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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Joint Press Release
Office of Consumer Protection and the Department of the Attorney General
Announce “Operation Donate with Honor”**

*FTC and 50 States join to Combat Fraudulent Charities
That Falsely Claim to Help Veterans and Service Members*

HONOLULU - The State of Hawaii Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) and Attorney General Russell Suzuki join the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), 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 promising 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 Americans 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. 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.

“People need to be careful when donating to charities and choose the ones with a proven track record of helping those that they claim to serve. One way of doing this is to avoid giving to fake charities that use names that sound a lot like the names of the legitimate ones. This is a reason that it’s important to do some research before giving,” said **Stephen Levins, Executive Director of the Office of Consumer Protection.**

Operation Donate with Honor was developed by the FTC and the National Association of State Charity Officials (NASCO), the association of state offices charged with oversight of charitable organizations and charitable solicitations in the United States. The initiative pairs enforcement actions with an education campaign, in English and Spanish, to help consumers recognize charitable solicitation fraud and identify legitimate charities. This includes a new video that highlights tips on how to research charities on giving wisely to veterans’ organizations.

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, OCP 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;
- Search the charity’s name online with the word “scam” or “complaint.” See what other people say about it;
- Check out the charity’s ratings at the Wise Giving Alliance, Charity Watch, or Charity Navigator;
- 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.

Attorney General Suzuki adds, “Potential donors should also check that the charity is registered with the Department of the Attorney General by visiting <https://ag.ehawaii.gov/charity/>. Any organization that asks the public for charitable

contributions in Hawaii must be registered with our office prior to asking for any donations.”

Before giving to a charity, donors and business owners can find information to help them donate wisely and make their donations count at [FTC.gov/Charity](https://www.ftc.gov/charity).

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