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Ohio Firefighter and Police Pension Fund to Put Spending Records Online.

The Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund volunteered to put its spending records online as part of a partnership with State Treasurer Josh Mandel's online checkbook program.

The announcement comes exactly a week after Mandel criticized the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System for not joining his initiative, which can be accessed at OhioCheckbook.com.

Mandel accused OPERS of trying to hide information from the public, which OPERS officials quickly denied.

"The executive director of OPERS feels that taxpayers do not have a right to see this information and she's just flat out wrong," Mandel said today during a press call. "It's dumfounding that they still refuse to volunteer to put their finances online."

OPERS officials have continued to say they support transparency, as evidenced by "extensive financial information" provided on their own website.

"It's disappointing to be continually mischaracterized by the treasurer of state," said Julie Graham-Price, a media representative from OPERS. "We intend to evaluate the online checkbook initiative; unfortunately, it's not on the treasurer's timeline."

OPERS and Mandel have a history of disagreement. The two sides have clashed over who should control where the multibillion-dollar pension fund's resources should be invested among other disagreements over reforms.

The police and fire fund is the first pension fund in the United States, according to Mandel, to volunteer to put their financial information online.

"We see no reason why our members as taxpayers should not be able to see what vendors we use, what services we use, what consultants we use, how much we're paying for our paperclips and pencils, things like that," said John Gallagher, executive director of the fund. Gallagher added that confidential information would not be put on the website.

The pension fund joins more than 100 state and local government entities that have volunteered to put their spending habits online.

"Obviously we're a huge fan of the local government stuff ... but it really is important for the pension funds to step it up," said Greg Lawson of the Buckeye Institute, a Columbus-based free market think tank. "It's just a great example of good government."

Mandel's initiative helped the state jump from No. 46 to No. 1 on a U.S. Public Interest Research Group list of transparent states providing online access to government spending.

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