



## **What's The Most Free State In The Land Of The Free?**

Samantha-Jo Roth

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The U.S. is known as the land of the free, but apparently not all freedom is created equal, according to the new 2016 rankings for "Freedom in the 50 States" conducted by the Cato Institute.

The Cato Institute released its 2016 rankings for "Freedom in the 50 States." The authors look at a wide range of indicators that fall into three broad categories: fiscal policy, regulatory policy and personal freedom.

"We have a relatively traditional American understanding of what freedom is. It's the ability of individuals to use their life, liberty and property as they see fit," said William Ruger, an author of the study.

Ruger says he spent over a year comparing each state's policies affecting economic and personal freedom.

"These states are laboratories of democracy," Ruger explained. "They are experimenting with different policies and there's not a one size fits all approach."

To determine the rankings, the authors look at state and local government intervention. They compared 230 policy factors like taxation, educational choice and drug policy. It includes everything from cigarette taxes and marijuana laws to incarceration rates and local gun bans.

South Dakota, Indiana, Oklahoma, Alaska and New Hampshire are considered the most free states in the country. New York is the least free state in the nation. The other states rounding out the bottom five include California, Hawaii, New Jersey and Maryland.