



A scorecard on the governors that want to beat Trump in the 2020 presidential election

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As the Democratic presidential candidates spar in the first debate leading up to the 2020 election, focus is on the governors who want to beat President Donald Trump and their individual accomplishments. Of the 45 U.S. presidents, 16 were previously governors (plus William Howard Taft, who was governor of the U.S. territory of the Philippines). But in 2020, of the two dozen or so people who are running for president or are rumored to be considering it, only four are current or former governors. Two are Democrats and two are Republicans.

Each has a track record, particularly when it comes to business and the economy. And the annual CNBC America's Top States for Business study offers some valuable insight into how they did.

The study, conducted every year since 2007 under a consistent methodology, measures the states in 10 categories of competitiveness. Here's a scorecard that shows how the governors who would be president did in terms of growing their states' economy and spurring job growth, while managing public health, education, infrastructure and housing development. It also notes the business and social causes they are championing.

Jay Inslee



Democrat

Washington (2013–present)

The 23rd governor of Washington State has made battling climate change the centerpiece of his presidential campaign. But as governor, now in his second term, Jay Inslee has tackled a wide variety of issues while dealing with a very closely divided state legislature. Inslee and the legislature have done battle on fiscal and budget issues, including how to comply with a court order to properly fund the state's schools. Infrastructure and high costs are persistent issues, largely tied to the state's surging economy. The Evergreen State has had the nation's fastest-growing economy for the past three years and was America's Top State for Business in 2017, all during Inslee's tenure.

- MOST RECENT TOP STATES RANK AS GOVERNOR: No. 2 (2018)
- MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Minimum-wage Increase, stronger worker protections, economic growth
- COMPETITIVE CHALLENGES: Education, infrastructure, costs, housing

John Hickenlooper



Democrat

Colorado (2011–2019)

The 42nd governor of Colorado inherited a strong state economy, and he built on that during his two terms in office. John Hickenlooper opposed the legalization of marijuana in Colorado, passed in a referendum during his first term, but he later conceded that the law appears to be working. Hickenlooper has built on the state's move toward a green economy, but the former geologist has bucked his party and come out in favor of hydraulic fracking. A former Denver mayor who co-founded a chain of brew pubs, Hickenlooper has called himself a fiscal

conservative. He helped broker a compromise with legislators to close a massive pension funding gap. Colorado is a perennial contender in our Top States for Business rankings.

- MOST RECENT TOP STATES RANK AS GOVERNOR: No. 5 (2018)
- MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Economic growth, job growth, rural development
- COMPETITIVE CHALLENGES: Education funding, infrastructure, costs

William Weld



Republican

Massachusetts (1991–1997)

The only Republican who has formally announced his candidacy to unseat Trump, Bill Weld's term as the 68th governor of Massachusetts predates America's Top States for Business by 10 years. But Weld's legacy was still fresh when we began our study in 2007. An unabashedly pro-business governor, Weld helped cement Massachusetts' role as a technology hub during the 1990s tech boom. Weld was socially liberal as governor, supporting abortion rights and gun control. But he was a fiscal conservative and had the credentials to prove it. He tied for first place with then-Vermont governor Howard Dean in the Cato Institute's fiscal restraint rankings in 1996, his last full year in office. Overall that year, the right-leaning organization gave Weld a B for fiscal policy.

- MOST RECENT TOP STATES RANK AS GOVERNOR: N/A
- MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Economic growth, expanded trade
- COMPETITIVE CHALLENGES: Budget shortfalls, health care

John Kasich



Republican

Ohio (2011–2019)

The 69th governor of Ohio and the last candidate to drop out of the 2016 Republican presidential primary, Kasich has lately been sending signals that he will not take on Trump again in 2020, saying in May that he does not see a path to victory in a party that is squarely behind the president. Nonetheless, his supporters have not given up, Kasich has not ruled out a run, and he still maintains a campaign-style website. In his two terms as Ohio governor, Kasich cut taxes and revamped the state's economic development efforts. But he was not successful in reforming the state's onerous legal system. Unlike his fellow Republican governors in the Midwest, Kasich did not pursue a right-to-work law that unions oppose. The state also suffered from quality-of-life issues, including crime and pollution.

- MOST RECENT TOP STATES RANK AS GOVERNOR: No. 15 (2018)
- MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Economic growth, tax cuts, economic development
- COMPETITIVE CHALLENGES: Business friendliness, heavy union presence, quality of life