

NORTH TO THE FUTURE

The Case for Alaska

Skinner G. Layne

INTRODUCTION

The Debate

The debate within the Free State Project over state selection, in my observation, cleaves at two levels. The first cleavage exists between the “East vs. West” debate: the irreconcilable conflict between the New England historical Patriots and the Rugged Individualists of the Western Frontier. The second cleavage exists between the people who want a “livable” state and the others who are more concerned with the practical conditions necessary for the political success of the FSP. Often the East/West division is a debate over livability, but often times it is not.

In making the final decision on our relocation, it is imperative that *while* we take into account the scores of factors that each of us personally finds to be important to our quality of life, it is absolutely vital that none of us become encased in the sarcophagus of short-sightedness and fail to remember that without the political success of the project, our quality of life in the new state will amount to nothing. Thus, the primacy of our potential political success should be the guiding focus in reaching our terminal judgment on the matter.

It is for the foregoing reasons that this document was conceived. Although a complete discussion of each and every argument for and against the selection of Alaska cannot be presented here due to the constraints of time and space, I endeavor to provide a *comprehensive* treatment of the subject and cover the most pressing topics and hopefully additional arguments that may not have been discussed heretofore.

North To the Future

The Alaska State Motto, adopted in 1967, is “North to the Future.” I hope here to persuade you that our journey North will bring that desired future: a future free of government restraint on the lives of autonomous individuals; a future where we guide our own destiny and make our own lives; a future that looks more like America’s distant than recent past; a future that Jefferson, Adams, Madison, and Henry would have recognized as their present.

By examining the numerical and statistical advantages provided by Alaska, I submit that the fruits of my labor will necessitate the conclusion that for both the short and long-term

success of the FSP at its most basic level, Alaska provides us with the greatest opportunity.

Furthermore, I will argue that the land benefits of living in the largest state in the union whose natural resources surpass most continents' are unmatched by any of the other candidate states. I submit that my arguments will prove that the opportunities for economic success of the FSP's membership are completely viable in Alaska, and that the potential for economic growth there, is as good as any of its competitors. I will argue that the present political culture and structure as well as the socio-cultural aspects of Alaska are more than adequate beginnings for a firmly rooted liberty-loving movement to grow and prosper for generations to come.

I will not, however, be filling this document with flashy clip-arts; nor will I attempt to woo you with pictures. This document will likely lack pithy quips, and will not give you "101 Reasons" or anything contrived. The occasional lackluster graph or data set might be included to enhance an argument, but that will be the extent of the bells and whistles you will find here. The information I present here and the accompanying arguments are intended to appeal to you not aesthetically or emotionally, as other arguments for other places have before. Rather, this document is written with the sole intent of presenting thoughtful, complete, and compelling arguments and analysis to better help you decide how to cast your vote.

My Request To You

I am a fifth generation native of Northwest Arkansas. I have never lived outside of the state; I have never spent more than a few weeks outside of the state at one time. I do not write out of motive for personal gain, attempting to bring the FSP to my home state, as others might attempt to do. I have no special interest in the State of Alaska or its selection as our free state; I have never even visited there. Rather, after careful examination of the data, the qualitative factors, and after assessing both in the context of an eventual probability of success, I have concluded that our greatest opportunity lies in Alaska.

Therefore, I ask you to keep an open mind. Dispel your preconceptions; rid yourself of personal self-interest in the selection of the state, and rather examine the arguments presented here with a "blank slate." It is only through objective consideration that our dreams of freedom will ever come to fruition.

THE NUMBERS

Population

A critical fact that must remain at the forefront of the state-selection debate is that we still have several years ahead of us before the 20,000-member mark is reached. Realizing full well that many of us will likely move prior to that threshold, the arguments I present here are nonetheless as compelling in spite of this fact. As a consequence of this delayed

move, we must consider the reality that our target state, whichever one it is, will have grown by the time four or five years have elapsed. This has not been lost on all of those participating in the debate, but it is still important that all be reminded of its relevance.

Those states that are already over the one million resident milestone therefore present us with a serious dilemma. If the state is experiencing rapid growth, will it be a viable location for the FSP five years from now? Even two years from now? The answer, though not necessarily obvious, is that such future growth would in the very least provide a complicating element to our movement’s strategic objectives. At its worst, it could be a poison pill, preventing even 20,000 activists from successfully dethroning the present political officeholders in the target state.

