

# CAPITOL RESEARCH

● ● ● FISCAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY

## GOVERNORS' SALARIES 2016

The Council of State Governments has been collecting data on governors' salaries for *The Book of the States* since 1937. The average governor's salary grew more slowly during and after the Great Recession, with many states instituting a ban on cost-of-living adjustments; however, as the fiscal health of states has improved, the annual increases normally seen in executive branch pay are returning to a more historically customary level in some states, particularly those that provide cost-of-living adjustments annually.

**Governors' salaries in 2016 range from a low of \$70,000 in Maine to a high of \$190,823 in Pennsylvania, with an average salary of \$137,415.**

- Maine Gov. Paul LePage earns the lowest gubernatorial salary at an annual rate of \$70,000, followed by Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper, who earns \$90,000 per year.
- Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf has the highest gubernatorial salary at \$190,823, followed by Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam's salary of \$187,500 per year, although Haslam returns his salary to the state.
- Governors in four states—Alabama, Florida, Illinois and Tennessee—do not accept a paycheck or return all or nearly all of their salaries to the state.
- The average annual salary for all governors grew by 1.5 percent from 2015 to 2016.
- Governors in 15 states saw their salaries increase in 2016 over 2015 levels. The biggest year-over-year salary increase was for Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, whose salary increased from \$87,759 in 2015 to \$141,000 in 2016—a 61 percent jump. In 2015, Arkansas' gubernatorial salary was the second lowest among all governors. For 2016, the Arkansas Independent Citizens Commission gave approval for an increase in the governor's salary along with other state officials, including the attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, auditor and land commissioner and for a number of judges.



- When excluding Arkansas, the average annual salary increase for the remaining 14 states was \$3,257 or 2.3 percent and ranged from a low of 0.5 percent in Idaho to a high of 3.1 percent in Montana.
- The average annual salary for governors has decreased only once during the past 10 years. In 2010, the average salary fell slightly, from \$131,115 to \$130,595, in large part because the salary for California's governor was reduced by 18 percent based on recommendations from the state's Citizens Compensation Commission. Prior to the reduction, the governor's salary was the highest in the country—\$212,179. Florida and Hawaii also cut pay for their top executive branch official in 2010.
- Although a number of states reduced governors' salaries from 2003 to 2009, those reductions were offset by increases in other states, making the average annual change for governors' salaries a 2.8 percent increase over this period.




- Since the 2010 decrease, the average governor’s salary has grown more slowly than in the previous decade, increasing less than 1 percent each year until 2016, when the year-over-year increase was 1.5 percent. That is due, in large part, to the widespread salary freezes that halted cost-of-living adjustments for public employees during and after the recession.

**The average governor’s salary in 2016 is very close to what it was 78 years ago when adjusted for inflation, but is quite different when compared to per capita personal income levels.**

- The average salary for a governor in the 48 states was \$7,823 in 1937. When adjusted for inflation, the average salary for a governor in 1937 becomes \$130,486—just 5 percent shy of the average salary in 2016.
- In 1937, the governor of New York collected the highest salary, earning \$25,000 a year. That \$25,000 salary in 2016 dollars would be worth \$417,000—

