

CATO gives Crist a 'D', Jindal an 'A' on fiscal report card for governors

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Want to see how your state's governor ranks when it comes to increasing taxes and spending? The CATO Institute has made that easy for you. It took seconds to determine that Florida, the state where **The US Report** is based, has a governor, Charlie Crist, who earned a grade of 'D.'

CATO has introduced the latest Policy Analysis, *'Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors: 2010.'* After noting 'tough choices' dictated by the economy for states, CATO explained, "That is the backdrop to this 10th biennial fiscal report card of the governors, which examines state budget actions since 2008. It uses statistical data to grade the governors on their taxing and spending records — governors who have cut taxes and spending the most receive the highest grades, while those who have increased taxes and spending the most receive the lowest grades."

CATO is a libertarian think tank, not in the political party sense of the word, but in the small government, free market sense.

Four governors got an 'A.' Republicans Mark Sanford of South Carolina, Bobby Jindal of Louisiana and Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota got the top grade. Joe Manchin of West Virginia was the only Democrat in the group. As an aside, considering Manchin's state had the late Democrat senator Robert Byrd bringing home more pork from U.S. taxpayers than any other in US history, Manchin may have had a leg up from the federal government when it came to budgeting.

Among those adjudged complete failures with a grade of 'F' were: Democrats Pat Quinn of Illinois, Jim Doyle of Wisconsin and Bill Ritter of Colorado. Of the seven governors receiving an 'F,' only one was a Republican.

Chris Edwards, Director of Tax Policy Studies at CATO, said in the introduction to the policy report, "Across the 50 states, recent tax increases have been by far the largest in many years. Many states raised taxes even though the federal government showered them with billions of dollars of added funding in last year's 'stimulus' bill."

That 'stimulus' probably won't be there when the next fiscal year rolls around. Cuts that could have been made this year have been postponed.

Crist is running for a US Senate seat in Florida as a no party affiliate candidate. The frontrunner in that race is Marco Rubio, a Republican who is former speaker of the Florida House. Floridians have seen property taxes and insurance rates rise, and electricity rates are skyrocketing in many cities on Crist's watch.

Most fiscal conservatives believe governors will have to confront reality sooner or later. Edwards wrote, “Further budget cuts are needed to deal with these problems. At the same time, rising competition in the global economy calls for the states to reduce their business taxes to attract investment.”

CATO has the **grade for each governor** and the complete policy analysis available online.
(Filed by Kay B. Day/Oct. 4, 2010; Source: *The CATO Institute*.)

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