

NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER

Free market group ranks NH most free state

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The pro-free market Cato Institute judged New Hampshire as the most free state in the country and based on its advice, the state is in solid shape for next year's rating.

The Granite State has been steadily climbing in the "Freedom in the 50 States" ranking since it fell back into the middle about a decade ago. Much of the gain has come because state taxes as a percentage of personal income in New Hampshire have declined over the past decade, while they've gone up in most states.

The Granite State was second in this ranking last year.

"New Hampshire is overall the freest state in the Union, combining relatively high scores on both personal and economic freedom," the ranking said.

New Hampshire's government taxes were found to be lower than any other state but Alaska.

Rounding out the top five behind New Hampshire and Alaska were Oklahoma, Indiana and South Dakota.

"New Hampshire is therefore a highly fiscally decentralized state ... Government subsidies, debt, and employment are all lower than average, and in all those categories we see improvements between 2010 and 2014," the report states.

The fiscally conservative Americans for Prosperity praised the report.

"We can be proud of our accomplishments, but we can't get complacent, since other states are making progress too," said Greg Moore, state director of AFP. "Alaska jumped from 9th up to 2nd in terms of freedom, so we need to continue our work to stay ahead of them."

New Hampshire stood out in New England.

Massachusetts was next-best in the region at 33rd most free; regional neighbors Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island and Connecticut were all in the 40-to-45th worst range.

The bottom five were New York, New Jersey, Maryland, California and Hawaii.

The authors of this report are William P. Ruger, who works at the conservative Charles Koch Institute, and Jason Sorens, who teaches at Dartmouth College and inspired the Free State Project. Those promoting the project set a goal in 2001 of convincing 20,000 Free State participants to move to New Hampshire.