Thus, the target state’s population needs significant room for growth over the next five years if we are to succeed in achieving our goals. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000, Alaska’s total population was approximately 626,900 compared with Idaho at around 1.29 million, Montana at just over 900,000, New Hampshire at 1.23 million, and Wyoming at almost 494,000. Clearly, the absolute advantage in population is Wyoming, and if the decision were to be made solely on population, Wyoming would be the obvious winner. However, there are other factors that will be considered later that will prove that Wyoming’s absolute advantage in population is offset by the deficits it has in multiple other areas.

	□1950□1960	□1960□1970	□1970□1980	□1980□1990	□1990□2000
Alaska	97,600	76,400	99,300	148,100	76,900
Idaho	78,600	45,400	231,300	62,800	287,300
Montana	83,800	19,600	92,300	12,400	103,100
New Hampshire	73,700	130,800	182,900	188,700	126,500
Wyoming	39,600	2,300	137,200	-16,000	40,200

The chart above¹ indicates the changes in population between each Census since 1950 for Alaska and those states considered the “front-runner” states. In the last decade, only Wyoming posted less growth in sheer numbers. The argument will be made that New Hampshire posted only an 11% increase in population, just a 2% difference from the growth *rate* of Wyoming over the last decade. This is surely true, and if it were not the case that the FSP’s impact on an election were determined by its raw numbers in comparison with the already existing population, then this argument would certainly detract from the cogency of the one I make here. However, it is the case that our influence over an election will be in large part because we make up a significant proportion of the voting population. Thus, New Hampshire, Idaho, and Montana, each showing population increases of over 100,000 people, and Idaho showing an increase of nearly 300,000 people, become increasingly less attractive given their substantial growth rates.

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Let us examine now the actual impact additional growth will have on our political influence. If, for example, New Hampshire's population grows by 100,000 people over the next ten years (a conservative estimate given its recent history), then it would be safe to say, that approximately one-half of those will move in within the first half of the decade. If around 50% of those new residents become voters (as they likely will; again, this is a conservative estimate), then that means 25,000 new voters in the state of New Hampshire by the time we make our move; 5,000 more people than we will have in our nascence. The prospect is even worse in Idaho, given its phenomenal growth between the 1990 and 2000 Census.

Again, with the exception of Wyoming (among these states considered here), Alaska provides the least opportunity for the diluting of our voting bloc in the short-term. This is vital to the quick success of the FSP, and the more quickly we can realize success, the lower will be the rates of attrition from among our own members, and the more readily we will gain attention for our cause.

Primary Turnout

One aspect of a state's political penetrability that has been relatively overlooked is the voter turnout in Republican Primaries. One particularly effective strategy available to us is using an existing party structure, applying our numbers to it both institutionally and at the ballot box, thus through controlling the nomination process within the currently prevailing majority party in the state, we would ensure electoral victory every November. The following are the total numbers of votes cast in the most recent Republican Gubernatorial Primaries in the states under consideration in this document.²

Alaska	72,248
Idaho	145,549
Montana	113,016
New Hampshire	152,372
Wyoming	90,685

In Alaska, if our membership voted in the Republican Primary, we would control 22% of the vote: more than enough to change the outcome of a race that is not even close to begin with. Close elections would be even more within our grasp. For example, in the 2002 Primary for Lt. Governor, the winner of the race received a total of only 21,076 votes.

On the other hand, our entire membership voting *en bloc* in Idaho would comprise only 12% of the vote in a Republican Primary; only 15% in Montana; 12% in New Hampshire; and only 18% in Wyoming, a state with a population of 130,000 fewer people.

² Important Note: All of these were contested primaries that did not involve incumbents and are from either 2000 or 2002. All data collected from the websites of the Election Divisions of each state.

By utilizing the existing party structures we can gain quick access to the electoral process and prove ourselves to be formidable adversaries to those who would oppose our agenda of liberty. In this regard, we must take advantage of every possible aspect of the system that could work in our favor. The Primary system is clearly one that must be considered very carefully when making our decision. Alaska's Republican Primary turnout provides a definitive strategic asset to the FSP.

Population Distribution

The tit-for-tat rings in one's ears "You can't do door-to-door campaigning in Montana!" and "In New Hampshire you're packed in like sardines!" Neither statement is probably entirely accurate, but these are the arguments continually made in attack of the two regions.

