



Justice gets a ‘C’ on Cato Institute's fiscal responsibility report card

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October 7, 2020

(The Center Square) – West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice was given a C grade for fiscal responsibility in a new Cato Institute report card.

The biennial **fiscal responsibility report card**, which was released this week by the libertarian think tank, graded governors on their spending, taxing and saving policies from 2018 through 2020.

Governors who used restraint by reducing spending, reducing taxes, maintaining a balanced budget and keeping a strong rainy day fund graded the highest.

Justice scored a 53 out of 100, which earned him the C grade. He was tied for 15th place with four other governors who received the same score.

“Governor Justice received a middling grade on the Cato report,” Chris Edwards, one of the leading researchers for the report, told The Center Square. “His spending score was a bit lower than average, but he has proposed cutting the state’s high property taxes on business equipment and has enacted tax cuts on retirement income and the energy industry.”

According to the report, Justice's proposal to cut property taxes on machinery, equipment and inventory would eliminate a barrier to manufacturing investment. He proposed exempting Social Security benefits and military retirement income from the individual income tax, which ultimately saved taxpayers \$25 million annually.

The report noted Justice said in his state of the state address that West Virginia's large surpluses should be returned to the taxpayers through tax cuts.

Justice’s C grade was an improvement from 2018, when he got an F for proposing a \$400 million tax increase in 2017. According to the report, Justice has changed his approach in recent years.

A spokesperson for Justice did not respond to a request for comment from The Center Square.