



Sam Brownback tops fiscal ranking of governors

BY JOSEPH LAWLER

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Kansas governor Sam Brownback received a vote of confidence in his controversial tax cut program Thursday, as the Cato Institute gave him the top rating on its annual fiscal policy report card.

The libertarian think tank ranked the Republican Brownback first among governors for his management of taxes and spending, tied with North Carolina's Pat McCrory, also a Republican.

The report card, which gives high marks to efforts to lower taxes and spending, specifically cited the tax cuts engineered by Brownback as a "major policy success." The cuts have become a political liability this year for Brownback, who faces a tough re-election race in the normally deep-red state.

The report's authors, Nicole Kaeding and Chris Edwards, acknowledged that "some pundits are suggesting that the Kansas tax cuts are a failure because they have created large gaps in future state budgets," but noted that general revenues are expected to increase anyway.

Fellow Republicans Paul LePage of Maine and Mike Pence of Indiana were the only other two governors to earn 'A' grades from Cato.

In the past, the Cato rankings have been cited by governors vying for national office as proof of their fiscal credibility.

Cato gave a 'B' grade to Texas' Rick Perry, Wisconsin's Scott Walker, Louisiana's Bobby Jindal, and New Jersey's Chris Christie, all of whom are thought to be potential future GOP presidential candidates.

Andrew Cuomo, the Democratic governor of New York who is also considered a possible player on the national stage, also earned a 'B,' with a higher number grade than Jindal or Christie earned. Maryland's Martin O'Malley, who has suggested that he might run for the Democratic

nomination in 2016, earned a 'D' mark for having "imposed numerous tax increases on Marylanders."