New York, blue states rank 'least free,' as red states stand out in personal, economic freedoms survey

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New York was ranked the least free state in the Union, followed closely by Hawaii and California, according to a new survey.

The latest version of the Cato Institute's "Freedom in the 50 States" also found that New Hampshire is the freest state, with Florida and Nevada as runners-up.

The survey, which has been done every two years since 2000, issued its overall freedom ratings based on a combination of personal and economic freedoms, comparing states along 230 different metrics ranging "from taxation to debt, eminent domain laws to occupational licensing, and drug policy to educational choice," according to its website.

Regarding their loser for the year, authors William Ruger and Jason Sorens wrote: "New York has been the least free state in the country for a long time. In fact, the Empire State has been the worst state for freedom in every year since our data set began in 2000."

"Economic freedom is the most significant weakness, but the state has not kept up with the rest of the country on personal freedom either. It belies the 'blue' state stereotype in that it is No. 50 on economic freedom *and* personal freedom," they added.

The authors likewise called out Hawaii for its policies, writing that the state "has long had one of the lowest levels of economic freedom in the country, but it has also slid behind on personal freedom."

"Thus, it isn't surprising that Hawaii is now the second least-free state in the Union. Even with its huge locational rents, Hawaii has experienced a net outflow of residents to the rest of the United States since at least the beginning of the past decade," they added.

California came in as third-least free, which the authors explained is "largely because of its long-standing poor performance on economic freedom."

By contrast, New Hampshire earned a place at the top of the list, where it has jostled with Florida over the years.

"New Hampshire grabs the top spot overall because it does well in both economic freedom (third) and personal freedom (second), something that is also true of Florida but is not the case for Tennessee," the authors said.