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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 17, 2021

DOJ helps distribute nearly \$500,000 in charity contributions after shutdown of deceptive charity telefunding operation

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today announced the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), along with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and 46 agencies from 37 states and the District of Columbia, shuttered a [massive telefunding operation](#).

Associated Community Services (ACS) and a number of related defendants who made deceptive fundraising calls agreed to settle allegations that they duped generous Americans into donating to charities that failed to provide the services they promised. In Wisconsin, nearly 43 million fraudulent calls were made between January of 2016 and August of 2019. Of those calls, there were 1.6 million unique numbers, meaning that many of the calls were made repeatedly to the same phone numbers.

“This operation that inundated people with deceptive calls has been shut down, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are going toward the important charitable causes that generous folks intended to support,” said Attorney General Kaul. “We must continue working to hold scammers who flood our phone lines accountable.”

Through the court action, the defendants paid almost \$500,000 to the states to be distributed to court-approved nonprofits for the charitable purposes donors originally intended to support. The court approved those funds be directed to the American Cancer Society, Semper Fi & America’s Fund, and the Tunnel to Towers Foundation. The funds recovered will now be used to assist Americans with cancer screenings and treatment, military service members and their families, and first responders and their families.

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Wisconsinites are encouraged to exercise caution when donating to a charity and to report suspected charity scams. Before making a contribution to a charity, consider the following tips:

- Contact the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance at Give.org or Charity Navigator to determine whether a charity has any complaints against them before donating;
- Research how the charity uses donations;
- Refrain from providing banking information to unsolicited callers or emails on behalf of a charity; and
- Search the charity's name online with the word "scam" or "complaint" and carefully review the results before making a donation.

Individuals who have information about a suspected charity scam are encouraged to report that information to the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions. You can report a violation online at:

<https://www.wdfi.org/CharitableOrganizations/forms/dfi-dccs-2255.pdf>

Other agencies joining in the case with Wisconsin DOJ and the FTC include the Attorneys General of Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wyoming; the secretaries of state of Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee; and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Utah Division of Consumer Protection.