



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Megan Alley
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On Nov. 12, Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced a partnership with his office and the village of Bethel to place the village's spending online at OhioCheckbook.com.

The "online checkbook," which was launched last year, is a user-friendly database that allows the public to see how tax money is being spent. Information is searchable by category, vendor and agency.

Users can view charts, graphs and individual checks, compare expenses between multiple municipalities and export data.

In April, Mandel sent a letter to 18,062 local government and school officials, representing 3,962 local governments throughout the state, asking them to place their checkbook data on OhioCheckbook.com.

"I praise Bethel for being a leader in the transparency movement," Mandel said. "My goal is to get every municipality signed on. There will be leaders and followers along the way, and I'm proud that Bethel has chosen to be a leader."

He added, "The leaders in Bethel have been great to work with thus far, and Bethel serves as a model of what this project is supposed to look like. We look forward to continuing to work with the village of Bethel to offer transparency to the people"

Bethel Mayor Alan Ausman said that OhioCheckbook.com is another way to show the residents of Bethel that local government is transparent.

"We heard, especially during this election time, that we are not transparent enough, and there are a lot of rumors about where the money is going" Ausman said. "This is another tool to address that concern and to show the residents that we are transparent."

He added, "The residents can get online and see where their tax dollars are going. It's a handy tool for the residents and the interworking of the village. I think it's a great idea."

The village of Bethel is the fourth local government in Clermont County to partner with the Treasurer's office to post their spending online at OhioCheckbook.com.

Pierce Township, Batavia Township and the village of New Richmond have also signed on to the program.

Ausman said he considers Bethel to be honest, rather than a leader.

"I'd be concerned about any municipality that wouldn't want to do it," Ausman said. "Everything we do is public record, and there's



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nothing to hide.”

He added, “If a municipality has second thoughts about signing up, I’d be a little leery.”

“Before I launched OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio ranked 46th in the country for government transparency,” Mandel said. “As a result of OhioCheckbook.com, we are now ranked number one.”

Mandel said the initiative is all about power to the people and empowering everyday citizens to have the information to hold public officials accountable.

Mandel said his office’s approach to local governments and school districts has been one of partnership and collaboration, rather than forcing or shaming municipalities into participating.

“As time goes by, we’ll get more aggressive, and I’ll personally show up to meetings and ask them what they have to hide.”

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