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Study: Most Big Localities Still Fail to Disclose Tax-Break Recipients

Washington, DC, March 8, 2017— More than half of the nation's 50 biggest cities and counties still fail to disclose online even the names of the companies receiving property tax abatements or other costly economic development incentives. Even fewer report incentive-deal outcomes: Only 13 of the 50 localities disclose the number of actual jobs created by one of their key incentive programs.

These are among the key findings of *Show Us the Local Subsidies*, a report issued today issued today by Good Jobs First, a non-profit watchdog group. The report is freely available at www.goodjobsfirst.org .

"Localities spend tens of billions of dollars annually on subsidies, yet most make it difficult for residents to learn which companies receive that assistance," said the report's author, Good Jobs First research Analyst Kasia Tarczynska. "And even fewer provide information on the effectiveness of the awards."

"More than 50,000 local and state governments will soon disclose the total costs of economic development tax-break programs, under Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement No. 77 on Tax Abatement Disclosures," said Good Jobs First executive director Greg LeRoy. "That Statement does not require the disclosure of recipient names, but we expect many taxpayers will want to know which companies got subsidized, and how much, when they see total program price tags."

Despite the large number of programs without adequate disclosure, there has been modest progress in transparency since 2013, when Good Jobs First last surveyed

localities' practices. The percentage of programs with no disclosure declined a bit and a few more programs now report on outcomes.

Only one of the 85 programs evaluated in the new report receives a perfect score of 100: New York City's Industrial Incentive Program. Yet the city's other program covered in the report—the Industrial and Commercial Abatement Program—gets a zero because it lacks recipient disclosure. Austin's two programs, with their average score of 92.5, give the Texas city the best overall rating. It is followed by Nassau County and Suffolk County, both in New York, Memphis-Shelby County in Tennessee, and Ohio's Franklin County, each of which receive an average program score of 85.

Among those large cities and counties still failing to provide online disclosure of even the names of subsidy recipients (much less dollar costs or job-creation benefits) are: Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; Boston; Broward County, Florida; Charlotte; Columbus, Ohio; Cook County, Illinois; Dallas; El Paso; Fairfax County, Virginia; Harris County, Texas; Indianapolis; Los Angeles City and County; Miami-Dade; Montgomery County, Maryland; Orange County, Florida; Philadelphia; Portland, Oregon; San Antonio and surrounding Bexar County; San Diego City and County; San Francisco; and San Jose.

In some areas there are significant differences between one level and government and another. For example, while Austin scores high, surrounding Travis County has no online disclosure in its separate programs. Similar discrepancies can be found between high-scoring Franklin County in Ohio and the City of Columbus within it.

For a program to be deemed transparent and therefore eligible to be rated in the report, the data must be available on a public webpage and the names of recipient companies must be included.

"We hasten to add that just because a program is transparent, that says nothing about its effectiveness," Tarczynska added. "But transparency is a prerequisite for evaluating effectiveness."

Good Jobs First is a non-profit, non-partisan resource center promoting accountability in economic development. Based in Washington DC, it was founded in 1998. The study was funded by the Surdna Foundation; however, all the findings and conclusions are those of Good Jobs First.

A table of scores can be found on the next page.

Rank and Score by Jurisdiction

Rank	City/County	State	Average Score
1	Austin	TX	92.5
2	Franklin County	OH	85
2	Memphis-Shelby County	TN	85
2	Nassau County	NY	85
2	Suffolk County	NY	85
6	Chicago	IL	70
7	Palm Beach County	FL	59.5
8	Portland-Multnomah County	OR	55
8	Travis County	TX	55
10	Fort Worth	TX	52.5
11	New York	NY	50
12	Memphis	TN	45
13	Detroit	MI	42.5
13	Wayne County	MI	42.5
15	Jacksonville	FL	40
15	Phoenix	AZ	40
17	Denver	CO	37.5
18	Oklahoma City	OK	32.5
19	Dallas County	TX	30
19	Las Vegas	NV	30
21	Washington, DC	DC	25
22	Houston	TX	22.5
23	Nashville-Davidson County	TN	20

Jurisdictions Lacking Transparency

City/County	State	Score
Allegheny County	PA	0
Bexar County	TX	0
Boston	MA	0
Broward County	FL	0
Charlotte	NC	0
Columbus	OH	0
Cook County	IL	0
Dallas	TX	0
El Paso	TX	0
Fairfax County	VA	0
Harris County	TX	0
Hillsborough County	FL	0
Indianapolis	IN	0
Los Angeles	CA	0
Los Angeles County	CA	0
Miami-Dade County	FL	0
Montgomery County	MD	0
Orange County	FL	0
Philadelphia	PA	0
Portland	OR	0
Riverside County	CA	0
San Antonio	TX	0
San Diego	CA	0
San Diego County	CA	0
San Francisco City-County	CA	0
San Jose	CA	0
Tarrant County	TX	0