



May 1, 2009

Dear Member of the Missouri House of Representatives:

We write to urge you to concur with the Senate substitute for HB 544, sponsored by Rep. Jason Smith. The bill would codify Executive Order 07-24 into law and create the Joint Committee on Recovery Accountability and Transparency. It also instructs the governor to disclose any redactions of appropriated funds clearly on the MAP site, giving Missourians more insight into their state's finances.

Since its launch, the Missouri Accountability Portal has helped Missouri taxpayers track how their tax dollars are being spent and has served as a template for similar efforts in other states and even in other countries. The continuing success of the project can only be guaranteed through legislation that secures its role for the posterity of Missouri and we encourage you to pass the Senate substitute for HB 544.

Transparency is not a political issue. Thus, efforts to increase government accountability should be insulated from the flux of the political system – legislation ensures that regardless of political climate Missouri's government expenditures will remain open to taxpayer scrutiny. It rewards advocates of an open government by instantiating measures for sunlight for generations of taxpayers to come.

While taxpayers benefit from portals such as MAP, the state can also use it as a tool to diagnose its spending habits. The creation of the Joint Committee on Recovery Accountability and Transparency in this bill instructs public officials to do just that. The committee is charged with identifying wasteful spending and confirming that state spending is being done in a responsible manner. This legislation recognizes that transparency, while an end in itself, is also a means to better government and encourages efficiency and responsibility in the state budget. In Texas, the creation of a spending transparency portal revealed redundancies and inefficiencies in agency expenditures which has already led to \$8.7 million in savings identified by the Comptroller's office.

Moreover, transparency in government finances embody the sentiments of our founding fathers; it was Thomas Jefferson, who 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."*

Codifying the spending transparency requirement into law ensures that the Missouri Accountability Portal will continue to be an excellent example for state transparency efforts, and HB 544 expands on its success to make it into a useful tool for responsible budgeting practices. **Thus, we urge you to pass the senate substitute for HB 544 and we look forward to working with you to continue to empower Missourians as true fiscal watchdogs.**

Sincerely,

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