



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Rick Armon | Akron Beacon Journal

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel wants to create “an army of citizen auditors” to monitor government spending statewide and help ferret out potential abuse.

Building on his earlier “Open Ohio” proposal for an online searchable database where taxpayers can track all state spending, Mandel announced Wednesday that cities, schools, libraries and other local entities should participate, too.

“The more transparency the better,” the treasurer said. “Waste, fraud and abuse doesn’t only happen in state government. It happens in local government, as well.”

Mandel made the comments before about 200 local fiscal officers gathered at the University of Akron for a Center for Public Investment Management conference.

His office would design and maintain the free database — called an “online checkbook.” It wouldn’t cost local governments any money, he said. His staff didn’t know the potential cost of creating and maintaining the database.

The treasurer’s office already maintains searchable databases for state salaries, pay for public school teachers and state properties.

State Rep. Mike Dovilla, R-Berea, introduced legislation in May to require the state to launch the database. Mandel said he will urge the legislature to include local governments when the House begins debating the proposal this fall.

“Citizens have a right to know how their tax money is being spent,” he said. “My vision is to create an army of citizen auditors throughout Summit County and throughout the state where taxpayers can go on the Internet ... and actually view every expenditure of the state. From 27 cents to \$27 million and everything in between.”

Mandel noted that there are plenty of examples of questionable spending, ranging from a county sheriff buying amusement park passes to Cuyahoga County spending \$4.2 million to furnish its juvenile justice center.

A public database should discourage that activity, the treasurer said.

The conservative Buckeye Institute for Public Policy Solutions and liberal Ohio Public Interest Research Group already have endorsed the idea.

Some local financial officers at Wednesday’s conference supported the concept.

“If it’s transparent, it gives everybody a chance to see what we’re doing,” said Robert Tullis, treasurer for the city of Salem in Columbiana County. “Why not do that? It’s a great idea.”



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Dave Osborne, treasurer for Manchester Local Schools in Summit County, said he'd like to see the financial transparency extended even further to include charter schools and JobsOhio.

There hasn't been public opposition to the proposal.

"But in the bowels of bureaucracy, there are definitely people trying to throw marbles under my feet and trying to slow or stop this project from happening," Mandel said.

Even if the legislature doesn't mandate participation, Mandel said he'd like to push forward anyway and also encourage voluntary participation from local governments.

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For more details about the treasurer's transparency efforts, go to www.tos.ohio.gov/Transparency.