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Clear Skies Ahead for Washington State Taxpayers

Taxpayer group applauds the passage of spending transparency legislation in Washington State

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In a victory for taxpayers, an amended version of SB 6818, a bill to promote transparency in state expenditures sponsored by Sen. Eric Oemig (D- Kirkland), is headed to Governor Christine Gregoire (D) for approval. The house passed an amended version last week after the bill had been adopted by the senate with unanimous consent. The senate concurred with the house amendments on March 11, 2008.

The bill requires the Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program (LEAP) Committee to work with the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to create a searchable state expenditure information website, detailing state expenditures by fund or account, expenditures by agency, program, and subprogram, budget object and subobject. Furthermore, information on state revenues by source, and state agency workloads, caseloads, and performance measurements are going to be made available through the site.

“With the legislation, Washington State taxpayers will get an opportunity to cut through the dense fog of bureaucracy and get a clear picture on where their tax dollars end up,” said Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform. “Taxpayers, who ultimately fund any expenditure made by government, deserve to be able to track their tax dollars at a mouse-click. Passage of this bill will give them a tool to hold their elected officials more accountable.”

As of this date, at least 17 states have bills pending requiring the creation of searchable websites for government expenditures. The movement to increase accountability through spending transparency transcends party lines, and support is often unanimous, as has been the case in the Washington State legislature. Democrat State Auditor Brian Sonntag and Republican Attorney General McKenna have also endorsed the idea of creating an online database for state expenditures.

“Thomas Jefferson once said: ‘We might hope to see the finances of the Union as clear and intelligible as a merchant’s books, 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 their vision. Washington State taxpayers can look forward to greater accountability and efficiency in government thanks to this legislation.”