ANALYSIS

South Carolina has traditionally done better on economic freedom than on personal freedom. The court-ordered legalization of same-sex marriage gave South Carolina a big spike on personal freedom in 2014, but other states quickly followed and that relative advantage was undone (although obviously not the improvement in freedom in an absolute sense).

As one of the states more dependent on the federal government, the Palmetto State gets by with high government employment and consumption and a relatively low tax burden. Local taxes are average, but state taxes, at a projected 4.7 percent of adjusted personal income in FY 2017, are below the national average for 2000–2016 of 5.8 percent. South Carolina enjoyed big tax cuts in the mid- to late 2000s, according to our measure. Government GDP share of income has fallen steadily from its 2009 high, as has government employment. Debt remains high but since FY 2010 has fallen 4.8 percentage points of adjusted income, even though cash and security assets have fallen 2 points over that same period.

South Carolina’s regulatory policy has improved noticeably over time, ignoring the ACA impact. Much of that is because of tort reforms in 2005 and 2011 and an improving civil liability system, in which confidence continues to increase according to the latest data. Government GDP share of income has fallen steadily from its 2009 high, as has government employment. Debt remains high but since FY 2010 has fallen 4.8 percentage points of adjusted income, even though cash and security assets have fallen 2 points over that same period.

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