



# JOSH MANDEL

## STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Jackson County Telegram  
By Phillip Buffington  
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Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel has announced that Jackson County government officials are the first in the county, as well as the southern part of the state, to open their checkbook for public viewing.

During a press conference held Thursday afternoon, July 9, at the County Commissioners office, Mandel stated Jackson County officials have entered into a partnership with the Ohio Treasurer's office to place their spending online at OhioCheckbook.com. Treasurer Mandel launched OhioCheckbook.com in late 2014 as a part of his office's Government Transparency project which, for the first time in Ohio's history, puts all state spending information on the Internet.

Jackson is the 11th county in Ohio to announce a partnership with the Treasurer's office.

"I believe the people of Jackson County have a right to know how their 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."

Mandel further stated that, before he felt comfortable asking county commissioners, county auditors, school board members, city councils, and mayors to put their finances online, he felt the example should be set at the state-level. When OhioCheckbook.com was launched, it made available \$408 billion in state spending, which, according to Mandel includes "everything from \$2 for a pack of pencils, to millions of dollars for road contracts, and everything in-between."

Mandel was joined Thursday by County Commissioners Ed Armstrong, Paul Haller, and Jerry Hall, County Auditor Clyde Holdren, as well as State Representative Ryan Smith (District-93).

Treasurer Mandel accredited Rep. Smith for "leading the charge" on this "power to the people" initiative. Mandel said that he had previously met with Rep. Smith while the two were in Jackson County and discussed with him the finer details of the transparency initiative.

"I said, listen, this is what we are trying to do," Mandel recalled. "There's no tax money involved, at all. Local governments aren't going to have to spend any money. We're just asking for permission to use resources in our office to put finances online."

Mandel went on to say that Rep. Smith played a pivotal role in helping to push the funding topic through the Ohio House of Representatives. Additionally, Mandel said when the Ohio budget was passed last week, it included funding to allow the Ohio Treasurer's office to put the finances of every one of the 3,962 local government in the state online.

Likewise, Rep. Smith had nothing but good things to say about Mandel's efforts to reach full transparency in government spending.

"An educated constituency makes us a stronger state," said Smith. "This makes everybody more comfortable with government, and we need that now more than ever."

Rep. Smith also gave praise to Auditor Holdren and the County Commissioners for being some of the first county officials to commit to partnering with OhioCheckbook.com.

Before OhioCheckbook.com's launch, Ohio was ranked 46th in the nation in spending transparency. Since the site's launch, however, Ohio has reached the number-one rank in the country. In fact, Ohio earned a perfect 100 score in March from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) in their annual "Following the Money 2015" report, which is the highest score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

Auditor Holdren spoke on behalf of Jackson County government officials, expressing his support for transparency in government.



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"This project gives us the ability to let taxpayers see how their money is spent," Holdren stated. "We must be good stewards of our tax dollars."

Treasurer Mandel assured those in attendance Thursday, that his decision to pursue this initiative was not exactly a popular one. Said Mandel, "This didn't make me a lot of friends among politicians and bureaucrats in Columbus, but I can tell you, the taxpayers enjoy having access to this information."

To date, over 150 local governments have signed up to partner with the Ohio Treasurer's office, and 350 others are currently in discussions to do the same.

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