



May 6, 2008

An Open Letter to the Pennsylvania State Senate: Taxpayers Support Spending Transparency Website (SB 1350)

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 17,000 Pennsylvania members of the National Taxpayers Union, **I urge you to bring greater transparency to Pennsylvania's public spending by creating an online database containing information on state expenditures.**

You have the opportunity to accomplish this worthy goal by supporting Senate Bill 1350. This legislation will revolutionize the role taxpayers can play in "good government" oversight efforts by creating a single, comprehensive website that provides detailed information on government expenditures. Such a database is crucial for helping Pennsylvania residents make their own evaluations of Harrisburg's spending decisions and priorities.

Many states (including Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington) have recently approved or implemented 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 that was signed into law in 2006. The resulting website from this federal law was launched in December 2007, and taxpayers can now visit www.USASpending.gov to track outlays for federal grants and contracts.

While SB 1350 would provide Pennsylvanians with valuable information on state government expenditures over \$25,000, taxpayers would be better served with access to details on *all* outlays. The federal database at www.USASpending.gov uses the \$25,000 amount as a cut-off point for inclusion. Considering that state governments spend significantly less than the federal government, we urge you to include *all* expenditures in the database, regardless of the amount.

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 ordinary citizens be given the ability to easily scrutinize government expenditures. This access will help promote an informed conversation over public policies and could possibly reduce waste and fraud.

Taxpayers deserve to know how their money is spent. We encourage you to support SB 1350 and put state spending data online in a comprehensive, integrated fashion.

Sincerely,

Kristina Rasmussen
Director of Government Affairs