

General Advice Report – Direct Mail Solicitations

The BBB warns consumers and businesses to be aware of notices designed to look like they are from federal, state, or local county agencies. These “notices” may be regarding updating social security records, name change upon marriage, or official minutes per annual corporation requirement.

Often these notifications are not directly sent from the government or county agency they claim to represent. Instead they may be from third party solicitors who learn of personal information from public records. Keep in mind that many of these third party solicitors deceptively lure people into paying for services they can obtain for free or at a significantly reduced rate.

Typically, federal, state, and local county government agencies will not use third party processors to renew, update, or change basic information. Most government and county agencies often have direct websites or offer phone numbers where you can request appropriate information. In either case, protect yourself by verifying that the direct mail solicitation you have received is authentic.

Consumers and business should be aware that the do-it-yourself procedure to renew information (including forms) is typically free of charge or significantly less than what the third party solicitors charge.

The U.S. Postal Inspector also notes that according to Title 39, United States Code Section 3001, it is illegal to mail a solicitation in the form of an invoice, bill, or statement of account due unless it conspicuously bears a notice on its face that it is, in fact, merely a solicitation. This disclaimer must be in very large (at least 30-point) type and must be in boldface capital letters in a color that contrasts prominently with the background against which it appears.

The disclaimer must not be modified, qualified, or explained, such as with the phrase "Legal notice required by law." It must be the one prescribed in the statute, or alternatively, the following notice prescribed by the U.S. Postal Service: THIS IS NOT A BILL. THIS IS A SOLICITATION. YOU ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO PAY THE AMOUNT STATED ABOVE UNLESS YOU ACCEPT THIS OFFER

If you would like more information about social security benefits or have questions, you should call the U.S. Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or by visiting their website at <http://www.ssa.gov/>

For information on official minutes per annual corporation requirement

You can report the receipt of non-conforming solicitations to your Better Business Bureau.