



April 10, 2007

Taxpayers Support Creating Grant and Contract Database in Texas

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the thousands of National Taxpayers Union and Council for Citizens Against Government Waste members in Texas, we ask you to support three bills that would bring transparency to government spending: HB 42, HB 640, and HB 1007. Representative Ken Paxton introduced HB 42, which would create a database of all state contracts. Representative Bryan Hughes introduced HB 640, which requires the online posting of state agency expenditures. Finally, Representative Corbin Van Arsdale introduced HB 1007, which would create a searchable database of state grant information.

Providing easy-to-use tools through the aforementioned legislation would better enable state residents to make sense of how their tax dollars are being parceled out. Timely availability of this information is crucial for helping taxpayers make their own evaluations of Austin's spending priorities. These bills deserve your support.

As you may know, last year President Bush signed S. 2590, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, into law. Originally sponsored by Senators Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Barack Obama (D-IL), 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.

Texas residents deserve this kind of openness from Austin as well. Creating similar websites on the state level would entail little cost, but would greatly increase transparency in the distribution of precious tax dollars and help hold all elected officials accountable for state spending. While more than a dozen other states have limited versions of disclosure websites for grants and/or contracts, no state to date has the comprehensive disclosure that would be achieved by these three bills. By acting now, Texas has the opportunity to lead the nation in making government spending data 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 help pass HB 42, HB 640, and HB 1007 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, appearing to read "Andrew Moylan".

Andrew Moylan
Government Affairs Manager
National Taxpayers Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Williams".

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