



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Grows for Statewide Government Transparency with Over 965 Local Government and School Districts Partnering with OhioCheckbook.com

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

LANCASTER &ndash; Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced today the launch of the City of Lancaster, the Village of Stoutsville and the Village of Sugar Grove's online checkbooks on OhioCheckbook.com. In December 2014, 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 government transparency ranking in the country for the second year in a row.

The Ohio Treasurer's office was joined at today's announcement by Lancaster City Auditor Tricia Nettles and Treasurer Bob Wolfinger. Lancaster is the first city in Fairfield County to post their spending on OhioCheckbook.com, and Stoutsville and Sugar Grove are the fourth and fifth villages in Fairfield County to post their spending on OhioCheckbook.com

The following is a breakdown for today's local government sites:

Lancaster's online checkbook includes over 130,000 individual transactions that represent more than \$748 million of total spending over the past six years.

Stoutsville's online checkbook includes over 900 individual transactions that represent more than \$192,000 of total spending over the past three years.

Sugar Grove's online checkbook includes over 4,300 individual transactions that represent more than \$1.3 million of total spending over the past three years.

"I believe the people of Fairfield 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 Treasurer Mandel. "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

"The City of Lancaster has always been transparent with taxpayer dollars, but we are excited to use OhioCheckbook.com to make it even easier for our residents to access public information," said Auditor Tricia Nettles.

"We are excited to be a part of the OhioCheckbook.com initiative," said Stoutsville Fiscal Officer Barbara Goodman. "The administration of the Village of Stoutsville is proud to show to our community that their tax money is being spent wisely."

"Our Village can utilize OhioCheckbook.com to enhance budgetary oversight and relay information swiftly to all stakeholders&mdash;Council Members, Village staff, and the community at-large," said Interim Clerk/Fiscal Officer for the Village of Sugar Grove Jeremy VanMeter. "The site gives a detailed account and a graphical representation of monies spent so that is easy to understand and also easy for us to update on an annual basis. The best part is that this service is being offered by the

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State Treasurer's office at zero cost to our local taxpayers."

"I applaud Lancaster, Sugar Grove, and Stoutsville on their commitment to transparency and for holding themselves to a higher standard," said State Senator Troy Balderson. "Increasing transparency ensures accountability in how tax dollars and resources are used."

On April 7, 2015 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 5, 2016 there have been more than 675,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$564 billion in spending over the past eight years, including more than 153 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 2015, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) released their annual "Following the Money 2015" report

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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 &ndash; the highest score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

In April 2016, U.S. PIRG announced that Treasurer Mandel earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for the second consecutive year in a row. Due to the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio again received the highest perfect score of 100 points this year &ndash; marking the second time in two years Ohio received the highest possible 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 or to view your local government website, visit the Local Government option on OhioCheckbook.com or click on:

Lancaster.OhioCheckbook.com;  
Stoutsville.OhioCheckbook.com;  
SugarGrove.OhioCheckbook.com.

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