



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Carol Harper | Lorain Morning Journal

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel hopes the state Senate approves House Bill 175 to place the state checkbook online for citizen critique.

"I believe the people of Ohio have a right to know how their tax money is being spent," Mandel said. "I think the best way to make government more efficient is to empower the people to hold the politicians accountable. I believe in the concept that sunlight is the greatest disinfectant to government waste. I think when we shine sunlight on government spending it makes politicians and other public officials think twice before they waste taxpayer money or defraud the citizens.

"My vision is to create an army of citizen auditors throughout Ohio by empowering the people to hold the politicians accountable," Mandel said. "This will be the first time in the State of Ohio for the state's finances to be online for people to see every single expenditure of state government, everything from two bucks for a pack of pencils to \$2 million for a construction expenditure and everything in between. I think this transparency initiative will help make Ohio a national model for transparency."

Introduced in May of 2013 by state Rep. Mike Dovilla, R- Berea, HB 175, called the "Open Ohio" bill, would establish a database listing all expenses of Ohio state government.

The database would be searchable and freely accessible, Mandel said.

The data from the state accounting system on each state agency includes the agency name, the amount of the expense, the date, and the person or business who received the money, Mandel said.

The bill passed the Ohio House 86-8 on June 4, with bipartisan support, Mandel said. It now is in the Senate.

Mandel began a transparency project in 2011 when he took office, he said, by displaying salaries of state and education employees in a searchable state database.

The legislation would require the Treasurer's Office to continue to display salaries going forward, he said. The Treasurer's Office also hosts an interactive database of state-owned properties and provides public access to county investment reports as well as other state and local data as part of the project.

Mandel estimates the cost of the database at \$500,000, he said, would be paid out of the Treasurer's Office budget with no extra allocation.

Since taking office, Mandel has pared his staff from 140 to 117 positions. Also, banking electronically saved \$100,000 a year, he said.

"I saved taxpayers \$6 million by voluntarily cutting my budget," Mandel said, adding the transparency project saves more money



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because officials naturally tighten expenses when citizens watch spending.

Mandel, a Republican, is up for re-election and is being challenged by Democrat Connie Pillich.

For information or to search for a state official's salary, visit www.ohiotreasurer.gov/.