



Washington Examiner

This GOP Governor Beats Desantis and Abbott on Conservative Scorecard

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October 14, 2022

Fifteen different governors beat Gov. Ron DeSantis and Greg Abbott on the CATO Institute's fiscal-conservative scorecard, with one governor from a state viewed as competitive for both parties coming out on top.

The two conservative stars got a low grade of C, behind 10 governors given a B and five governors given an A. The Florida and Texas governors' scores were equal to those of some Democratic governors, as well as Gov. Kristi Noem (R-SD). Gov. Kim Reynolds (R-IA) received the highest marks.

"This report grades governors on their fiscal policies from a limited-government perspective. Governors receiving an A are those who have cut taxes and spending the most, whereas governors receiving an F have increased taxes and spending the most. The grading mechanism is based on seven variables: two spending variables, one revenue variable, and four tax-rate variables," the report reads. "Cato has used the same methodology on its state fiscal reports since 2008."

LEE QUESTIONS ACCURACY OF CATO INSTITUTE REPORT CARD, METHODOLOGY

The scorecard, which does not take into account social-conservative measures and instead measures only the tax and spending policies of the governors, said DeSantis's score stemmed in part from his inability to enact aggressive tax cuts.

"As Florida governor, DeSantis has taken many fiscally conservative actions. His middling grade on this report reflects that his tax cuts have not been as large as the cuts in many other states recently," the report read. "DeSantis scores above average on spending. He has proposed lean budgets, although the legislature has passed higher spending levels. Between 2019 and 2023, general fund spending rose at an annual average rate of about 3.1 percent."

Abbott received similar criticisms.

"He scores lower in this Cato report than in prior ones partly because many states have passed large state-level tax cuts in recent years and Texas has not," according to the report. "Abbott has supported property tax cuts, but local taxes are not scored on the Cato report."

DeSantis, Abbott, and Noem were ranked alongside six Democratic governors: Govs. Tony Evers of Wisconsin, John Bel Edwards of Louisiana, Janet Mills of Maine, Laura Kelly of Kansas, Jared Polis of Colorado, David Ige of Hawaii, and Steve Sisolak of Nevada. Two Democrats, Roy Cooper of North Carolina and Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico, even ranked above the three, earning B ratings.

Notably, Republican Govs. Bill Lee of Tennessee, Kay Ivey of Alabama, Phil Scott of Vermont, and Mike Parson of Missouri received D ratings.

No Republicans were given an F rating, while no Democrat was given an A rating.