



November 2, 2007

Taxpayers Support Creating Spending Database in Maryland

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the thousands of National Taxpayers Union and Council for Citizens Against Government Waste members in Maryland, we ask you to sponsor the Maryland Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (HB 7) introduced by Representative Warren Miller. If signed into law, this legislation would create a public website that lists state expenditures over \$5,000 and for what purposes the money is being disbursed.

Providing an easy-to-use tool like the searchable database proposed by HB 7 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 Annapolis' 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 at www.federalspending.gov that the general public can use to track the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal grant and contract expenditures.

Maryland residents deserve the same access. So far at least nine states have created online spending databases for their residents. By acting now, Maryland has the opportunity to join in and make 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.

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. Missouri created their online spending database using existing resources, while Oklahoma's Office of State Finance estimates that fully implementing their website would cost \$300,000 (\$40,000 in initial costs with future maintenance expenses of \$245,000-\$260,000). The bottom line is that there are ways to make spending information accessible to taxpayers without consuming excessive outlays in the process. We are ready to work with you to craft low-cost, high-impact solutions for promoting spending transparency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kristina Rasmussen".

Kristina Rasmussen
Director of Government Affairs
National Taxpayers Union

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David Williams".

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