



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Momentum Builds for Statewide Government Transparency as OhioCheckbook.com Surpasses 235,000 Searches in the First Six Months

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

SANDUSKY ‐ Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel announced partnerships between the Ohio Treasurer's office and Erie County and the City of Sandusky today to place their spending online at OhioCheckbook.com. Last year, 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.

Treasurer Mandel announced the partnerships at a meeting of the Firelands Regulatory Economic Development Steering Committee in Sandusky today and presented an interactive demonstration of OhioCheckbook.com to attendees. Treasurer Mandel was joined at today's announcement by Erie County Auditor Rick Jeffrey, Erie County GIS Coordinator Mark Wromblewski, Sandusky Finance Director Hank Solowiej, Sandusky City Commissioner Richard Brady and Sandusky County Manager Eric Wobser. Erie County and the City of Sandusky are the first local governments in Erie County to announce a partnership with the Treasurer's office to place their spending online.

On April 7th, 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.

"I believe the people of Erie County have a right to know how their tax money is being spent and I applaud local leaders here for partnering with the Treasurer's office to post their finances on OhioCheckbook.com," said Treasurer Mandel. "My vision is to create an army of citizen watchdogs who are empowered to hold public officials accountable."

"Open and transparent has been an important part of my term in office, as evidenced by the Erie County Auditor's website and this is just one more important step down that path," said Erie County GIS Coordinator Mark Wromblewski.

"One important goal of my tenure in the Erie County Auditor's Office is to be open, transparent and accountable to the taxpayers of Erie County, as evidenced by the enhancements to the Erie County Auditor's website," said Erie County Auditor Rick Jeffrey.

"We are proud of the strides we have made to date. We are excited to participate and partner with the Ohio Treasurer of State's Office on the OhioCheckbook.com initiative, as we view this as one more important step down the path of leading the way to an open, transparent and accountable Office."

"The City of Sandusky is excited to be part of the OhioCheckbook.com initiative offered by State Treasurer Josh Mandel," said Sandusky Finance Director Hank Solowiej. "This will make it very easy for us to share information with our residents and increases our government transparency. We are proud to be a leader in this initiative."

"The City of Sandusky is excited to be part of Treasurer Mandel's effort to make government more transparent and accountable to our residents," said Sandusky City Commissioner Richard Brady. "On the state level this program is an example of government taking their responsibility seriously while leading by example. I believe that local governments have the obligation to follow this lead and join in this effort. As elected officials we are charged with being good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. This program provides the window for our residents to both better understand how their tax dollars are put to work for them as well as rekindle trust in government."

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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 June 16, 2015, there have been more than 235,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$408 billion in spending over the past seven years, including more than 112 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, 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.

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 visit OhioCheckbook.com.

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