UNITED STATES
COMMON SENSE
making sense of government, policy, and data

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US COMMON SENSE LAUNCHES GOVRANK.ORG, NATIONWIDE FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY PLATFORM

Platform ranks governments; provides free data and sources; includes all states, 13,000+ municipalities, Puerto Rico

Mountain View, CA (March 10, 2016) – Today, United States Common Sense, a data-driven policy group, launched GovRank.org. The platform offers free public access to the financial data of state and local governments across the U.S., as well as their financial records and information about their fiscal performance in the years following the onset of the Great Recession. The organization also researched the nature of fiscal distress and fiscal sustainability, and it developed a framework to compare fiscal performance across governments, making the results available on GovRank's individual government profile pages. The Laura and John Arnold Foundation provided funding support for the project.

 "As a nation, we don't pay attention to fiscal health until we're doing fiscal autopsies," said **Autumn Carter, US Common Sense's Executive Director**. "We've witnessed some high-profile struggles—Stockton, San Bernardino, Detroit, Chicago, California, Illinois—but it would have been better to draw effective attention to their situations before they became so dire. GovRank.org offers the public the best opportunity to reframe our fiscal discussions around forward-looking sustainability, rather backward-looking post-mortems."

GovRank's more than half-million data points and the 100,000 PDF financial audits from which US Common Sense extracted them comprise the largest freely accessible public finance database and financial records repository in the nation. The non-partisan 501(c)(3) non-profit spent a year quietly undertaking the civic engagement initiative, compiling the reports and an additional 70,000 budgets for governments that serve as few as 700 residents, and issuing over 10,000 public records requests. It successfully developed a method to programmatically extract top line financial figures from comprehensive financial records and manually extracted the remainder. The downloadable database includes government revenues, expenses, assets, liabilities, and public employee pension and non-pension liabilities for years dating back to 2008-09, which is the earliest date for which data was broadly available.

GovRank provides percentile rankings of fiscal performance, including an overall rank and three components: budget balance, asset flexibility, and pension funding. Based on its analysis of GovRank data, US Common Sense developed the following findings:

- **Overall worst performing states** (starting with worst): Illinois, Connecticut, New Jersey, Kentucky, Massachusetts, California, Hawaii, Maryland, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin.
- **Overall best performing states** (starting with best): Wyoming, Idaho, Oklahoma, North Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, Montana, Texas, and Indiana
- **Overall worst performing cities with at least 100,000 residents** (starting with worst): Montgomery, AL; Chicago, IL; New York, NY; Houston, TX; Birmingham, AL; Indianapolis, IN; Detroit, MI; Flint, MI; Omaha, NE; and Portland, OR.

Find the platform at GovRank.org.

ABOUT USCS | Founded at Stanford University in 2010, United States Common Sense is a non-partisan non-profit policy group dedicated to opening government data and resources to the public, developing data-driven policy analysis, and educating citizens about how their governments work.

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