

## Navigate:

- [POLITICO](#)
- [Ben Smith](#)
- Cato rates Pawlenty, Daniels, Barbour

Main Content

# [Cato rates Pawlenty, Daniels, Barbour](#)

Ben Smith

The libertarian Cato Institute just issues [a round of grades](#) to governors, including presidential candidates, on their adherence to the fiscal policy it prefers -- essentially, cutting spending rather than raising taxes or borrowing when revenues dip.

Tim Pawlenty got an "A" for his anti-tax stance and "frugal" budgeting; Mitch Daniels got a "B," with points off because "he seems to focus more on balancing the state budget than shrinking the size of government."

And Haley Barbour got a C:

Governor Barbour has a conservative reputation, but his tax and spending record over seven years as governor has not been very conservative.

Barbour has proposed some small tax breaks and blocked some tax increases proposed by the legislature, but he has not pushed for pro-growth reforms such as marginal tax rate cuts.

Barbour signed into law a tax increase on hospitals in 2008 and a tax increase on cigarettes of 50 cents per pack in 2009. With regard to the hospital tax, Barbour said, "It's a good, fair deal that taxes the hospitals, not our citizens--and rightly so."

But, of course, the cost of higher taxes collected from hospitals will ultimately fall on citizens.

On spending, Barbour oversaw large increases in the budget before the recent recession. General fund spending soared 43 per-cent between FY04 and FY08. But the recession has forced governors to cut back, and Barbour's proposed spending for FY11 is down 14 percent from the FY08 peak.