

State Auditor McGuinness Launches Historic Transparency Initiative

DOVER, DEL. – State Auditor Kathy McGuinness said today she is working with county and local governments and school districts to help them transparently show how they spend their federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds.

“For most Delawareans, the third stimulus payment they received this spring is likely either spent on bills or put into savings already,” McGuinness said during an event on the Baywalk in Dewey Beach. “But for county and local government officials, as well as school district officials, the \$1.25 billion in ARP funds they will receive have yet to appear in their bank accounts.

“And one thing I have heard repeatedly from Delawareans is that they want to know exactly how that money is going to be spent,” McGuinness continued. “This is an unprecedented amount of federal money for these officials to receive and, as Delaware’s fiscal watchdog, I want to help track where these tax dollars are being spent.”

McGuinness’ website will host a secure online portal – powered by OpenGov, a leader in modern cloud software solutions for cities, counties and state agencies – that will allow government officials to enter their ARP spending quickly and efficiently each week. The website will then provide easy-to-read graphics for the public to review and compare the expenditures.

“My office is serving as a resource for county and local officials as they navigate this uncharted territory,” McGuinness said. “Building this reporting into their workflow now will save officials headaches and hassles later when

entities come in to review how officials have spent these funds.”

McGuinness said the statewide initiative, dubbed Project: Gray Fox in honor of Delaware’s state wildlife animal, is the first of its kind in the First State – and has garnered support already from several municipalities, including Dewey Beach, Lewes and Newark.

“As mayor, I really appreciate all the efforts of the Delaware State Auditor’s Office,” Dewey Beach Mayor Dale Cooke said. “Since transparency with expenditures of funds is of major importance in a small municipality with minimal staffing, any process that makes it easier to document and keep our property owners and residents informed is certainly a welcomed addition.”

“Project: Gray Fox will provide an efficient, secure method to ensure that the expenditure of the American Rescue funds is transparent and consistent throughout the state,” Lewes Mayor Theodore Becker said. “Transparency in the expenditure of these public funds is critical because all Delawareans should be confident these funds are being used to benefit their respective communities. The city of Lewes looks forward to participating in this program.”

“Newark is excited to participate in Auditor McGuinness’ transparency initiative,” Newark Mayor Jerry Clifton said. “Our shared constituents expect transparency from their government, and Project: Gray Fox helps us meet that expectation.”

In April 2016, the [U.S. Public Interest Research Group Education Fund](#) – a nonprofit that seeks to protect consumers and promote good government – gave [Delaware a C+](#) rating and ranked it in the bottom 10 states in providing online access to government spending data. In 2019, [Delaware received a D+](#).

“Delaware should be striving for an A+ rating, and we’re going

in the wrong direction,” McGuinness said. “As the First State, we should be a leader in fiscal transparency – and that’s why I’ve created this initiative for Delawareans.”

Once it is completely built, the ARP fund tracker will be located on the Auditor’s Office website, at <https://auditor.delaware.gov>.

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