



January 16, 2008

**An Open Letter to the New Jersey State Senate:
Support S 445 and Make State Spending Information Available Online**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 10,000 New Jersey members of the National Taxpayers Union, I urge you to bring greater transparency to state government spending by creating a searchable online database of public expenditures. **Providing an easy-to-use website, such as the one outlined by the Transparency in Government Act (S 445), would better enable New Jersey residents to make sense of how their tax dollars are parceled out.**

In particular, S 445 would create a website detailing annual state agency expenditures, bond debt servicing, contracts, capital outlays, revenue intake, federal grants, and additional forms of spending. Timely access to this information is crucial for helping taxpayers make their own evaluations of Trenton's spending decisions. This legislation deserves your support!

Many states (such as Texas, Hawaii, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Kansas, South Carolina, and Nebraska) have recently approved or launched spending websites for their own residents' use. These highly commendable efforts are in large part a state response to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2006. This legislation, sponsored by Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Tom Coburn (R-OK), called for a searchable online database that can be easily used by the public to research federal grant and contract expenditures. The resulting website was launched in December 2007, and taxpayers can now visit www.USAspending.gov to track where their tax dollars are going.

We've found that support for spending disclosure has transcended party lines at both the federal and state levels – and for good reason. Policy makers understand the importance of accountability in a democratic system. However, in order for a representative democracy to fully flourish, it is imperative that ordinary citizens have the ability to scrutinize government expenditures. This access will help to promote an informed conversation over public policies and priorities. In a practical sense, we also believe spending transparency will help reduce waste and fraud while encouraging efficiency.

The bottom line is that taxpayers deserve to know how their money is spent. We encourage you to support S 445 and put state spending data online. You can visit www.ShowMeTheSpending.org for more information on this important issue, and please do not hesitate to call upon us if we can be of any assistance in this effort.

Sincerely,

Kristina Rasmussen
Director of Government Affairs