

# National Sources for State Fiscal Research

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## NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

The following organizations cover state budget, finance, and policy issues from a national or multistate perspective.

### AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL

Based in Arlington, Virginia, this membership organization is dedicated to limited government and free market principles. It includes about 25 percent of the nation's state and federal lawmakers, as well as corporate and foundation members. The council works on model legislation that has been adopted in many states. Its website includes budget, tax reform, and pension reform sections.

► <https://www.alec.org>

### THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

This is the only organization that serves all three branches of state government. Policy coverage and analysis is conducted at the Lexington, Kentucky-based headquarters, a Washington, DC office, and four regional offices, and includes budget, tax, and economic topics. The council's annual *Book of the States* contains a data-rich section on state finance.

► <http://www.csg.org>

### FEDERATION OF TAX ADMINISTRATORS

The federation serves as a research and information exchange for state tax administrators, and as a vehicle to promote interstate cooperation and to press state interests at the federal level. The Washington, DC-based organization provides useful comparative data on state tax rates, tax burden, and tax holidays and amnesty programs, as well as information on revenue estimation. Its website offers links to state tax and revenue departments, revenue reports and research, the work of tax study groups, and tax-related publications in each state.

► <http://www.taxadmin.org>

### GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

This is a Chicago-based organization of US and Canadian federal, state, provincial, and local government finance officers who prepare and monitor budgets, financial statements, official statements, bond offerings, and pensions. Its website includes best practices and other useful information for analysts. The group publishes a weekly newsletter and regular research reports.

► <http://www.gfoa.org>

### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE BUDGET OFFICERS (NASBO)

Membership is limited to employees in executive-branch budget offices, and staff is in Washington, DC. NASBO's *Fiscal Survey of the States*, released in the spring and the fall, reports on proposed and enacted budgets, with data from all fifty states. The association's website tracks and contains links to proposed and enacted budgets for states, territories, and the District of Columbia. Its annual *State Expenditure Report* examines spending across budget categories (such as education, Medicaid, corrections, and transportation). NASBO also publishes issue briefs and has a resources section that includes reports from other sources. It produces the weekly *Washington Report* and a weekly compi-

lation of budget-oriented news clips.

► <http://www.nasbo.org>

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE AUDITORS, COMPTROLLERS AND TREASURERS (NASACT)**

Based in Lexington, Kentucky, the association brings together three important professional groups that lead different components of state finance, and it provides management and staff assistance to auditors and comptrollers. An online directory gives names and website links for officeholders. Publications include the monthly *NASACT News*, weekly *Washington Update*, white papers, and reports.

► <http://www.nasact.org>

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES (NCSL)**

The Denver-based organization serves legislators and legislative staff in the fifty states, and in commonwealths and territories. NCSL represents the interests of state governments before Congress and federal agencies. A fiscal policy section provides research on budget conditions and procedures, revenues, tax policies, and pensions.

► <http://www.ncsl.org>

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE RETIREMENT ADMINISTRATORS (NASRA)**

Members of the association are primarily executive directors of state and territorial pension systems, and large teacher and local retirement systems. Other forms of membership are available to managers of local plans and private sector firms that advise the retirement industry. Based in Lexington, Kentucky, NASRA provides news and analysis of state pension funds and runs the Public Fund Survey, which tracks pension information in large state and local plans. A summary of information is provided annually. A link to Public Plans Data, a project of NASRA, the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, and the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, is available on the association's website. It also provides links to individual state retirement system websites, where visitors can find actuarial and financial reports, information on authorizing statutes, and board composition.

► <http://www.nasra.org>

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE TREASURERS**

Membership in this Lexington, Kentucky-based association comprises state treasurers and officials with comparable responsibilities. It tracks federal issues that affect state treasurers and issues position statements, such as one opposing federal legislation that would remove the interest-free status of municipal bonds. Working groups, conferences, and webinars cover new developments in public finance.

► <http://nast.org>

- **STATE DEBT MANAGEMENT NETWORK**

The network, an affiliate of the National Association of State Treasurers and also based in Lexington, is made up of issuers and managers of state debt. It serves as a tool for exchanging information on debt management practices, capital planning, and debt issuance. It also posts relevant materials from other public and private organizations that issue reports on debt-related topics.

► <http://nast.org/affiliates/sdmn>

**NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION**

This association, in Washington, DC, provides a forum for member governors to share best practices and address mutual state needs on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch. Its website provides links

to all state and territorial governors' offices.

