



February 26, 2010

To: Members of the Virginia House Committee on Appropriations
Re: Support for SB 431, the "State Government Spending Accountability Act"

Dear Committee Member,

We write to urge your support of SB 431, the "State Government Spending Accountability Act," which would take yet another important step to improve transparency in government finances by making the existing spending transparency database Commonwealth Datapoint more comprehensive and user-friendly.

Specifically, the bill requires the online posting of a virtual check register of all funds expended by agencies (including credit card purchases) providing access to vendor name, date of payment, amount, and a description of the type of expense. The bill further stipulates that the Auditor of Public Accounts shall post by class official salaries or pay rates of public employees making more than \$10,000 annually.

Currently, many Virginians remain unaware of the transparency resources already at their disposal. SB 431 sets out to change that as it would raise the visibility of spending transparency data via agency websites. Per enacting clause of the bill, the database shall be made accessible for users via a hyperlinked icon to be placed on each agency's and institution's website, and if feasible, the link shall take users directly to spending information for the respective agency. Finally, the Auditor shall conduct a review of other states' online databases and discern best practices to ensure Virginia taxpayers are treated to a database that is as transparent and user-friendly as possible.

Virginia taxpayers deserve to know how their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent, which is why the General Assembly took strides towards greater fiscal accountability during last year's legislative session. SB 431 simply builds on last year's improvements and would add important expenditure details for taxpayers to review while facilitating access to the relevant data.

Especially as the Auditor's office has stated that it does not anticipate significant additional costs to implement the bill, passing these common-sense improvements to the progress already made should be a no-brainer.

We strongly urge you to vote in support of SB 431 and continue the General Assembly's demonstrated commitment to making government more accountable to its constituents.

Sincerely,

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

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