




AMERICANS
for TAX REFORM

 **Center for
Fiscal
Accountability**
Americans for Tax Reform

June 17, 2010

Dear Member of the New Jersey General Assembly,

I am writing to urge your support of Senator Joe Pennacchio's Senate Bill 708, which would codify state spending transparency into law for New Jersey taxpayers.

This bill will give teeth to Governor Christie's executive order requiring state and local spending to be open and accessible to taxpayers online. In addition, the proposed website will include comprehensive information on state expenditures, list recipients of funds, public salary information and agency performance outcomes.

Currently, more than two dozen states mandate that taxpayers be able to track state expenditures on a searchable website. The transparency websites in these states have enjoyed bipartisan support and are met with enthusiasm by taxpayers - citizens are eager to discover where their hard-earned dollars are going. New Jersey should follow in the footsteps of states all around the country that are launching effective and popular transparency websites by passing S. 708 swiftly.

Opening up state finances to public scrutiny benefits both the state and its taxpayers. States have been able to use their transparency portals to identify savings and inefficiencies, saving taxpayers millions. Just in Texas, State Comptroller Susan Combs was able to spot \$8.7 million in savings by scrutinizing spending on her state transparency site.

With the advent of technology, a state spending portal is inexpensive and easy to create and maintain. A study by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University found that states often overestimate the cost of creating a transparency website and in most instances can create a portal within their existing budgets. There is no excuse for taxpayers to be kept in the dark on how their tax dollars are being spent.

Beyond its potential to provide real savings, transparency in government has the capacity to reform the relationship between taxpayers and their governments by establishing unprecedented openness. Thus, we urge you to vote YES on Senate Bill 708 and look forward to working with you to advance accountability and transparency for New Jersey's taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

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