



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Grows for Statewide Government Transparency with Over 660 Local Government and School Districts Partnering with OhioCheckbook.com

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

LANCASTER—Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced today the launch of the Fairfield County online checkbook on OhioCheckbook.com. Also announced today is a partnership with the City of Lancaster and the Ohio Treasurer's office to post the city's 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 government transparency ranking in the country for a second year in a row.

The Ohio Treasurer's office was joined at today's announcement by Fairfield County Auditor Jon Slater, Finance Director David Miller, Chief Deputy Auditor Scott Zody, City of Lancaster Auditor Patricia Nettles and City of Lancaster Treasurer Bob Wolfinger. Fairfield County is the 16th county in Ohio to post their spending on OhioCheckbook.com.

Fairfield County's online checkbook includes over 41,000 individual transactions that represent more than \$82 million of total spending over the past two years.

"I believe the people of Fairfield 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."

"Fairfield County is proud to provide its citizens with easy access to public information through OhioCheckbook.com," said Auditor Jon Slater. "Our citizens deserve to know how their hard earned tax dollars are being utilized, and we welcome the opportunity to maintain a high level of transparency for Fairfield County's residents."

"We are eager to provide information about our operations for the public we serve," said County Commission President Dave Levacy. "While the county currently maintains access via social media, the website, and public records requests, we continue to look for ways to make Fairfield County even more transparent."

"This is an exciting commitment toward enhancing transparency and accountability in local government," said Senator Troy Balderson. "OhioCheckbook.com will allow Fairfield County residents to track where their tax dollars are being spent and to find out more about the programs and services being provided."

"I am proud that my home county has joined the State of Ohio by participating in the Ohio Checkbook because the people of Fairfield County deserve transparency with how the government spends their money," said Representative Tim Schaffer. "I am

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supportive of Treasurer Mandel's efforts and I applaud him and Fairfield County leaders for pushing this initiative."

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 April 19, 2016 there have been more than 515,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$512 billion in spending over the past eight years, including more than 139 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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In April 2016, U.S. PIRG announced that Treasurer Mandel earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for the second consecutive year in a row. Due to the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio again received the highest perfect score of 100 points this year – marking the second time in two years Ohio received the highest possible score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

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 FairfieldCounty.OhioCheckbook.com.

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