



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Builds for Statewide Government Transparency as OhioCheckbook.com Surpasses 220,000 Searches in the First Five Months

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

CINCINNATI — Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel stood today with Hamilton County leaders and announced the first partnership between the Ohio Treasurer's office and a Southwest Ohio county government to place their spending online at OhioCheckbook.com. Last year, 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 ranking in the country for government transparency. Treasurer Mandel was joined at today's announcement by Hamilton County Auditor Dusty Rhodes and County Commissioners Greg Hartmann, Chris Monzel and Todd Portune as well as State Representative Jonathan Dever (District 28). Hamilton County is the first Southwest Ohio county and largest local government in Southwest Ohio to announce a partnership with the Treasurer's office to place their spending on OhioCheckbook.com.

On April 7th, 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.

"I believe the people of Hamilton County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with the Treasurer's office to post their finances on OhioCheckbook.com," said Treasurer Mandel. "My vision is to create an army of citizen watchdogs who are empowered to hold public officials accountable."

"Displaying government expenditures online is one of the best ways to keep government accountable to taxpayers and helps prevent unwise expenditures from happening in the first place," said County Auditor Dusty Rhodes. "Using modern technology to give taxpayers information is a big step forward toward the goal of giving citizens better control over how their money is being spent."

"The introduction of OhioCheckbook.com here in Hamilton County represents a significant enhancement in our local government's efforts to make its budget operations as transparent as possible to Hamilton County residents," said Commission Vice President Chris Monzel. "County government works hard to open our books to the public. OhioCheckbook.com is another tool, a very hands-on, easy to use tool, that residents can click on to know if their tax dollars are being spent efficiently."

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

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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 May 27, 2015, there have been more than 220,000 total searches on the site. OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$408 billion in spending over the past seven years, including more than 112 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, 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.

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 visit OhioCheckbook.com.

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