



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

By Loren Genson | Medina Gazette

Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel is hoping to give Ohioans and newspapers a new tool for tracking state spending.

Mandel, R-Lyndhurst, is asking for state lawmakers to pass a bill that would put the state's checkbook online in a searchable database.

"The more sunlight we shine on government spending, the more efficient government will be," he said.

His proposal, approved by the House in June and headed for debate in the Senate this fall, would include searchable database that's user friendly and easy to navigate. It would also allow the public to request data as downloadable spreadsheets to create their own databases.

"It will be the most specific state transparency project in the country," Mandel said. "Everything from two bucks for a pack of pencils, to \$2 million for a contract. Citizens will be able to see how much the state is spending, who's getting paid with taxpayer money and what the purpose is."

The bill passed the House with 86 yes votes on June 4, and Mandel said he has received bipartisan support.

"I've been traveling the state of Ohio to build a groundswell of support for the legislation in the hopes we can have it passed by this fall," he said.

Mandel said he hopes to have the database up and running early next year if he gets approval this fall. He also said he hopes to add county and city data to the searchable database.

"After we get the state's checkbook online, I'd like to get the city, county and school checkbooks online, and then the universities and pension funds," he said.

Mandel said his office would be willing to assist local governments by putting their data online so long as they can send his office their records.

Mandel said passing legislation to keep online records of spending would mean the program would remain in effect even after he leaves the office.

The legislation would only require state agencies to provide the data for the site, but Mandel said he hopes local governments would opt to open their books as well.

"It will make politicians and bureaucrats think twice before going on a junket to Hawaii," he said.



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Mandel's proposal has already received a nod from the Ohio Newspaper Association. Executive director Dennis Hetzel asked newspaper editors and editorial boards to lend their support to the legislation, noting his association testified in support of the bill.

"We are not aware of any opposition to the bill, and Mandel has said this can be done with the existing resources in his office," Hetzel said in an article posted on the Ohio Newspaper Association's web site.

For current state databases provided by Mandel's office, including salary databases and property searches, visit www.ohiotreasurer.gov/Transparency.