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New York Is The Least Free State, Study Finds (VIDEO)



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New York isn't North Korea, but it's the closest thing you'll find in the U.S. -- at least according to a new report from a libertarian think tank.

A Mercatus Center [study](#) has pegged New York as the country's "least free" state, 49 slots behind "Live Free or Die" New Hampshire. Its authors gave the state particular abuse for its taxes, "by far the highest" in the country, according to their methodology.

True to their libertarian ways, however, they also said that New York would have scored higher if it had legalized gay marriage.

New York's low ranking in the study hasn't stopped co-author Jason Sorens from living in the state -- he's an assistant professor at SUNY Buffalo. And for the many New Yorkers who might associate freedom with being able to actually enjoy themselves, Sorens acknowledged that there are a few more nightlife options in the Empire State than in, say, South Dakota (#2 in the index).

"New York City has a lot going for it," Sorens admitted to HuffPost. "If you like culture, the arts, music, having lots of things to do, nightlife, you're going to value having more things to do even if you feel more impinged upon."

But he thinks lower taxes in other states, plus social freedoms like medical marijuana, may make them more attractive in the future.



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"Twenty or 30 years from now, maybe the center of culture will shift to places we don't think of now. I mean, look at Las Vegas," he said, pointing to Sin City's recent success in the worlds of art and food.

The rankings in the "Freedom in the 50 States" index are highly subjective. For

example, on one particularly contested issue, abortion, the authors punted: "Rather than take a stand," they write, they simply "coded the data" on abortion and didn't include it in their final tally.

And liberal New Yorkers who think regulating health insurance companies protects their freedom will be out of luck.

"I would just make a distinction between freedom and welfare or well-being," Sorens said. "I think this is just a definitional distinction. And maybe, for some people freedom is not the most important thing, maybe sometimes we have to trade off freedom for welfare."

But smokers who rail against the state's high cigarette taxes and the Bloomberg administration's aggressive anti-smoking campaign will find something to agree with: anti-tobacco policies are taken into account under the heading of "paternalism."

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