Now in the Senate, Local Transparency Initiative Moves Closer to Becoming Law

Published on Show-Me Institute (https://showmeinstitute.org)

By: Patrick Ishmael

The ability of government to tax you—to take your money through force—comes with an obligation of stewardship and openness, and those obligations don't have a minimum size requirement. Big city or small, the obligations are the same.

It's why I'm following with great interest legislation now proceeding through the Missouri Senate proposed and being carried by Rep. John Wiemann. Previous versions of his legislation required that all cities provide their “checkbook” information to the state, at which point the state would make those spending documents public. The latest version includes counties, but reporting is voluntary.

As our previous research shows, it is oftentimes the activities of governments that don't want to voluntarily provide their spending records that raise the greatest questions. After all, why would any government shield its spending records from the public? With few exceptions, every dollar of taxpayer money spent should be an open record and a record that every level of government should be happy to provide.

Suffice it to say, I would much prefer the state take a mandatory approach to cities and counties providing these records than a voluntary one. Very much. However, establishing a reporting system, even on a voluntary basis, opens the door to greater reforms later. I hope the senate moves quickly on this important legislation.
About the Author

Patrick Ishmael  
Director of Government Accountability

Patrick Ishmael is the director of government accountability at the Show-Me Institute.

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Show-Me Institute

5297 Washington Place  
Saint Louis, MO 63108  
Phone: (314) 454-0647  
Fax: (314) 454-0667

3645 Troost Avenue  
Kansas City, MO 64109  
Phone: (816) 287-0370

Email: info@showmeinstitute.org

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