



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Builds for Statewide Government Transparency as OhioCheckbook.com Surpasses 269,000 Searches in the First Seven Months

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

TOLEDO – Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel stood today with Metroparks of the Toledo Area officials and announced a partnership with the Ohio Treasurer's office 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 announced the partnership at a meeting of the Toledo Rotary Club today and presented an interactive demonstration of OhioCheckbook.com to attendees. Treasurer Mandel was joined at today's announcement by Deputy Director of Administration for Toledo Metroparks Matt Cleland, Director of Visitor Services Denise Johnson and Director of Public Relations Scott Carpenter. Metroparks of the Toledo Area is the first park system and special district in Ohio to partner with OhioCheckbook.com. Toledo Metroparks is also the second entity in Lucas County to announce a partnership with the Treasurer's office to place their spending online.

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 Toledo 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."

"Metroparks has facilitated the needs of the public for expenditure information through the public records request process, OhioCheckbook.com will bring greater access and a user friendly format that will help to facilitate a high level of transparency," said Matt Cleland, Deputy Director of Administration. "The Metroparks of the Toledo Area are excited to be the first special district in the state to partner with Treasurer Mandel on OhioCheckbook.com. We believe this will be a great tool to help park goers understand how their tax dollars are being spent."

"We are excited that taxpayers will now be able to access and search the Metroparks of the Toledo Area finances online at their fingertips at any time of the day," said Denise Johnson, Director of Visitor Services.

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

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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 July 24, 2015, there have been more than 269,000 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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