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DISCLOSE PUBLIC RECORDS ON INTERNET, CENTER URGES

New York City and other government entities should begin to “proactively” disclose payrolls, expenditure information and other public records on the Internet, according to testimony before the City Council today by Tim Hoefer, operations director of the Manhattan Institute’s Empire Center for New York State Policy.

Hoefer spoke before the Council’s Committee on Technology on a local bill that would require the city to develop and implement open data standards for posting government records on the city web sites by 2013.

He suggested the city bypass the three-year process instead immediately require agencies to post electronic records that otherwise are available under the state Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).

“All public information should be proactively disclosed on the Internet, starting with expenditure, budget and payroll records that will give taxpayers a clearer view of how the bulk of their tax dollars are being spent,” Hoefer said. “This would also free agencies of the time-consuming burden of processing multiple FOIL requests for different slices of the same material. It would be a win-win for citizens and for government alike.”

Promoting better transparency and accountability in government is an on-going priority for the Empire Center, Hoefer noted. The Center’s transparency website, www.SeeThroughNY.net, includes the wages of 1.5 million public employees; pension benefits; teacher and school superintendent contracts; legislative office expenditures; legislative pork barrel projects; and a tool to compare school and local government expenditures. It has attracted more than 2.7 million unique visitors who downloaded 9.5 million pages of data, since July 31, 2008.

The entire payroll of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the pensions of 342,543 state and local government retirees added to the site this month.

The Albany-based Empire Center is a project of the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, a non-profit, 501(c)3 think tank.

Download Hoefer’s written testimony [here](#).