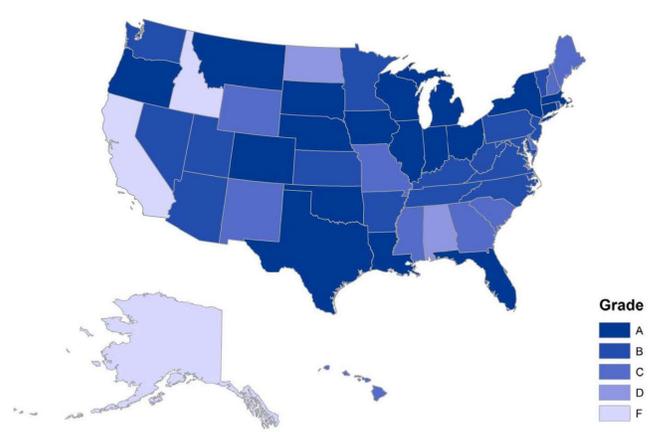




Enabling citizens to track state government spending can help ensure that state funds are spent wisely.



Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Oregon provide the greatest budget transparency; California, Alaska and Idaho offer the least.

Following the Money 2016

How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data

Online Budget Transparency

State governments spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year. Enabling citizens to track that spending can help ensure that state funds are spent wisely.

Following the Money, the seventh annual evaluation of spending transparency, reviews states' progress toward providing transparency and accountability for state government spending that is:

- *Comprehensive*, including information about contracts, spending, subsidies and tax expenditures.
- *One-stop*, presenting data on all government expenditures on a single website.
- *One-click searchable and downloadable*, allowing browsing or searching with common-sense queries.

Grading the States

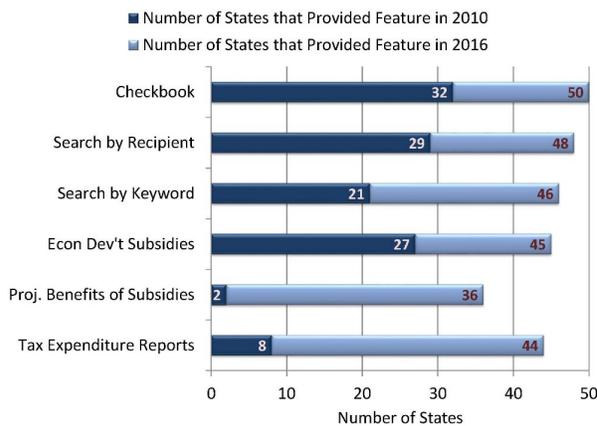
All 50 states operate websites to make information on state spending accessible to the public, but the quality of these sites varies widely.

- 18 states, led by Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Oregon, received an "A." Visitors to these sites can find information on specific vendor payments, and can download the entire checkbook dataset for analysis.
- 17 states received a "B," with spending information that is easy to access but more limited than the spending information provided by "A" states.
- 10 states received a "C" for their checkbook-level spending information but limited information on subsidies or other "off-budget" expenditures.
- 5 states received a "D" or "F" for their limited online budget data.

Increasing Transparency

Remarkable Progress

Since our first evaluation of state budget transparency in 2010, states have improved online data availability dramatically. All 50 states now provide online access to their checkbook, while 45 provide data on at least one major economic development subsidy.



How States Can Improve Transparency

All states, even those that received top scores, can improve budget transparency.

- The greatest weakness is lack of data on the benefits of economic development subsidies. Only 11 states provide checkbook-level information on the recipients of each of the state's most important subsidy programs.
- States should support transparency at the municipal and county level and make those data available through the state's transparency website.
- No state provides a comprehensive list of government entities outside the standard state budget. States should incorporate expenditures of all quasi-governmental entities, public-private partnerships, and special districts.
- Most websites still fail to match the user-friendliness and intuitiveness common to Americans' everyday experience of the Internet.

Most Improved State Websites in 2016

State	Improvement
Michigan	up 13 points
West Virginia	up 10 points
Nevada	up 7 points
Wyoming	up 6 points
Rhode Island	up 5.5 points

Michigan received a perfect score after it added functionality to its transparency site, including bulk downloads, details about excluded information, and a page dedicated to quasi-public agencies.

West Virginia launched a new website that is easier to navigate and provides information about projected and actual public benefits of the state's major subsidies.

U.S. PIRG
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For more information and the full report, please visit www.USPIRG.org