▶ <http://www.nga.org/cms/home.html>

Related organizations include:

- **MIDWESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION**  
▶ <http://www.midwesterngovernors.org>
- **WESTERN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION**  
▶ <http://www.westgov.org>
- **DEMOCRATIC GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION**  
▶ <https://democraticgovernors.org>
- **REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION**  
▶ <http://www.rga.org>

## OTHER NATIONAL RESEARCH, ACADEMIC, AND ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

These nongovernmental groups follow budgets and fiscal policy, compile data on states and localities, coordinate academic research in public finance, and hold conferences.

### **ASSOCIATION FOR BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (ABFM)**

This is an association of budget and public finance professors and graduate students from schools of public administration and policy in the US and abroad. A part of the American Association for Public Administration, it promotes academic research and serves as a network for current and former state and local budget officials. ABFM publishes a quarterly journal, *Public Budgeting & Finance*, and a newsletter, *Line Item*, which provides both organizational news and updates on relevant publications from other sources.

▶ <http://abfm.org>

### **BALLOTPEDIA**

Sponsored by the Lucy Burns Institute, a nonprofit organization in Middleton, Wisconsin, Ballotpedia describes itself as an encyclopedia of American politics. It provides political and election coverage, along with state budget and finance information. It closely follows initiatives and referendums, and offers basic financial data and credit information for each state.

▶ [https://ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page](https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page)

### **BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**

A public policy research institution in Washington, DC, Brookings provides coverage of policy and fiscal challenges on local, state, national, and international levels. It cosponsors an annual municipal finance conference with Brandeis and Washington universities.

▶ <http://www.brookings.edu>

### **CATO INSTITUTE**

A Washington, DC-based public policy research organization with a limited-government, free-market perspective. State and local fiscal policy is one of its research topics.

▶ <http://www.cato.org>

**CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES (CBPP)**

This research and policy organization focuses on exploring budget and tax issues, reducing poverty, and supporting efforts to improve the lives of low- and moderate-income people. Reports from the Washington, DC-based group have covered budget planning and improving cost and revenue estimates. Through its States Priorities Partnership, the CBPP works with budget-focused state organizations that have similar policy goals.

► <http://www.cbpp.org>

**CENTER FOR RETIREMENT RESEARCH AT BOSTON COLLEGE**

The center partners with the National Association of State Retirement Administrators and the Center for State and Local Government Excellence to produce the Public Plans Data website, which includes data for more than 150 state and local retirement plans. The center, in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, also provides research briefs related to pensions and retiree health issues. Pension reform briefs are available for some states.

► <http://crr.bc.edu>

**CENTER FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE**

This research organization focuses on workforce issues, including the need to recruit and retain strong employees for state and local government, and the costs associated with health and retirement benefits in the public sector. The center, based in Washington, DC, has published extensively on pension benefits and funding, as well as other compensation issues. Reports have also concentrated on the costs of employee health benefits and retiree health care. It collaborates with the National Association of State Retirement Administrators and the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College to produce the Public Plans Data website.

► <http://slge.org>

**CENTER FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP**

Housed at the George Mason University School of Policy and Government in Arlington, Virginia, the center is a research and teaching hub that focuses on state and local governance and intergovernmental relations. It follows and analyzes fiscal stress on municipalities and chronicles efforts to achieve fiscal sustainability. It publishes a daily blog, *The GMU Municipal Sustainability Project*.

► <http://spgia.gmu.edu/research/research-publications/research-centers/center-for-state-local-leadership>

**CITIZENS FOR TAX JUSTICE (CTJ)**

A research and advocacy organization based in Washington, DC, CTJ focuses on tax policy at the federal, state, and local levels. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy is a partner organization.

► <http://ctj.org>

**COUNCIL OF STATE CHAMBERS**

Based in Alexandria, Virginia, this association of state chambers and their leaders follows state budget and tax policies, particularly as they affect businesses. Its website carries links to individual chambers, which generally offer local coverage of budget and other fiscal issues.

► <http://www.statechambers.org/>

**FEDERAL FUNDS INFORMATION FOR STATES**

This Washington, DC-based organization assists subscribers with reports that summarize congress-

sional actions, detail federal grant opportunities, and analyze the impact of federal budgetary decisions on states, which receive about 30 percent of their funding from the federal government. Though most information is available only to paying subscribers, a portion is free, including a primer on federal grants, a table showing federal funding for major programs, and links to other federal and state budget information sources.

