

Advertisement




True Results
America's #1 Lap Band® provider.

Attend a Free Seminar

USA TODAY

 **PRINT THIS**

Powered by  **Clickability**

 Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

States put spending details online

By Tracy Loew, USA TODAY

A growing number of states are putting everything from budgets and contracts to travel expenses online for the public to scrutinize.

Twelve states post all their state spending, six post the checkbooks of selected departments, and seven have passed laws ordering the creation of online spending websites, according to Sandra Fabry, executive director of the Center for Fiscal Accountability, based in Washington, D.C.

The most recent to go online were Kentucky, Georgia and Maryland, which launched in January. An additional 15 are considering legislation, she says. "Taxpayers who fund every expenditure by government have the right to know how their tax dollars are being spent," Fabry says.

Among the states considering plans:

•**Oregon.** A group of 27 bipartisan legislators is sponsoring a bill, dubbed the "Open Books Oregon Project," that would require the state to create a searchable website by Jan. 1, 2010, listing revenue and expenditures for all state agencies.

•**Virginia.** Both houses of the Legislature have passed versions of a transparency bill, says John Taylor, president of Tertium Quids, a non-partisan group that favors reducing the role and cost of government in Virginia.

•**Colorado.** Democratic Gov. Bill Ritter is working with state Treasurer Cary Kennedy and state lawmakers to put the state's "checkbook" online, Ritter spokesman Evan Dreyer says.

The trend took off in 2006 after Congress created a publicly searchable website for all federal contracts and grants over \$25,000, Fabry says. The site, www.usaspending.gov, launched in December 2007.

This month, the Obama administration launched a website where people can keep track of the money spent in the federal stimulus package, www.recovery.gov.

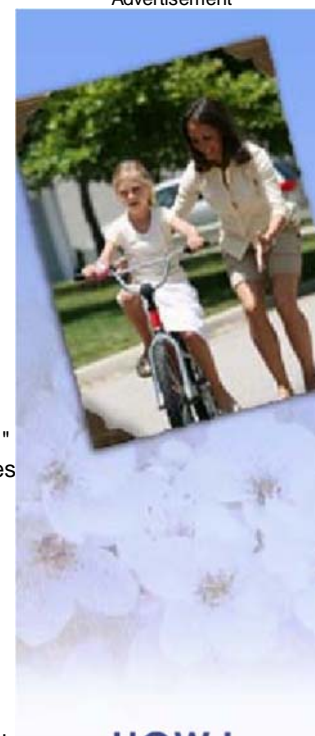
Kansas was the first state to pass a law requiring creation of a website detailing state expenditures in 2007, Fabry says.

Texas invested \$310,000 in its "Where the Money Goes" website, which went live in January 2007. The emphasis on transparency helped departments analyze how they spent money and where they could save, state Comptroller Susan Combs says.

The website helped save \$4.8 million and identified an additional \$3.8 million in expected savings, Combs announced in December.

Combs says her office saved \$73,000 by consolidating multiple contracts for toner cartridges and \$328,000

Advertisement



HOW I GOT THERE?

True Results
America's #1 Lap Band® provider.

Attend a Free Seminar

by establishing separate post office boxes to receive different types of tax payments instead of buying a new mail sorter.

James Quintero, fiscal policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, says making state contract information public has led to lower bids.

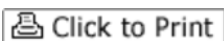
The sites have proved popular. Missouri's site got more than 13 million hits in its first 18 months, Republican Gov. Matt Blunt announced in November.

"It just seems like such an empowering tool for taxpayers," says Oregon state Rep. Kim Thatcher, a Republican and one of the sponsors of her state's bill.

Loew reports for the Statesman Journal in Salem, Ore. Contributing: Trevor Hughes, the Fort Collins (Colo.) Coloradoan.

Find this article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/techpolicy/2009-02-22-onlinegovspend_N.htm



[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright 2008 USA TODAY, a division of Gannett Co. Inc.