



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

COLUMBUS – Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel and officials from the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS), the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio (STRS Ohio), the School Employees Retirement System (SERS) of Ohio and the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System (HPRS) announced today 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.

With today's historic announcement, all five of Ohio's statewide public pension funds have formally agreed to post their checkbook level expenditures online at OhioCheckbook.com. This announcement also represents Ohio becoming the first state in the country to have all statewide pension fund checkbooks online. On October 1, 2015, the Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund became the first statewide pension fund in Ohio to partner with OhioCheckbook.com.

The State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio and the School Employees Retirement System of Ohio have agreed to submit their checkbook level expenditure data to the Treasurer's office by January 15, 2016 and to publish their online checkbook websites at OhioCheckbook.com by February 16, 2016.

"A pension system that is responsible for the stewardship of member and employer contributions must always operate in full view of the public," said OPERS Executive Director Karen Carraher. "We already present extensive financial information on the OPERS website, and in working with the treasurer in this manner we continue our 80-year legacy of transparency."

"STRS Ohio serves nearly 500,000 active, inactive and retired public school educators. We believe strongly in transparency and have reported monthly administrative expenditures of our system for many years," stated STRS Ohio Executive Director Michael Nehf. "We are now pleased to partner with the treasurer's office on this transparency initiative to include STRS Ohio's administrative expenses on the Ohio Checkbook."

"While SERS has always been transparent with its expenditures and posted them for more than a decade, participating in the Ohio Checkbook is a logical extension of that commitment," said Lisa J. Morris, Executive Director of the School Employees Retirement System of Ohio. "The added functionality of the Ohio Checkbook can only enhance the usefulness of the information we provide."

"HPRS has always been a strong advocate of openness and transparency which is supported by the 'A' rating in transparency HPRS and the other state pension systems recently received from the Center for Public Integrity," added Mark Atkeson, Executive Director of the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System. "In addition to information published on our website, partnering with the Treasurer of State and participating in the Ohio Checkbook complements our commitment to providing access

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to public information.”

“I believe the taxpayers and retirees of Ohio have a right to know how their tax money is being spent and I applaud Ohio’s public pension funds for partnering with my 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.”

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.

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
- 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 December 17th, there have been more than 411,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$490 billion in spending over the past eight years, including more than 134 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

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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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