

**Maryland Taxpayers
Association, Inc.**



**STATEMENT OF RICHARD FALKNOR
November 3, 2007
TO THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
IN BEHALF OF HB 7
THE MARYLAND FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT**

“CITIZEN OVERSIGHT TO SUPPLEMENT CITIZEN LEGISLATORS”

Mr. Chairman, and committee members, my name is Richard Falknor, and I am executive vice-president of the Maryland Taxpayers Association, Inc.

Every Maryland citizen should welcome delegate Warren Miller’s innovative measure as a means of getting the best value from the constantly growing state and local expenditures.

Maryland, as we all know, has a part-time legislature. There is little opportunity nor few mechanisms for systematic legislative oversight of constantly expanding state (or local) government activities.

Just since MTA submitted testimony on a similar measure last March, Americans for Tax Reform reports this progress on transparency on the national level.

Kansas became the first state [on April 23, 2007] to sign into law comprehensive legislation mandating the creation of a website detailing state expenditure information.

Minnesota quickly followed and Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed legislation at the beginning of May.

Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry signed legislation on June 5, and Gov. Rick Perry of Texas signed transparency legislation into law on June 15.

Hawaii has passed similar legislation.

Meanwhile, on July 11, Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri became the first governor to implement a comprehensive searchable web portal detailing government expenditures via Executive Order.

Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina followed on August 30.
[Underscoring MTA s.]

As the National Taxpayers Union showed in its study last year entitled *Maryland's Fiscal Folly: the Taxpayer's View*, the Free State has a lamentable recent history of runaway spending, year after year after year, and under both parties.

And Maryland government expansion is not just a state-level problem. As the *Baltimore Examiner* wrote last year - - -

"The population rose 13 percent from 1996 to 2004 in Harford County, according to the Census Bureau's most recent statistics, while the number of state government employees climbed 55 percent. In Carroll County, the population rose 15 percent, less than half the rate of local government employment. And in Howard County, the population grew 19 percent while local government employment grew 47 percent. The same trend applies to Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties."
[Underscoring MTA's.]

HB7 will provide citizens, whether kitchen-table activists or major Maryland media, with easy-to-use tools to "follow the money."

The Maryland Taxpayers Association, Inc. sees HB7 as an important first step in state and local transparency, but a relatively inexpensive and user-friendly one.

We envision Maryland state-level transparency as a model for parallel county and municipal searchable websites.

MTA urges a favorable committee report.

MTA, Inc. is a 501(c)(4) non-partisan, not-for-profit, volunteer grass-roots organization which asks Maryland elected officials for their pledge not to raise taxes, acts to make Maryland government more efficient, and organizes and chairs the Maryland Center-Right Coalition and the Maryland Leadership Conference.