

OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE

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SECRETARY OF STATE



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June 29, 2018

Kate Brown  
Governor of Oregon  
900 Court Street, Suite 254  
Salem, OR 97301

Tobias Read  
Oregon State Treasurer  
900 Court Street, Room 159  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Governor Brown and Treasurer Read,

Oregonians deserve to know how the state government spends their hard-earned tax dollars. Only through full transparency can we ensure that agencies are truly accountable and restore public trust in state government. I'm excited to share with you a fantastic opportunity for us to work together to increase financial transparency in Oregon government.

Years ago, the state launched the Oregon Transparency website and began posting selected financial information online. This was a good first step, but far more transparency is needed. Nearly one year ago, my office began publishing the Secretary of State's financial reports each month with expanded details. It takes only a few hours of staff time each month to update the [Secretary of State Financial Transparency Page](#), and it is easily found by clicking on the Financial Transparency link on our Home Page.

In contrast to the Secretary of State's monthly disclosures, the Oregon Transparency website publishes expenditure reports for state agencies that are only updated once a year for the prior fiscal year. The most recent data posted today is from June 30, 2017. This lengthy reporting delay significantly reduces the usefulness of the data to the public, the press, and the legislature.

In addition, the data on the Oregon Transparency website is limited to the name of the agency, the budget category for each expenditure, the vendor name and state, and the expenditure amount. These scarce details often do not allow Oregonians to understand when or where the state is actually spending money. By contrast, the Secretary of State's financial

transparency report expands upon these categories by adding payment date,<sup>1</sup> budget sub-category,<sup>2</sup> invoice description, vendor city, agency division,<sup>3</sup> and reference document number. Since all of these additional categories in our reports are pulled from the RSTARS financial system run by the Department of Administrative Services, they are also readily available to other state agencies.

Finally, the Oregon Transparency website reports do not include any detail on monthly payments to state workers, opting instead to only list annual salaries. By contrast, we report each position number and the monthly salary for that position, as well as any overtime, holiday pay, standby duty pay, work out of class and lead pay, PERS, PERS pension obligation bonds, health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, Social Security and Medicare taxes, Public Employees' Benefit Board fees, the Workers Benefit Fund assessment, and the Employee Relations Board assessment. This shows the real cost for each employee. Monthly reporting also allows the public to see raises and any pay differences when we hire new workers.

Increasing Oregon's financial transparency by providing monthly updates and needed details can be done without waiting for legislation or obtaining an extra budget allocation. In sum, you have the power to dramatically increase transparency in our state government, and I would gladly join you in this endeavor by sharing what we have learned as we have streamlined our reporting process. Let's work together to increase our state's financial transparency for the good of all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Dennis Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis Richardson

P.S. Here is an example of why expanded detail is so important to true transparency. A Secretary of State expenditure appears on the Oregon Transparency website as Professional Services non-IT to Crazy Daisy Productions LLC of OR for \$6,480.00. This description is largely unhelpful as it is entirely unclear what the money paid for or when it was spent. In contrast, the same expenditure appears on the Secretary of State's Financial Transparency Page with the above information, as well as that it was paid on 10/26/2016 by the Elections Division for Oct 16 Audio for General VP (Voters Pamphlet) with a reference document number of VC604537, and specifying that the vendor is located in Beaverton.

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<sup>1</sup> This is "Final Approval Date" in RSTARS.

<sup>2</sup> This is "Agency Object Title" in RSTARS.

<sup>3</sup> This is a division breakdown using Program Cost Account in RSTARS.