Alaska provides the perfect compromise between these two positions. While vast in its geography, Alaska has the distinct advantage of combining enough urbanization to facilitate effective grassroots campaigning and enough land so that the Westerners or Southern Farm boys (like myself) are in no danger of contracting claustrophobia. With 571,000+ square miles in area³, there is more than adequate breathing space for anybody who wants it.

However, of the 626,932 people living in Alaska, over 41% are concentrated in Anchorage alone.⁴ Furthermore, an additional 13% reside in the Fairbanks area, and 5% in the Juneau area. This means that nearly 60% of the entire population of Alaska is assembled in three relatively compact general municipal areas. Moreover, the remaining 40% of the population is not scattered about over the hundreds of thousands of square miles of land. Instead, they are in a number of small towns across the state. This provides an additional advantage over the other Western states under consideration where countless people live "in the middle of nowhere."

While the state of Alaska is vast with much wilderness and "bush" country, the population does not live in those parts. Instead, contrary to popular belief, they live in modern cities and towns with the normal amenities one would expect in cities of similar size in the "lower 48." In later pages, I will dispel many of the myths about the way and quality of life in Alaska.

It can therefore be extrapolated that unlike having to divide ourselves among the four corners of Wyoming or Montana, the FSP members can locate in a few number of areas not extremely distant of each other, and control enough of the geography to be serious contenders for eventual majorities in the state legislature in Alaska. Furthermore, campaigning in the major urbanized areas will be much easier than covering the rural routes of Montana, Wyoming, or the Dakotas. Thus, New Hampshire and the Northeast

³ <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/tourism/learn/aboutgeography.htm>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Alaska Summary File 1

do not have a monopoly on the ability to engage in effective grassroots efforts like door-to-door campaigning.

Libertarians & The Alaskan Independence Party

The measure of libertarian sentiment may stop with the enumeration of Libertarians in most states, and libertarian Republicans in a few others. But in Alaska, our allies come in more shapes than one, and in more strength (per capita) than anywhere else in the nation. The Alaskan Independence Party presently has over 17,700 voters registered under its banner. The Libertarian party has more than 7,300. Out of 462,000 registered voters, that is 3.8% and 1.6% respectively. No other state provides the FSP with that much support already in the state, not even New Hampshire.

The Alaskan Independence Party will prove to be a great ally in our struggle for liberty. To read the complete platform of the AIP, please see Appendix A of this document. The “Porcupine Ideology” is well aligned with the AIP’s platform.

Initially, we would begin with a significant advantage over other candidate states: 45,000 pro-liberty people, nearly one-tenth of all registered voters in Alaska. To forego such an opportunity would simply be foolish.

THE LAND

Natural Resources

There is one natural resource without which the United States economy would be fatally crippled: oil. No other state in the Union, much less in the ten states under consideration by the Free State Project comes even close to matching Alaska in access to petroleum resources, although presently Texas produces more oil daily than Alaska. The strategic benefit of controlling the state government that possesses the access to these resources cannot be understated.

First, 85% of the Alaska state government’s budget is financed by oil revenues.⁵ This means that taxation is already inherently not a necessity to the people of Alaska. It will therefore be an easier “sell” to the people of Alaska to eliminate the very few taxes that are currently in place since their elimination will not be politically as problematic as they would be in other states where significant cuts in taxes would mean dramatic changes in the local *modus operandi* with regard to government services.

Second, the ability to control the flow of oil to the “lower 48” will provide substantial leverage if we ever decided to exercise it. This becomes increasingly important as the United States seeks to decrease its dependence upon foreign petroleum producers thereby expanding domestic exploration and production. Alaska will continue to be at the forefront of this debate because of its vast ability to extract these products from its natural

⁵ <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/tourism/learn/economy.htm>

environment. The implications of this national debate on the local political culture and its ability to positively impact the FSP will be discussed in a later section.

