

The Villages Sun Times

NY "least free state" in U.S.

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NY is the "least free" state in the nation, according to a study released by the Cato Institute.

In rankings published Tuesday, the Libertarian think tank deemed NY the least free state and New Hampshire the most free. "If New York were to adopt a fiscal regime closer to that of California, New Jersey, or CT, its overall economic freedom score would be close to theirs", the analysis said.

The report knocked New York for high taxes on cigarettes and rent control laws in New York City. "In order to calculate these scores, we weight public policies according to the estimated costs that government restrictions on freedom impose", the Cato Institute said. Cato Institute says NY is the worst state on regulatory policy and that the local tax burden is twice as high as the average state. Cato predicts it will remain there for "many years to come".

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has billed NY as the progressive capital of the nation, and he has hailed the state's steps to provide services to its neediest residents, install tough gun-control laws and legalize same-sex marriage in 2011.

"The government spends nearly four times what the average state does on subsidies to business", Cato reported. The other states that make up the bottom five are California, Hawaii, New Jersey and Maryland.

New Hampshire, at the opposite end of the list, has the lowest government tax rate of all states except Alaska, the number two state on the list.