



Report Shows Texas Losing Ground in Personal Freedom

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Texas isn't nearly as 'free' as we like to believe, and a new study shows we're getting less free all the time, News Radio 1200 WOAI reports.

The Cato Institute, a Libertarian-leaning think tank, has released its quadrennial study of Freedom in the Fifty States, and it pegs Texas as the 28th freest state in the country, and shows we have slipped two places since the last report in 2012.

The report shows Texas continues to rank well in economic freedom, citing everything from a lack of a state income tax to a strong economy which allows employees the freedom to move from job to job.

But it is in the category of 'personal freedom,' where Texas is lacking.

The report cites a number of ways state government restricts our personal freedom

It cites the state's criminal justice system, which continues to incarcerate an inordinately large number of people compared to our crime rate, and the fact that there are no restrictions on property seizures by police.

"A single offense by a minor can carry a life sentence."

The report cites Texas' tough drug laws, with no decriminalization even for possession of small amounts of marijuana. And points out that in 2013, the Legislature even banned a 'harmless psychedelic' called Salvia divinorum.

The report also cites the state's very strict licensing and regulation rules. Many professions require licensing and specific training, which prevents individuals from entering those professions.

Texas is criticized for its tough restrictions on gambling, it's lack of choice in education, and 'low' freedom to travel, with no restrictions on license plate readers.

The report also criticizes municipal annexation laws, which allow cities free rain to annex areas

without allowing any input from the people to be annexed.

Among policy recommendations made by the Cato report...to eliminate partisan judicial elections. The report says that leads to cronyism, with personal injury lawyers backing judicial candidates, and that causes judges to rule on behalf of those lawyers, making it more likely that an individual will lose a lawsuit.

The most free state in the country, according to Cato, is New Hampshire. The least free states are New York and California.