



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

Press Release - Ohio Treasurer's Office

COLUMBUS – Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel and officials from Ohio's five statewide public pension funds announced today the launch of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS), the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio (STRS Ohio), the School Employees Retirement System (SERS) of Ohio, the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System (HPRS) and the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund's (OP&F) online checkbooks on OhioCheckbook.com.

In December 2014, Treasurer Mandel launched OhioCheckbook.com, which sets a new national standard for government transparency and for the first time in Ohio history puts all state spending information on the internet. OhioCheckbook.com recently earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for a second year in a row.

With today's historic announcement, Ohio becomes the first state in the country to have all statewide public pension fund checkbooks online.

The following is a breakdown of Ohio's public pension funds' checkbooks:

OPERS' online checkbook includes over 113,000 individual transactions that represent more than \$463 million of total spending over four years.

STRS' online checkbook includes over 12,800 individual transactions that represent more than \$206 million of total spending over the past two Fiscal Years.

SERS' online checkbook includes over 3,800 individual transactions that represent more than \$33 million of total spending over Fiscal Year 2015.

HPRS' online checkbook includes over 150 individual transactions that represent more than \$448,000 of total spending in Quarter 1 of Fiscal Year 2015.

OP&F's online checkbook includes over 2,400 individual transactions that represent more than \$19 million of total spending over Calendar Year 2014.

"A pension system that is responsible for the stewardship of member and employer contributions must always operate in full view of the public," said OPERS Executive Director Karen Carraher. "By contributing data to the Treasurer's online checkbook, OPERS continues its 80-year legacy of transparency."

"STRS Ohio serves nearly 500,000 active, inactive and retired public school educators," stated STRS Ohio Executive Director Michael Nehf. "We strongly believe in transparency and have reported monthly administrative expenditures of our system for many years. We are now pleased to partner with the treasurer's office on this transparency initiative to include STRS Ohio's administrative expenses on the Ohio Checkbook."

"We share the Treasurer's dedication to transparency," said SERS External Communications Supervisor Tim Barbour. "SERS has a long history of transparency and we maintain that commitment by making public records easy to access. SERS has a great

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track record of being responsive to public records requests and the online checkbook is another tool to improve that outreach.”

“HPRS has always been a strong advocate of openness and transparency which is supported by the ‘A’ rating in transparency HPRS and the other state pension systems recently received from the Center for Public Integrity,” added Mark Atkeson, Executive Director of the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System. “In addition to information published on our website, partnering with the Treasurer of State and participating in the Ohio Checkbook complements our commitment to providing access to public information.”

“For many years OP&F has promoted transparency through easy access to its financial documents. We are pleased to continue this openness by participating in OhioCheckbook.com,” said John Gallagher, Executive Director of the Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund. “Ohio’s citizens have the right to know where their tax dollars are spent and this website assists in this pursuit.”

“I believe the taxpayers and retirees of Ohio have a right to know how their tax money is being spent, and I applaud Ohio’s public pension funds for partnering with my 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.”

“We applaud the pension funds for participating in the OhioCheckbook.com database,” said Dennis Hetzel, Executive Director of the Ohio Newspaper Association. “Providing ready, clear access to this information supports their stewardship of billions of dollars on behalf of retirees, public employees and the taxpayers of Ohio.”

“Ohioans, and state and local employees, deserve to know where their tax dollars are going,” stated Greg Lawson, Senior Policy Analyst for The Buckeye Institute. “The Ohio Treasury and Treasurer Mandel should be applauded for giving Ohioans greater insight into how the state’s pension system is funded and managed. Transparency is the lifeblood of good governance.”

“Our 5 public pension systems impact so many Ohioans and transparency in our pension systems is vital,” said State Senator Bill Beagle, Chair of the Ohio Retirement Study Council. “This is an important step in letting the pension members more easily see how their systems spend money.”

On April 7, 2015 Treasurer Mandel sent a letter to 18,062 local government and school officials representing 3,962 local governments throughout the state calling on them to place their checkbook level data on OhioCheckbook.com and extending an invitation to partner with his office at no cost to local governments. These local governments include cities, counties, townships, schools, library districts and other special districts.

A large coalition of statewide and local government organizations have expressed support for OhioCheckbook.com and local government transparency, including:

Ohio Municipal League
Ohio Township Association
Ohio Association of School Business Officials

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Buckeye Association of School Administrators
County Commissioner Association of Ohio
County Auditor Association of Ohio
Ohio Newspaper Association
Ohio Society of CPAs
Buckeye Institute
Common Cause Ohio

OhioCheckbook.com was launched on December 2, 2014, marking the first time in Ohio history when citizens could actually see every expenditure in state government. Since its launch, OhioCheckbook.com has received overwhelming support from newspapers and groups across the state and, as of September 12, 2016 there have been more than 618,000 total searches on the site.

OhioCheckbook.com displays more than \$540 billion in spending over the past eight years, including more than 148 million transactions. The website includes cutting-edge features such as:

- “Google-style” contextual search capabilities, to allow users to sort by keyword, department, category or vendor;
- Fully dynamic interactive charts to drill down on state spending;
- Functionality to compare state spending year-over-year or among agencies; and,
- Capability to share charts or checks with social media networks, and direct contact for agency fiscal offices.

In March 2015, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) released their annual “Following the Money 2015” report and Treasurer Mandel earned Ohio the number one transparency ranking in the country for providing online access to government spending data. Ohio was prominently featured in the report after climbing from 46th to 1st in spending transparency as a result of Treasurer Mandel’s release of OhioCheckbook.com. Due to the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio received a perfect score of 100 points this year – the highest score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

In April 2016, U.S. PIRG announced that Treasurer Mandel earned Ohio the number one government transparency ranking in the country for the second consecutive year in a row. Due to the launch of OhioCheckbook.com, Ohio again received the highest perfect score of 100 points this year – marking the second time in two years Ohio received the highest possible score in the history of the U.S. PIRG transparency rankings.

The Treasurer’s office is partnering with OpenGov, a leading Silicon Valley government technology company, to provide residents of Ohio the ability to view and search local government expenditures in a user-friendly, digital format. “Ohio is setting the standard for financial transparency on an unprecedented scale. We are excited to partner with the Treasurer’s office to bring world-class technology to communities large and small across the state,” said Zachary Bookman, CEO of OpenGov.

For more information or to view your local government website, visit the Local Government option on OhioCheckbook.com or click on:

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