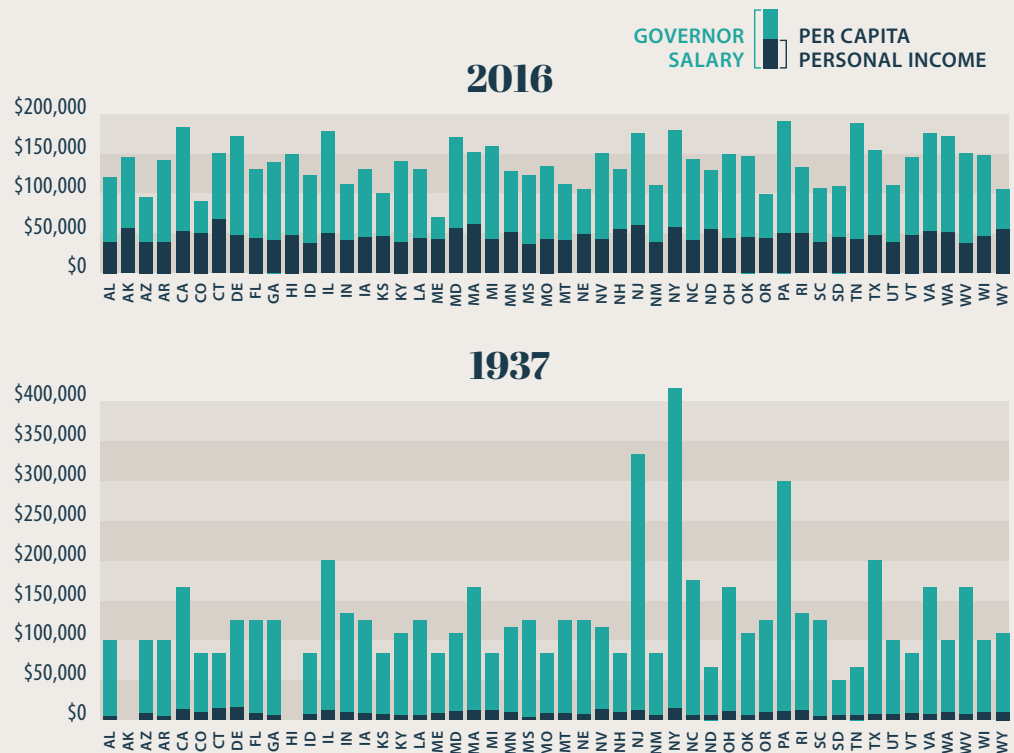
more than double what Gov. Andrew Cuomo earns today. In comparison, the governor of South Dakota earned just \$3,000 in 1937, or \$50,040 in today’s dollars—less than half of Gov. Dennis Daugaard’s current \$107,121 salary.

- In 1937, the average governor’s salary was almost 14 times the per capita personal income of the day (total personal income divided by the population), which was \$579. That multiple varied significantly across states. For example, in Mississippi, the governor’s salary was 34 times the state’s per capita personal income while in Connecticut, it was only 5.8 times.
- In 2016, the average governor’s salary is less than three times per capita personal income—significantly less than in 1937. The range of values for this measure has shrunk as well, ranging from a low of 1.6 times in Maine to a high of 4.7 times in Illinois and New York.

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SOURCE: The Council of State Governments, *The Book of the States*, 2016.

## GOVERNORS’ SALARIES COMPARED TO PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME, 2016 AND 1937



Source: The Council of State Governments, *The Book of the States*, “The Governors: Compensation, Staff, Travel and Residence,” 1937, 2016.

