

# State record on jobs no guarantee as president; Prior governors didn't repeat results in D.C.

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Gov. Rick Perry says that on his watch Texas has created more than 1 million jobs. Former Gov. Mitt Romney touts turning job losses into gains in Massachusetts. Former Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. boasts that his job-growth credentials in Utah trump them both. But records from recent governors turned president show it's difficult to re-create gubernatorial success on a national level.

Since 1950, not a single governor elected president - a foursome that includes Republican icon Ronald Reagan and Democratic superstar Bill Clinton - has matched their record on job creation after moving into the White House, according to an analysis by The Washington Times of not seasonally adjusted employment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The best numbers of the lot were Jimmy Carter's, who during his single term as Georgia governor oversaw a 14 percent increase in jobs, but the national employment figures increased only 6 percent during his four years in the White House.

Mr. Reagan, Mr. Clinton and George W. Bush all had a rougher go at it, with Mr. Bush scoring the worst. In his eight years as president, he didn't come close to matching the 18.9 percent jump in jobs Texas experienced while he was governor. U.S. job growth was less than 4 percent during his eight years in the White House.

Analysts said they're not surprised that the gubernatorial records didn't translate on a national stage because the country's employment health has to do with a lot more than who calls 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., home.

"As governors, you are much more closely connected to a state and regional economy," said Christian Dorsey, of the Economic Policy Institute. "When you are doing something as diffuse as presiding over a national economy, you don't have many of the levers that you have in place from the state and local level. So, I think it's certainly clear that governors and mayors have a much greater impact on moving the dial up and down by what they do than a president does through national policy that of course has to be vetted through Congress."

Mr. Dorsey warned that it is "just too impossible" to decipher what happened in a particular state at a particular time and then to promise to replicate it nationally.

"It's comparing not just apples to oranges, but it's comparing apples to all the fruit that's available in the market," he said.

Still, with the national unemployment rate at 9.1 percent and the 2012 presidential race being billed as a "jobs election," the governors and former governors in the GOP field have used the debates this month to publicly tangle over the mantle of jobs guru.

"What Americans are looking for is someone who can get this country working again," Mr. Perry said. "And we put the model in place in the state of Texas. When you look at what we have done over the last decade, we created 1 million jobs in the state of Texas - same time America lost 2 1/2 million."

Mr. Romney, meanwhile, has tried to chip away at Mr. Perry's record by arguing he was "dealt four aces" in Texas - in the form of zero state income tax, right-to-work laws, a Republican Legislature and an abundance of oil in the ground.

"When I came in as governor, we were in a real free fall," Mr. Romney said in a recent debate, casting himself as a turnaround specialist. "We were losing jobs every month. We had a budget that was way out of balance. So I came into office; we went to work as a team, and we were able to turn around the job losses."

Mr. Perry has countered that Mr. Romney "had one of the lowest job-creation rates in the country."

Then there's Mr. Huntsman, who is trying to outflex both of those Republican rivals and breathe new life into his campaign.

"I hate to rain on the parade of the great Lone Star governor, but as governor of Utah, we were the No. 1 job creator in this country during my years of service, and to my good friend Mitt, 47th just ain't going to cut it, my friend - not when you can be first," he said.

Chris Edwards, director of tax-policy studies at the libertarian-leaning **Cato Institute**, said he is concerned that Republicans will trap themselves with a "silly discussion about how many jobs a chief executive can create."

"For one thing," he said, "the American economy is so huge and complicated. Presidents have influence ... and we've seen this with Obama the last few years, they can try their [best] to create jobs, but obviously, the economy has a mind of its own."

He said the recent fight over the lasting impact of the president's economic-stimulus package, with Republicans calling it an utter failure and Democrats claiming it prevented another deep depression, shows the difficulty of mixing politics and economics.

"The problem with economics is that ultimately it is not physical science," he said. "It is not absolutely provable or not."

Previous governors turned president learned that the economy does indeed have a mind of its own.

Mr. Reagan presided over a 23 percent increase in employment during his eight years in the California governor's mansion and then a 15 percent increase during his eight years in Washington.

It was a similar story for Mr. Clinton, who ran the show in Arkansas for about 12 years and saw the state's workforce grow by 28.5 percent, though it rose less than 19 percent during his eight years in the White House.

Mr. Bush, though, had the biggest drop, governing over a 3.75 percent increase during his two terms as president.

Asked why Mr. Romney thinks he can replicate on the national level what he says he did on the state level, spokeswoman Andrea Saul said her boss has a "a proven record - not just in one state."

She pointed to his experience helping lead "successful" turnarounds of Bain & Co., the Salt Lake Winter Olympics in 2002 and then in Massachusetts.

"He took office in the midst of a recession and presided over a reversal in the state's fortunes as well."

Huntsman spokesman Tim Miller said state and national employment are based on the same skills that helped him strengthen the numbers in Utah.

"The same fundamental principles are in place when creating an environment for job growth: competitive tax code, getting the regulatory monkey off the back of small business and attracting capital."

Mr. Perry's camp did not respond.