



AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

GROVER G. NORQUIST

PRESIDENT

April 20, 2007

Dear Member of the Property Tax Conference Committee,

As you are in the middle of working to bring property tax relief to Florida taxpayers, I would like to focus on a different aspect and urge you to embrace current efforts to bring more transparency into government spending.

Senator Ronda Storms (R-Brandon) and Rep. Gayle Harrell (R-Stuart) deserve great credit for taking the lead on this issue. Now, several provisions are on the table that would enable taxpayers to get a better idea of how their governments spend their hard-earned tax dollars, particularly at the local level. Among them are:

- Requiring local governments to report their expenditures and revenues on the Internet.
- Requiring local governments to post the proposed budget, anticipated revenues and other information online by a certain deadline.
- Requiring local governments to post their contracts online with certain exceptions and on a staggering scale.

We urge you to lend your support to the efforts to increase transparency in the way government spends taxpayer dollars, which will help turn taxpayers into fiscal watchdogs.

Transparency begets accountability. As stewards of taxpayers' hard earned dollars, state legislators are accountable to taxpayers. However, 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. Lacking information on how government spends taxpayer dollars makes it difficult for citizens to make informed decisions and to partake in political discourse.

Understanding this premise, state legislators from around the country have been working to pass legislation that would mandate the creation of comprehensive internet-based databases detailing government expenditures. Efforts vary from state to state, but the underlying notion is the same: **Taxpayers deserve to know how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent.**

And the issue transcends party lines. There may not be consensus about how the money should be spent, but there is agreement that taxpayers should be able to keep track of the spending.

All these efforts help foster a better understanding of the ways in which government operates. Ultimately, they will help reduce fraud waste and abuse. Opacity in the budget process often leaves taxpayers frustrated, and can create the perception of possible abuse of the system. More public scrutiny will help eliminate impropriety in dealing with taxpayer dollars – be it perceived or real impropriety.

Taxpayers will be best served when all levels of government are required to disclose their expenditures in a clear and searchable public format. **I urge you to embrace transparency in government spending as you move forward this session.**

Onward,

Grover Norquist

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