



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

The Columbus Dispatch
By Alan Johnson
April 13, 2016

Ohio has repeated as the top state for public spending transparency, according to an annual report today by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

"Following the Money 2016" ranked Ohio No. 1 for the second year in a row, largely as a result of OhioCheckbook.com, the online spending database hosted by state Treasurer Josh Mandel.

Ohio was one of four states to achieve a perfect 100-point score on the U.S. PIRG report, but was ranked first due to additional criteria. Also receiving perfect scores were Michigan, Indiana and Oregon. California, Alaska and Idaho received "F" grades and were at the bottom of transparency rankings.

U.S. PIRG based its ratings on the state websites and how easy, or difficult, it is for taxpayers to get detailed information on government spending.

Ohio got high marks for adding municipalities, other local government entities, and schools to the OhioCheckbook.com website. Of the 3,962 local government and schools in Ohio, about 650 have signed up for the online checkbook, Mandel said in a conference call this morning.

"Ohio is once again the national leader in state spending transparency. But more than just holding the highest spot, Ohio's commitment to improving their web portal has encouraged other states to join this race to the top," said Michelle Surka, co-author of the Following the Money report.

Catherine Turcer, policy analyst for Common Cause Ohio, said spending "is not a Democratic or a Republican issue. I see this site as an inspiration ... Ohioans are blessed to have a way to track spending."

Greg Lawson, of the Buckeye Institute said OhioCheckbook.com enables "taxpayers to ask the right questions ... Maybe we'll get to the point where nobody is filing public records requests because it's all going to be out there."

The U.S. PIRG report is the seventh annual review of state transparency.

Mandel launched OhioCheckbook.com Dec. 2, 2014. The database has \$512 billion in spending over eight years covering 139 million transactions.

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