

The Plot Thickens: Alaska Takes GoFundMe and Others to Court

03.11.26 | Linda J. Rosenthal, JD



In the last twenty-four hours, there's been an intriguing and important development in the explosive charitable-crowdfunding controversy that first made headlines six months ago in October 2025.

That story threw a spotlight on the world's largest crowdfunding platform – GoFundMe – and its audacious and largely under-the-radar move last year to swoop down and snatch the crowdfunding efforts of some 1.4 million 501(c)(3) organizations. See [Another Headache for America's Charities](#) (October 22, 2025, updated October 23, 2025) *FPLG Blog*.

GoFundMe offered a tepid mea culpa in [Nonprofit Pages: We listened and made changes](#) (October 23, 2025), but did little to ameliorate the facts on the ground. In any event, there were other crowdfunding entities with similar surreptitious efforts.

Anyone lurking at that time on social media (and particularly, on LinkedIn which has emerged as the “go to” site for thoughtful professional conversations) knew that this scandal was unlikely to quietly fade away. See, for example, the epic rant by Roger Craver in [Ethics Awareness Month: The Great Scrape of 2025](#) (October 22, 2025) *The Agitator by Donor Voice*: “As The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) celebrates [Ethics Awareness Month](#) —one of our sector's largest digital intermediaries, GoFundMe, stands accused of crossing lines that would make even the most jaded fundraiser blush.”

Letter from 22 Charity Regulators

Indeed, just recently, a coalition of state charity officials demanded immediate action and answers. See [GoFundMe Multistate Letter](#), [7 pp. PDF] (March 3, 2026); see also [Update on GoFundMe](#)



Controversy: State Charity Regulators Demand Answers and Action (March 6, 2026) *FPLG Blog*.

The purpose of the regulators' letter is "to express [their] grave concerns about GoFundMe's creation of donation web pages for more than 1.4 million charities without their prior knowledge or consent, prompting an outcry from charities nationwide whose identities were plagiarized. Although the States understand GoFundMe may have subsequently removed the unauthorized donation web pages and is now obtaining prior consent from impacted charities, we seek immediate verification of the steps GoFundMe has taken and demand more be done to protect the interests of charities and donors."

But Alaska's top charity officials did not sign onto that coalition's letter "in part because officials here believed the response was too weak," explained Alaska Beacon's James Brooks in *Alaska accuses crowdfunding websites of violating law, using charities' names without their consent* (March 11, 2026, 5:36 am).

"In a prepared statement," the state's attorney general, Spencer Cox, said, 'Alaska law is clear: if you're going to raise money in a charity's name, you must first get the charity's consent. These lawsuits are about protecting donors, protecting nonprofits, and preserving the public trust that makes charitable giving possible.'" See also *Alaska sues GoFundMe, PayPal, others over thousands of unauthorized charity pages* (March 10, 2025, updated March 11th) Lars Hanson, *Alaska News Source*; and *Breaking: Alaska Sues 6 Crowdsourcing Fundraising Platforms* (March 11, 2026) Paul Colery, *The NonProfit Times*.

The Six Alaska Lawsuits

The state filed complaints against each of "six crowdfunding and charity-related platforms, accusing them of creating online donation pages for nonprofits without the organizations' knowledge or consent and then soliciting contributions through those pages." Named defendants are: GoFundMe, PayPal Inc., Charity Navigator, JustGiving, Pledgeto, and Network for Good.

The individual complaints (including related exhibits and attachments) were filed in Alaska Superior Court in Anchorage on Tuesday, March 10th. See these [links](#). The lawsuits allege "violations of Alaska's Charitable Solicitations Act, which the state says requires fundraisers to obtain consent before raising money for a charity, as well as the Alaska Consumer Protection Act." Each lawsuit includes a request for "injunctive relief, civil penalties, and restitution" for wrongs committed against thousands of Alaska organizations.

"Attorney General Cox said the platforms 'used publicly available information to generate fundraising pages for more than 1 million nonprofits nationwide, including several thousand in Alaska, without first obtaining permission from the charities.'" "

"The state's Consumer Protection Unit said its investigation found other platforms engaged in similar conduct, including hosting pages that appeared to represent Alaska nonprofits even when the organizations had not agreed to allow the platforms to solicit donations on their behalf."

Alaska's position is that "nonprofits have a right to control fundraising in their name, including the strategies they use, the vendors and platforms they partner with, and how they manage donor



relationships.” Moreover, “unauthorized pages can collect fees, display outdated or inaccurate information, compete with a nonprofit’s own campaigns, or prevent the organization from knowing who donated and when.”

“GoFundMe’s unauthorized donation page and those like it on other platforms negatively impact the nonprofit sector,” said Laurie Wolf, president and CEO of the Foraker Group, which is the state association for Alaska nonprofits. “Philanthropy relies on the ability to honor donor intent and donor trust. This all requires nonprofit consent, transparency, and accountability, none of which is offered in these transactions.”

Conclusion

The broadening of the spotlight from not only GoFundMe to additional crowdfunding platforms was the subject of intense and spirited speculation and debate in those October 2025 LinkedIn discussion threads and in various mentioned articles and posts by experts in the field. See, for example, Roger Craver on his blog on October 22, 2025: “Before we cast GoFundMe as the sole villain, let’s widen the lens to the broader philanthropic middlemen — the fintech layer now siphoning a percentage from nearly every act of generosity.” He mentioned five platforms, none of which is included in the Alaska litigation, but may pop up down the line as other jurisdictions expand their sights.

Buckle up. It should get interesting.

– Linda J. Rosenthal, J.D., FPLG Information and Research Director