

Federal Workers Aid Suspect Charities

Vets groups slammed at '08 hearing still in U.S. giving drive

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Two charities blasted by Congress for letting down the military veterans they ostensibly serve are themselves receiving help from what might be considered an unlikely source - the federal government.

Highlighting a systematic disconnect between nonprofit watchdogs and the government's workplace giving drive, the groups - Help Hospitalized Veterans of Winchester, Calif., and the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes of Ossining, N.Y. - are among the charities benefiting from the generosity of federal employees through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

... Pentagon's list includes a rating

Henderson recommends that military donors check charities against the "America Supports You" list created by the Department of Defense. Although DOD does not investigate charities, it requires charities on the list to be rated by at least one watchdog group, and posts links to the ratings on its site. The system may deter groups that tend to receive low ratings from applying. Neither Help Hospitalized Veterans nor the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes is on the military's list.

... "Because CFC is associated with the government, they need to be extremely fair and cautious in whom they might choose to include or exclude from their lists," said Aaron Dorfman, executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, which supports greater accountability for nonprofit groups. "If a charity has not been proven to be violating the law, even if it might not pass the smell test, it's difficult for the CFC to kick them off the list without then being subject to lawsuits."

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