



TREASURER OF STATE

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For Immediate Release

Treasurer Milligan announces quarterly returns, growth of College Savings Program

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As we approach tax season, I'm ever mindful of the responsibility that we all have to take care of our financial burdens. I'm also cognizant that everyone has those burdens, whether large or small, and none of us enjoy paying a portion of our hard-earned money to Uncle Sam.

As a small businessman and real estate developer, I have a keen interest in finance. It's a major part, if not the most important thing, you have to think about when running a company. You must be attentive to the financial needs of your business – both the expected and the unexpected – to run one successfully.

That's why when I was elected as your State Treasurer, I challenged my investment team to think outside the box for ways that we could boost returns on the state's \$3 billion investment portfolio. Prior to my election, the receipted amounts for the Treasurer of State's office had hit a lull.

During my first full year in office, I was able to more than double our receipted returns, ending fiscal 2016 with more than \$48.9 million. Treasury receipts haven't been that high since 2008.

My office is on track to produce similar results for fiscal 2017. As I reported to the State Board of Finance earlier this month, we're actually ahead of where we were at this point last year by about \$5.5 million. We hope to show a steady increase in the State's receipted amounts in the years to come depending, obviously, on the economy and federal interest rates.

But the bottom line is that we've retained enough to grow, even if you count for some unexpected economic changes. I'm excited about where we're headed.

Also in the second quarter, we had some exciting news regarding the state's college-savings program that my office oversees.

The Arkansas 529 Program allows you to deduct up to \$10,000 per married couple or \$5,000 per individual in contributions from your state income taxes. This is essentially tax-free money put into a 529 account that our children or grandchildren can use toward their education expenses after high school.

The program is so flexible that it applies not only to traditional colleges and universities, but to trade and vocational schools as well. The money can be withdrawn and used for a variety of education expenses beyond tuition, including trade-specific tools and supplies, computers and textbooks.

During my time in office, the Arkansas 529 Program has seen tremendous growth. From January 2015 to January 2017, my office grew the Arkansas 529 Program's total assets by \$130 million. That's nearly a 23 percent increase.

What this means is that we have more families saving for their children's post-secondary education here in Arkansas. And with tuition rates on a steady incline, it's encouraging to know that more students will have access to higher education – whether it's through a four-year college or a two-year technical school.

Those are just a few of the things we've been working on in the Treasurer's office over the past few months. I vowed when I ran as your State Treasurer that I would bring more transparency to the office, and I look forward to continuing to do that.