► <http://www.ffis.org>

#### **FRANKLIN CENTER FOR GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INTEGRITY**

Based in Alexandria, Virginia, the organization focuses on government transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility. The mission of its Watchdog.org project is “to restore oversight of our state governments.” The center covers eight states (Colorado, Florida, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin) more intensely, with less frequent reporting on twenty-one others.

► <http://franklincenterhq.org>

#### **GOOD JOBS FIRST**

A national policy resource center, this Washington, DC-based organization promotes corporate and government accountability in economic development, with an emphasis on accurate and complete reporting of tax subsidies for jobs and the relationship between growth and employment.

► <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org>

#### **GOVERNING INSTITUTE**

An initiative of *Governing* magazine and its parent company, e.Republic, this Washington, DC-based institute often covers topics relevant to state budgeting and finance, including recent commentaries on funding infrastructure.

► <http://www.governing.com/gov-institute>

- **GOVERNING**

The magazine of state and local government covers state budgeting and finance issues.

► <http://www.governing.com>

#### **GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS BOARD (GASB)**

Based in Norwalk, Connecticut, the board establishes accounting and financial reporting standards for states and local governments that follow generally accepted accounting principles. GASB is overseen by the Financial Accounting Foundation.

► <http://www.gasb.org/home>

#### **INSTITUTE ON TAXATION AND ECONOMIC POLICY**

This research organization, in Washington, DC, works on federal, state, and local tax policy issues. Its website features a map with links to tax-related information from each state. Citizens for Tax Justice is a partner organization.

► <http://www.itep.org>

#### **HAAS INSTITUTE FOR A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY**

The institute is at the University of California, Berkeley. It produces and reports on research in the US and internationally concerning public finance, global financial systems, and debt and credit issues.

► <http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/just-public-finance>

**TRUMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The school, at the University of Missouri, in Columbia, publishes the *American Review of Public Administration*, which covers budgeting and financial management, as well as other topics relating to public administration and management.

► <https://truman.missouri.edu>

**MERCATUS CENTER**

The center, at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, describes itself as bridging the gap between “academic ideas and real-world problems,” with a focus on how markets solve problems. The subjects of Mercatus’ recent reports have included the Puerto Rican fiscal crisis, Medicaid provider taxes, and state pension funding. Economic and fiscal research includes annual rankings of state solvency and data regarding federal spending on states.

► <http://mercatus.org>

**MULTISTATE ASSOCIATES INC.**

With a network of state and local lobbyists, this Alexandria, Virginia-based company provides coverage of state legislative actions, with attention to budget and other fiscal issues that may affect businesses and trade associations. Links are provided to state government and legislative websites, gubernatorial state of the state addresses, and other state and local government information.

► <https://www.multistate.com>

**MUNICIPAL SECURITIES RULEMAKING BOARD**

Based in Washington, DC, the board is the US municipal bond market’s self-regulating body. Funding is largely provided by assessments on municipal security brokers, dealers, and advisers.

► <http://www.msrb.org>

- **ELECTRONIC MUNICIPAL MARKET ACCESS**

This Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board website provides prices, bond offering statements, and other municipal bond data. Many free resources are available, including credit agencies’ ratings and other information on thousands of state and local debt issuers.

► <http://emma.msrb.org/Home/Index>

**MUNINET GUIDE**

Described as a hub for municipal research, the website of MuniNet, in Hinsdale, Illinois, provides comprehensive coverage of municipal finance, defaults, fiscal distress, pensions, and infrastructure. Demographic, employment, and other information is available on each state through a clickable map, with the state pages leading to further information on cities and counties.

► <http://muninetguide.com>

**NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH**

The nonprofit bureau is the arbiter of US business cycle dates, and conducts and disseminates economic research that often touches on state revenue and spending issues. Cambridge, Massachusetts-based, its researchers include more than 1,400 economics and business professors from US colleges and universities. Recent papers have looked at the fiscal cost of hurricanes and the economic impact of increased Medicaid spending.

► <http://www.nber.org>

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUNICIPAL ANALYSTS**

This Pittsburgh-based nonprofit membership association promotes professionalism among credit analysts, provides education and tools for information sharing, and seeks to improve issuer disclosure by encouraging the use of best practices. A directory provides links to regional municipal analyst groups.

