

Use technology to track tax dollar use

Published: 12/8/2007 12:19 AM

The DuPage County Board passed a budget that requires substantial cuts in operating budgets of several departments, and they deserve credit for making the tough decision to cut spending.

However, the board is attempting to dodge the issue by postponing cuts until after the referendum to raise the sales tax, hoping voters will plug their budget gaps. The county should first enact reforms to dispel concerns about waste before asking voters to fund their growing spending habits.

Members of Americans for Prosperity believe that taxpayers deserve to know how their money is spent. Traditional budget publications are often very difficult for experts -- let alone ordinary taxpayers -- to understand, and they are often inaccessible and incomplete. The opaque process creates a perception of bureaucrats funding unnecessary or even corrupt programs.

An online database with technology familiar to most citizens can be used to create accountability and openness. If taxpayers can easily find where and how their money is spent, the transparency will result in more informed decisions at the polls.

This is a nonpartisan issue and follows common sense principles of good government. U.S. Sens. Barack Obama and Tom Coburn recognized that fact and fought to create a searchable Web site for federal funds.

We live in a democracy where political power emanates not from the top down, but from the people. Technology allows communication at a level of detail and with speed never before possible, and it is now incumbent upon government to make use of it to inform taxpayers. The county has the opportunity to lead the state in making spending information more easily accessible. Creating a Web site at the county level would bear little cost, and would greatly increase transparency.

The people of DuPage County deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent. I challenge county officials to support a searchable online database -- a tool to track how public dollars are spent. Government should have nothing to hide from the taxpayers who fund it.

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