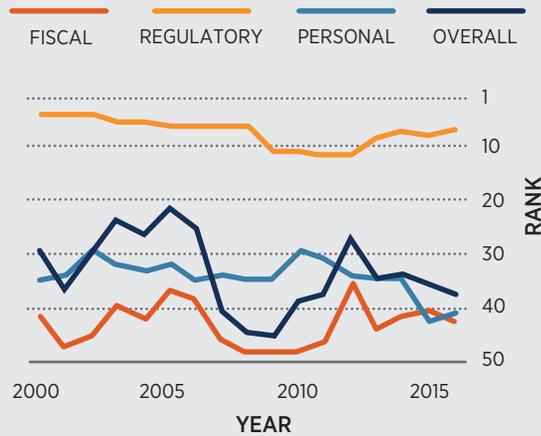


# WYOMING

2016 RANK  
**38th**



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Fiscal:** Privatize hospitals to reduce government employment and consumption and allow sales taxes to be cut. Wyoming spends far more on health and hospitals as a share of its economy than any other state.
- **Regulatory:** Let employers buy workers' compensation coverage from any willing seller. Consider privatizing the state fund.
- **Personal:** Reduce "policing for profit" by limiting equitable sharing, directing forfeiture revenues to the general fund, and putting the burden of proof on the government.



Population, 2017  
**579,315**

Net Migration Rate  
**2.8%**



State Taxes, Percent of Personal Income, FY 2017  
**3.56%**

Local Taxes, Percent of Personal Income, FY 2015  
**4.19%**

Partisan Lean, 2016  
**R +26.2**



Real Per Capita Personal Income, 2016, in 2009 \$  
**\$51,634**

Real Personal Income Growth, CAGR, 2000-15  
**3.8%**

## ANALYSIS

As a highly resource-dependent state, Wyoming's fiscal situation fluctuates greatly from year to year, causing unusual volatility in its freedom scores. Improving regulatory policy can be a way to diversify the economy, and the Equality State could also stand to improve on personal freedom, where it is well below average.

With favorable trust and corporate privacy laws and no income taxes of any kind, Wyoming is as good a place to park your wealth as any other state. Cowboy Staters derive a much larger share of their gross income from capital gains than other Americans. Wyoming is a relatively fiscally decentralized state, especially for its small population. Excluding mineral severance, motor fuel, alcohol, and tobacco revenues, state taxes come to a projected 3.6 percent of adjusted income in FY 2017, well below the national average and a big decline from FY 2009, when they peaked at 5.9 percent. Local taxes stand at about 4.2 percent of income, slightly above the national average. However, Wyomingites have little choice in local government as counties are the locus of most taxation, thus squandering the advantages of fiscal decentralization. Government debt is the lowest in the country (a mere 6 percent of income), and liquid assets are huge (77.8 percent of income), but state and local employment is enormous (19.5 percent of private employment—a big increase over 2008, when it was 17.8 percent), and so is government share of GDP (15 percent). Like Alaska, then, Wyoming personifies the blessings and curses of abundant energy and mineral wealth: low taxes, extremely high reserves, and bloated budgets and public payrolls.

Wyoming does well on land-use freedom but hasn't reformed eminent domain much. Labor law is generally good, with no minimum wage, a right-to-work law, and enforcement of noncompete agreements, but employers must obtain workers' compensation coverage from a monopoly state fund,

and anti-discrimination law goes beyond the federal minimum. Health insurance mandates are lower than average, and the managed care model is still viable. A telecommunications deregulation bill was passed in 2013-14, but there is no statewide video franchising. Occupational licensing has grown over time but is still well below the national average. Nurse practitioners and physician assistants enjoy broad scope of practice, but dental hygienists do not. Wyoming is the best state for insurance freedom, lacking price controls on property and casualty lines. Its price-gouging law was repealed many years ago, but it still has a Depression-era "unfair sales act" on the books. Repealing the latter could vault Wyoming to first place as least cronyist state. Its civil liability system is good, even though the state has not reformed punitive damages at all.

Wyoming's criminal justice policies are similar to those of a Mississippi or Alabama. Incarceration and drug arrest rates are high and have generally risen over time, but non-drug victimless crime arrests have fallen over time and are now only slightly higher than average. A timid asset forfeiture reform was enacted in 2016, but state law is still worse than average. Cannabis laws are predictably bad, though not among the very harshest. Wyoming is one of the very best states for gun rights, having passed constitutional carry in 2010. The only areas where it could improve involve removing location restrictions for carry and specifying no duty to retreat in public, not just in the home as now. Alcohol freedom is a bit above average despite state liquor stores, because taxes are so low. Gambling freedom is below average, but the state does have pari-mutuel wagering and charitable games. Nonsectarian private schools are strictly regulated, and there are no private school choice programs. Tobacco freedom is above average, as smoking bans admit some exceptions. Retail raw milk sales were legalized in 2015. Cousin marriage is illegal, but blood tests and waiting periods are not required for marriage.