## 2015/2016 GOVERNORS' SALARIES

State	2016 Governors	2015 Governors' Salary		2016 Governors' Salary		
		Current Dollars	Percent of National Average	Current Dollars	Percent of National Average	Percent Change from 2015
Alabama*	Robert J. Bentley	\$120,395	89%	\$120,395	88%	0.0%
Alaska	Bill Walker	\$145,000	107%	\$145,000	106%	0.0%
Arizona	Doug Ducey	\$95,000	70%	\$95,000	69%	0.0%
Arkansas	Asa Hutchinson	\$87,759	65%	\$141,000	103%	60.7%
California	Jerry Brown	\$177,467	131%	\$182,789	133%	3.0%
Colorado	John Hickenlooper	\$90,000	66%	\$90,000	65%	0.0%
Connecticut	Dannel Malloy	\$150,000	111%	\$150,000	109%	0.0%
Delaware	Jack Markell	\$171,000	126%	\$171,000	124%	0.0%
Florida*	Rick Scott	\$130,273	96%	\$130,273	95%	0.0%
Georgia	Nathan Deal	\$139,339	103%	\$139,339	101%	0.0%
Hawaii	David Ige	\$146,628	108%	\$149,556	109%	2.0%
Idaho	Butch Otter	\$121,975	90%	\$122,597	89%	0.5%
Illinois*	Bruce Rauner	\$177,412	131%	\$177,412	129%	0.0%
Indiana	Mike Pence	\$111,688	82%	\$111,688	81%	0.0%
Iowa	Terry Branstad	\$130,000	96%	\$130,000	95%	0.0%
Kansas	Sam Brownback	\$99,636	74%	\$99,636	73%	0.0%
Kentucky	Matt Bevin	\$139,056	103%	\$140,070	102%	0.7%
Louisiana	John Bel Edwards	\$130,000	96%	\$130,000	95%	0.0%
Maine	Paul LePage	\$70,000	52%	\$70,000	51%	0.0%
Maryland	Larry Hogan	\$165,000	122%	\$170,000	124%	3.0%
Massachusetts	Charlie Baker	\$151,800	112%	\$151,800	110%	0.0%
Michigan	Rick Snyder	\$159,300	118%	\$159,300	116%	0.0%
Minnesota	Mark Dayton	\$123,427	91%	\$127,150	93%	3.0%
Mississippi	Phil Bryant	\$122,160	90%	\$122,160	89%	0.0%
Missouri	Jay Nixon	\$133,821	99%	\$133,821	97%	0.0%
Montana	Steve Bullock	\$108,167	80%	\$111,570	81%	3.1%
Nebraska	Pete Ricketts	\$105,000	78%	\$105,000	76%	0.0%
Nevada	Brian Sandoval	\$149,573	110%	\$149,573	109%	0.0%
New Hampshire	Maggie Hassan	\$127,443	94%	\$129,992	95%	2.0%
New Jersey	Chris Christie	\$175,000	129%	\$175,000	127%	0.0%
New Mexico	Susana Martinez	\$110,000	81%	\$110,000	80%	0.0%
New York	Andrew Cuomo	\$179,000	132%	\$179,000	130%	0.0%
North Carolina	Pat McCrory	\$142,265	105%	\$142,265	104%	0.0%
North Dakota	Jack Dalrymple	\$125,330	93%	\$129,096	94%	3.0%
Ohio	John Kasich	\$148,886	110%	\$148,886	108%	0.0%
Oklahoma	Mary Fallin	\$147,000	109%	\$147,000	107%	0.0%
Oregon	Kate Brown	\$98,600	73%	\$98,600	72%	0.0%
Pennsylvania	Tom Wolf	\$190,823	141%	\$190,823	139%	0.0%
Rhode Island	Gina Raimondo	\$129,210	95%	\$132,710	97%	2.7%
South Carolina	Nikki Haley	\$106,078	78%	\$106,078	77%	0.0%
South Dakota	Dennis Daugaard	\$107,121	79%	\$109,264	80%	2.0%
Tennessee*	Bill Haslam	\$184,632	136%	\$187,500	136%	1.6%
Texas	Greg Abbott	\$150,000	111%	\$153,750	112%	2.5%
Utah	Gary Herbert	\$109,900	81%	\$109,900	80%	0.0%
Vermont	Peter Shumlin	\$145,538	107%	\$145,538	106%	0.0%
Virginia	Terry McAuliffe	\$175,000	129%	\$175,000	127%	0.0%
Washington	Jay Inslee	\$166,891	123%	\$171,898	125%	3.0%
West Virginia	Earl Ray Tomblin	\$150,000	111%	\$150,000	109%	0.0%
Wisconsin	Scott Walker	\$147,328	109%	\$147,328	107%	0.0%
Wyoming	Matt Mead	\$105,000	78%	\$105,000	76%	0.0%
<b>National Average</b>		<b>\$135,438</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>\$137,415</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>1.5%</b>

SOURCE: The Council of State Governments, *The Book of the States*, "The Governors: Compensation, Staff, Travel and Residence," 2015, 2016.

Alabama—Gov. Robert Bentley is not accepting his salary until the unemployment rate in Alabama drops.

Florida—Gov. Rick Scott does not accept a salary.

Illinois—Gov. Bruce Rauner returns all but \$1.00 of his salary.

Tennessee—Gov. Bill Haslam returns his salary to the state.