► <http://www.nfma.org>

**THE NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT**

Based at the State University of New York at Albany, the institute is a primary source of data on US state revenues, expenditures, budgets, and fiscal trends. Reports on fiscal and other topics are issued frequently; recent subjects have included gambling, the decline in oil and coal prices, slowing state tax revenues, and the investment performance of public pensions. The institute tracks state revenue and, in conjunction with The Pew Charitable Trusts, has published several reports on revenue estimating. Other themes included in its state and local finance work include pension reform, education finance, health care finance, and fiscal trends.

► <http://www.rockinst.org>

**THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS**

The Washington, DC-based nonprofit's government performance division, previously known as the Pew Center on the States, has a unit devoted to state fiscal health. Its work has included pension studies for all fifty states, reports on rainy day funds and revenue volatility, and a focus on the state-local fiscal relationship. Its Fiscal Fifty interactive web tool lets users compare states on a number of metrics, including changes in state spending, revenue volatility, and long-term costs. Several reports have focused on revenue estimating, in conjunction with the Rockefeller Institute.

► <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/states-fiscal-health>

- **STATELINE**

Pew's state news service provides daily reporting and analysis of state policy, with strong attention to fiscal topics.

► <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline#s=Relevance/sortDir=asc/pg=0/count=9/content=59fe81ce-f007-4fa1-a82e-a1579d6643bd>

**ROBERT M. LAFOLLETTE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The school, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has had a long-term commitment to developing and analyzing public finance policy. A state policy report is published twice a year.

► <http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/index.php>

**STATE POLICY NETWORK**

The Arlington, Virginia-based network concentrates on policy issues associated with limited government and free market principles. It supports affiliated state organizations concerned with budget and other fiscal issues.

► <https://spn.org>

**STATESIDE ASSOCIATES**

This state and local government affairs firm, based in Arlington, Virginia, monitors fiscal and policy issues for clients, and provides other state-related services. The free resources on its website that are useful to a broader audience include major state-by-state legislative dates, party makeup, top state

political officeholders, weekly notes on state legislative activity, and news on state and local elections.

▶ <http://www.stateside.com>

#### **STROM THURMOND INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Based at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina, the institute conducts public policy research covering local, regional, state, and national issues, including analysis relating to the economy as well as taxes and other fiscal topics.

▶ <http://sti.clemson.edu>

#### **TAUBMAN CENTER FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Research, education, and public events at the center, at Harvard Kennedy School, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, focus on improving state, city, and metropolitan-area governance. Some issue briefs and working papers cover fiscal topics.

▶ <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/centers/taubman>

#### **TRUTH IN ACCOUNTING**

This Chicago-based organization aims to increase awareness of each state's fiscal condition through understandable and transparent government disclosure. It publishes annual assessments of each state and maintains vigilance for accounting gimmicks that can compromise budgets' integrity and transparency. It compiles state budget and financial data—much of it behind a paywall—as well as demographic information that viewers can use to create their own charts and graphs in its State Data Lab.

▶ <http://www.truthinaccounting.org>

- **STATE DATA LAB**

▶ <http://www.statedatalab.org>

#### **UNITED STATES COMMON SENSE**

Initially focused on the Golden State, this Mountain View, California-based nonprofit has expanded to cover all fifty states, providing research and data to help users analyze the finances of multiple levels of government. Website features include govrank.org, a data portal that can be filtered according to topic and source; an archive of state and local financial documents; and state performance assessments. Research examines budget balance, asset flexibility, and pension funding.

▶ <http://uscommonsense.org>

▶ <http://www.govrank.org>

#### **URBAN-BROOKINGS TAX POLICY CENTER**

This Washington, DC, center is a partnership between the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution. It provides national expertise on tax, budget, and policy issues, with some attention to state and local budgets and taxes.

▶ <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org>

#### **URBAN INSTITUTE**

Based in Washington, DC, the institute conducts national, state, and local economic and policy research on budget, taxes, municipal debt, and other topics related to finance and performance.

▶ <http://www.urban.org/research-area/taxes-and-budget>

#### **THE VOLCKER ALLIANCE**

The Volcker Alliance was launched in 2013 by former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker to



address the challenge of effective execution of public policies and to help rebuild public trust in government. The nonpartisan Alliance works toward that broad objective by partnering with other organizations—academic, business, governmental, and public interest—to strengthen professional education for public service, conduct needed research on government performance, and improve the efficiency and accountability of governmental organization at the federal, state, and local levels. The Alliance website’s state and local section provides reports and blogs on state budget issues.

