



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Shelley Terry | Ashtabula Star Beacon

ASHTABULA — Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel is leading the charge to put the state's checkbook online.

Mandel will need support from taxpayers to see this happen, he said during a stop at the Star Beacon Monday afternoon.

"People of Ohio have the right to know where tax dollars are spent," he said. "Sunlight is a disinfectant to waste."

In May, Mandel made the news with a proposal that would empower him to create an online database that shows how the state spends every penny, allowing the public to hold public officials accountable.

The bill (House Bill 175), called "Open Ohio," was introduced by Mandel's fellow Republican, Rep. Mike Dovilla of Berea, and backed by a handful of legislators from both parties, including Rep. John Patterson, D-Jefferson.

Ohioans could track every cent the state government spends, from travel expenses to office supplies, using an easily searchable format. Ultimately, Mandel would like to expand the checkbook to allow people to search the spending of their school boards, city council and township trustees. Ohioans could see which vendors get the most money and how spending compares from one group to another, encouraging thrifty and honest government.

Mandel's office already maintains searchable salary databases online for public-school teachers and state employees.

House Bill 175 made it through the Ohio House's state and local government committee before summer recess. Come fall, it's in the Senate's hands and Mandel said he plans to push the legislation.

He encourages Ohioans to write and/or email their Senators and ask them to support it.

"I think the people have a right to know how their hard-earned money is being spent," Mandel said.

The proposal has garnered the support of the Columbus-based Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions, the Ohio Public Interest Research Group and the Ohio Newspaper Association.

The bill is getting some opposition because if a public checkbook becomes law, all future state treasurers would have to maintain it.

The cost of creating the online checkbook is unknown, but the legislation doesn't give Mandel any more money to build it. He plans to

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absorb the costs into his budget, he said.
For more information, call 1-800-228-1102 or email Mandel at
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