



May 31, 2007

An Open Letter to Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry: Sign the Taxpayer Transparency Act

Dear Governor:

On behalf of the 4,700 Oklahoma members of the National Taxpayers Union, I ask you to sign the Taxpayer Transparency Act of 2007 (SB 1) into law. Originally introduced by Senator Randy Brogdon, this legislation would create a public website that would allow taxpayers to log on, browse, and make their own evaluations of Oklahoma's budget 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-OK) and Barack Obama (D-IL), the bipartisan legislation requires 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. Kansas officials were recently directed to create their own version that will allow residents to track all state government expenditures online.

Oklahoma residents deserve the same access. A survey of Oklahoma voters found that an overwhelming majority supported the idea of creating a searchable website for state grants and contracts. This makes sense, as such a database would greatly increase transparency and help hold all elected officials accountable for spending decisions.

The Office of State Finance estimates that fully implementing a spending database website comes with a \$300,000 price tag. If opening up the books results in erasing even a small amount of wasteful spending, that is money well spent.

As we found at the federal level, support for this legislation transcended 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. That's why the Oklahoma State Legislature passed SB 1 unanimously. Won't you join them by signing the Taxpayer Transparency Act into law?

Sincerely,

Kristina Rasmussen
Director of Government Affairs