



AMERICANS *for* TAX REFORM

Grover G. Norquist
President

May 27, 2008

Dear Committee Member,

I write to urge you to support H.B. 420 sponsored by Rep. Tom Brinkman, a bill that would do much to empower taxpayers to track their tax dollars at a mouse click.

Specifically, the bill would mandate the creation of a comprehensive website detailing information about state government expenditures including – but certainly not limited to – grants and contracts, require a searchable website for earmarks and provide for increased transparency in state real property tax management. Agency management standards and performance measures would also be implemented under this bill.

H.B. 420 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.**

The maturing and expansion of the Internet makes it possible for you to improve constituents' ability to access information specifically in the area of government expenditures. More public scrutiny will help eliminate impropriety in dealing with taxpayer dollars – be it perceived or real impropriety. The database to be created H.B. 420 would allow taxpayers to hold policy makers and government agencies accountable for questionable spending decisions.

H.B. 420 would provide taxpayers with an important tool to become more involved in the state's budget process by giving them access to detailed information as to which entities are awarded tax dollars, and additional information regarding amount, transaction type, the name of the agency making the expenditure, and a descriptive purpose of the funding action or state award among other things.

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, six states have already passed and signed spending transparency legislation. 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.

Just like at the federal level, where this effort not only had bipartisan support, but also passed unanimously, state level support also crossed party lines, and was unanimous in many

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cases. Transparency in government spending is not a right – left issue, it is a right – wrong issue, and Ohio simply cannot afford to sit at the sidelines as lawmakers around the country are beginning to shed a light on their government expenditures by creating similar websites as the one H.B. 420 would create.

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, while giving access to the actual expenditure document. I urge you to not only support this legislation and spending transparency for the state level, but to further explore ways in which local governments, too, can be held more accountable for their spending decisions as well.

With this bill, you have the opportunity to empower taxpayers, and that is an opportunity that should not be missed. Your constituents are counting on you to support H.B. 420.

Onward,

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

Grover G. Norquist