



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Toledo Blade Editorial

An online database that would allow Ohio residents to track state spending with the click of a mouse would be an effective and efficient way to promote government transparency.

The House has passed a bill that would create such a database. The Senate should quickly concur and send the measure to Gov. John Kasich when lawmakers return from their recess.

The "Open Ohio" program is proposed by State Treasurer Josh Mandel, who is seeking re-election in November. He calls the online checkbook critical to stopping government misspending. In any event, he says, Ohio taxpayers have a right to see how state government is spending their money.

"By having this information available for public consumption, officials will think twice before wasting taxpayer dollars," Mr. Mandel told The Blade's editorial board. "This will make government more efficient."

The online checkbook would show spending from the previous five years, while tracking current expenditures. A user could search companies that do business with state agencies, and see the date, amount, and purpose of the money they receive. Such context is necessary to allow comparisons of how various administrations spend money, Mr. Mandel argues.

The database would show how much the state spends on everything from office supplies to travel. If the public checkbook becomes law, all future state treasurers would have to maintain it.

Ohio officials are studying similar government-spending databases in Texas, Nebraska, and Idaho to adopt their best practices. Mr. Mandel says Ohio could become a national model of government transparency.

His goal — lofty but noble — is to get the state's checkbook online, and then work with city councils, school boards, and county boards of commissioners across the state to put local spending online as well.

"My vision is to create an army of citizen auditors across Ohio," Mr. Mandel said. "This will help to smoke out waste, fraud, and abuse in government."

The estimated cost to get the online checkbook up and running is \$500,000. Since the state's current two-year general-fund budget approaches \$62 billion, that would be money well spent.