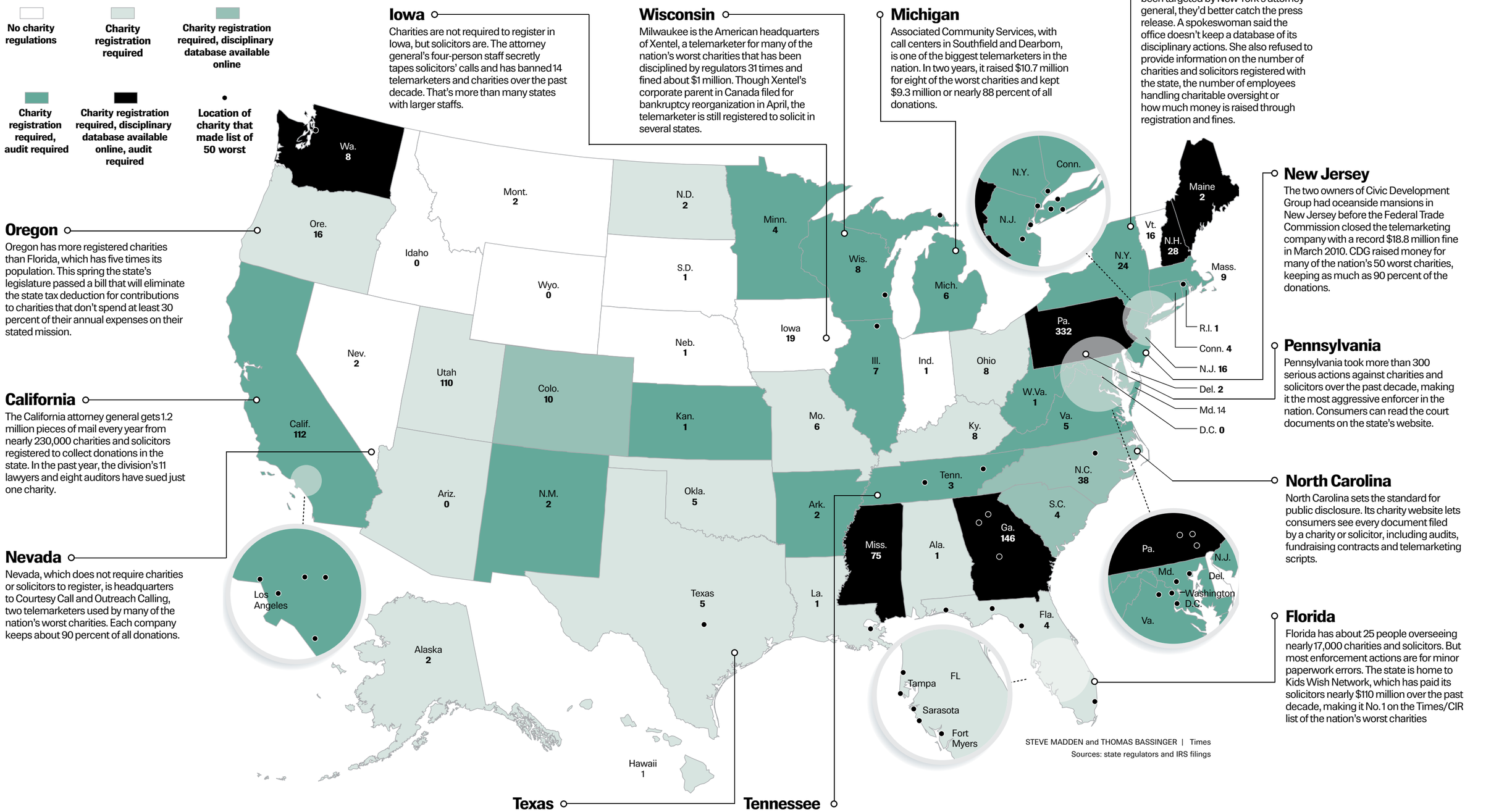
How states stack up

This map shows which states take any of three basic measures to protect donors from fraud.
The number with each state indicates serious regulatory actions taken against charities and their solicitors.



Iowa

Charities are not required to register in Iowa, but solicitors are. The attorney general's four-person staff secretly tapes solicitors' calls and has banned 14 telemarketers and charities over the past decade. That's more than many states with larger staffs.

Wisconsin

Milwaukee is the American headquarters of Xentel, a telemarketer for many of the nation's worst charities that has been disciplined by regulators 31 times and fined about $1 million. Though Xentel's corporate parent in Canada filed for bankruptcy reorganization in April, the telemarketer is still registered to solicit in several states.

Michigan

Associated Community Services, with call centers in Southfield and Dearborn, is one of the biggest telemarketers in the nation. In two years, it raised $10.7 million for eight of the worst charities and kept $9.3 million or nearly 88 percent of all donations.

New York

If consumers want to know who has been targeted by New York's attorney general, they'd better catch the press release. A spokeswoman said the office doesn't keep a database of its disciplinary actions. She also refused to provide information on the number of charities and solicitors registered with the state, the number of employees handling charitable oversight or how much money is raised through registration and fines.

Oregon

Oregon has more registered charities than Florida, which has five times its population. This spring the state's legislature passed a bill that will eliminate the state tax deduction for contributions to charities that don't spend at least 30 percent of their annual expenses on their stated mission.

California

The California attorney general gets 1.2 million pieces of mail every year from nearly 230,000 charities and solicitors registered to collect donations in the state. In the past year, the division's 11 lawyers and eight auditors have sued just one charity.

Nevada

Nevada, which does not require charities or solicitors to register, is headquarters to Courtesy Call and Outreach Calling, two telemarketers used by many of the nation's worst charities. Each company keeps about 90 percent of all donations.

New Jersey

The two owners of Civic Development Group had oceanside mansions in New Jersey before the Federal Trade Commission closed the telemarketing company with a record $18.8 million fine in March 2010. CDG raised money for many of the nation's 50 worst charities, keeping as much as 90 percent of the donations.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania took more than 300 serious actions against charities and solicitors over the past decade, making it the most aggressive enforcer in the nation. Consumers can read the court documents on the state's website.

North Carolina

North Carolina sets the standard for public disclosure. Its charity website lets consumers see every document filed by a charity or solicitor, including audits, fundraising contracts and telemarketing scripts.

Florida

Florida has about 25 people overseeing nearly 17,000 charities and solicitors. But most enforcement actions are for minor paperwork errors. The state is home to Kids Wish Network, which has paid its solicitors nearly $110 million over the past decade, making it No. 1 on the Times/CIR list of the nation's worst charities

Texas

Of the 11 states that do not require all charities to register, Texas is the biggest. The state requires a small number of charities to register, but only those raising money in the name of law enforcement officers and veterans.

Tennessee

Knoxville is home to James T. Reynolds Sr., whose family operates a network of five charities, all promising financial aid to cancer patients. But most of the millions raised go to the Reynolds family and their hired-gun solicitors. Less than 2 cents of every dollar donated gets to patients as financial aid.

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Sources: state regulators and IRS filings