



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

First-of-its-Kind Online Checkbook Sets a New National Transparency Standard;

Displays \$400 Billion in Spending with Full Search and Compare Tools

COLUMBUS ‐ For the first time in Ohio history, Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel has placed Ohio's expenditures on the internet. By visiting OhioCheckbook.com, citizens can follow their money and hold public officials accountable. This first-of-its-kind website allows Ohioans to search, compare and share more than \$408 billion in checkbook-level spending, and includes data spanning the last seven fiscal years.

OhioCheckbook.com sets a new national transparency standard by not just displaying checkbook-level spending data, but also providing taxpayers with fully interactive tools and an unprecedented level of context. Ohio's Online Checkbook allows anyone with a computer or smartphone to do Google-style searches of more than \$408 billion in state spending, and lets users compare and share this information like never before.

"I believe taxpayers have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I'm doing this to empower the people to hold politicians and bureaucrats accountable," said Treasurer Mandel. "I subscribe to the notion that sunlight is the greatest disinfectant to government waste."

"I am proud to partner with Treasurer Mandel on our Open Ohio government transparency and accountability initiative," said Representative Mike Dovilla. "OhioCheckbook.com is an important step forward for taxpayers. I look forward to providing continued leadership in our efforts to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in government."

Features of OhioCheckbook.com include:

- Checkbook-level data on more than \$408 billion in state spending over seven fiscal years, from 2008-2014;
- Approximately 112 million transactions;
- Approximately 3.9 billion pieces of spending information;
- Capabilities to conduct "Google-style" contextual searches, as well as advanced searches by agency, recipient, or keyword;
- Interactive charts and graphs that allow users to drill down on state spending like never before;
- Compare tools that provide context and allow users to view state spending across 10 agencies at a time, or over the last seven

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fiscal years;

Social media integration, to allow users to share spending charts and graphs on Facebook, Twitter or other social media accounts, as well as tools that allow users to directly contact government agencies to inquire about spending;

Replicated images of checks that include details about the budget funds, and reasons for the state spending;

Coaching tips and help buttons throughout to improve the ease of navigation; and,

The ability to directly download all data in electronic format, either by selecting an entire fiscal year or targeting more specific data using advanced search functionality.

Data for OhioCheckbook.com comes from the state's accounting system, the Ohio Administrative Knowledge System (OAKS). It includes all state spending that is appropriated by the Ohio General Assembly into an existing fund. Ohio's Online Checkbook is current through Fiscal Year 2014, which ended June 30, 2014, and will soon be updated on a monthly basis.

OhioCheckbook.com is the latest advancement in the Treasurer's Transparency Project, which was launched by Treasurer Mandel in 2011. It builds on databases of state employee and teacher salaries, county investments, and interactive state property maps previously launched on OhioTreasurer.gov.

A recent U.S. Public Interest Research Group report notes, "Top-flight transparency websites can save money for taxpayers, while also restoring public confidence in government and preventing misspending and pay-to-play contracts." OhioCheckbook.com provides considerably more checkbook-level data and functionality than the top three online checkbook websites currently ranked by U.S. PIRG (Indiana, Oregon, and Florida).

The Treasurer's office investment in state-of-the-art functionality for OhioCheckbook.com will reap dividends for taxpayers in the form of greater government efficiency, transparency and accountability. This top-flight transparency project will raise the bar for all government entities, and tip off a race to greater transparency in Ohio and across the country.

To view Ohio's Online Checkbook, visit OhioCheckbook.com, or for more information on Treasurer Mandel and other office initiatives, go to OhioTreasurer.gov.