

## **Introduction: Western States Budget Reports**

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These reports summarize the 13 western state budgets for the 2018–2019 fiscal year. The majority of the western states are financially sound, but several states continue to struggle nearly 10 years after the recession. In this regard, there are stark differences across the states in this region. For example, Utah has a diverse economy (Hachman Index score of 97.4), relatively high household incomes (median of \$71,319 ranks 12<sup>th</sup> nationally), and leads the nation in job growth since the end of the recession (23.6% growth between 2009 and 2017, more than twice the national pace of 11.9%). Utah had revenue growth and increased its state budget in FY19 by 3.8 percent over FY18. In comparison, Wyoming lacks economic diversity (Hachman Index score of 46.4), has household incomes on par with the nation (median of \$60,434, \$98 above national median), had less jobs in 2017 than at the end of the national recession in 2009, and faced a \$850 million structural deficit in 2018.

Regardless of the current status of each state's economy, legislators all have one thing in common – concern about the next economic downturn. Many legislators are still reeling from the severity of last recession and want to be more prepared as most economists agree that we are nearing the end of the second longest US expansion on record.

One unique feature of the past year is the impact of the #MeToo movement on state legislatures as noted in several reports this year. Legislators diverted attention from policy and budgetary matters as they addressed allegations of sexual misconduct among their members and staff. A few states lost legislators due to sexual misconduct. States, not just in the western region, are offering sensitivity trainings, conduct breakdowns, or harsh consequences for such actions to minimize the social and political impact of harassers and assaulters.

While each budget report to its state's successes and challenges, this accumulation paints a vivid picture of the western region's economic health as they relate to the state budgets.

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