



How Does Your Governor Rank?

Ranking the fiscal policies of America's governors post-pandemic

The 2022 *Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors* received widespread attention from governors proud to be among the top-ranked leaders in Cato's analysis of state tax and spending policies.

The report grades the governors from A to F based on Cato's analysis of their fiscal records since 2020. This year, Iowa governor Kim Reynolds gained the highest score for keeping a tight clamp on state spending and signing into law major income tax reforms.

Along with Governor Reynolds, Chris Sununu of New Hampshire, Pete Ricketts of Nebraska, Brad Little of Idaho, and Doug Ducey of Arizona rounded out the list of governors who earned an A grade for their 2020–2022 tax and spending policies. Governors who received an A cut taxes and spending the most, whereas governors who received an F increased taxes and spending the most. Tim Walz of Minnesota, Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania, J. B. Pritzker of Illinois, Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, Phil Murphy of New Jersey, Kate Brown of Oregon, Gavin Newsom of California, and Jay Inslee of Washington all received an F.

Reynolds has been a lean budgeter since entering office in 2017. In 2021, she abolished Iowa's inheritance tax, and last year she approved a tax overhaul that simplified and lowered Iowa's individual income tax structure. Iowa is on track to convert its income tax to a 3.9 percent flat tax by 2026.

The report's evaluations have been proudly touted by governors who scored well, including Reynolds during the Iowa press debate

on PBS and Arizona governor Doug Ducey on *Kudlow*. Ducey also shared his grade on Twitter saying, "Eight years of fiscally responsible decisions have paid off! Arizona earned a top score in @CatoInstitute's much-anticipated fiscal policy report card."

Governor Inslee of Washington received an F in Cato fiscal reports in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020, and he received the lowest score in the nation in 2022. He has a long record of tax and spending increases. When Inslee originally ran for the governor's office, he promised not to raise taxes, but in his first budget, he proposed more than \$1 billion in hikes. Since then, he has proposed or approved new and increased taxes on energy, capital gains, tobacco, businesses, real estate transactions, and online sales.

Among those who fell in the middle are Colorado Governor Jared Polis and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who both earned a C.

Prepared by Chris Edwards, who occupies the Kilts Family Chair in Fiscal Studies, and research associate Ilana Blumsack, the report is a useful resource for people concerned about high taxes and spending, especially when considering an interstate move or one's vote. The report also features an interactive map of the states for smooth access to governors' highlights.

Edwards has promoted the report widely in the media, including on Fox Business's *Kudlow*, using these opportunities to stress that federal Republicans should look to their state-level counterparts for inspiration if they want to restrain and cut government. Dozens of journalists across the country have cited the 2022 report. ■