



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Mandel launches ohiocheckbook.com  
Sidney Daily News  
By Sheryl Roadcap  
April 21, 2016

JACKSON CENTER &ndash; Local government spending is becoming more transparent thanks to Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel.

Representatives from Mandel's office were present Thursday morning to congratulate local officials on the change while announcing the launch of the live website, Ohiocheckbook.com.

Jackson Center, Russia, Anna and Fort Loramie are the first Shelby County villages to go live online. Botkins will be online soon. And Fairlawn Local Schools is the first school system in the region to put its information online. Ohiocheckbook.com is a free website intended to be a user-friendly tool for both citizens and government officials to navigate. Users can find information about each expenditure, from "high-level" department spending down to office supply costs. One of the key features of the site is that all of the expenditures are listed beneath graphs, which illustrate costs.

"I believe the people of Shelby County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with my office to post the finances on OhioCheckbook.com," said Mandel in a press release.

Mandel's deputy chief of staff, Eric Ochmanek, echoed Mandel's praise saying, "All (these) local governments should be applauded for being the first in your counties for posting your information online for anybody to see 24 hours a day, seven days a week." He continued saying that since the website originally "launched in December 2014, for the first time in Ohio's history," citizens have "unprecedented access to how your money is being spent."

Local officials expressed appreciation for the transparency that the new website permits.

"We are excited to join the other villages of Shelby County to become pioneers in transparency. We believe this site will benefit our constituents and our leadership and will allow more enhanced understanding of the spending for Jackson Center," said Jackson Center Fiscal Officer Bev Wren.

Anna Village Administrator Nancy Benroth said, "The village of Anna believes transparency is extremely important and this site will allow us to show our taxpayers how we spend their money. We are also very excited to join the other villages in Shelby County as being the first entities to open our checkbooks to the public. Constituents can review the site to become more informed and answer any questions they may have."

"We are pleased to be able to increase our transparency and allow our taxpayers the opportunity to understand how their hard-earned money is spent," said Fort Loramie Village Administrator Tony Schmitmeyer.

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Although Botkins hasn't gone "live" yet, Botkins Village Administrator Ryan Piche also was pleased with the opportunity.

"The village of Botkins is proud to join many other villages in Shelby County as leaders in transparency. We believe this tool will help both our leadership and our residents to better understand the village's expenditures," he said in the release.

"I appreciate Treasurer Mandel's leadership to make government more transparent, and I applaud the local leaders of Jackson Center, Russia, Anna, Fort Loramie, Botkins and Fairlawn Schools for partnering with the treasurer on this effort to keep their governments accountable to the taxpayers," wrote Ohio Senate President Keith Faber.

Of the 3,962 Ohio local governments invited, including all villages, counties and cities, there are 298 "live" right now, with 658 other governments committed to join. Ochmanek said that prior to the website launch, Ohio had ranked 46 out of 50 states, but now it is No. 1 in the country.

The search bar located at the top of the website allows users to find any entity with expenditures connected to the state, and this is what brought Ohio to the No. 1 spot in transparency. The treasurer's office is proud they have had 515,000 hits to date on the website in the last 16-months, since inception.

"It is up to each (local government) to decide how they want to update their information. We are not going to push that on anyone," said Andrew Coutts, public affairs liaison in the treasurer's office.

Local governments, schools, port authorities, parks, library districts and other special districts can utilize the site. In the near future, organizations will be able to update monthly, quarterly or annually with one click. Ochmanek said he and Coutts hope to be back in the area soon as they are also working with the city of Sidney to partner up.

For more information or to view these local governments' websites, visit the Local Government option on Ohiocheckbook.com.

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