



March 5, 2007

Taxpayers Support Creating Grant and Contract Database in Tennessee

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the thousands of National Taxpayers Union and Council for Citizens Against Government Waste members in Tennessee, we ask you to sponsor the Taxpayer Transparency Act of 2007 (SB 1066 and HB 915) introduced by Senator Jim Tracy and Representative John Mark Windle. If signed into law, this legislation would create a public website that lists every entity receiving Tennessee grants and/or contracts over \$5,000 and for what purposes the money is being disbursed.

Providing an easy-to-use tool like the searchable database proposed by SB 1066 and HB 915 would better enable state residents to make sense of how their tax dollars are being parceled out. Timely access to this information is crucial for helping taxpayers make their own evaluations of Nashville's spending priorities. This legislation deserves your support.

As you may know, last year President Bush signed S. 2590, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, into law. Cosponsored by Senators Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) and Barack Obama (D-Ill.), the bipartisan legislation directs the U.S. Office of Management and Budget to create a searchable online database that the general public can use to track the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal grant and contract expenditures.

Tennessee residents deserve the same access. Creating a similar website on the state scale would entail little cost, but it would greatly increase transparency in the distribution of precious tax dollars and help hold all elected officials accountable for their budget spending. While more than a dozen other states have limited versions of disclosure websites for grants and/or contracts, no state to date has created a single comprehensive database. By acting now, Tennessee has the opportunity to lead the nation in making spending more easily accessible to the public.

As we found at the federal level, support for this legislation will likely transcend party lines. Advocates from across the opinion spectrum share the common notion that transparency of and public access to government information is vital to the health of our political system.

We sincerely hope you decide to sponsor this legislation and help pass it into law. If we can be of any assistance in this effort, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristina Rasmussen".

Kristina Rasmussen
Senior Government Affairs Manager
National Taxpayers Union

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Williams".

David Williams
Vice President, Policy
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste