



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Grows for Statewide Government Transparency with Over 530 Local Government and School Districts Partnering with OhioCheckbook.com

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

PORTSMOUTH – Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced today the launch of the Southern Ohio Port Authority (SOHPA) online checkbook on OhioCheckbook.com. Also announced today are partnerships with the City of Portsmouth, the Village of New Boston and the Ohio Treasurer's office to post their spending on OhioCheckbook.com. In December 2014, 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.

The Ohio Treasurer's office was joined at today's announcement by SOHPA Board Chairman Bud Sayre, Executive Director Jason Kester and Finance Co-Chair C.B. Herrmann, City of Portsmouth Auditor Trent Williams, Councilman Kevin Johnson and City Manager Derek Allen and Village of New Boston Mayor Junior Williams and Councilman Mike Payton.

The Southern Ohio Port Authority's online checkbook includes over 400 individual transactions that represent more than \$413,000 of total spending over the past three years. The Southern Ohio Port Authority is the first Port Authority in the state and the first entity in Scioto County to post their spending on OhioCheckbook.com. The City of Portsmouth and the Village of New Boston are the first municipalities in Scioto County to announce a partnership with the Treasurer's office to post their spending online.

"I believe the people of Scioto County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with my office to post the finances on OhioCheckbook.com," said Treasurer Mandel. "By posting local government spending online, we are empowering taxpayers across Ohio to hold public officials accountable."

"Providing our citizens know with a free and easy to use website at OhioCheckbook.com was something we felt we needed to do," said SOHPA Executive Director Jason Kester. "Promoting transparency and building trust in our community is very important. We applaud Treasurer Mandel and his staff for giving us such a great tool."

"I am happy to have the opportunity to partner with Treasurer Mandel to make the City's information easily accessible and transparent to the public," said City of Portsmouth Auditor Trent Williams. "With the technology that is available now, this just seems like a valuable tool to allow our taxpayers to easily see for themselves how and where their tax dollars are being spent. I look forward to moving the City forward with this initiative in the near future."

"We here at New Boston are genuinely proud to partner with the Treasurer of State's office and participate in the OhioCheckbook.com transparency website," said Village of New Boston Mayor Junior Williams. "We already encourage the community to become involved and understand the financial aspects of the village. This program will allow complete fiscal

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transparency and clarity as to how taxpayer dollars are received and expended.”

On April 7, 2015 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.

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
- 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 February 16, 2016 there have been more than 464,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$506 billion in spending over the past eight years, including more than 137 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.

In March 2015, 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.

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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 or to view your local government website, visit the Local Government option on OhioCheckbook.com or click on SouthernOhioPortAuthority.OhioCheckbook.com.

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