



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Mary Ann Greier  
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SALEM - Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced partnerships with four more Columbiana County entities for inclusion on OhioCheckbook.com, along with demonstrating the ease of access to Salem's checkbook since going live.

"It's all about power to the people," he said.

Mandel appeared Wednesday morning at Salem City Hall in council chambers to recognize Salem again as the first city in Columbiana County to join and to introduce representatives from the city of East Liverpool and Beaver Local Schools as new partners, along with Unity Township and the Salem Public Library. The city of Columbiana is also a partner.

Other area communities besides Salem which have already gone live include the village of Salineville, Goshen Township, Beaver Township, South Range Schools, the city of Sebring, city of Alliance, New Middletown and Mahoning County.

"I believe strongly that taxpayers have a right to see how tax dollars are being spent," Mandel said.

Mandel was joined by Salem City Auditor Betty Brothers, East Liverpool Mayor-elect Ryan Stovall, Beaver Local Schools Superintendent Lou Ramunno and Beaver Local School District Treasurer Stacy Williams, along with several Salem officials.

The quest by Mandel and his staff to bring more transparency to government in Ohio came into being after staff members told him Ohio ranked 47th in the nation for government spending transparency. The treasurer's office partnered with the technology firm OpenGov to provide residents with the means to view government spending easily and digitally.

One year ago the state of Ohio's checkbook information went live, giving taxpayers the ability to see what's being spent and how it's being spent at the state level. As Mandel explained, taxpayers have always had access to the information, but now they can access it from anywhere whenever they want. Technology over the years has given everyone more options, from banking online instead of physically going to a bank to buying airline tickets online instead of going to a travel agent or even buying stock online instead of going to a broker.

On April 7, Mandel sent a letter to 18,062 local government and school officials representing 3,962 local governments throughout the state inviting them to make their data available on OhioCheckbook.com. Salem and Salineville stepped up first and were part of the first wave of communities to go live.

"I felt it was really important," Brothers said.

The city relies on a 1 percent income tax for the general fund and this way everybody can see what's done with that money, she

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said.

"The city of Salem has been a good steward of the taxpayers' money," she said.

Stovall said the city of East Liverpool's file has already been sent and now the state treasurer's office is preparing their portion of the website, with East Liverpool's checkbook expected to go live sometime in the first quarter of next year.

"One of my campaign promises was to have more transparency at city hall. This is a way to do that. The people expect to see what's going on with their money," he said.

"It's all about proof to the public," Williams said.

She's currently working on gathering the information to submit to the state. She pointed out that the website can be used as a tool for comparison with other districts and other entities. Beaver Local is the first school in Columbiana County to join.

As a result of OhioCheckbook.com, the state is now ranked first in government spending transparency and Mandel has been spending a lot of time traveling the state announcing new partnerships and promoting use of the website. He also traveled to Youngstown and Cleveland on Tuesday, with plans to hit Cincinnati and Dayton next week.

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