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October brings minor fee changes

For the first time in over 20 years, the Business Licensing Service program, now residing at the Department of Revenue, is raising fees slightly. The Legislature provided the Department of Revenue with the authority to increase the fees, which will be used to purchase a new system that will allow for improvements to the licensing and renewal process.



The fee to file an annual report for profit corporations and limited liability companies has increased from \$69 to \$71. Applications for business licenses are going from \$15 to \$19. These increases will apply to all applications and renewals due in October and forward. If you have questions regarding these fees, please see the notice at www.bls.wa.gov.

Message From the Director



This past quarter, we began a business analysis project to define our business rules, requirements, and to identify "gaps" in our current processes for use in the design of a new state-of-the-art filing system. This is the first step in the bigger project of replacing our current system by 2015. What this means to you, our customers, is that in the future, you will be able to log in and manage your clients' records more effectively and easily. You'll be able to upload documents, enter minimal data, and in most cases, immediately file your records! You'll be able to run reports on both active and closed clientele. No more backlogs, no more trips to Olympia. The future looks so bright, "we gotta wear shades"! ~ Pam

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the BUZZ**First quarter 2014
fiscal year statistics:**

July 1—September 30

New registrations:
13,196Total active
registrations:
366,323Annual reports filed:
78,968Received mail:
19,181Scanned
documents:
112,309Phone calls:
34,598Average time to
answer calls:
2 minutes, 11 secAutomated
password retrieval:
5,090**HAPPENINGS*****Ferguson & Wyman warn consumers about storefront solicitor scams!***

Secretary of State Kim Wyman is teaming up with Attorney General Bob Ferguson to warn consumers about a troubling practice by some individuals who solicit donations near retail stores on behalf of charities.

Our office's Charities Program and the Consumer Protection Division of the Attorney General's Office (AGO) are aware of potentially illegal actions taken by these solicitors. Increasingly, the solicitors are asking for charity donations outside of retail stores. The solicitors often set up a table at a store entrance or exit. They ask for small cash, check, debit or credit card donations. In most instances, the solicitors will offer small trinkets for a donation. They state that donations will go toward various charitable purposes, such as helping sick or disabled children, animals, battered women, or to support well-known charitable organizations.

On Sept. 19, Joseph Searles, who pocketed 98 percent of the proceeds from unlicensed raffles he ran purportedly to raise money for autism research, pleaded guilty to one count each of first-degree theft and operating a raffle without a license. Searles will spend 90 days on electronic home monitoring.

Secretary Wyman cautions that a registration with the Charities Program is not an endorsement of the solicitor, or his or her charity, nor is it an assurance that the solicitor is complying with the law.

"People can't assume that every charity registered with our program operates legally or in good faith. When we discover illegal activity, we quickly coordinate with the Attorney General's Office so they can try to put a stop to it," Wyman said.

Here are tips to people who might encounter storefront solicitors:

- Don't give in to pressure. Tell the solicitor you want to take time to make your decision.
- Ask for written material about the charity to take home and research to see if their donations help other charities as they claim.
- Ask the solicitor if he or she is registered with the Office of Secretary of State.
- Don't be fooled by a name. Some use similar sounding names that closely resemble respected, well-established charities.

Wyman and Ferguson recently sent a jointly signed letter to Washington retailers alerting them to the questionable solicitations.

HIGHLIGHTS

Wyman to award 2013 CFC NASS Medallions

Five companies to receive Corporations for Communities award

Five Washington companies are receiving this year's Corporations for Communities award. This award honors exceptional Washington businesses that make it a priority to help the community.

The state's most prestigious civics award is going to global timber giant Weyerhaeuser, based in Federal Way; IKEA, the furniture store whose Washington headquarters are in Renton; Town Auto Group, located in Wenatchee; McClain Insurance Services, an Everett company that received honorable mention last year; and Columbia Fresh Produce, Inc., a Walla Walla business with six employees.



"NASS Medallion"

It is the first time more than two companies have received the award since the Corporations for Communities program was launched in 2009 by the Office of Secretary of State's Corporations and Charities Division.

"When I sat down to review this year's nominees, it was clear to me there was no way I could present this award to only two companies," said Secretary of State Kim Wyman. "Many companies deserved to receive this honor, so we've decided to expand the number of award recipients this year to five. These companies have shown a strong sense of giving back to their communities and making a difference."

Secretary Wyman will present executives from the five companies with the National Association of Secretaries of State Medallion Award during a ceremony in her office on Oct. 22 from 1:30 to 3 p.m. The Medallion Award recognizes civic engagement, voter education efforts, government services and a commitment to giving back to the community.

Legislative update

In 2014, the state bar committees for Corporations and Limited Liability Companies will offer up a bill to allow conversions. What this means is that a corporation will have a way to convert to an LLC and vice versa. It will also allow a foreign to become a domestic or a domestic to become a foreign entity. Currently, it is a bill request at the Code Reviser's Office #-0509.1/13.



As you can see, it is still a work in progress, and it is possible that it will experience changes as it makes its way through the legislative process (see, "I'm Just A Bill" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyeJ55o3EIQ>). If you are interested in following this bill, more information will be available in the next issue of the DISH.

Tips & Tidbits

Returned documents:

Be sure to use the returns@sos.wa.gov email when you corrected documents for filing. This email can be used only for non-payment-related returns.

Copies:

You can order the most common documents online and receive regular copies via email. Expedited processing is also available to complete your request in two business days.

www.sos.wa.gov/corps/OrderDocs

Fax Reminder:

The Corporations and Charities Division stopped accepting faxes back in July 2012. Occasionally we still receive attempts to file via fax from service organizations. Please remind staff that fax is no longer an accepted delivery for filing documents.

Do you want to receive this electronically?

Contact Patrick Reed, at patrick.reed@sos.wa.gov

Expedite Your Apostille Order!

NEED YOUR APOSTILLE IN A HURRY?

As of **October 1, 2013**, you will be able to expedite your order for an additional \$50, similar to other expedited services. This will allow same-day processing if you bring the documents to our office. If you send the documents by mail for expedited service, they will be processed within two business days. Non-expedited requests are processed in the order received, typically within five to seven business days.



www.sos.wa.gov/corps/apostilles/

An "**apostille**" is an authentication issued to documents for use in countries that participate in the Hague Convention of 1961. A [list of countries that accept apostilles](#) is provided by the US State Department.

ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.SOS.WA.GOV/CORPS/

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