

Transparency at Work in Texas

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Agenda

- 1) History of Texas transparency initiative
- 2) Changes since August 2008
- 3) Anticipated changes in 2009



Transparency – Why?

- *“Government spending is often seen as impenetrable and unknowable. Taxpayers have the absolute right to know how their money is being spent, and it is only with transparency that government can be held truly accountable.”*
- Susan Combs, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

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Why did we put expenditures on line?

- Part of continued plan to set new standards for transparency and accountability in state spending.
- Taxpayers expect and deserve it — it's their money.
 - Public has easy access to information useful in deciding whether tax dollars are being spent in a responsible manner.

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Timeline

- January 2007 – Posted the Comptroller’s office expenditures down to NIGP level
- April 2007 – Added 24 additional agencies
- June 2007 – Added pre-existing in-house reports to the public site
- October 2007 – Added the legislative required “check book” view for all agencies

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Where the Money Goes

Window on State Government

Transparency at Work in Texas

Susan Combs
Texas Comptroller
of Public Accounts

Search Tools Home

Where the Money Goes

As part of our continuing effort to set new standards for transparency and accountability in state government, the Comptroller's office now provides four different ways to examine state spending. Data is updated nightly, so check back often for updated information.

Select a "Where the Money Goes" search tool:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>State agency search</p> <p>Find out who is spending what.</p> | <p>Vendor search</p> <p>See who is being paid by the state.</p> |
| <p>Spending category search</p> <p>View how much is spent in broad spending categories.</p> | <p>Purchasing code search</p> <p>Drill deeper into detailed purchases—down to the pencils—for the largest state agencies.</p> |

Please Note: Each search tool will open a new window or "pop-up" where you can enter search criteria. If your browser software is set to block pop-ups, you will need to turn this feature off to conduct a search. Please access your browser's help information to turn off the pop-up blocker.

Some information has been designated as confidential by the submitting agency, per Texas Government Code Section 403.0046. If you have questions concerning this particular expenditure, you may contact the submitting state agency's open records contact. If you have questions concerning this provision, please contact the Comptroller's Open Records manager at open.records@cpa.state.tx.us.

"Government spending is often seen as impenetrable and unobscure. Taxpayers have the absolute right to know how their money is being spent, and it is only with transparency that government can be held truly accountable. We are helping citizens with an easy way to examine state expenditures in one place without needing to contact multiple agencies."

— Susan Combs

Texas Online | Statewide Search from the Texas State Library | State Link Policy | Texas Homeland Security

Susan Combs, Texas Comptroller - Window on State Government - Contact Us

Privacy and Security Policy | Accessibility Policy | Link Policy | Public Information Act | Compad with Texans

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Where the Money Goes

Prompt

Ready to prompt before running the query.

Select Fiscal Year: 2008

Enter Vendor/Payee Name:

Run Query

Cancel

VICKI ALVORD_VIRGINA FENDI

VILLAGE AT AMHERST LP DBA CORONADO

VILLAGE CHARTERS INC

VILLAGE CUSTOM HOMES LLC

VILLAGE DISTRIBUTORS

VILLAGE DRUGS INC

VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

VILLAGE MEDICAL PLAZA LTD

VILLAGE OAKS PHARMACY & MEDICAL SUP

VILLAGE OF SURFSIDE BEACH

VILLAGE OF THE HILLS

Enter Vendor/Payee Name:

More Information

2008

Expenditure Report

Refresh Date: April 30, 2008 2:20:52 PM

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Where the Money Goes

Document - View - Find - Undo - Redo - Refresh Data

Analysis context: Month (All values)

Texas State Expenditure Information by Payee

Fiscal Year: 2008

Page 1 of 1

Payee: VIDA HEALTH CARE INC

| Agency Name | Expenditure Amount |
|---|--------------------|
| Department of Aging and Disability Services | \$121,530.40 |
| Total: | \$121,530.40 |

Expenditure Report

Refresh Date: June 30, 2008 3:39:23 PM

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Where the Money Goes

Document - View - Find - Undo - Redo - Refresh Data

Analysis context: Month (All values) | Department of Aging and Disability Services

Page 1 of 1
 Fiscal Year: 2008
 Department of Aging and Disability Services
 Payee: VIDA HEALTH CARE INC

| Expenditure Category | Expenditure Amount |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Public Assistance Payments | \$121,530.40 |
| Total: | \$121,530.40 |

Expenditure Report Refresh Date: June 30, 2008 3:39:23 PM

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Where the Money Goes

Document - View - Find - Undo - Redo - Refresh Data

Analysis context: Month (All values) | Department of Aging and Disability Services | Public Assistance Payments | 7601-Medical Services - Nursing Home Programs

Page 1 of 1
 Fiscal Year: 2008
 Department of Aging and Disability Services - Public Assistance Payments - 7601-Medical Services - Nursing Home Programs
 Payee: VIDA HEALTH CARE INC

| Payment Date | Expenditure Amount |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 4/1/08 | \$18,220.80 |
| 4/23/08 | \$10,307.60 |
| 4/30/08 | \$10,249.20 |
| 5/5/08 | \$6,161.20 |
| 5/7/08 | \$4,321.60 |
| 5/14/08 | \$10,774.80 |
| 5/21/08 | \$10,718.40 |
| 5/23/08 | \$642.40 |
| 5/25/08 | \$10,190.80 |
| 5/28/08 | \$116.80 |
| 6/4/08 | \$10,103.20 |
| 6/11/08 | \$10,015.60 |
| 6/18/08 | \$9,962.00 |
| 6/25/08 | \$9,928.00 |
| Total: | \$121,530.40 |

Expenditure Report Refresh Date: June 30, 2008 3:39:23 PM

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Keys to Success

- Start with the information you have
 - Transparency does not have to be all or nothing.
 - The Comptroller's office started by posting its own expenditures via a simple Web page.
- Invite others
 - Encourage other state entities to shine the light on state spending by doing their part to provide information.
- Look closely at your existing resources
 - The Comptroller's office was able to repurpose an in-house application to provide a useful drill-down application online.
- Leverage your technology solutions
 - We including the extensive and searchable online database as a deliverable on a much larger business intelligence hardware and software solution.

