

Ten Top Tens: State Rankings Worth Pursuing - Summary*

Governor Stitt's vision for the state would see us top 10 in the nation in several important categories. Some metrics, however, could be counterproductive. For instance, would anyone want to be among the highest-taxed states?

The 1889 Institute has identified 10 areas where states should focus their energies. We set out goals for each, and suggest what is worth ranking. *In the full 7-page paper, we also point out rankings where Oklahoma should not chase "Top 10" status.*

Dollar spending by government and the size of government programs, even if they are popular, are not measures worthy of inclusion in a Top 10 state ranking. Governments should be penalized for wasting money on things that do not work.

Education

Goal: Give every child the opportunity to obtain the tools to become a productive member of society.

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) performance adjusted for demographics. (Oklahoma's rank: 41)
- Cost effectiveness (efficiency) of public education. (Oklahoma's rank: 26)
- Percentage of state-funded students enrolled in a charter or private school. (Oklahoma's rank: 31)
- Number of graduating high school seniors with at least 15 hours of college credit.
- Percentage of college freshmen from Oklahoma needing remediation. (Currently 40 percent in Oklahoma.)
- Average cost of a 4 year college degree at state universities. (Oklahoma's rank: 20)
- College compliance with traditional legal norms.

Economic Well-being

Goal: Maximize economic opportunity, prosperity, and growth, with the general benefits accruing to everyone who contributes to society.

- Cost of living. (Oklahoma's rank: 2)
- Housing costs. (Oklahoma's rank: 3)
- Average income per capita adjusted for the cost of living. (Oklahoma's rank: 12)
- 10-year average increase in state GDP. (Oklahoma's rank: 29)

Economic Neutrality

Goal: Government acts only as a referee in the economic realm and minimizes distortions and privilege in its tax, spending, and regulatory policies.

- Economic Freedom. (Oklahoma's Cato Institute rank: 19); (Oklahoma's Fraser Institute rank: 3)
- Tax Foundation's State Business Tax Climate Index. (Oklahoma's rank: 26)

Government Efficiency and Accountability

Goal: To ensure that government programs produce the highest possible value for the lowest possible cost to taxpayers and to have orderly means to hold government accountable when it fails.

- Number of state and local government employees per 10,000 residents. (Oklahoma's rank: 26)
- State and local government spending as a percentage of state GDP. (Oklahoma's rank: 27)
- Transparency. (Oklahoma's rank: 40)

Regulation

Goal: Regulate only to the degree necessary to protect health and safety of the public, where there is a clear failure of private information and incentives.

- The number of legally binding regulations - fewer is better. (Oklahoma's rank: 15)
- The amount of money spent on compliance - lower is better.
- The ratio of agency regulatory rules to legislatively passed laws - fewer regulations per law is better, as it means the legislature is doing more of the work and leaving less to unaccountable agencies.

Health

Goal: Wide access to quality health services. Free enterprise has proven, in every category of goods and services, to provide low prices and broad availability at a high quality.

- Number of prescribers per capita - this would include doctors, physician's assistants, and nurse practitioners authorized by law to write prescriptions for non-narcotic drugs.
- The existence, and burden, of a certificate of necessity (CON) regime within a state. Oklahoma still has CON in the nursing home and psychiatric treatment industries.
- Medical services price index in comparison to cost of living across states.
- Dollars saved through the use of Medicaid waivers.

Transportation Effectiveness

Goal: To improve the enjoyment of life and reduce the transaction costs of trade by allowing people to quickly and safely move goods and people.

- Reason Foundation's state highway system performance ranking. (Oklahoma's rank: 33)
- Oklahoma's administrative disbursement per mile of state road. (Oklahoma's rank: 39)

Court System

Goal: A fair, stable, predictable, and accessible legal system.

- Average cost of a court case, excluding verdicts and settlements.
- Average time from filing a lawsuit to final resolution, including dismissals, settlements, verdicts, and appeals.

Public Safety

Goal: To strike the correct balance between deterring dangerous behavior and respecting the individual rights of citizens.

- Civil asset forfeiture rankings. IJ publishes a state by state report card (Oklahoma's grade is D-minus).
- Crime rates, adjusted for police spending.
- Whether state forensic labs are incentivized to help convict the accused through the use of lab fees payable upon conviction. (Oklahoma's rank: tied for 50)

Recreation

Goal: To foster an institutional environment where individuals and civic organizations are free to use their resources and creativity to build "quality of life" attractions.

- Low barriers to recreational projects. This includes land use, zoning, environmental studies, and any other government impediment to opening a business.
- Low land-use regulation (according to Cato, Oklahoma's rank: 3)