As we approach tax season, I’m ever mindful of the responsibility that we all have to take care of our financial burdens. I think we can all agree that none of us enjoy paying a portion of our hard-earned money to Uncle Sam.

Not only are we coming up on tax season, but April is also Financial Literacy Month. Being a small businessman, I’ve always had an interest in finance. It’s a major part of running a company. Preparing for both the expected and unexpected financial needs is critical if you want to succeed.

When I ran for Treasurer, I vowed to bring more of a focus to financial education. According to the FDIC, Arkansas had the third-highest percentage of unbanked people in the nation in 2011. While the percentage of Arkansas’s unbanked population has declined since then, we still have some half-a-million people living in poverty and some of the lowest credit scores in the nation. That causes me great concern.

Having the ability to manage your finances, balance a budget and live within your means can really bring a person peace of mind. Along with education, it’s a highly important step on the path to independence for young adults, in my opinion.

Historically, treasurer’s offices across the country have addressed financial literacy in various ways.

It’s for these reasons that I am proud to have implemented, under the umbrella of the Arkansas 529 Program, a financial education curriculum for Arkansas students. AR Finance AR Future is a computer-based curriculum that teaches the basics of financial literacy to students and is offered for free to schools across the state.

Since its creation in October 2015, more than 15,000 students throughout the state have completed 53,775 learning modules through the program. Students in 42 Arkansas counties are using the program, but I’d love for school districts in all 75 counties to implement it.

AR Finance AR Future allows schools free access to financial education software that students in grades fourth through sixth can use. Topics include responsible money choices, income and careers, planning and money management, credit and borrowing, financing higher education, and insurance and safety management. Upon successful completion, students receive a certificate of achievement.

One of the most encouraging insights that we’ve heard is that these students are going back home and teaching their parents what they’ve learned through these programs. We’re educating more families on the importance of being in control of their finances, rather than having their finances controlling them, and that is really encouraging.

Having a clear understanding of budgeting, saving and spending can lay the foundation for students to become independent adults who are better equipped to weather and overcome financial hardships.

This is about our future: our children and our grandchildren. AR Finance AR Future is just one of the programs my office administers that is focused on improving the lives of Arkansas children.

With so many Arkansans living paycheck to paycheck, not having a solid financial understanding can be detrimental to a family. I hope that through my office’s work with the Arkansas 529 College-Savings Board on higher education and financial literacy, we’re able to have a positive influence on Arkansas families and their finances.

*Dennis Milligan was elected Treasurer of State in 2014. The State Treasury is responsible for overseeing the state’s $3.8 billion portfolio. Since 2015, the Treasury has receipted the state more than $70 million in investment returns – the largest returns in nearly a decade. Milligan is also a member of the Arkansas 529 College-Savings Board and oversees the Arkansas 529 Program, which has experienced a $130 million increase in assets since he took office.*