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CONTACT: John Kartch
Sandra Fabry
202-785-0266

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Pro-Taxpayer Lawmakers Champion Spending Transparency

- Measure would bring greater accountability into government finances -

WASHINGTON, D.C. –Sen. Ken Cuccinelli (R-Centerville), who chairs the Taxpayer Protection Caucus in the state senate, and fellow signer of the Taxpayer Protection Pledge Del. Ben Cline (R-Rockbridge) have introduced SB 585/HB 1360, legislation that would mandate the creation of a comprehensive searchable website for government expenditures.

The measure would allow Virginia taxpayers to view and search detailed information on the ways in which government spends tax dollars. While the auditor of public accounts currently hosts a website for government expenditures called “Commonwealth Data Point”, the level of detail sought by this year’s legislation would significantly surpass the old website. Not only would the bill provide access to the actual expenditure document, it would also provide details on past and expected performance outcomes. SB 585/HB 1360 are co-sponsored by Sen. Chap Petersen (D- Fairfax) and Johnny Joannou (D-Portsmouth) respectively.

“It comes as no surprise that pro-taxpayer lawmakers like Sen. Cuccinelli and Del. Cline want to enable Virginia taxpayers to track their tax dollars at a mouse-click,” said Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform. “But one should note that this spending transparency movement transcends party and ideology lines, as reflected by the bipartisan co-sponsorship of this bill. The reason is simple: There may be disagreement on how tax dollars should be spent – but all sides agree, taxpayers should be able to scrutinize where their money is going.”

The spending transparency issue has brought together unlikely allies like consumer advocate Ralph Nader, and taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, who jointly called on governors to emulate and go beyond federal legislation which led to the creation of www.USASpending.gov. In 2007, five states passed legislation that mandates the creation of similar websites – again with bipartisan support. Several other states including Texas, Missouri, South Carolina, and most recently Louisiana have taken executive action or are looking to do so.

“Thomas Jefferson once said: *‘We might hope to see the finances of the Union as clear and intelligible as a merchant’s book, so that every member of Congress and every man of any mind in the Union should be able to comprehend them, to investigate abuses, and consequently to control them,’*” continued Norquist. “The Founding Fathers had the vision, and today, we have the technology to fully implement it. Americans for Tax Reform is thrilled to be working with lawmakers and activists in Virginia and around the country to empower taxpayers.”

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact John Kartch at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jkartch@atr.org.

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