



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

The Circleville Herald
By Jennifer Bahney
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The City of Circleville has officially joined Ashville, New Holland and Scioto Township to promote financial transparency among Pickaway County governments. Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel appeared at Circleville City Hall on Friday to announce the launch of Circleville's addition to OhioCheckbook.com.

"What you're seeing this morning is their leadership and their recognition as public officials that our boss is the tax payers," Mandel said of Circleville Auditor Gayle Spangler and Mayor Don McIlroy.

OhioCheckbook.com was launched in December 2014 as a means to make the state's finances easily accessible online. In April 2015, local governments and school boards were invited to share their finances as well. The site has since become a national model to other states wanting to promote financial transparency in government.

"The people have a right to know how the tax money is being spent," Mandel said. "I believe one of the best ways to make government more efficient is to empower citizens to hold the politicians accountable."

Mandel said the idea to create the online checkbook came after a national ranking put Ohio at 46 out of 50 states in government transparency. Mandel said he asked his staff, "who in the state of Ohio is in charge of shining sunlight on spending? And they looked into it and came back to me and said, no one is. And I said, well, why don't we do it?"

Today, Ohio ranks first in government transparency.

Auditor Gayle Spangler said that the accounting software used by the City of Circleville has made the ability to share information with OhioCheckbook.com relatively simple.

"Our anticipation is, after we balance out every month, we will put that month's financial information up on OhioCheckbook. It'll be that fast. It will be part of our monthly balancing process," Spangler said.

Mandel said that the web site took 18 months to build and initially cost the state \$814,000. The state does not charge local governments to participate.

"Our ongoing cost depends on how many local governments sign up," Mandel said. "We think it will pay for itself in a year and a half or two years."

Of Ohio's 3,962 local governments and school districts, Mandel said that more than 750 have committed to partnering with the project.

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"I'm going to be going to other places here in the county and surrounding counties and say, 'if Circleville can put up their finances online, why not Chillicothe, Circleville Schools, and so on.'"

To access any of the Pickaway County online checkbooks, visit OhioCheckbook.com and click on "Local Gov & Schools."

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