



Truth in Accounting Joins FOX45, WJLA, and The Baltimore Sun to Show Marylanders the Full Cost of Government

Nonpartisan analysis of state, county, and city books launches in Maryland; organization invites other local media to bring the same education to audiences

BALTIMORE, MD, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Truth in Accounting, a nonpartisan nonprofit that has analyzed government financial reports since 2002, today announced a joint effort with The Baltimore Sun and Sinclair Broadcast Group stations FOX45 in Baltimore and WJLA in Washington, D.C., including the Spotlight on Maryland investigative unit. The collaboration will examine Maryland's finances from the State House to every county and Baltimore City over time, using governments' own audited numbers, not campaign talking points.

The first piece in the series, a guest commentary by Truth in Accounting founder and CEO Sheila Weinberg, CPA, was published in The Baltimore Sun on August 9, 2026. It walks readers through a distinction most voters never hear: the difference between a short-term "checking account" budget surplus and the long-term bills already on the books, like pensions, retiree health care, and other obligations that official budget narratives often leave out of the discussion.

Using Maryland's own financial reports, Truth in Accounting found the state's shortfall grew from \$23.4 billion, about \$9,700 per household Taxpayer Burden™ in Fiscal Year 2023 data compiled near the end of the Hogan administration, to a \$25.7 billion hole and an \$11,200 per-household Taxpayer Burden™ in the most recent analysis under Gov. Wes Moore. The organization has tracked Maryland's condition since 2009. Full historical data is available at Data-Z.org.

"Marylanders, like Americans everywhere, are being left in the dark about their government's true financial condition," said Weinberg. "We are not here to score political points. We look at the numbers and the rules. Governments have their own accounting standards that households and businesses would never be allowed to use. Governments are required to balance their budgets so citizens can hold elected officials accountable for how they spend public money and so governments do not take on unsustainable debt. But the use of political math has hidden costs and shifted them into the future, leaving taxpayers responsible for debts they had no opportunity to see or evaluate."

A model for newsrooms in every state

The Maryland project is designed as a sustained educational investigation, not a one-day story. Over time, we will surface facts that official briefings tend to obscure, follow the numbers into counties and Baltimore City, and ask the follow-up questions, budgets are written to avoid.

Truth in Accounting is now inviting editors, publishers, and news directors in Maryland and other states to adopt the same model. Truth in Accounting can provide newsrooms with a ready framework: how to read an Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, how pension and retiree-health promises change the surplus-or-deficit story, and how to explain those findings in plain language so voters can judge the books closest to home.

“Most people have little influence over what happens in Washington,” Weinberg said. “They do have a say in their city hall, their county board, and their state capitol. Those are the governments that educate their children, pave their roads, and make pension promises in their name. If those books are incomplete, the public cannot hold anyone accountable. We are offering local media a nonpartisan deep dive their audiences will not get from a campaign press office.”

The invitation is open regardless of a newsroom’s size or political climate. Truth in Accounting does not take positions for or against candidates or parties. It measures whether assets available to pay bills cover the bills already incurred, and it leaves the moral and political conclusions to readers and voters.

What the partnership will cover

In Maryland, the work will include the state government, all 23 counties, and Baltimore City. Analysis will compare cash-basis budget claims with audited financial reports; explain how government accounting rules differ from those applied to corporations and households, including the exemption from ERISA-style pension funding requirements; and place one-time windfalls, federal aid, investment spikes, and accounting maneuvers in context so a pile of cash is not mistaken for a true surplus.

“A true surplus exists only when assets available to pay the bills exceed the government’s bills, including long-term obligations it has already taken on,” Weinberg noted. “Just because you make more money than you spend doesn’t mean you have a surplus if you still have unpaid bills or credit card charges.”

Newsrooms interested in a similar series for their state, local government or school board can reach Truth in Accounting at the contact below. [The August 9 commentary](#) is available at The Baltimore Sun.

About Truth in Accounting

Founded in 2002, Truth in Accounting is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit headquartered in the Chicago area. Its mission is to educate and empower citizens with understandable, reliable, and

transparent government financial information. The organization analyzes the audited financial reports of the federal government, all 50 states, and the nation's largest cities, and publishes the annual Financial State of the States and related reports. Data-Z (data-z.org), a project of Truth in Accounting, makes the underlying data available to journalists, legislators, researchers, and the public. Truth in Accounting receives no funding from state or local governments.

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