

# ALABAMA POLITICAL REPORTER

## **Bentley Receives Failing Grade on Fiscal Conservatism From CATO Institute**

Chip Brownlee

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The Governor's performance as a fiscal conservative has been graded, and he is taking home a report card with a big fat F.

The right-wing libertarian CATO Institute gave Alabama Governor Robert Bentley an F on his fiscal policy report card for 2016.

CATO ranks every governor in the United States on fiscal policy every other year, giving A's and B's to governor's they deem fiscally conservative and failing grades to governors whom they don't.

Bentley, a Republican who ran on fiscal conservatism and family values during both of his gubernatorial campaigns (2010 and 2014), was one of ten US governors who received an F from the Institute.

The Governor dropped from a B on 2014's report card to an F on this year's report card. His failing grade was because of his 2015 plan for major tax increases in the State, in order to make up for a \$200-million hole in the State's General Fund.

"In his first few years in office, Bentley generally opposed tax increases, but in 2015 he made a U-turn," the Institute wrote in their report card. "He proposed a tax increase of more than \$500 million a year, including increases on businesses, cigarettes, automobile sales/rentals, and other items."

Instead of trying to raise taxes in the State, the CATO Institute said Bentley should have tried to cut spending. CATO blamed Bentley for "substantial General Fund increases in the past two years."

The Institute didn't cut Bentley a break, even considering he runs a State in which income, sales and property taxes are already extremely low compared to others ' not to mention ballooning Medicaid costs and the State's consistent inability to support its General Fund.

"With the growing revenues of recent years, most states have balanced their short-term budgets without major problems, but many states face large challenges ahead," the Institute's Chris

Edwards said. “Medicaid costs are rising, and federal aid for this huge health program will likely be reduced in coming years.”

Bentley’s failing grade joined nine other state governors: Peter Shumlin, D-Vermont; Jerry Brown, D-California; David Ige, D-Hawaii; Dan Malloy, D-Connecticut; Dennis Daugaard, R-South Dakota; Brian Sandoval, R-Nevada; Kate Brown, D-Oregon; Jay Inslee, D-Washington; and Tom Wolf, D-Pennsylvania.

Bentley, Daugaard, and Sandoval were the only Republicans who received failing grades from CATO, an institute known for its hardline fiscal conservatism. No Democrats received an A on their report card.

Five received A’s: Paul LePage, R-Maine; Pat McCrory, R-North Carolina; Rick Scott, R-Florida; Doug Ducey, R-Arizona; and vice presidential candidate Mike Pence, R-Indiana.