

Professional Fire Fighters of Greensboro

International Association of Fire Fighters Local 947

March 21, 2002

Office of the Secretary
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Room 159
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Professional Fire Fighters of Greensboro to express our objection to the Federal Trade Commission's proposal to amend the Telemarketing Sales Rule. The proposed application of a national "do not call" registry to our organization is unfair, unwise, and unworkable.

As fire fighters, we make it our business to serve our communities to the greatest extent possible. Our fire fighter organization is a non-profit entity that relies extensively upon small gifts from a large number of people to support numerous charitable activities. Through such contributions, we have been able to purchase a Children's Fire Safety House that has allowed us the opportunity to train children to be able to get out of fires alive. We have also donated an all-terrain rescue vehicle to our fire department for use in difficult rescues and are continuing to make payments on its purchase. It also makes it possible for us to have purchased and donated numerous smoke detectors to our department for installation in homes which otherwise may not have one and possibly save many lives. Our organization donated monies to victims of flooding in Eastern North Carolina to try and help them rebuild their lives. We give monies to other non-profit organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Association of Retarded Citizens, Urban Ministries, Clare House (Battered Women's Shelter), Summit House (home for female non-violent offenders that can serve their time and have their children with them), and United Services for Older Adults (purchased fans to be given for heat relief). We have purchased food for the needy at holiday seasons, given to the families of fallen fire fighters after 9-11, assist fire fighters throughout the Country when they have fallen on hard times due to medical problems in their families or disasters in their lives. We also support youth athletics in our community. As you can see, if you hamper our fund raising abilities we will not be able to do even a small portion of the things that we do to give back to our communities.

The proposed rule is unfair because it would create a "do not call" registry maintained by the federal government that would apply to fundraising calls made on behalf of our organization to support our charitable activities, but would not apply to politicians' fundraising calls or phone solicitations by banks, telephone companies, and insurance companies. Beyond being unfair, this simply does not make any sense.

The proposed rule is unwise because it would prohibit our organization from contacting individuals on the "do not call" list even if they had consistently donated to our organization in the past and would still like to do so in the future. At a time when government is relying upon non-profits and charities to do more, it should not undermine the ability of organizations such as our own to provide valuable services to the public.

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Finally, the proposed rule is unworkable because it violates our First Amendment right to contact members of the public. The Supreme Court has consistently held that any limitations on free speech must be narrowly drawn and use the least intrusive means. This rule satisfies neither of these requirements and further violates the Constitution because it favors calls from commercial interests, such as banks and insurance companies, over calls made on behalf of non-profits.

Please reconsider this amendment in light of these concerns, and reject the proposal to apply the “do not call” registry to calls made on behalf of non-profit organizations.

Sincerely,

Richard L. O'Brien
President