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## Cali and Florida: A Tale of Two States

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In Florida, life is good. The tragic and horrific June 24 collapse of the surfside Champlain Towers notwithstanding, the purplish-red sunshine state is dynamic, diverse, welcoming, and well-governed.

In deep-blue California, however, they have tent cities and poop patrols.

Such is the difference between these two hugely important American states — one of them on a roll, and the other one seemingly circling the toilet bowl.

In a fine and comprehensive comparison of these two states, the New York Post's Kyle Smith poses a few questions:

Should lots of new housing be built in the interest of affordability? California says no, Florida says yes. Should homeless people be allowed to turn public spaces into tent cities? California says yes, Florida says no. Should public elementary schools teach critical race theory? California says yes, Florida says no. Should gas be \$4 a gallon? California says yes, Florida says no. Should biological males be allowed to dominate girls' sports? Florida says no. California not only says yes, but it is trolling Florida by forbidding its employees to take state-funded trips to Florida, as well as 16 other states.

Is it any wonder that California lost population for the first time ever last year, while Florida's growth was second only to another dynamic and diverse red state, Texas?

It's too easy to chalk this up to Democrat-versus-Republican governance, but we're going to do it anyway. After all, California has for years had Democrat supermajorities in both houses of its state legislature, and three of its past four governors have been Democrats. Florida, on the other hand, has had four straight Republican governors: Jeb Bush, Charlie Crist, Rick Scott, and now Ron DeSantis, a rising star within the GOP and, at 42, the youngest governor in the nation.

“A native Floridian with blue-collar roots,” his biography reads, “Ron worked his way through Yale University, where he graduated with honors and was the captain of the varsity baseball team. He also graduated with honors from Harvard Law School. While at Harvard, he earned a commission in the U.S. Navy as a JAG officer. ... His military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Service and the Iraq Campaign Medal.”

Just how lucky are Floridians? DeSantis barely beat a human train wreck named Andrew Gillum in the 2018 gubernatorial election. (The margin was 49.59% to 49.19%, a mere 33,000 votes out of more than eight million cast.)

Then there's California, where Gavin Newsom, the guy with the soap-opera good looks and the awful leftist instincts, now faces a recall election after having cruised to victory with 62% of the vote. Polling indicates that he'll probably survive the recall and that de Maistre's age-old observation is true: Every citizenry has the government it deserves. How so? Despite having just 12% of the nation's population, California has 25% of its homeless.

Elections, then, have consequences, and there's perhaps no better example of this than a comparison of California and Florida during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Kyle Smith continues:

California introduced some of the harshest lockdown measures in the country, crashing its economy, while Florida was among the first states to begin reopening, way back in May 2020, and has been almost entirely open since September. ... One survey found that Florida had the second-fewest coronavirus restrictions; California ranked 45th by the same measure.

As for the psychological and emotional effects of locking children out of schools, we may never be able to measure the harm California did to its youngest citizens. The data firm Burbio, which has been tracking school reopenings, ranks California dead last on its index of in-person learning, [while] Florida scored 95 percent in-person learning, third-best in the nation.

The difference between the two states can be boiled down to a simple question — one that reveals the key to human flourishing: Are your people free, or aren't they?

The answer shouldn't surprise anyone. As Smith writes, "Florida is America's freest state, according to a Cato Institute survey: No. 1 in fiscal freedom, No. 1 in educational freedom." As for California, Cato calls it "the cronyist state in the union," a reflection of the ongoing graft and graft that are wrecking the once-great Golden State, the state that Ronald Reagan governed half a century ago.

Elections. They do indeed have consequences.