Free Market Cato Institute Gives Michigan Gov. Whitmer 'F' On Fiscal Policy

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A prominent national free-market think tank has given Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer an F grade on fiscal performance in their biannual review of state governors.

The report by the Washington, D.C. based Cato Institute examines state budget actions taken by state governors from 2018 through 2020.

The other governors assigned an F grade were Ralph Northam of Virginia, Andrew Cuomo of New York, Phil Murphy of New Jersey, J.B. Pritzker of Illinois, Kate Brown of Oregon, and Jay Inslee of Washington.

Here's Cato's summary of Whitmer's performance:

Michigan

Gretchen Whitmer, Democrat

Legislature: Republican

Grade: F

Took office: January 2019

Gretchen Whitmer served in the Michigan House and the Michigan Senate before being elected governor in 2018. Whitmer scores poorly on this report because of her support for large tax increases.

When campaigning in 2018, Whitmer "scoffed at the idea" that she supported a gas tax hike in a televised debate, calling the accusation "ridiculous." Despite that dismissal, Whitmer pushed hard for a gas tax increase her first year in office. Her plan would have increased the 26 cents per gallon tax by 45 cents over time to raise $2 billion annually. Polls found large-scale public opposition, and the plan did not pass the legislature.

It is not clear why Michigan would need higher road funding. In 2015, lawmakers approved a huge tax-increase package to fund roads, and Michigan's population has been static at 10 million people for two decades. A Reason Foundation study ranked Michigan in the bottom half of states in highway spending efficiency, so Whitmer should focus on using current highway funds more efficiently.

Whitmer approved an increase in online sales taxes and she proposed increasing taxes on passthrough businesses. In a flip-flop that is angering retirees in the state, Whitmer campaigned

in 2018 on repealing a pension tax imposed by the prior governor, but now she seems to have dropped the idea.