



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## Follow the Money with [wvCheckbook.gov](http://wvCheckbook.gov)

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State of West Virginia

John B. "JB" McCuskey is West Virginia's 21st State Auditor. He served as a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates, District 35, from 2012 to 2016.

During his tenure with the West Virginia House of Delegates, Auditor McCuskey chaired the Banking and Insurance and the Enrolled Bills Committees, and was a member of the Industry and Labor, Energy and Judiciary Committees. He also chaired the Interim Committee for the Regional Jail and Correctional Facility Authority.

Auditor McCuskey is a graduate of The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., with a degree in political communication. He earned his law degree at the West Virginia University College of Law, and was previously an attorney with Steptoe & Johnson in Charleston.

Prior to attending law school, Auditor McCuskey worked as a civilian for the Department of Defense at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., in the offices of the Army and Department of Defense General Counsels.

As West Virginia's State Auditor, I believe it is part of my duty to ensure that every tax-paying citizen has access to how their money is being spent by those both elected and employed by the state. The revenue that is collected is never the government's money – it is the people's money. The government represents the people and, as such, is responsible for every penny spent on their behalf. It is a huge obligation that I personally take very seriously.

For too long, financial documents and spending/revenue records have been either unavailable to the public or far too difficult to find online. The state's transparency website – [www.wvCheckbook.gov](http://www.wvCheckbook.gov) – changes all that. This website has been up and running successfully since February of this year and is available in real time to all those who wish to explore and track how state dollars are being spent. This is a great innovation for use by our citizens as it allows for open and free discovery of all taxpayer dollars, coming and going, for the state of West Virginia.

Response received from the public, as well as state government agencies, has been both positive and appreciative. Users have found the site to be easily navigated, which only encourages more frequent use and fulfills our objective to open the books and let the sun shine on our state's financial transactions in order to provide overall transparency.



This site has been constructed in a way that is efficient and user-friendly for everyone who visits. Facts and figures will be available by agency and vendor for both purchasing and payments through [wvCheckbook.gov](http://wvCheckbook.gov). For example, as bids are awarded for the current road bond projects, those funds will be included on the site. Any electronic copies of data or documents will be posted and constantly updated by the outstanding technical staff at the West Virginia State Auditor's Office.

During the February roll-out of the website at press events held in both Martinsburg and Charleston, attendees were offered assistance in exploration and navigation of the site. The comments we received on that very first day were positive, and, quite frankly, I think there was a good bit of surprise among those in attendance that any collection of data perceived as so massive, which it truly is, was so easy to navigate. This website currently contains nearly 40 million rows of data, and it is constantly growing.

In partnership with the tech company OpenGov, the site was built to include data going back to fiscal year (July) 2014-15, up to the current fiscal year. This challenge was met, in a remarkably short amount of time, by three of our own technical specialists in the auditor's office and five dedicated people from OpenGov, who together developed [wvCheckbook.gov](http://wvCheckbook.gov) in less than a year.

This group was successfully able to interface with the West Virginia Enterprise Resource Planning Board ([wvOasis](http://wvOasis)) in order to provide real time data for the site. It was a huge effort, and I commend all those who participated in reaching this very aggressive level of success. We set this goal early on in the first year of my

## Welcome to wvcheckbook.gov

West Virginia believes transparency leads to more effective and accountable government, and a more informed and engaged community. We invite you to explore our financial data including how the state generates and spends revenue.

The screenshot shows the wvCheckbook.gov website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'wvCheckbook.gov', 'Home', and 'Feedback'. Below this is a banner with a welcome message and a background image of financial charts. The main content area is divided into four white tiles with blue icons and text:

- Revenue:** Interested in learning about the sources of West Virginia's revenue? If so, click here.
- Spending:** Interested in learning how West Virginia spends the revenue it generates? If so, click here.
- Supreme Court:** Supreme Court spending is a hot topic in West Virginia. Interested in learning how the Supreme Court spends its budget? If so, click here.
- How To:** Need a little help learning how to use wvCheckbook? If so, click here.

On the right side, there is a dark blue sidebar with the following sections:

- Quick Links:**
  - Employee Compensation
  - Department Expenses
  - Annual Actuals
  - Annual Budget
  - Monthly Actuals
  - Vendor Payments
  - What's Included & Excluded
- Explore Top Departments:**
  - Select Department (dropdown menu)

FY 2017 State Auditor's Financial Reports  
VISTA  
Tax Credit Accountability  
State Contracts

Tax Expenditures  
State Bond Ratings Report  
Transparency Resources  
West Virginia at a Glance

administration, and with the dedication, perseverance and can-do attitude of those involved in this formidable project, the site is successfully online and fully functional with regular use.

Recently, I have been visiting county commissions throughout the state, presenting our **wvCheckbook.gov** website in an effort to engage the interest of local leadership in establishing county-level transparency websites. The reception for this effort has been extremely positive. As of now, we have seven counties who are on board and ready to get started, with more to follow soon.

In April of this year, the U.S. PIRG (Public Interest Research Group) Education Fund announced in its evaluation of state transparency websites

that eight states are leading the nation in spending transparency. Ohio and West Virginia were at the top of the list, setting an example for other states across the country. This recognition occurred less than three months after the launch of **wvCheckbook.gov**. Needless to say, we were so gratified to learn that West Virginia has become a leader in creating an online, user-friendly transparency website that makes it easy to access critical data.

The State Auditor's Office is striving daily to empower all West Virginians to investigate fraud, waste and abuse of taxpayer funds through this transparency website. We want 1.8 million auditors – all of our citizens – to have the power to investigate and research any suspected misuse of taxpayer funds.

Therefore, from this point forward, there should be no question where our money is going. Now that our accounts and financial documents are transparent, it's all out there. The enemy of any democracy is an uneducated electorate. I sincerely hope every citizen who has ever doubted or questioned the spending practices of our state will explore **wvCheckbook.gov** and follow the money. ▽