



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL LOPEZ URGES THE PUBLIC TO REMAIN VIGILANT  
REGARDING MAUI FUNDRAISING SOLICITATIONS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HONOLULU** – Nearly two months since the Maui wildfires, Attorney General Anne Lopez is urging Hawai'i residents to remain watchful for suspicious fundraisers.

“We are continuing to receive reports and complaints regarding organizations that are soliciting donations for Maui fire relief efforts, but who are not actually registered charities,” said Attorney General Lopez. “Solicitations can come from emails, websites, door-to-door collections, flyers, telephone calls, text messages, and people on the street. I continue to emphasize that everyone must remain cautious and do research before making a donation to anyone soliciting money.”

Through the efforts taken by the Department of the Attorney General, several unregistered fundraisers have registered with the department. Some fundraisers have voluntarily ceased solicitation, while other fundraisers are currently subject to further departmental review and scrutiny.

“We are taking a number of steps to ensure that all charities are abiding by our legal requirements, while also reviewing complaints relating to suspicious fundraising efforts,” said Attorney General Lopez.

Attorney General Lopez offers following additional tips to help people direct their donations to trustworthy charitable organizations and to avoid being victimized themselves:

- **Only donate to registered charities.** You can check to see if a charity is registered with the Department of the Attorney General by visiting the Tax & Charities Division website: [www.ag.hawaii.gov/tax](http://www.ag.hawaii.gov/tax)

- **Donate directly to a known charity.** To ensure contributions are received and used for intended purposes, make contributions directly to known charities rather than relying on others to donate on your behalf.
- **Read the fundraiser description.** Avoid donating to fundraisers making vague and sentimental claims with no specifics about how your donation will be used. Most legitimate charities have been proactively providing updates as to how the funds have been used so far for the Maui fire relief efforts.
- **Check if an organization is a 501(c)(3) entity.** If a fundraiser claims your contribution to the organization is tax-deductible, check to see if that organization is a listed 501(c)(3) entity by the IRS: <https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>. If the organization is not listed, your donation may not be tax deductible and calls into question the trustworthiness of the organization's other statements.
- **Guard your personal information.** Be aware of whom you are dealing with when providing your personal and financial information. Do not provide any personal information over the phone when you receive unsolicited phone calls asking for a donation.
- **Avoid cash donations if possible.** Pay by credit card or write a check directly to the charity. Do not make checks payable to individuals.
- **Beware of copycat charities and spoofing.** Beware of charities with copy-cat names similar to but not the same as those of reputable charities. Also be vigilant about fraudulent websites imitating reputable charities. Most legitimate charities' websites end in .org rather than .com.
- **Beware of unsolicited spam emails.** Do not respond to any unsolicited or spam emails, including clicking links or purported photographs, because the files may contain viruses. Only open attachments from senders you know.
- **Do not allow yourself to be pressured into making a donation.** Reputable charities do not use hard-sell pressure tactics.

Any questions or complaints about a scam charity or suspicious fundraiser can be directed to the Tax & Charities Division at (808) 586-1480 or by sending an email to [ATG.Charities@hawaii.gov](mailto:ATG.Charities@hawaii.gov).

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