



## Debunking Mike Huckabee's 'I Cut Taxes' Claim

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A former Republican governor who cut taxes nearly 100 times while in office?

That's a resume likely to appeal to conservative voters — which is probably why former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee presents himself that way.

In fact, he raised taxes more than he cut them.

Huckabee — who [announced his candidacy](#) for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination — spent 10 years as governor of Arkansas, and he has touted his tenure as one of tax cuts and responsible spending.

In truth, the Arkansas governor raised taxes during his time in office for a net increase of [more than \\$500 million](#). For the average Arkansas resident, state and local taxes jumped a whopping [47 percent](#) from 1997 to 2005. The [Club for Growth](#) reports that Huckabee raised fuel taxes by 16 percent, the sales tax by 37 percent and cigarette taxes by 103 percent.

How does he get away with calling himself a tax cutter?

When he ran for the Republican nomination in 2007, he repeatedly cited cutting taxes [94 times](#). In a [video](#) released in preparation for his 2016 announcement, Huckabee states plainly, “As governor of Arkansas, I cut taxes.” In his announcement speech, he again cited his 94 tax cuts.

Huckabee did cut taxes 94 times — not only by cutting [capital gains](#) and increasing the child tax credit, but on things like [lawn care and greyhound betting](#) — cuts that did not come close in value to the governor's 21 tax increases.

One of those 94 tax cuts was a sales tax exemption for the Salvation Army amounting to just [\\$15,000 annually](#); another was a [\\$20,000 exemption](#) for the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra; yet another was a \$76,000 income tax deduction related to organ donation.

As Michael Dobbs of the Washington Post pointed out in a 2008 [column](#), Arkansas ranked 30th in the nation for the highest taxes when Huckabee assumed office in 1996. When he departed office in 2008, the state had jumped to the 13th spot.

To say that Huckabee cut taxes as governor is to ignore the other half of the fiscal equation. Huckabee's 94 tax cuts, worth \$378 million, were completely offset by his [\\$883 million](#) in tax increases.

The reality of Huckabee's taxing past is not news; his claims regarding his fiscal record received a thorough shellacking at the hands of critics when he ran for the Republican nomination in 2008. Yet he continues to promote the fiction that he was a tax-cutting governor.

When pressed, he'll admit the tax hikes, citing a Democratic legislature, the [need to govern](#), a judicial mandate to increase education spending and [roads in need of repair](#). Many Huckabee foes take issue with those excuses — for example, the Club for Growth [contends](#) Arkansas' court-ordered obligation to change its education financing system did not prevent the state from using spending cuts, rather than tax increases, to generate funds. And in a 2006 [report](#) that gave the Arkansas governor a "D" for fiscal policy, the Cato Institute criticized Huckabee's tax-and-spend record, noting that he was proposing tax increases in 2002 to counteract a deficit caused in part by his own spending increases. The report concluded bluntly, "Huckabee's leadership has left taxpayers in Arkansas much worse off."

For Huckabee to paint his record as that of a tax cutter is deceptive. And while he may be able to justify the tax hikes, can he justify his misleading rhetoric? Given his questionable claims on his tax record, voters will have to take a hard look at his other stands to see if they comport with his actions as governor.