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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SC Ranks No. 9 in National Review of State Transparency Websites

Columbia, S.C. – State Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom's S.C. Fiscal Transparency Website ranks No. 9 nationally in a new report evaluating the quality and user-friendliness of all 50 states' transparency websites.

South Carolina received a "B+" – earning 87 points – in a report issued by two nonprofit good-government advocacy organizations, U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and Frontier Group.

The report lauds South Carolina as an "advancing state" in the field of government financial transparency available online, noting that the Palmetto State employs best practices with a variety of its website features.

In one example, the evaluation included an unannounced search for six specific expenditures. South Carolina is one of only three states whose website "proved comprehensive by hosting all six of the test expenditures in an easily accessible format in the online checkbook for fiscal year 2017," the report says.

It also notes that:

- South Carolina is one of only six states that "post a citizen-accessible financial report on their website," referring to South Carolina's 2017 Popular Annual Financial Report prepared by Eckstrom's office

- The number of open-records requests declined significantly after Eckstrom launched the Palmetto State's transparency website in 2008. That noteworthy decline continues, with the site providing a wealth of spending detail and other financial information available to anyone online, thus rendering many requests for information no longer necessary.

- South Carolina is among a handful of states that "created and update their websites with funds from their existing budgets."

"Some states have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on their transparency websites," Eckstrom says, "but we've always used existing internal resources for our site to save taxpayers money. This report proves that it's not necessary to spend lots of money on a high-priced website to provide high-quality information to the public."

Eckstrom's staff is working to achieve an "A" for the Palmetto State in the 2019 evaluation. "We could make an 'A' this coming year if we receive credit for new information we've recently added that provides details on financial incentives the state awards to attract film productions in South Carolina," he says.

Eckstrom has pioneered transparency in South Carolina since launching his office's site in 2008. He credits the teamwork and dedication of his staff, which built and maintains the site, for making it one of the best in the nation. "A lot of work goes into keeping the site up to date and constantly improving it with information that's not just new but that's also useful to the public," he says. "My staff tackles that challenge head on."

The report ranking South Carolina No. 9 in transparency is on the PIRG website.

In addition to advising other government entities on ways to provide better financial transparency, Eckstrom's office monitors spending by state agencies as a safeguard against them overspending their budgets. His office also processes vendor payments for state agencies; administers and processes the state payroll; and produces the state's comprehensive annual financial report.

Eckstrom is the first certified public accountant to serve as South Carolina's comptroller general.

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