

# Idaho suffers for Otter's strong conservative rating

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Some Idahoans might be surprised to learn that C.L. "Butch" Otter is America's most conservative governor. Not those who know Otter's record on the issues analyzed by IndieGov, a group that examines government data for the tech company FindTheBest, but folks influenced by right-wing radio, blogs and politicians.

As reported by the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell, IndieGov examined where the nation's governors stand on a variety of issues: individual rights, abortion, same-sex marriage, federal regulations, the Second Amendment, health care, tax policy and immigration, to name a few.

Nobody graded more conservative than Otter.

Given that Otter helped cut public school funding and income taxes while reducing the size of state government by roughly 20 percent and fighting Obamacare and same-sex marriage in the courts, that ranking makes sense.

The result of all this conservatism? Millions of dollars wasted on lawyers; teachers fleeing the state; fewer children able to afford college; and rapid growth in low-wage jobs.

And so it's troubling that a cadre of Idahoans would drag us even further to the right. You know these folks. They have infiltrated your local GOP central committee and hold a bunch of legislative seats up north.

They hammered Otter over creation of a state health insurance exchange and a long-overdue investment in road and bridge repair. They thought it wise public policy to fracture a system that forces deadbeat dads to support their children and oppose leveling the playing field for brick and mortar businesses by taxing purchases made on the Internet.

There is, of course, plenty of reason to criticize Otter. His administration has been immersed in scandal and his leadership generally ranges from non-existent to weak. But Otter does understand that a governor must govern. So he created a state exchange instead of turning that responsibility over to the feds.

He fought to raise the fuel tax for the first time in 20 years. And he hasn't slammed the door shut on Medicaid expansion, something that has been embraced by Republican governors and legislators across the nation because it saves lives and money.

So yes, it could be worse.

But only if Idaho's voters ever are unwise enough to put in charge those who think Otter a liberal.