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May 25, 2010

MEDIA ALERT

Agencies remind Utah Consumers to give wisely to Veterans Charities

(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah - Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, and Terry Schow, Executive Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs, announced today that both agencies are asking Utah consumers to consider veterans groups when making charitable donations. The Utah Division of Consumer Protection has added a new dedicated section to their website at www.consumerprotection.utah.gov to assist consumers make wise donations to veterans organizations.

"We are deeply indebted to our service men and women who have given their lives to protect our freedom," said Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, "We are asking consumers who are looking to donate to veterans groups to make sure they are registered with the state by checking with the Division of Consumer Protection."

"Our agency salutes our nation's armed forces and their incredible sacrifice," added Terry Schow, Executive Director of the Department of Veterans Affairs, "We encourage all veteran-related charities to work with our Veterans Advisory Board to make sure funding is targeted to areas with the most need."

"Our service men and women have made great sacrifices to our country and our great state of Utah," said Representative Richard Greenwood, a veteran of the Vietnam War, "We applaud these state agencies' efforts in making sure money gets in the right hands to support our veterans."

Tips on Giving Wisely

The following tips will help consumers ensure their donations go to a legitimate charity;

1. Recognize that the words "veterans" or "military families" in an organization's name does not necessarily mean that veterans or the families of active-duty personnel will benefit from your donation.
2. Donate to charities with a track record and a history. Charities that spring up overnight may disappear just as quickly.
3. If you have any doubt about whether you've made a pledge or a contribution, check your records. If you can't remember making the donation or pledge, resist the pressure to give.
4. Check out an organization before donating. Some phony charities use names, seals and logos that look or sound like those of respected, legitimate organizations.

5. Call the Utah Division of Consumer Protection at (801) 530-6601 to see whether the charity or fundraising organization has to be registered in Utah.
6. Do not send or give cash donations. For security and tax record purposes, it is best to pay by check made payable to the charity.
7. Ask for a receipt showing the amount of your contribution.
8. Be wary of promises of guaranteed sweepstakes winnings in exchange for a contribution. You never have to give a donation to be eligible to win a sweepstakes.

About the Utah Division of Consumer Protection

The mission of the Division of Consumer Protection is to respond to consumer complaints, to protect consumers from unfair and deceptive practices, to encourage the development of fair consumer sales practices and to provide consumer education. Consumer may lookup registered charities in Utah by logging on to the Division's website at: www.consumerprotection.utah.gov

About the Utah Department of Veterans Affairs

The Utah Department of Veterans Affairs is the state agency that assists former and present members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims for and securing such compensation, hospitalization, educations and vocational training, and other benefits or privileges to which they may be entitled under Federal or state law or regulation by reason of the service in the military. More information can be found by logging on to the Department's website at: <http://veterans.utah.gov/>

Additional Resources for Consumers

www.guidestar.org - Guidestar

www.bbb.us/charity - Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance

www.charitynavigator.org - Charity Navigator

www.charitywatch.org - American Institute of Philanthropy

FTC public education materials in English: <http://www.ftc.gov/charityfraud/>

FTC public education materials in Espanol: <http://www.ftc.gov/donaciones>

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