In addition to its abundance of oil, Alaska is home to one-half of the entire nation’s coal reserves.⁶ At present, there is 5.5 *trillion* tons of un-mined coal in Alaska.⁷ No other state, in the Union even approach this level of coal production possibilities. Moreover, the coal reserves in Alaska are largely untapped⁸ but nevertheless extremely accessible, thus making them an attractive benefit to our target state. Furthermore, because of these coal reserves, the potential for methane gas production is extremely significant. It is estimated that the coal beds could produce up to 1,000 *trillion* cubic feet of methane.⁹

Alaska also boasts the largest silver and zinc mines in the United States, producing half of the United States’ zinc and nearly 20% of its silver each year. The following is a table of the other mineral resources available in Alaska.¹⁰

	Proven reserve	Estimated additional reserves
Chromium	215,570	127,950 <i>tons</i>
Cobalt	63,600,000	55,103,400 <i>pounds</i>
Platinum	760,000	171,895 <i>oz</i>
Tin	125,975,000	5,046,000 <i>pounds</i>
Fluorine	4,940,000	<i>tons</i>
Nickel	1,123,000,000	950,561,500 <i>pounds</i>
Mercury		1,500,000 <i>pounds</i>
Tungsten	1,345,560	34,008,000 <i>pounds</i>

One of Alaska’s abundant, renewable natural resources is timber. There are currently 28 million acres of commercial timberland in Alaska.¹¹ The vast amount of aquatic access also makes Alaska #1 in the nation in fish production, yielding over 6 billion pounds of fish per year.¹²

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Flores, Stricker, and Kinney, “Alaska Coal Resources and Coalbed Methane Potential,” U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 2198, p. 4, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/bul/b2198>, 2003.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Source: U.S. Geological Survey

¹¹ <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/tourism/learn/economy.htm>

¹² *Ibid.*

Finally, one of Alaska's most surprising natural resources is its very productive farmland. While receiving fewer dollars in farming subsidies than any other state, a mere \$98,000 per annum, the state has over 15 million acres of arable land, only one million of which is currently in production. Because of Alaska's long light hours during the summer, the growing season, though shorter than in the southeastern states, is quite prolific. Contrary to popular opinion, Alaska actually can grow a significant amount of food, and does so each year. One important consideration is the fact no other state under consideration receives even close to as little farming aid from the federal government as Alaska. New Hampshire receives more than 13 times as much as Alaska, Wyoming more than 184 times as much, Idaho 1,558 times, and Montana an astounding 2,101 times as much in farming subsidies! One of the most difficult tasks before us in whatever state we move to is weaning the farmers from the government payroll. There is nothing that galvanizes farmers more than the threat of cutting their subsidies. Moving into a highly agricultural state that receives large amounts of aid from the federal government will make our task nearly impossible if we maintain our intentions to seek reductions in such benefits to reduce our dependence on the federal government.

Water

Since the beginning of time, human civilizations have been built near abundant water resources. From the Fertile Crescent to Boston Harbor, people have recognized the vital importance of water. The Romans built magnificent aqueducts to allow the extremities of the Empire to thrive. Modern technology and engineering have made it possible for people to inhabit areas of the earth that would never have been possible two or three hundred years ago. However, no amount of engineering is a substitute for convenient, local access to abundant fresh water, because while survival may be possible in times of water scarcity, nothing thrives.

Alaska provides unrivaled access to fresh water, having over 40% of the entire nation's non-glacial, non-frozen surface water in over 3 million lakes and 12,000 rivers, and is home to more wetlands than remain in all of the other U.S. states *combined*. Moreover, these figures do not include the three-fourths of Alaska's fresh water that is frozen in glacial ice.¹³

Such abundant access to water has several unique advantages. First, the ability to harness the power of just a few of the countless tens of thousands of waterways for hydroelectric energy eliminates the potential for dependency on energy from other sources. The more self-sufficient as a state we are, the more bargaining power we have with the federal government. If we are reliant on neighboring states to supply us with enough power just to survive, then we are at their mercy and the dictates of the federal government, to whom they will no doubt be enslaved.

Second, while many of us often take the availability of clean drinking water for granted, it is an important consideration in selecting our future home state. Wyoming, for

¹³ <http://www.worldwatersa.com/sources.html>

example, has a State Water *Planning Commission* to ensure proper use of its scarce water.¹⁴ Montana has a Drought Advisory Committee,¹⁵ and New Hampshire requires a State Drought Management Team¹⁶; whereas southeastern Alaska has an impressive maximum drought record of nine *days*.¹⁷ Having access to large quantities of fresh water also prevents the potential for dependency on outside sources for it, a resource more than necessary for survival.

Simply stated, no other state under consideration for the Free State Project provides such remarkable opportunities for access to fresh water, an important factor in making our final decision.

