



March 5, 2009

An Open Letter to the Colorado Legislature: Taxpayers Support Online Spending Transparency (HB 1288)

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the more than 7,300 Colorado members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to increase accountability in Colorado state government by supporting HB 1288, the Colorado Taxpayer Transparency Act. This legislation would create a searchable online database of all state revenues and expenditures, allowing taxpayers to easily access information on how their money is being spent.

According to the most recent statistics available, Colorado extracts more than \$4,300 per capita in state and local taxes over the course of a year. At this time, citizens have no way of easily navigating the state budget to see exactly how that money is being allocated. HB 1288 would simplify the process of gathering that information by centralizing it and allowing it to be searched by any Coloradan with access to the Internet. This type of transparency should be a fundamental right, and with the passage of this bill it will become a reality.

Many states have already enacted similar legislation for little or no cost, with fantastic results. Nebraska, Texas, Missouri and Oklahoma are among the success stories out of over a dozen states that have embraced transparency. The federal government has done so as well, with the passage of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act in 2006. That legislation, co-sponsored by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) and then-Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL), created USASpending.gov, which has given millions of Americans the opportunity to examine data on where their federal tax dollars are going. The sponsorship of that bill underscores the bipartisan support for this important issue.

It is time for Colorado to join and march in the front ranks of this movement. In this economic climate, it is as important as ever for both citizens and lawmakers to get a firmer grip on the specifics of budgetary decisions made in Denver. Passage of HB 1288 will lead to a more honest and open debate on Colorado's spending priorities, and give taxpayers a seat at the table throughout the process. On behalf of NTU's Colorado membership, I hope you will consider these benefits and pass HB 1288, the Colorado Taxpayer Transparency Act.

Sincerely,

Joshua Culling
State Government Affairs Manager
National Taxpayers Union