



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Grows for Statewide Government Transparency with Over 1,200 Local Government and School Districts Partnering with OhioCheckbook.com
Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

VAN WERT— Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced today the launch of the City of Van Wert, Village of Wren and Village of Willshire's online checkbooks on OhioCheckbook.com. In December 2014, Treasurer Mandel launched OhioCheckbook.com, which sets a new national standard for government transparency and for the first time in Ohio history puts all state spending information on the internet. OhioCheckbook.com recently earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for the second year in a row.

The Ohio Treasurer's office was joined at today's announcement by Van Wert Mayor Jerry Mazur, Van Wert Auditor Martha Balyeat, Van Wert Council President Pete Weir, and Van Wert Councilman Ken Markward. Also joining in today's announcement were Village of Wren Mayor Monica Davis, Village of Wren Fiscal Officer Jessica Heckler and State Representative Craig Riedel.

Van Wert, Wren and Willshire are the second, third and fourth local governments in Van Wert County to post their spending on OhioCheckbook.com.

The following is a breakdown of today's local government sites:

- Van Wert's online checkbook includes over 31,000 individual transactions that represent more than \$47 million of total spending over the past three years.
- Wren's online checkbook includes over 2,300 individual transactions that represent more than \$890,000 of total spending over the past five years.
- Willshire's online checkbook includes over 5,700 individual transactions that represent more than \$1.4 million of total spending over the past three years.

"I believe the people of Van Wert County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with my office to post the finances on OhioCheckbook.com," said Treasurer Mandel. "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

"The City of Van Wert is excited to join the OhioCheckbook.com initiative with other leaders in Van Wert County," said Van Wert Auditor Martha Balyeat. "We believe using this software will help open lines of communication with our citizens."

"The Village of Wren is proud to join the other leaders in transparency across Van Wert County," said Wren Mayor Monica Davis. "We believe this tool is a powerful platform to help us be more financially responsible."

"OhioCheckbook.com allows government the ability to be transparent to its citizens," said State Representative Craig Riedel. "I am proud the City of Van Wert, Village of Wren, and the Village of Willshire have chosen to join the countless other local

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governments who have shown transparency and accountability to all of Ohio's taxpayers."

On April 7, 2015 Treasurer Mandel sent a letter to 18,062 local government and school officials representing 3,962 local governments throughout the state calling on them to place their checkbook level data on OhioCheckbook.com and extending an invitation to partner with his office at no cost to local governments. These local governments include cities, counties, townships, schools, library districts and other special districts.

A large coalition of statewide and local government organizations have expressed support for OhioCheckbook.com and local government transparency, including:

- Ohio Municipal League
- Ohio Township Association
- Ohio Association of School Business Officials
- Buckeye Association of School Administrators
- County Commissioner Association of Ohio
- County Auditor Association of Ohio
- Ohio Newspaper Association
- Ohio Society of CPAs
- Buckeye Institute
- Common Cause Ohio

OhioCheckbook.com was launched on December 2, 2014, marking the first time in Ohio history when citizens could actually see every expenditure in state government. Since its launch, OhioCheckbook.com has received overwhelming support from newspapers and groups across the state and, as of September 4, 2017 there have been more than 818,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$598 billion in spending over the past nine years, including more than 164 million transactions. The website includes cutting-edge features such as:

- "Google-style" contextual search capabilities, to allow users to sort by keyword, department, category or vendor;
- Fully dynamic interactive charts to drill down on state spending;
- Functionality to compare state spending year-over-year or among agencies; and,
- Capability to share charts or checks with social media networks, and direct contact for agency fiscal offices.

In March 2015, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) released their annual "Following the Money 2015" report and Treasurer Mandel earned Ohio the number one transparency ranking in the country for providing online access to government spending data. Ohio was prominently featured in the report after climbing from 46th to 1st in spending transparency as a result of Treasurer Mandel's release of OhioCheckbook.com. Due to the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio received a perfect score of 100 points this year — the highest score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

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In April 2016, U.S. PIRG announced that Treasurer Mandel earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for the second consecutive year in a row. Due to the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio again received the highest perfect score of 100 points this year – marking the second time in two years Ohio received the highest possible score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

The Treasurer's office is partnering with OpenGov, a leading Silicon Valley government technology company, to provide residents of Ohio the ability to view and search local government expenditures in a user-friendly, digital format. "Ohio is setting the standard for financial transparency on an unprecedented scale. We are excited to partner with the Treasurer's office to bring world-class technology to communities large and small across the state," said Zachary Bookman, CEO of OpenGov.

For more information or to view your local government website, visit the Local Government option on OhioCheckbook.com or click on:

- VanWert.OhioCheckbook.com;
- Wren.OhioCheckbook.com;
- WillshireVillageVanWert.OhioCheckbook.com.

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