Abundance

If anything could be said about land in Alaska, it is that there is a lot of it. Alaska is one-fifth of the size of the contiguous forty-eight states, more than 571,000 square miles in all. Arguments have been made (and will continue to be made, I presume) that most of this land is owned by the federal and state governments. However, it is the avowed policy of the Alaska state government to get rid of large quantities of the land it owns.

Land is still available under the Alaska Homestead Act, and although there are restrictions and requirements, people who are truly interested in not paying for their land can obtain it without paying the state any money at all. It may require investment to get it up to standard, but these are some of the issues that can be easily changed by simple statutory amendment. The advantage here for the Free State Project is that because so much of the land is state-owned, once the laws are changed, it will be extremely easy for newcomers to obtain their own property. Compared with other states where most of the land is private, it is nearly impossible to obtain land even at a reasonable price.

Moreover, the state currently engages in the sale of land at very reasonable prices, some extremely cheap, and some more expensive, depending on one's location preference. Obviously, if one desired to live in a more urban area, the cost will be higher, as a result of the laws of supply and demand.

The importance of an abundant supply of real estate cannot be underestimated. Free people need room; they need breathing space; they need land. There was a film from a few years ago called *O Brother Where Art Thou* where one of the characters in the film was asked what he would do with his soon-to-be-collected bounty. This uneducated Southern fellow responded with economic wisdom, saying that he would buy back the family farm because "you ain't no kind of man if you don't own land." Oversimplified, maybe, but nevertheless, the simple fact is that people who own property are more likely to be protective of their rights of property ownership than those who do not.

¹⁴ <http://waterplan.state.wy.us/brochure.html>

¹⁵ <http://nris.state.mt.us/Drought/>

¹⁶ http://www.des.state.nh.us/dam/drought_mgmnt.htm

¹⁷ <http://www.worldwatersa.com/sources.html>

One of the great risks by selecting a state with mostly just cities and only small parcels of rural land, such as in the Northeast, is that the rights associated with property ownership, and even the right to own property itself will be far less important to the native culture, and to non-FSP people who later move to the state. Only the Alaskan opportunity supplies us with adequate potential for expansion and for true, large-scale property ownership.

Additionally, the present federal ownership of land presents us with a wedge issue, a campaign-rallying cry to the people of Alaska who are tired of being strong-armed by the federal government. The timber industry, for example is at the mercy of the federal government on many issues concerning logging roads in national forests. The presence of pro-liberty activists could garner the immediate support of people in the timber industry who are seeking to be freed from the bonds of federal land ownership. The issue of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) is yet another example of federal land ownership issues interfering in the local operations of Alaskans. The political leverage mustered by an added core group of supporters for freedom from federal mandates would be particularly useful for achieving our goal of liberty in our lifetime.

THE MONEY

International Trade

No other candidate state can claim the remarkable record of international trade that Alaska boasts. More than \$2.25 billion of the Alaskan economy comes from international trade. One of the few states with both coastal and Canadian borders, Alaska is not limited in its number of trading partners. Each year, Alaskan companies export goods and services to over 70 countries.¹⁸ Japan alone buys more than \$1.3 billion in goods and services annually from Alaska.

Alaska also has unique Foreign Trade Zones in St. Paul, Valdez, Fairbanks, Kodiak, and Anchorage. These Foreign Trade Zones allow those engaged in international commerce to defer, reduce, and in many cases eliminate the necessity of paying tariffs, U.S. Customs Fees, and duties on goods imported to and exported from within the zone.¹⁹ Nothing is more crucial to the viability of an economy than the ability to engage in free, foreign trade. Alaska provides the Free State Project a distinct advantage because it has a large coastal border, a border with Canada, and its own Foreign Trade Zones.

Economic strength is one of the key components of the state we will select. If the state experiences severe economic declines periodically, it will make it increasingly difficult for our members to remain in the state. Because Alaska's economy does not rely on local and domestic markets as do most of the Western states, and because it has a diverse set of

¹⁸ <http://www.alaskachamber.com/International.htm>

¹⁹ Alaska FTZ Brochure <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/trade>

foreign trading partners, far more so than the Northeastern states, it is less susceptible to broad economic downturns. It will be far less correlated to American recessionary woes, and the economic troubles of any single country will not destroy its vitality. Even during the worst of the Japanese recession, the Alaskan markets were not significantly hurt because of the inelasticity of demand for the goods that Japan imported from Alaska. Such long-term stability in these terms should give Alaska prime consideration when casting a ballot for our target state.

