



Cato Institute releases biannual report card on nation's governors

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The Cato Institute has released its biannual *Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors*, a useful tool that can help voters determine whether or not their chief executives are acting responsibly when it comes to taxation and spending.

The report this year, authored by Chris Edwards, should come with some interest, given that some of the governors graded in this round ran on Tea Party-themed platforms. This is the first real look into whether or not they've delivered on the rhetoric they espoused on the campaign trail.

Looking through the list, the nation's best governors on fiscal policy — those receiving an "A" — do indeed have a Tea Party influence, or at the very least they ran on fiscally conservative platforms. Here's a look at the cream of the crop:

- Sam Brownback (R-KS)
- Rick Scott (R-FL)
- Paul LePage (R-ME)
- Tom Corbett (R-PA)

The highest scoring Democrat, New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch, received a "B," and was among the best in the nation on fiscal policy. His grade is up from two years ago, when he received a "D." Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, who followed Mitt Romney in the Bay State, also received a "B." Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam takes home the prize of being the lowest scoring Republican in the report, with a "D."

Who are the nation's worst governors on fiscal policy? Well, here they are — all of five received an "F" in the report (starting with the worst):

- Pat Quinn (D-IL)
- Dan Malloy (D-CT)
- Mary Dayton (D-MN)
- Neil Abercrombie (D-HI)
- Chris Gregoire (D-WA)

Some other names of interest with summarized comments:

— **Bobby Jindal (R-LA): B**

Currently in his second term, Jindal's score is actually down from 2010, when he received an "A." He's been solid on fiscal policy, but report attributes the drop in his score to support of bad, incentive-based tax policies, including tax credits for the movie and music industries.

— **John Kasich (R-OH): B**

Known as a budget hawk during his time in the U.S. House — in fact, he was so committed to reducing spending that he took on then-Speaker Newt Gingrich, Kasich, elected as Governor of Ohio in 2010, is a vast improvement over his predecessor. Kasich has held the line on spending

and signed some tax cuts into law. The biggest knock on him, however, is his approval of a hospital bed tax last year.

— **Chris Christie (R-NJ): B**

There's no denying that Christie is popular with conservatives, despite having some moderate-leaning views on economic issues. In New Jersey, he's no doubt viewed as being very far to the right. Like Jindal, however, the report notes that Christie is fond of tax credits and incentives that distort the tax base.

— **Scott Walker (R-WI): B**

Walker gets high marks for his collective bargaining reforms for public-sector workers and trying to make it difficult for the legislature to raise taxes, but he's been average on spending and is fond of tax credits.

— **Nikki Haley (R-SC): B**

Haley has some big shoes to fill. Her predecessor, Mark Sanford, was routinely one of the more fiscally conservative governors in the country. And while her score is still good — thanks to some modest reforms to state pension and trimming government employment, Haley, who ran as a Tea Party candidate, has been bad on spending.

— **Jan Brewer (R-AZ): D**

While she's celebrated for her stance against immigration, Brewer is one of the worst Republican governors when it comes to fiscal policy, pushing "substantial increases in spending" and having a mixed record on taxes.

In addition to this report, check out reports from previous years. It helps add perspective on some of the governors' scores and some that may no longer be in office could be considering bids at some point in the future or may be in positions of influence (e.g. talk show hosts or commentators).