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Lessons Learned

- Protecting confidential data is a big issue
- State agencies may need lead time to adapt to new reporting environment
- Reconciliations can be cumbersome
 - Original payment
 - Payment cancellations
 - Refunds
 - Credits
 - Coding errors

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What's New?



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What's New – Local Transparency

Texas Transparency Check-Up



- Home
- What is Transparency?
- Taxpayer's Tips
- Transparency Steps and Tools
- Submit Your Transparency Story
- Share Your Feedback
- Sign up for Updates

Coming in 2009: the Texas Transparency Report Card.
Stay tuned to see who's making the grade.

Transparency by Texas Counties

Texas has 254 counties, more than any other state. Nearly 80 percent of Texas county funding and revenue comes from taxes alone. The remainder comes from various sources such as fees, fines, grants, bond funds and toll road funds. Regardless of size – and Texas counties range from fewer than 100 residents to more than 3 million – each county is governed by a judge and four commissioners, which make up the commissioners court. This group, along with other county officials, develops a county's budget. There are minor differences in when each county must hold a public hearing about the budget, but all are required to hear public comments. Ultimately, the commissioners court approves the budget and sets the county's tax rate.

indicates searchable data.

Which Texas counties are leading the way to give the public a look at budgets and expenditures? See what the Comptroller's office found online. Because the Web is dynamic and more and more local governments are making transparency a priority, this information can change rapidly. Let us know what needs to be updated. And check back often for the latest information.

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What's New - Link to the Locals

| County | What's Online | Years | What's Missing |
|---------------|--|-------------|--|
| Coleman | Financial Report | 1 quarter | Budget, Check Register |
| Collin | Budget Financial Report Check Register | 6 3 2 | |
| Collingsworth | Budget | 2 | Financial Report, Check Register |
| Colorado | Budget Financial Report | 1 1 | Check Register |
| Comal | Budget Financial Report | 3 2 | Check Register |
| Comanche | — | N/A | Budget, Financial Report, Check Register |
| Concho | Budget | 1 | Financial Report, Check Register |
| Cooke | Budget | 1 | Financial Report, Check Register |
| Coryell | Budget Financial Report | 1 1 | Check Register |
| Cottle | — | N/A | Budget, Financial Report, Check Register |
| Crane | Budget | 1 | Financial Report, Check Register |
| Crockett | — | N/A | Budget, Financial Report, Check Register |
| Crosby | Budget | 1 | Financial Report, Check Register |

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What's New - Link to the Locals

- In addition to Counties there are links for:
 - Cities
 - School Districts
 - Texas River Authorities
 - Texas Metropolitan Transit Authorities
 - and, other States

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What's New - Determining Confidentiality



- First year – Comptroller responsibility
- September 1, 2008 – State agency responsibility

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What's New – Salary Information



- Comptroller site does not contain individual salary information
- The media and public interest groups have requested salary information

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Next Steps

- Grading the locals
- Requests from the Legislature

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Next Steps – Local Governments

**Coming in 2009:
the Texas
Transparency
Report Card.**

Stay tuned to see who's
making the grade.

- Part of the Comptroller's emphasis on transparency
- Will start assigning 'grades' to the local sites

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Next Steps – Legislative Requests



- Series of reports based on special report prepared for TXDoT
- Series of reports based on special request from member of appropriations committee

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Final Thoughts



- Popularity
- Other sources

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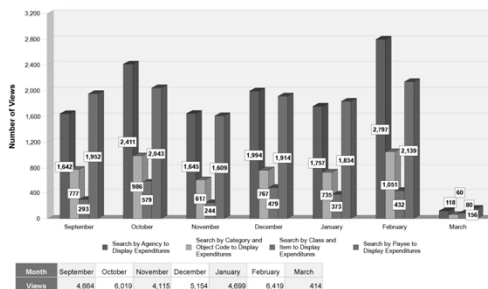


Final Thoughts - Popularity

- Where The Money Goes receives about 12,000 page views per month
- Results in about 5,000 searches per month

State Expenditures Report Views

Total Number of Hits: 31,484



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Final Thoughts - Popularity

| Category | Percentage of Visits |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Citizen | 64 |
| State Employee | 19 |
| State Government Official | 7 |
| Vendor | 7 |
| Media | 3 |

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Final Thoughts - Popularity

- Top three reasons for site visits:
 - Just curious
 - Interested in a big-picture view of state spending
 - Looking for very specific information

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Contact Information

- Where the Money Goes
 - View the Texas Comptroller's "Where the Money Goes" state spending search tools at www.window.state.tx.us/wherethemoneygoes or contact us at (800) 531-5441, ext. 3-4070.
- Tom Mathey
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 - (512) 463-3868
 - tom.mathey@cpa.state.tx.us

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