

HONOLULU

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Libertarians Give Ige An ‘F’

The Cato Institute evaluates the nation’s governors based on fiscal restraint.

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In its 13th biennial fiscal report card, the libertarian [Cato Institute](#) awarded Hawaii Gov. David Ige an “F” when it comes to fiscal responsibility.

Here’s what the institute’s Chris Edwards had to say on Ige, based on statistical data of the governor’s taxing and spending record during the period January 2014 to August 2016:

- David Ige defeated prior Hawaii governor, Neil Abercrombie, in the Democratic primary in 2014. Abercrombie had received poor grades on Cato reports, and Ige pointed to his tax hikes as one of the causes of his political demise.
- Ige let expire temporary income tax increases put in place by Abercrombie, but he proposed increases in gasoline taxes and vehicle registration fees in 2016. However, it was the governor’s excessive spending that pushed down his grade on this report. General fund spending rose 7 percent in 2016, and Ige proposed to increase it 12 percent in 2017.

Nine other governors also received an “F” in the institute’s [2016 report card](#): Robert Bentley of Alabama, Peter Shumlin of Vermont, Jerry Brown of California, Dan Malloy of Connecticut, Dennis Daugaard of South Dakota, Brian Sandoval of Nevada, Kate Brown of Oregon, Jay Inslee of Washington and Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania.

Top “A” scores went to governors “who have pursued fiscal reforms to make their states more competitive”: Paul LePage of Maine, Pat McCrory of North Carolina, Rick Scott of Florida, Doug Ducey of Arizona and Mike Pence of Indiana.

“The top-scoring governors in this year’s report are restraining spending and cutting tax rates, which is crucial in our competitive global economy,” Edwards said in a press release.

“Unfortunately, the report also found poor-scoring governors who are jacking up spending even though their states already face fiscal troubles from high debt and unfunded retirement liabilities.”

The Cato Institute is a think tank with ties to Charles Koch of Koch Brothers fame, founders and funders of a number of libertarian and conservative organizations.

The Ige administration offered no immediate reaction to the report. The governor previously served as chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

But Keli Akina, president of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, said his think tank has warned Hawaii's leaders "about the long-term impact of increased spending — especially when the budget is built on overly optimistic projections."

He added, "The governor deserves credit for taking initial steps towards dealing with the state's unfunded liabilities, something that should be considered in evaluating his fiscal policy. But Hawaii citizens deserve more. The governor should look to raise his grade by abandoning any proposals to increase taxes and cutting — not expanding — state spending."

Akina is running for an Office of Hawaiian Affairs seat this fall.