



AMERICANS *for* TAX REFORM

Grover G. Norquist
President

May 8, 2008

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Office of the Governor
142 State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Perdue,

I write to urge you to sign SB 300, which mandates several important steps to increase transparency in government spending, and to use the executive powers vested in your office to take this effort to the next level. The legislation, among other things, requires the creation of an online database for salary and travel expenses of the entire personnel in the executive branch of state government, as well as every state authority, university or college in the University System of Georgia, and every local board of education.

The "Transparency in Government Act" contained in the bill furthermore requires the Department of Audits and Accounts to develop and operate a searchable website for pertinent expenditure reports such as the State of Georgia Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the annual Budgetary Compliance Report, the annual State of Georgia Single Audit Report and other expenditure lists. Certain grant and contract expenditure information over \$20,000 in the aggregate shall be made available after January 1, 2010.

This bill is an important step in the direction of empowering Georgia taxpayers and rests on the notion that transparency begets accountability - a principle that was already understood by the Founding Fathers. 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."*

While some information on government expenditures is already open to public access in a number of states, finding and understanding the information is often problematic. **This inability to easily access relevant information on how government spends taxpayer dollars makes it difficult for citizens to make informed decisions and to partake in political discourse.**

More public scrutiny will help eliminate impropriety in dealing with taxpayer dollars - be it perceived or real impropriety. SB 300 will allow taxpayers to hold policy makers and government agencies accountable for questionable spending decisions.

The effort to empower taxpayers to track their tax dollars online is sweeping the country. In the wake of the passage of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, five states passed legislation mandating the creation of online databases for government expenditures in 2007, and Govs. Blunt of Missouri and Sanford of South Carolina issued executive orders to this effect. This year, four states have already passed and signed spending transparency legislation, and in one additional state besides Georgia, a bill is awaiting the governor's signature. Govs. Jindal of Louisiana, Palin of Alaska and Gibbons of Nevada took executive action to make government finances more transparent, and several state constitutional officers have embarked to do the same.

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Georgia simply cannot afford to sit at the sidelines as lawmakers around the country are beginning to shed a light on government expenditures.

Ultimately, taxpayers will be best served when all levels of government, federal, state and local, are required to post all their expenditures in a clear and searchable format accessible to all taxpayers on the Internet.

I urge you to sign SB 300 into law and to encourage swift implementation of the bill's provisions to increase transparency in government spending. I furthermore urge you to consider issuing an executive order that broadens the scope of the bill to require the online posting of all government expenditures regardless of their nature, and without a threshold for disclosure, in a single searchable online database. Ideally, the actual expenditure document, the grant, contract, purchase order etc. should be made available to taxpayer scrutiny in the same online portal. Taxpayers pick up the tab for every expense made by government, and they deserve to know how every dollar of their hard earned money is spent.

I would love to discuss this important matter with you at your convenience.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Norquist', written in a cursive style.

Grover G. Norquist