



PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Officials Shut Down Charity Which Claimed To Help Veterans But Allegedly Misled Donors

Baltimore, MD (February 17, 2016) --Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Secretary of State John C. Wobensmith announced today that the Office of the Secretary of State has shut down a purported charity for veterans which allegedly falsified marketing materials and other documents and has not accounted for donations.

The Secretary of State issued a cease-and-desist order against the Southern Maryland Veterans Association, along with principal Dan Brashear, and alleged former associate Norman Randolph McDonald.

In response to multiple complaints, an investigation by the Secretary of State's Charities and Legal Services Division, aided by the Office of the Attorney General, showed that the organization was allegedly not assisting the housing needs of veterans as claimed in marketing materials. The charity was also not registered with the Secretary of State.

"I commend the investigators who took these complaints seriously and took steps to make sure that any potential fraud was stopped," said Attorney General Frosh. "This case shows again that we all must be vigilant, because there are unscrupulous people who care more about their own pockets than the welfare of the community."

"Manipulating the good intentions of Marylanders who think they are helping our veterans is unconscionable and unacceptable," said Secretary of State Wobensmith.

Solicitors for Southern Maryland Veterans Association had been a visible presence at retail and grocery stores in Calvert County and elsewhere in Southern Maryland. Fund-raisers for the charity would distribute documents that claimed to show that the organization was registered with the state, when in fact it was not.

The charity appeared to collect thousands of dollars in 2014 and 2015 in cash and donated goods, but exact totals of contributions and their use could not immediately be determined by investigators.

The cease-and-desist order alleges multiple violations of the Maryland Solicitations Act, including misleading potential donors to a charitable organization, using false and misleading advertising in connection with a solicitation and failing to register with the Secretary of State

before soliciting.

Attorney General Frosh thanked Assistant Attorney General Josaphine Yuzuik for her work on the case.

The Office of the Secretary of State registers and regulates charitable organizations that solicit charitable contributions in Maryland. The Office works to ensure that charitable contributions made by Marylanders go to qualified charitable organizations and are used for the intended purpose.

Anyone who may have been solicited by this organization is encouraged to contact Michael Schlein, Investigator, Charities and Legal Services Division at 410-260-3879. To check if a charity is registered or to report other suspected violations of charitable giving law, please call 410-260-3879 or 1-800-825-4510. More information on charities can be found on the Secretary of State's charity home page: <http://www.sos.state.md.us/Charity/SearchCharity.aspx>.