



Alaska

Alaska ranks as 24th freest state in new report

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(The Center Square) – Historically strong on personal freedom and boasting one of the best civil liability systems in the nation, Alaska ranked 24th among the freest states, according to **Freedom in the 50 States**, a report by libertarian think tank the Cato Institute.

The state ranked 14th in 2016.

The report's authors said Alaska was a tricky state to rank because of its large oil-and-gas reserves and revenues, which cause the state's scores on fiscal policy to bounce around depending on the global price of oil. This reason could be partially to blame for Alaska's dip on the list, they said.

An analysis of the state showed high markers for freedom on a variety of issues: state taxes are low, drug arrests are below average, homeschooling remains unregulated and gun owners do not need a license to carry a concealed handgun.

“As one of the country's most libertarian states, Alaska has always done well on personal freedom and reached the top 10 in 2016 for the first time since 2001,” the author's said.

Where Alaska's performance was underwhelming was in key regulatory policies.

“The labor market is far more regulated than one would expect for such a conservative state,” the report’s authors said.

The state has no right-to-work law, and Anchorage and Fairbanks require licenses for many occupations.

Cato criticized Alaska’s civil asset forfeiture, which it called “among the worst in the country.”

“The burden of proof is on the owner of the property to prove innocence, property is subject to forfeiture from mere probable cause, and the proceeds largely go to law enforcement,” according to the report.

The authors suggested new forfeiture policies.

“Reform asset forfeiture to require a criminal conviction before forfeiture and to require Department of Justice equitable sharing proceeds to follow the same procedure,” the authors said.

Alaska also should consider alcohol sales and cigarette use, the authors said. Alaska forbids grocery stores from selling any alcohol, including beer, and levies some of the highest alcohol taxes in the country. Cigarette taxes also are high, reaching \$2 per pack in 2019, according to the report.

The states topping the list in the report were New Hampshire, Florida, Nevada, Tennessee and South Dakota. At the bottom were New York, Hawaii, California and New Jersey.