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Maine Gov. Scores Highest On CATO's 'Fiscal Report Card for Governors'

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October 6, 2016

Republican Governor of Maine Paul LePage took the number one spot in the Cato Institute's 13th *Fiscal Report Card on the Governors* released on Tuesday, receiving an "A" from the non-profit public policy research organization for being "a staunch fiscal conservative".

The biennial report grades governors in the United States based on their records of taxing and spending from a "limited government perspective".

"Paul LePage of Maine has been a staunch fiscal conservative," the report stated. "He has held down spending growth, and state government employment has fallen 9 percent since he took office.

"LePage has been a persistent tax cutter," the report continued. "In 2011 he approved large income tax cuts, which reduced the top individual rate and simplified tax brackets. In 2015 he vetoed a tax-cut plan passed by the legislature partly because the cut was not large enough. The legislature overrode him, and Maine enjoyed another income tax reduction.

"In 2016 LePage pushed for more reforms, including estate tax repeal and further income tax rate cuts," it noted.

LePage has served as Maine's 73rd governor since 2011. He was reelected for a second term in 2014.

The report ranks the nation's governors based on fiscal data gathered between January 2014 and August 2016. Grades were assigned to each governor based on their "success at restraining taxes and spending since 2014, or since 2015 for governors entering office that year."

Seven variables were used to measure each governor's performance: two on spending, one on revenue, and four on tax rates. Each score was based on the average of the three variable categories.

Other Republican governors who received an "A" grade on the *Fiscal Report Card* included Pat McCrory of North Carolina, Rick Scott of Florida, Doug Ducey of Arizona, and GOP vice-presidential nominee Mike Pence from Indiana.

However, Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania Tom Wolf scored the lowest of all 47 governors surveyed due to his numerous proposals to increase state spending and taxes despite the fact that Pennsylvania has one of the lowest state credit ratings from Standard and Poor's, the Cato report pointed out.

Other governors who received failing grades from the think tank include Jay Inslee of Washington, Kate Brown of Oregon, Brian Sandoval of Nevada, and Dennis Daugaard of South Dakota.

Governors receiving an 'A' have focused on reducing tax burdens and restraining spending. Governors receiving an 'F' have put government expansion ahead of the public's need to keep its hard-earned money“Governors receiving an 'A' have focused on reducing tax burdens and restraining spending. Governors receiving an 'F' have put government expansion ahead of the public's need to keep its hard-earned money,” the report explained.

“Supporters of smaller government lament that politicians of both major parties tax and spend too much,” it continued. “While that is true, Cato report cards have found that Republican governors are more fiscally conservative, on average, than Democratic governors.”

The report did not include Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin or Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards due to both having been in office only a short period of time. Alaska Governor Bill Walker was also not included in the rankings due to "peculiarities" in his state's budget.