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## Cato releases 2010 Governors Report Card (additional thoughts added)

*This was originally posted yesterday, but I'm bumping it because it was [linked today by Jim Galloway over at the AJC](#) and I've added some additional thoughts at the bottom of the post.*

The [Cato Institute](#) released its bi-annual *Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors*. I've got a [write-up on it over at United Liberty](#), but I wanted to touch on Gov. Sonny Perdue's score here.

While I don't mean trash Chris Edwards, the author of the report, because has done incredible work at the [Downsizing the Federal Government](#) project, I have to disagree with his take on Perdue, who gets a "B" on fiscal policy.

Edwards [writes](#) (p. 17):

Governor Perdue is sometimes a tax hiker and sometimes a tax cutter. He began his tenure by supporting substantial tax increases, but he then reversed course and supported modest cuts in 2007 and 2008. In 2009, he supported a package of business tax "incentives," but then vetoed more substantial pro-growth tax cuts, including cuts to the capital gains tax and corporate net worth tax. In 2010, Perdue signed into law a tax increase on hospitals, and then cut property taxes and taxes on retirement income. Purdue has a good record on spending and has presided over substantial cuts to the state's general fund budget since it peaked in fiscal 2008.

After his two years in office, Perdue was given a "D" for fiscal policy. Stephen Moore, who authored that report along with Stephen Slivinski, [called for Perdue's impeachment at the National Review](#) for proposing tax hikes within hours of being sworn into office.

He was given a "C" in 2006 and a "B" in 2008. I understand the methodology they're using, which is to look at year-to-year increases in spending. However, characterizing Perdue's record on spending as "good" is incredibly misleading. When you look at the longer term picture, as [evidenced by the chart below from the Georgia Public Policy Foundation](#), the right term to use is "status-quo."

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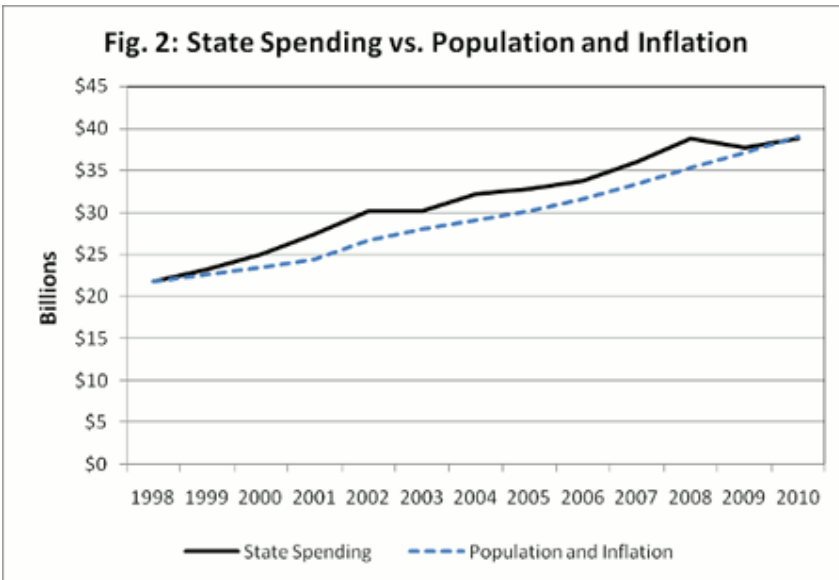


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As I've said before, the reason spending cuts due to the recession, which have brought the budget to a sustainable course, have been so difficult these last two sessions is because Perdue and the Republican legislature decided not to reform the budget process.

How have other Georgia Governors done on this report?

1992: Zell Miller (D) - C

1994: Zell Miller (D) - B

1996: Zell Miller (D) - C

1998: Zell Miller (D) - C

2000: Roy Barnes (D) - C

2002: Roy Barnes (D) - B

2004: Sonny Perdue (R) - D

2006: Sonny Perdue (R) - C

2008: Sonny Perdue (R) - B

2010: Sonny Perdue (R) - B

[MORE THOUGHTS] After writing yesterday, I felt like I need to add a couple of points. Another interesting exclusion from the Cato report is any mention of the billions stimulus dollars that Gov. Perdue accepted, the same funds he said could hurt Georgia over the long term, likely due to required tax hikes from strings attached. I don't see how you can possibly leave that off when reviewing a Governor's fiscal policy, especially from a libertarian standpoint.

Another point long the same is line is that Cato has not measured, at least from what I can tell, is the acceptance of federal funds into the state's budget. These are funds that would be separate from the stimulus, and not including these funds would make Gov. Perdue look more fiscally prudent than he really is. The Georgia Public Policy Foundation has measured those numbers (see above) and it shows state spending to be unsustainable.

As I noted a few months ago, the state budget for FY 2011 is said to be \$17.8 billion. Sure, but that's just the state funds. It doesn't include the \$12.8 billion we're getting from Washington, DC. The FY 2011 is actually over \$38.5 billion, up from \$34.9 billion in FY 2010.

If living off the funds from the federal government makes a Governor have "a good record on spending," then I'm going to agree with what New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson

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record on spending, then I'm going to agree with what New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson has previously said about the report.

Posted by Jason on October 1, 2010 11:30 AM | [Permalink](#)

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