

Why Wyoming Is the Best Choice for the Free State Project

Wyoming is a land of incredible variety and beauty, and is home to some of the most well-known landmarks in the world: Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Devil's Tower, among others. Wyoming has the third warmest winters of our candidate states and is located right beside two major cities. Those who first settled Wyoming were rugged individualists who sought out the freedom of her rolling plains and majesty of her snow-capped mountains. What they had they either brought with them or crafted with the labor of their own hands. They worked to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves and their children, and to this day Wyoming remains a land that captures the spirit of that first American dream.

Wyoming is the winner in terms of population; it has by far the fewest people, and thus is easiest for us to influence and win majorities in. This means that Wyoming has a significant head start over all other states. Wyoming can be overcome only if some other state has significant advantages over it in terms of their residents' acceptance of our ideas (political culture). But as we shall see, Wyoming is one of the most pro-freedom, independent-minded states in the country. Not only does Wyoming have the smallest population and overall district sizes, but it is very receptive to our ideas.

Wyoming is ideally suited for the Free State Project because most of its people are just like us. They are friendly, individualistic, and self-reliant. As such, they form the perfect basis for creating and sustaining a free state, for, at its core, liberty is impossible without a strong sense of individual sovereignty and responsibility. Wyoming's people quite often side with issues that would be very familiar to the thoughts of Free State Project members: what happened to the days when government protected its people instead of exploiting them? Why is it anyone else's business how I raise my kids? Why should my hard-earned money be taken from me to support someone else's whims? Why is Washington taking so many of our freedoms in the name of "protecting" us?

With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that Wyoming tops the FSP's "high votes for conservative and libertarian presidential candidates" ranking. This is a state that consistently responds to candidates advocating a small government agenda. Wyoming's own state government is one of the smallest and best managed in the nation, and is the only FSP candidate state that can boast both a balanced budget and a large reserve fund – this in a state with no personal or business income tax, and some of the lowest property taxes in the nation! Wyoming has made headlines in such newspapers as the *Washington Post* for this reason, and is thus already an excellent example of what freedom can do. Well-known financial analysts such as *Forbes* continuously rank Wyoming cities among some of the best in the country for such things as "business and careers" and "cost of doing business." The Tax Foundation and Bloomberg rated Wyoming "America's Wealth-Friendliest State" and "America's Best Tax Climate for Businesses." Again, this is a wonderful example of what people can accomplish without heavy-handed taxes and regulation holding them in perpetual mediocrity, and the country is taking notice of it. Because of this, **Wyoming has the highest mean household income after it is adjusted for cost of living** (tied with Delaware).

Consider other aspects of Wyoming's libertarian nature as well: The Republican Liberty Caucus considers Wyoming's Congress members to be the *most libertarian in the nation* for both fiscal and social issues. Pro-freedom organizations such as Gun Owners of America and the National Taxpayers Union have ranked Wyoming's record as the best in the nation, while left-wing groups like the National Education Association, American Federation of Government Employees, and the anti-gun Brady Campaign have ranked Wyoming as worst in the nation. Wyoming has libertarian Republicans like US Senator Michael Enzi, who was the only Senator to vote against a recent trade restriction bill. **Wyoming even has libertarian Democrats** – like Keith Goodenough, a leader in the state senate. Wyoming is the only FSP candidate state that lacks a "hate-crimes" law, demonstrating that political

correctness has not infiltrated the halls of government there. Wyoming has the third best homeschooling and marijuana laws among the candidate states. Wyoming's state Libertarian Party won Major Party Status in 2002. In fact, Libertarian candidates received more votes from Wyoming in 2002, on average, than any other candidate state. The dominant Wyoming Republican Party supports such libertarian causes as "death with dignity" and the return of all federal land to the state. Of all the Western candidate states, Wyoming is the least dependent on the federal government. Wyoming has the lowest number of welfare recipients and the second lowest percentage of people on welfare in the nation. Wyoming is also the most religiously diverse candidate state.

But can we win in Wyoming? The answer is a resounding **Yes!** Wyoming boasts one of the last remaining part-time citizen legislatures in the nation, and counting both the House and Senate, FSP'ers could build a majority by capturing a mere 57 seats among, on average, the smallest districts of all our candidate states. Elections are so cheap in Wyoming that the Wyoming US House and Senate elections cost less than 25% as much as the same elections in New Hampshire. Wyoming's population is highly concentrated into population centers, making campaigning very easy. Wyoming has term limits, ballot initiatives, and referendums. Wyoming's Supreme Court is moderate and its federal circuit court is both fiscally conservative and socially liberal. Wyoming consistently ranks at the top of our criteria when spreadsheet results are examined. The main FSP spreadsheet is available at the FSP website, and a much larger spreadsheet (containing over 80 variables) is available for the asking from bonneau@easystreet.com. In fact, Wyoming's lead is so commanding in these data sources that advocates for other states have actually had to question the utility of the spreadsheets!

Wyoming also has the smallest voting-age population of any of our candidate states. *8,000 FSP activists in Wyoming would equal a greater percentage of the population than 20,000 in states like Idaho and New Hampshire!* This is a tremendous advantage to us because it means that each of our activists count for more before anything else is even considered. Twenty thousand in Wyoming could nearly field a ballot initiative by themselves. Wyoming also enables us to confront weaker opposition groups: Wyoming has the lowest number of unionized teachers, the second lowest number of unionized workers, and the third lowest number of government employees. Statist groups like the Green Party have been unable to gain ballot access in Wyoming.

Some states may rank higher on various individual measurements, but when you compare the broad scope of current liberties and opportunities that Wyoming presents, no other state even comes close. Nowhere else will each of our activists count for so much by themselves, and nowhere else is the state legislature small enough, and the population libertarian enough, for us to quickly achieve the majorities that will make liberty in our lifetime possible.

The only concern raised about Wyoming is the jobs issue – even though 20,000 activists (which includes many self-employed, retirees, and non-working spouses) don't need all the 36,300 jobs projected; even though our immigration will itself generate a lot more jobs; even though most immigration will be in the Cheyenne/Laramie area (within range of the large Fort Collins job market); even though we will have 7 to 8 years to look for jobs; and even though we really only need 8000 activists (and likely much fewer than 8000 jobs) in Wyoming to be equivalent to 20,000 in a large state. This concern seems to have no merit whatsoever.

For much more in-depth analysis of Wyoming, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.geocities.com/freewyoming>

<http://members.aol.com/wyomingliberty>

And this state report: <http://www.freestateproject.com/wyoming2.htm>