

Mississippi Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Service Commission, Secretary of State's Office to implement new requirements to protect consumers from scams

Jackson, MS (June 10, 2019) - The Mississippi Public Service Commission (PSC) and Secretary of State's Office announced changes today to the Telephone Solicitation Act affecting registration requirements of charities. Currently, charitable organizations operating in Mississippi are required to register with the Secretary of State's Office, but many are exempt from solicitation requirements under state law and may solicit via phone call or text message. A recent change in the law, which takes effect July 1st, means these calls and messages may be covered under the provisions of the Telephone Solicitation Act.

One of these changes focuses on paid telephone solicitation by charities. Organizations using volunteers to fundraise are currently exempt from the law. Beginning July 1st, organizations paying telephone solicitors will be covered by the Telephone Solicitation Act and be subject to penalties if they fail to comply. Failure to register and/or calling consumers on the No Call List could result in the Public Service Commission issuing fines of up to \$10,000 per violation.

The amendment is aimed at protecting consumers from scam callers soliciting Mississippians, through robocalling or other means, and claiming they represent a legitimate organization.

The PSC and Secretary of State's Office have notified charitable organizations across the state of the change and look forward to working with them if they have any questions about their registration status.



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“This change in the law will protect consumers,” said Public Service Commission Chairman Brandon Presley. “There are folks out there who call or text and say they are with a charity and solicit donations, but they aren’t and they’re lining their own pockets. This change is one way we can keep scam artists from stealing money from our citizens. It’s affecting everyone, but hitting our elderly on fixed incomes especially hard. That’s a shame and a disgrace. We must do everything we can to protect the public from those who wish to do them harm.”

“Mississippi is an incredibly gracious and charitable state,” Southern District Commissioner Sam Britton said. “However, there are bad actors out there posing as legitimate organizations that intend on taking advantage of people willing to give. We look forward to working with the Secretary of State’s Office to continue to combat this problem to further protect Mississippians from scam artists and to hold these criminals accountable.”

“Our number one priority in our Charities Division is to ensure donated funds are received by those who need them the most, not scammers,” Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann said. “This important partnership with the PSC is another stick we can use to carry out this important mission, and we are grateful to the PSC for taking the lead on it.”

The PSC and Secretary of State’s Office encourage anyone motivated to donate to a charitable organization to research the organization prior to giving to ensure that they are legitimate and avoid ever giving out private information, particularly a credit card number over the phone.

For more information about the PSC, visit www.psc.ms.gov. For more information about the Secretary of State’s Office’s Charities Division, including the agency’s most recent Report on Charitable Giving, visit www.sos.ms.gov/charities

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