

Burlington **Free Press**

You call that ‘freedom?’

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John McClaughry’s “Economic and personal freedom in Vt” (Aug. 21) touts the rankings of “freedom” in the Cato Institute’s “Freedom in the 50 States.” That publication employs a very limited definition of freedom: the absence of government mandates.

Enacting a tax for road maintenance makes you less free, as do a regulation specifying how industrial waste must be handled and a law setting a minimum wage. The benefits of decent roads, decent wages, etc. are not relevant to this “freedom.” A destitute family unable to feed and care for their children can be absolutely “free” under this definition.

Readers should understand the origins of this “freedom index.” One author is connected to the Charles Koch Institute. Both authors are associated with the Mercatus Center at George Mason. The Kochs have “contributed more than thirty million dollars to George Mason, much of which has gone to the Mercatus Center” according to the New Yorker’s Jane Mayer. Cato, the publisher, was itself co-founded by Charles Koch, and the Koch family has donated more than \$30 million to it over the years. David Koch is still a board member.

This “freedom index” has nothing to do with freedom as most people understand that concept. It has everything to do with furthering a very specific agenda that naturally favors the rich and powerful at the expense of ordinary working people.