



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Builds for Statewide Government Transparency as OhioCheckbook.com Has Received Over 195,000 Searches in the First Five Months

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

ELYRIA – Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel stood today with Lorain County leaders and announced the first partnership between the Ohio Treasurer's office and a Northeast Ohio county government 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. Treasurer Mandel was joined at today's announcement by Lorain County Commissioners Lori Kokoski, Matt Lundy and Ted Kalo. Treasurer Mandel was also joined today by State Senator Gayle Manning (District 13) and State Representative Nathan Manning (District 55). Lorain County is the first Northeast Ohio county and second in the state to announce a partnership with the Treasurer's office to place their spending information on OhioCheckbook.com.

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.

"I believe the people of Lorain County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with the Treasurer's 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."

"I have always enjoyed educating the public about our county budget," said Commissioner Ted Kalo. "Through OhioCheckbook.com we can provide taxpayers with greater transparency so they can see how we manage the budget."

"The Treasurer's OhioCheckbook initiative provides a great opportunity for us to improve transparency in county government. By simply going online, county taxpayers will be able to see how their tax dollars are being spent," stressed Commissioner Lori Kokoski.

"Having served with Treasurer Mandel in Columbus, I am pleased to have our county partner with his office to promote government transparency. Transparency is critical to government accountability," stated Commissioner Matt Lundy.

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

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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 May 4, 2015, there have been more than 195,000 total searches on the site. OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$408 billion in spending over the past seven years, including more than 112 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.

Last month, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) released their annual “Following the Money 2015” report 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 – 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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