the call.

There are more than 1.8 million nonprofits in the United States. Find those that speak to your interests, check out how the organization is operating and make a contribution that is in line with your budget. When you do your homework, you can know that your contribution will be used wisely and that the charity is grateful for your generosity.