# *Before You Write that Donation Check...*

**Local News**

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - It's the season for giving and sharing, but when most people give to charity, they probably don't ex

A new report released by the Washington Secretary of State and Attorney General cautions people to resist the pitche

"One-fourth of the paid fundraisers for charities in this state, commercial fundraisers, return less than 20 percent to th

Reed cautions not all professional fund-raisers gouge their clients, and some nonprofit groups raise their own money by phone. He says there is one way to avoid the issue altogether.

"If a person wants to help out police, firefighters, veterans - encourage them just to contact their local organization and send it to them. Because they're probably getting a call from many states away when they're being solicited on the telephone."

Reed adds their investigation even found a few call centers that charge the charities more than what they raise in donations...and yet, he says the courts have ruled the excessive fees are not illegal.

"They charged the charity 122 percent of the amount that they raised, y'know, which I just find appalling. Now, their justification is that they're arranging for people to pay so much a month and all that, and in the long run it's gonna work out - but still, I just find that outrageous."

Reed says their research shows fund-raisers target older adults. So, along with *AARP Washington*, the state is launching "Operation Check Before You Give," urging people to ask phone solicitors for more information, such as a street address or website. Then, before sending money, check it out on the Secretary of State's website or toll-free number, 1-800-332-4483 begin_of_the_skype_highlighting 1-800-332-4483 end_of_the_skype_highlighting.