

Beshear: New Scam Targets Kentuckians' Generosity to Veterans

Sham charity caller claims donations will pay veterans' medical bills, aid homeless

FRANKFORT, KY. (July 25, 2017) – A caller from a sham charity dubbed, “Coalition for Veterans of America” is preying upon Kentuckians' goodwill toward veterans and veteran causes, Attorney General Andy Beshear said today.

The Office of the Attorney General has received multiple reports from Kentuckians, including a report directly from the Kentucky State Police, saying a caller claiming to be with the “Coalition for Veterans of America” is seeking donations to help cover Veterans Affairs medical bills and aid homeless veterans.

Beshear's Office of Senior Protection verified the organization is a sham, and is working with the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs to increase awareness among veterans and their families throughout July, which is Military Consumer Protection month.

Beshear said upon learning of the scam, his office issued a scam alert because he wants Kentuckians who would like to support deserving veterans and their families to do so without being victimized.

“Our veterans and their families deserve respect and safeguards from scammers,” Beshear said. “To make sure our veterans and legitimate veteran organizations receive donations, I am asking Kentuckians to beware of this scam and take time to verify a charity before making a donation.”

Donors who are not familiar with a charitable organization can verify official organizations on CharityNavigator.org. The Attorney General's Consumer Protection website offers research tools, including a list of active charitable giving campaigns in Kentucky.

Beshear said donors should follow these additional tips to avoid a sham charity scam:

Do not feel pressured to give money or financial information over the phone.

Beware of sound-alike charities.

Be cautious of social media requests for donations. Although some may be legitimate, consumers need to verify before making donations.

Ask solicitors what percentage of your donation will be given to relief efforts. By law, the solicitor must tell you if you ask.

Avoid wire transfers or gift cards as a donation method.

Better protecting Kentucky families, especially seniors, from scams is one of the core missions of Beshear's office.

Kentuckians interested in staying ahead of scammers can sign up to receive Scam Alerts from Beshear's office by texting the words KYOAG Scam to GOV311 (468311), or visit ag.ky.gov/scams to sign up with your mobile phone number or email address.

To report scams to the Office of the Attorney General call 888-432-9257 or file a consumer complaint online.

Congressman Rogers Votes for Federal Funding to Revitalize Coal Communities

WASHINGTON, DC -- This week, the House Appropriations Committee is working to pass the final five remaining appropriations bills to fund federal government operations in fiscal year 2018. The Committee passed two of those bills today, including the Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill. U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers (KY-05) voted for the legislation, which provides \$31.4 billion for Interior and Environment related agencies, including \$75 million to continue the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Pilot Program to revitalize coal communities.

The funds are targeted to important investments in the nation's natural resources, including \$3.4 billion for the Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service to prevent and combat devastating wildfires. The legislation also contains several policy provisions to rein in harmful and unnecessary regulations at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other agencies.

“I'm very pleased that this bill will continue the successful AML Pilot Program that is actively turning old abandoned mine land into productive areas for job creation, tourism and other economic development projects in our struggling coal-producing states,” said Congressman Rogers, who first championed the AML Pilot Program in 2016. “This bill also cuts more waste in the EPA and focuses funding on providing clean water across the country.”

Bill Highlights: Wildland Firefighting and Prevention – In total, the bill funds wildland firefighting and prevention programs at \$3.4 billion – fully funding the 10-year average for wildland fire suppression costs for both the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service. This is \$334 million below the FY 2017 level. Most of this reduction is the result of the transfer of the Forest Service's hazardous fuels reduction program to its National Forest System, as requested by the Administration. The legislation also includes \$575 million for hazardous fuels management, which is \$5 million above the FY 2017 level.

Federal Payments to Local Communities – The bill provides \$465 million for the “Payments In Lieu of Taxes” (PILT) program. PILT provides funds for local governments in 49 states to help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable federal lands within their counties.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – The bill funds the EPA at \$7.5 billion, a reduction of \$528 million below the FY 2017 enacted level and \$1.9 billion above the Administration's request.

The legislation supports the President's proposal to reshape the agency's workforce by providing resources requested to offer buyouts and voluntary separation agreements to employees.

This bill also reflects the Administration's goal to rein in outdated, unnecessary and potentially harmful regulations at the EPA. For example, it includes language authorizing the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Secretary of the Army to withdraw the Waters of the United States rule.

EPA Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds – The bill includes a total of \$2 billion for these funds, including \$1.1 billion for the Drinking Water fund and \$863 million for the Clean Water fund.

EPA Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Funds – The bill includes \$30 million, equal to the FY 2017 enacted level and \$10 million more than the President's request.

Office of Surface Mining (OSM) – The OSM is funded at \$213 million in the bill – \$40 million below the FY 2017 level. This includes \$75 million to continue a pilot program to accelerate the reclamation of abandoned mine lands, which will help boost community redevelopment and economic growth. The legislation also continues state regulatory grants at \$68.6 million.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – The bill contains \$1.2 billion for the BLM, a decrease of \$46 million below the FY 2017 enacted level, including a \$20 million decrease for federal land acquisition.

National Park Service (NPS) – The legislation contains \$2.9 billion for the NPS, a decrease of \$64 million below the FY 2017 level. Much of the reduction is in land acquisition activities. Within the total, the bill retains \$55 million targeted to park operations and maintenance to help reduce the deferred maintenance backlog.

U.S. Forest Service – The bill includes \$5.2 billion for the Forest Service. Approximately half of this funding – \$2.5 billion – is targeted to wildland fire prevention and suppression. The bill also includes a provision prohibiting the Forest Service or BLM from issuing new closures of public lands to hunting and recreational shooting, except in the case of public safety.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) – The FWS is funded at \$1.5 billion in the bill, a \$38 million decrease below the FY 2017 enacted level. Core responsibilities and grant programs are level funded. The legislation prioritizes funding to reduce the endangered species delisting backlog and refuge maintenance backlog, to fight invasive species, to prevent illegal wildlife trafficking, and to prevent the closure of fish hatcheries.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) – The bill includes \$1 billion for the USGS, \$46 million below the FY 2017 enacted level. Funding is targeted to programs dealing with natural hazards, streamgages, the groundwater monitoring network, and mapping activities. The bill includes \$10.2 million for an earthquake early warning system to help save lives during natural disasters, and provides the \$8.3 million increase necessary for support of “Landsat 9” – a satellite program that provides land use measurements that are important to local communities for agriculture, forestry, energy and water resource decisions.

Smithsonian Institution – The Smithsonian Institution is funded at \$885 million in the bill, \$22 million above the FY 2017 enacted level. This level is sufficient to allow all current operations and programs to continue.

National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities – The bill includes \$145 million for each of the endowments, \$5 million below the FY 2017 level for each endowment.

Eisenhower Memorial Commission – The bill provides \$16.6 million for the Eisenhower Memorial Commission (\$1.6 million for salaries and expenses and \$15 million for construction). Bill language extends the authority to build on the current site.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – The bill provides \$275 million for LWCF programs – \$125 million below the current level but \$211 million above the President's request. State and local recreation and battlefield preservation programs are prioritized, while strategic investments in federal land acquisition are recommended.

Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) – The CSB is funded at \$11 million, equal to the FY 2017 level. The Administration proposed to terminate this program.

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