



AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY

KANSAS

February 7, 2007

Chairman Morrison and members of the committee,

I am Alan Cobb, Kansas State Director of Americans for Prosperity, a free market grassroots public policy group with more than 6,500 members in Kansas.

We are here in full support of HB 2207.

Taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent. Traditional budget publications are not only very difficult for ordinary taxpayers to understand; they are also often inaccessible and contain incomplete information. Creating a modern, searchable, on-line database will leverage technology that most Kansans already use and understand to make information about state spending widely accessible.

This bill is similar to recently passed federal legislation, under which a comprehensive database of federal spending is being built. If technology can make the federal budget understandable for ordinary taxpayers, surely it can do the same thing for our state budget.

Giving taxpayers this tool to understand where and how their money is being spent will make state government more accountable and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse. An opaque spending process creates the perception, or possible reality, of legislators or bureaucrats use the state budget to fund unnecessary, wasteful, or even corrupt programs, confident that most Kansans will never know about it.

This database will help eliminate any perception of impropriety by ensuring that all awards of state funds are subject to public scrutiny. It will also, even when there is no perceived wrongdoing, allow taxpayers to hold the government to higher standards, reviewing exactly how money is being spent and proposing more effective or efficient uses of state dollars. By making the details of spending available to the public, the state can leverage the expertise and ideas of engaged citizens who can, at their own convenience, evaluate the data and provide feedback to legislators and grassroots groups, such as ours, that work on fiscal issues.

Transparent government is good government. Good government has nothing to hide from the taxpayers that fund it and is open to input from those taxpayers on how to constantly improve as stewards of their hard-earned tax dollars.

Every public company in America is required to regularly publish volumes of information about how shareholder dollars are spent. Taxpayers should receive no lower standard of disclosure regarding how their tax dollars are spent. Indeed because taxation is mandatory, the standards for disclosure should be higher, because information is critical to citizen engagement on policy change. A shareholder who thinks a company has inadequate disclosure can always sell his or her shares; a taxpayer has no such recourse.