



June 11, 2009

Wisconsin State Assembly

Dear Member of the Wisconsin State Assembly,

**I am writing to urge your support of Rep. Bill Kramer's Amendment to the proposed budget, Assembly Bill 75, to create a searchable online database of state spending.** While not a silver bullet, transparency in government finances is an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to rectifying the staggering state of Wisconsin's economy. Around the country, searchable online databases detailing government expenditure information serve as a tool to help eliminate the potential for fraud, waste and abuse.

**The amendment requires the Department of Administration to establish a website that would report to taxpayers all state agency expenditures exceeding \$25.** This includes school district expenditures as well as state contracts and grants. In light of the maturing of the Internet, there is no reason taxpayers should be left in the dark as to how the government is spending their money.

It is inexcusable that the current budget thrusts a \$2.1 billion tax burden on Wisconsin taxpayers, made more egregious by the lack of oversight in the budget process and state spending. This amendment provides Wisconsinites with a refined tool to easily find relevant government spending information and ultimately fosters a better understanding of the way government operates.

**As representatives, you are stewards of your constituents' tax dollars, and as such cannot responsibly allocate these monies without a clear and comprehensive understanding of the state's finances.** But given that taxpayers fund every expenditure made by government, they, too should be able to track their tax dollars at a mouse click. This amendment will enable both the legislature and Wisconsinites to research and analyze state expenditures, and to identify budgetary savings in the process.

While Wisconsinites shoulder one of the highest tax burdens in the country, they are also lagging farthest behind in transparency. Since 2007, more than 25 states have taken action to provide taxpayers with information on state finances, while no efforts have been successful in the Badger State.

**A commonly raised concern with regard to spending transparency websites is the cost issue.** The good news is that these searchable online databases can be and have been created at little or no extra cost for taxpayers, and that real tangible savings (the Texas State Comptroller has identified \$8.7 million dollars in savings using transparency in her office alone) can be achieved.

**Thus, I ask you to vote "YES" on Rep. Kramer's amendment to Assembly Bill 75 and urge you to reconsider the indefensible tax burden encompassed in the state budget before passing it as a whole.**

Onward,

Grover Norquist  
President  
Americans for Tax Reform

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