



Broadcast Contests, Lotteries, and Solicitation of Funds

Television and radio stations holding FCC licenses that broadcast or advertise information concerning a contest that they conduct must fully and accurately disclose the material terms of the contest and must conduct the contest substantially as announced or advertised. Contest descriptions may not be false, misleading or deceptive with respect to any material term. Material terms include those factors that define the operation of the contest and affect participation in the contest.

Lotteries

The FCC has defined a lottery as “any game, contest or promotion that combines the elements of prize, chance and consideration.” Federal law generally prohibits the broadcast of any advertisement or information concerning a lottery. Advertisements or information about the following activities, however, are permitted:

- lotteries conducted by a state acting under the authority of state law, where the advertisement or information is broadcast by a radio or television station licensed to a location in that state or in any other state that conducts such a lottery;
- certain fishing contests;
- gaming conducted by an Indian tribe pursuant to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act; or
- lotteries that are authorized or not otherwise prohibited by the state in which they are conducted and that are conducted by a not-for-profit or governmental organization, or are conducted as a promotional activity by a commercial organization and are clearly occasional and ancillary to the primary business of that organization.

Casino gambling is a form of lottery because it has the elements of prize, chance and consideration. The FCC has determined that it is permissible to broadcast truthful advertisements for lawful casino gambling, regardless of whether the state in which the broadcaster is licensed permits casino gambling.

Solicitations of Funds

Generally, broadcasts of requests for funds intended for lawful purposes (including requests for contributions to meet station operating expenses) are permitted by federal law if the contributions are used for the announced purposes. Federal criminal law, however, prohibits fraud by wire, radio or television, and violation of this law may lead the FCC to issue sanctions against holders of broadcast licenses.

If you believe that a station has violated the contest, lottery or funds solicitation rules, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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