



January 15, 2009

## **An Open Letter to Virginia Legislators: Taxpayers Support Online Spending Transparency (SB 936)**

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the nearly 9,000 Virginia members of the National Taxpayers Union, I urge you to bring greater transparency and accountability to the Commonwealth's budgetary process by creating a searchable online database of all government expenditures.

SB 936, introduced by Sen. Cuccinelli, would put information on state revenues, expenditures and appropriations on a searchable Web site to be made live by July of 2010, thereby providing a new level of clarity to Virginia's fiscal picture. This information is crucial for taxpayers to evaluate the way their hard-earned dollars are spent in Richmond. It is the first step in giving the citizens of Virginia a well-deserved place in the budget debate.

With many states already embracing the pro-transparency movement, it is time for Virginia to do the same. Missouri, Texas, Kansas, South Carolina, Nevada, Nebraska, and Alaska are among the states to have made their expenditures publicly accessible online. The federal government likewise took this step after the 2006 passage of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. The legislation's original sponsors were Senators Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Barack Obama (D-IL) – a powerful demonstration that this is an issue with widespread support on both sides of the political aisle.

SB 936's positive implications for the taxpayer are obvious. But Virginia government officials will benefit from a spending database as well. By shining light on the state's books, it will be easier for public entities to identify and eliminate waste in their budgets, allowing them to conduct operations more efficiently and direct funding to where it is most useful.

This bill's passage will be a bipartisan triumph for Virginia taxpayers, who deserve to see how their money is being spent. It is time to have an open and honest conversation about the Commonwealth's priorities. That cannot be achieved without spending transparency. I encourage you to recognize this fact and pass SB 936..

Sincerely,

Joshua Culling  
State Government Affairs Manager