



March 14, 2008

**An Open Letter to the Tennessee House of Representatives:
Taxpayers Support Online Spending Transparency (HB 4034)**

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 5,400 Tennessee members of the National Taxpayers Union, **we urge you to bring greater transparency to Tennessee's government spending by creating an expansive online database containing information on all state expenditures.**

In the current legislative session, you have an opportunity to accomplish this worthy goal by supporting House Bill 4034. This legislation revolutionizes the role taxpayers have in Tennessee's state government by creating a comprehensive Web site detailing information on government grants, contracts, subcontracts, and other expenditures. Such a database is crucial for helping taxpayers make their own evaluations of Nashville's spending decisions and priorities.

While HB 4034 provides citizens with valuable information on many government expenditures, it is important that elected officials preserve the privacy of their citizens. Accordingly, we recommend that information pertaining to tax exemptions and credits be withheld from the database. **Nonetheless, it is imperative that you move forward with this legislation to enable Tennessee's residents to make sense of how their tax dollars are parceled out.**

Many states (such as Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas) have recently approved or implemented spending Web sites for their own residents' use. These highly commendable efforts are in large part a state response to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act that was signed into law in 2006. The resulting Web site was launched in December 2007, and taxpayers can now visit www.USASpending.gov to track outlays for federal grants and contracts.

Support for spending disclosure has transcended party lines at both the federal and state levels – and for good reason. Policy makers on both sides of the aisle understand the importance of accountability in government. It is vital that the veil of secrecy be lifted and ordinary citizens be given the ability to scrutinize government expenditures. This access will help promote an informed conversation over public policies and reduce waste and fraud.

Taxpayers deserve to know how their money is spent. We encourage you to support HB 4034 and put state spending data online in a comprehensive, integrated fashion.

Sincerely,

Kristina Rasmussen
Director of Government Affairs