



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Loren Genson
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Brunswick will be the first school district in Medina County to put its checkbook online through state Treasurer Josh Mandel's OhioCheckbook.com.

Mandel visited Brunswick on Thursday to join school officials in making the announcement at the district's administration building. Brunswick is one of only eight districts statewide that has committed to using the software.

"The leadership here is something we should be proud of," Mandel said. "I'm going to be talking about this as I travel the state." District Treasurer Patrick East said it was an easy decision to make because the district already had committed to making budget documents more accessible to the public.

"We believe in transparency," he said. "We have information on our website, and now it will be on the treasurer's website." Brunswick school board President Richard Nowak agreed with East.

"How could transparency be a bad thing," he said.

The spending information for Brunswick likely will not be accessible on OhioCheckbook.com until the fall.

"We're driven by accuracy, not speed," Mandel said.

The district will have the opportunity to review the data after it's uploaded by the state to ensure the information was copied correctly.

Mandel hopes Brunswick's decision will spur other schools, cities and counties to add their spending information to his online database.

Lorain County government and the city of Stow in Summit County have announced their intention to participate.

"They can decide whether they want to lead, or wait until they're asked by the community to make the information available," he said.

So far, Mandel said he's received support from government officials throughout the state on both sides of the political aisle.

"This issue is refreshingly different from partisan politics," Mandel said.

Since implementing OhioCheckbook.com, the state of Ohio transparency rating, compiled by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, jumped from 46th in 2014 to first in 2015. The U.S. PIRG is a consumer group founded by Ralph Nader, a five-time presidential candidate and consumer advocate.

In the 2015 Following the Money annual report, the group wrote that Ohio "unveiled an entirely new transparency website incorporating all of the features typically found on leading sites, as well as cutting-edge functionality."

At Thursday's announcement, Mandel also thanked state Sen. Larry Obhof, R-Montville Township, for his support in funding the transparency project in the Ohio budget bill that was signed into law this week.

"The money provided will help provide the funding for uploading these budgets and getting the information online," Mandel said.

"Sen. Obhof is one of the main reasons we got this done."

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