



Cato Institute ranks LePage among top four U.S. governors on fiscal policy

By Steve Robinson

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The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank headquartered in Washington, D.C., released its 2014 Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors.

Maine Gov. Paul LePage received top marks from Cato with a score of "A". Only three other governors — Gov. Sam Brownback of Kansas, Gov. Pat McCrory of North Carolina, and Gov. Mike Pence of Indiana — received the same top score.

"The recession of 2007–2009 knocked the wind out of state government budgets, but revenues and spending have grown steadily in recent years," wrote Cato's Nicole Kaeding and Chris Edwards. "As revenues have risen, some governors have pursued reforms to reduce tax burdens on families and make their states more competitive. Other governors have used rising revenues to expand programs."

According to Cato, the grades were calculated based on the governors' tax and spending policies. Governors who lowered spending and taxes received higher grades than governors who raised taxes and increased spending.

"Paul LePage of Maine pushed through major income tax cuts in 2011, and he has supported further tax and spending reforms in recent years," the authors wrote. "The governor has been a consistent tax cutter."

"General fund spending has been roughly flat the past three years, and state government employment is down about 6 percent since he took office," they wrote.

Who flunked the fiscal policy scorecard? Gov. Jerry Brown of California, Gov. John Kitzhaber of Oregon, Gov. Jack Merrell of Delaware, Gov. Mark Dayton of Minnesota, Gov. Pat Quinn of Illinois, Gov. John Hickenlooper of Colorado, Gov. Jay Inslee of Washington, and Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts.