



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Dan Horn

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Hamilton County taxpayers will soon be able to go online to see what county officials are buying with their money, from office supplies to road repairs.

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel said Thursday the county will become the sixth in the state to join his OhioCheckbook.com website, which allows anyone to search a database of state spending.

The site, launched last year, covers state contracts, travel expenses, salaries and any other public record related to government spending. State spending is the focus of the site now, but Mandel said his goal is to expand it to every county and city in Ohio.

Hamilton County's data is expected to be available by August.

"This initiative is all about empowering taxpayers," Mandel said. "Taxpayers have a right to know how their tax dollars are spent."

Mandel, a Republican, was joined by county officials from both political parties Thursday when he announced the expansion to Hamilton County. Auditor Dusty Rhodes, a Democrat, and Republican Commissioner Chris Monzel both endorsed the move.

Rhodes, who has made property tax data available on his office's website for years, said public officials might be more careful about spending if they know everything they do will be posted on OhioCheckbook.com.

"That will give people a reason to think before they spend," he said.

Mandel said records on the site will not include confidential personal information, such as Social Security numbers and account numbers, but taxpayers will be able to tell who is spending money and what they're buying. The site currently includes an overview of state spending, a list of the biggest government contractors and a searchable database of specific expenditures.

The site cost more than \$800,000 to create last year, Mandel said, but the money came from about \$6 million in budget cuts at the treasurer's office.

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