

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

A Conservative Contender

While Bush and Romney get headlines, a midwestern governor builds a case for 2016.

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January 15, 2015

Media coverage of Republican presidential contenders has lately been dominated by [Mitt Romney](#) and [Jeb Bush](#), former governors who have not won elective office in more than a decade. Meanwhile, a current GOP governor has been scoring impressive victories on behalf of limited government and economic growth.

Indiana's Mike Pence may be the most taxpayer-friendly governor in the country. Elected in 2012, Mr. Pence has already killed the state's death tax and enacted a plan that will slash the corporate income tax rate to 4.9% from 6.5%. He's also secured a reduction in business property taxes and a modest cut in Indiana's personal income tax rate to 3.23% from 3.4%.

And he's done it while maintaining a state budget surplus, a tradition he intends to continue. In this week's State of the State address in Indianapolis, Gov. Pence called for a balanced-budget amendment to the Indiana constitution. Balancing government budgets is an issue that has fallen off the media radar since the 2011 fight over the federal debt limit, but remains highly popular among grass-roots conservatives, i.e. Republican primary voters.

The Hoosier chief executive has also been aggressively cutting state regulations as he seeks to lure companies from less business-friendly jurisdictions. A favorite marketing slogan: "New York, New York: If you can make it there, you can make a lot more of it here."

Indiana has been among the leaders in private-sector job growth since the recession ended in 2009. And during a recent visit to the Journal, Mr. Pence was quick to credit his predecessor [Mitch Daniels](#) for laying "the foundation" for the state's success. It's also true that Mike Pence isn't the only midwestern governor pursuing a growth agenda.

But Mr. Pence is the only 2016 contender to earn a flat A on the libertarian Cato Institute's most recent Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors, which means he's been able to restrain spending, not just taxes. The Pence resume also includes election to six terms in the U.S. House, where he rose to a leadership position as Chairman of the Republican Conference.

If Gov. Pence decides to run, he will have a compelling story to tell. He's one more reason why the Republican field in 2016 could be the party's strongest in decades.

