



Gov. Herbert Gets "D" For Fiscal Responsibility In Libertarian Report

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A new report from the libertarian think tank Cato Institute gave Utah Governor Gary Herbert a "D" grade for fiscal responsibility. But Herbert's campaign manager says a closer look at how the organization came to that conclusion tells a different story.

The report gave Herbert low marks for last year's 9 percent increase in the state budget and 20 percent increase in state government employment since the governor took office in 2009.

Herbert's campaign spokesman Marty Carpenter says the numbers are misleading, noting the state has added more teachers because the student population in Utah grows by about 10 percent every year.

"We're one of the youngest populations in the country and it's a challenge that we face," Carpenter says. "But you take teachers out of that mix and count it as just state employees and we have fewer state employees now per capita than we had when the governor took office."

Herbert's Democratic Challenger, Mike Weinholtz has accused Governor Herbert of failing to invest enough in public education. Utah schools remain dead last in student spending.

Carpenter says the 9 percent increase in the state budget over the last year is the result of a healthy economy, in which people are working and spending more. He adds Utah's tax burden has only diminished over the past 20 years.

"So just looking at it and saying well, the state budget increased, therefore something bad is happening, quite the opposite," Carpenter says. "The state budget is increasing because a lot of great things are happening in our state."

The report also criticized Herbert for approving a gas tax and property tax increase. Those increases were passed to help maintain transportation infrastructure and provide more funding for rural schools, respectively.