► <https://volckeralliance.org>

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Federal agencies and congressional offices provide numerous sources of data on state finances, economies, and demographic trends.

### **BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

Part of the US Department of Commerce, the bureau publishes comparative data on a range of topics related to state tax and finance. Data include personal income and consumption expenditures, and gross domestic product by state, with material released on a preset schedule available on the website.

► <http://www.bea.gov/index.htm>

### **CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE (CBO)**

As a provider of nonpartisan research and analysis for Congress, the CBO conducts analysis to support the federal budget process. Given that states and the federal government share many funding responsibilities, the organization’s work is often relevant to state budgeting. Its website has a section on state and local governments.

► <https://www.cbo.gov>

### **DATA.GOV**

This is the US government’s open-data portal, with tools and resources on topics including education, health, agriculture, climate, energy, and finance. More than 8,000 data sets are directly related to states, such as workers’ compensation rates or employee benefit costs, or information about state leases.

► <https://www.data.gov>

### **THE FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM**

The central bank of the United States, the Federal Reserve has twelve regional Federal Reserve Banks that often cover economic, demographic, and fiscal trends within their districts and nationally. The Federal Reserve System Online website contains links to the Washington, DC-based Board of Governors as well as to each Fed regional bank.

► <http://federalreserveonline.org>

- The Federal Reserve Board of Governors website contains quarterly reports on the US municipal bond market, including market size and data on holdings by sector.  
► <http://www.federalreserve.gov>
- The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis site is notable for its Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) tool, which provides a way to explore and graph hundreds of thousands of fiscal data elements from eighty sources. FRED can help users track tax collection, municipal bond yields,

domestic bond issues, exchange rates, financial stress indexes, and other economic data.

▶ <https://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2>

- The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia site provides widely followed current and leading economic indexes for the US and the states dating back to 2005. The data are useful for putting historical, current, and projected state revenues and expenditures into an economic context.

▶ <https://www.philadelphiafed.org>

#### **FEDSTATS**

This site provides easy access to statistical information produced by the US government. Data come from more than 100 agencies, with trend information on the economy, education, health care, population, energy use, and agriculture.

▶ <http://fedstats.sites.usa.gov>

#### **US GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO)**

An independent nonpartisan agency, the GAO examines multiple issues relating to federal spending, including many that have a significant impact on states. Headed by the Comptroller General of the United States, the office focuses on improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and performance of government programs. It sometimes looks specifically at issues affecting the state's fiscal condition and outlook, and provides frequent analysis of topics relevant to state spending such as transportation and Medicaid.

▶ <http://www.gao.gov/index.html>

#### **US CENSUS**

The State Government Finances section offers many links to sites containing quarterly and annual data on government revenues, expenditures, assets, and debt. The agency's Census of Governments takes place every five years; the most recent was done in 2012.

▶ <https://www.census.gov/govs/state>

- **SURVEY OF PUBLIC PENSIONS: STATE & LOCAL DATA**

Revenues, expenditures, financial assets, and membership information for more than 6,000 state and local defined-benefit public pension systems.

▶ <https://www.census.gov/govs/retire>

#### **US CONGRESS JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE**

Snapshots provide major economic indicators for each state and the District of Columbia. Economic statistics include export data, unemployment rate changes, home prices, and average weekly earnings.

▶ <http://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/statebystatereport>

#### **US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION**

The department produces a weekly update of outstanding balances on federal loans to states to provide unemployment benefits during economic downturns.

▶ <http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/unemploy/budget.asp>

## CREDIT RATING AGENCIES

Much of the content produced by bond rating agencies is available only to paid subscribers or buyers of individual reports, but press releases on rating actions, some research, and analysts' names and contact information are often accessible for free on the agencies' websites. Ratings on individual bonds can also be found free on the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board's Electronic Municipal Market Access website (<http://emma.msrb.org/Home/Index>). While rating agencies are in the private sector, they must receive certification from the Securities and Exchange Commission to grade municipal debt. The agencies include:

- **FITCH RATINGS**  
▶ <https://www.fitchratings.com/site/home>
- **KROLL BOND RATING AGENCY**  
▶ <https://www.krollbondratings.com>
- **MOODY'S INVESTORS SERVICE**  
▶ <https://www.moody's.com>
- **S&P GLOBAL RATINGS**  
▶ [https://www.spratings.com/en\\_US/home](https://www.spratings.com/en_US/home)