

FORCED TO GIVE

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Soldiers are forced to give money to charitable, lobbyists, and other civilian organizations each year.

I. Background of Soldiers giving

- a. Why we give
- b. Why is it important to give?
- c. Current culture of giving

II. Who are we giving to

- a. AUSA- what they do and how much they take in annually
- b. AER
- c. CFC
- d. Unit/ Divisional Associations raffle tickets

III. The Pressure tactics and quotas

- a. Who it comes from-Quotas
- b. Why is there pressure to succeed/ reprisals for failure
- c. Pressure tactics
- d. What Army Regulations say

IV. Recommendation

- a. Actually enforce the AR 600-20, ethics regulations, and
- b. No more Unit representatives trying to collect for associations they campaign and collect for themselves.
- c. Disclose what these organizations do for the unit

Soldiers are forced to give money to charitable, lobbyists, and other civilian organizations each year. It is the Soldierly image that says that he is an active member of his community. The two entities support one another. He is an upstanding citizen in that community. He is the kind of person that will go out into the community and try to make a difference through volunteering or direct donations to make things better in his community. It is these beliefs and images that lead to the extortion of money from Soldiers during the giving season of charitable giving each year. It is that time when several charitable Organizations ask Army Units to support them financially with large donations in return for support of soldier programs. These groups are said to be big supporters of the military and their families. They supposedly are looking out for their best interest. They do just that and giving is a good thing I believe that giving and helping these organizations are a way to show support for the Community. However, not every soldier want to donate for each and every charity that comes by. So what happens is they are pressured by their chain of command to give to these organizations in order to meet a self-imposed quotas. Often Soldiers are left asking what is it these organizations really doing for me my unit or even the Army. Perhaps it that these organizations and units do a poor job or displaying their success year round therefore Soldiers cannot see the direct impact of their contributions in their Army community.

Who are these organizations? Primarily The Association of the United States Army, Army Emergency Relief, The Combine Federal Campaign, and Unit Divisional and regimental Associations conduct fundraising campaigns on Army post worldwide

even while units are deployed in order to raise money. This includes selling thousands of raffle tickets by select organizations for prizes that is never even disclosed to anyone who actually won the prize. These one year memberships range from as low as two dollars per soldier to as much as hundreds of dollars for the so called life time memberships. Units are assigned a goal of desired contributions; usually 100% of that goal must be met. This is where Soldiers that do not wish to give have problems. Because the local Chain of command is under pressure to make the quota set by the higher chain of command. Therefore, this put pressure on Soldiers and Leaders alike to give. Both Leaders and Soldiers alike are forced to give under by the use of Pressure tactics. These collection tactics are unfortunately placed in the hands of the Command Sergeant Major. These tactics start as a pep rally formation that tells the Soldiers how great the organization is and much that it does for soldiers their family and the community. Additionally the leader vow the unit will never fail in a simple "mission", even one to donate money. That quickly escalate to formations, and late duty days and being labeled as disloyal or non-team players because the Soldier did not want to donate to the Organization. Soldiers are further scrutinized if they want to complain about this to the IG. Often they do not involve the IG in fear of reprisals and the amount of money is minor compared to the major headaches that come with not giving. Often those Reprisals come in the form of Leaders failing to support individual Leaves and Pass request; Recommendations for specials skills schools; or a simple day off. Soldiers are often forced to go out and pedal these Hundreds of thousand raffle ticket that these Associations make knowing full well the odds of anyone let alone a soldier winning the proverbial Car is far fetched. I personally have never heard of a Soldier winning any of these raffles. So who actually

wins the raffle? I am just sure that there will be a raffle, and as a leader, NCOs will be required to support the commands effort to raise money for these organizations.

According to Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy, Chapter 4, paragraph 4-11(a), Commanders must ensure that memberships among personnel under their jurisdiction is truly voluntary. Commanders are prohibited from use of any type practices that involve or imply compulsion, coercion, influence, or reprisal in the conduct of membership campaigns. This prohibition includes repeated orientations, meetings, or similar counseling of persons who s has chosen not to give after given a chance to do so. Commanders also are precluding from using membership statistics in support of supervisory influence. Units are allowed to inform Soldiers of the membership drive and give no special favor to one or the other. Engaging in strong arm tactics are illegal and can be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice Article 92, Failure to Obey a Lawful Order or Regulation.

I do not like that fact that the Command Sergeant Major always is the one who head these campaigns for membership drives. That put the CSM at great risk and protect the commander when the accusations of illegal practices arise it is the CSM and 1SGs that are at risk of adverse actions. Leaders need to insure that they are not in violation of the joint ethics regulation DOD 5500.7-R that says leaders must avoid conflict between their commercial/ financial interest and their official duties. This include arm-twisting money out of soldiers for the promised return of support for ones unit by these private organizations.

Make no mistakes this type of behavior is an improper relationship and can lead to misperceptions and unfair practices on the leaders part.

The correct thing for Units to do is be an active partner with the surrounding community. There is nothing wrong with Soldier donating or helping civilian and military organizations raise funds, as long as it is of their own free will. The Command can assist organizations in the community with fund raising and memberships.

However, First, Unit leaders need to take steps to insure that the written orders in Army Regulation 600-20 (Army Command Policy) and DOD 5500.7-R (the Joint ethics regulation) are followed. Violators of this policy should have swift action taken against them.

Secondly. Remove the importance of these drives from the annual training calendars and events. They are not part of a units mission essential task list and do not deserve that level of important. They are nothing more than a distracter that usually causes Command Sergeant Majors to focus on membership drives, instead of more important issues such as Soldier quality of life, training, or manning. Additionally the command climate can quickly turn negative if Soldiers are repeatedly bombarded with pleas to give to every cause on the planet.

Third these organizations should be more responsible for contacting soldiers directly and giving soldier the opportunity to give or not give. This can be done via the Internet or direct mail. The chain of command is then removed from the equation as a middleman that acts as if they work directly for the civilian organization.

Fourth. Units as well as the organization need to do a better job of disclosing information of whom and how much a Unit receives in benefits and prizes. If this is done Soldiers in that unit can see the direct benefits of the organization and will join or donate

anyway of their own free will without all the pressure? It is my belief that Soldiers know when a organization does things for the greater good of the Unit or if they are just simply exploiting the Soldiers because there is no direct benefit for the Soldier of the Community.

In Summary, It is a good thing for Soldiers and units as a whole to partner with their surrounding community. To contribute to on another causes as well as lends mutual support. But forcing Soldiers to join associations, donate, sell raffle tickets, or force others to do any of these things is extortion and should result in punishment under the UCMJ.