



## Fiscal Report Card Gives Illinois Governor an 'F'

*By Patrick Burke - October 9, 2012*

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**(CNSNews.com)** -- A fiscal report card from the Cato Institute gave Illinois's Democratic Governor Pat Quinn the lowest rating for fiscal policy performance, primarily for signing three separate tax increases into law, as well as increasing government spending.

The report card, which is released every two years, was conducted by Cato's director of Tax Policy Studies, Chris Edwards, and "grades governors on their fiscal policies from a limited-government perspective." (Cato is a libertarian think tank "dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace," reads its Web site.)

Governors were also evaluated based only on short-term budgetary and taxing actions from January 2010-August 2012, and long-term structural initiatives were not taken into account.

In addition to Gov. Quinn, four other Democratic governors were awarded an 'F' grade: Dan Malloy of Connecticut, Mark Dayton of Minnesota, Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii, and Chris Gregoire of Washington.

Typically, governors were given higher grades on a 100-point scale, which were then converted to letter grades, for reducing taxes and spending less. Lower marks were given to those who increased spending and taxes, and added incentives and credits to the tax code.

No Republican governors received "F" grades. However, three GOP governors did get a "D" -- Arizona's Jan Brewer, Utah's Gary Herbert, and Tennessee's Bill Haslam.

Four Republican governors -- Sam Brownback of Kansas, Rick Scott of Florida, Paul LePage of Maine, and Tom Corbett of Pennsylvania -- received an "A" grade in the report card. The highest ranking Democratic governor was John Lynch of New Hampshire, who got a "B," the same as Louisiana's GOP Gov. Bobby Jindal.

The report card claimed that Gov. Quinn's fiscal performance was not much better than that of his predecessor Rod Blagojevich (D-Ill.)

"In 2009 Quinn signed a \$1.1 billion per year tax increase, which included higher taxes on beer, wine, liquor, candy, beverages, hygiene products, and video gaming. In 2011 he pushed through a massive tax increase of \$7.3 billion a year, which included higher individual income taxes, corporate taxes, and estate taxes," according to the report card.

Quinn was also criticized for giving corporate tax incentives apparently in response to businesses such as Sears and Motorola wanting to leave Illinois.

Sam Brownback and Rick Scott both received the highest grades out of the 48 governors who were evaluated. Brownback cut income taxes and eliminated what the report card called, "numerous special interest tax breaks."

In the case of Scott, the report card gave him a high score for vetoing spending bills and setting the stage for a complete elimination of corporate taxes in Florida.

"Former health care entrepreneur Rick Scott has pursued reforms on both the spending and tax sides of the Florida budget," the report card said.

The praise for Rick Scott continued, "Scott has vetoed hundreds of millions of dollars of unneeded spending, put in place pension reforms for state workers, and cut state government employment by about 4 percent," reads the report. "He also wisely rejected federal subsidies for a high-speed rail system."

"Scott has proposed an initial cut in the corporate tax rate from 5.5 to 3.0 percent, followed by a complete repeal of the tax by 2018," states the report.

Gov. Scott Walker (R-Wisc), who received a "B," was complimented for his reforms as they relate to public sector unions. However, the report card was critical of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), which it described as "corporate welfare."

"Governor Walker has shown himself to be an outstanding reformer with his pension and labor union changes, but he should focus his energies on fundamental tax reforms rather than WEDC-style giveaways," the report card said.

The average scores of Republican and Democratic governors were 57 and 43, respectively.