Tourism

Alaska's natural beauty and diverse forms of recreation attract more than 1.4 million visitors to the state each year. Consequently, the tourism industry is the second largest employer in the state, with more than one in eight people employed in the industry.²⁰ More than one billion dollars in revenue comes to the state each year through tourism, and provides the greatest opportunity for new small business ventures than any other industry in the state.

The advocates of New Hampshire often boast of the existence of the high-tech industry in their state. However, for most people who even have this training, it means employment usually by a corporation. And for many of us who have no training in the field, it lacks any significant attraction. However, the diversity of the Alaskan economy, and in particular, the strength of the mammoth tourism industry, provides anybody with the desire, the ability to start his/her own small business. Entry into the tourism market is far easier than in most industries, as it does not require graduate degrees or highly specialized training, giving opportunity for all who want to enjoy the benefits of a free state, not just the elite few who can work in highly specialized fields. Yet it is a very economically rewarding industry with the potential for very high earnings.

Easy entry for a small business into a market will provide families the flexibility they need to sustain themselves financially and enjoy the benefits of taking time off without the rigidity of corporate vacation schedules. The Free State Project may enjoy short-term success with any demographic, but the ultimate ability of people to start families and remain in the state is absolutely key to the long-term success of the movement. If the state we choose is not ultimately conducive to family life, we will no doubt be short-lived. The economic viability of small business ownership provides the best opportunity for families, and the Alaskan tourism industry is one of the greatest available tools to make this desire come to fruition.

Construction

The booming commercial construction industry in Alaska opens the door to careers in many fields, from skilled laborers to civil engineers and architects. With massive infrastructure expansions planned in the near future, construction in Alaska will yield thousands of jobs to people of all levels of qualification. The new oil projects by BP and Phillips plan new capital expenditures of \$1.2 billion dollars, and many other

²⁰ <http://www.alaskachamber.com/TourIndustryhtm.htm>

corporations such as Wal-Mart will be contracting to build new stores and warehouses across the state.²¹

Furthermore, according to the Alaska Chamber of Commerce, these massive construction projects are on hold because the current labor market in Alaska cannot handle the demand for new employees. Thus, the greatly expanding economy in Alaska, unlike most of the rest of the United States, provides a ripe job market for freedom-seeking people looking to earn an adequate living.

Seafood

Employing more than 33,000 people, the Seafood industry is one of the fundamental pillars of the Alaskan economy. Its production comprises 60% of all American-harvested seafood each year, totally more than 5 billion pounds. The seafood processing plants maintain a payroll in excess of \$350 million annually.

Oil & Gas

I have previously written of the vast quantities of petroleum produced by the state of Alaska, so this will be somewhat abbreviated. The oil and gas industries, employing more than 8,000 people, provide numerous job opportunities for people of many different backgrounds, including attorneys, geologists and other scientists, environmental quality experts, and engineers, just to name a few. The oil and gas industry adds even further to the already diverse economy of the state of Alaska.

THE CULTURE

Non-Native Alaskans

With only 38% of the Alaskan population born inside the state, it provides the least provincial atmosphere for the Free State Project. And because of its low population, that translates into fewer actual persons than any state who are born within the state's borders, with the sole exception of Wyoming.

One of the greatest potential risks our movement faces is being labeled as "outsiders." A state with a low population of native residents substantially decreases our risk of receiving this label. Moreover, most of the non-native residents of states in the Northeast are from other Northeastern states, and the same is true of the Western states: their increases stem primarily from other Western and Midwestern states. Alaska, quite obviously, does not receive its influx of new residents from neighboring states. Indeed, the population of Alaska is quite diverse, coming from the various regions of the lower 48. This virtually eliminates, particularly when considered in light of the situation faced in the other candidate states, the risk that regional prejudice will hamper our electoral success.

²¹ http://www.alaskachamber.com/construction_profile.htm

The Gun Culture

Now boasting the least restrictive firearms regulations in the entire nation, Alaska is not only receptive to the idea of true liberty, but it protects, to the fullest extent, one of the most foundational rights of any free society. This will prove to be a vital element of any free state, and Alaska's status quo protections already serve as a model to any state looking to free its populace from governmental control in this policy area.

Marijuana

The pro-liberty culture of Alaska becomes even more readily apparent when considering that of all of the candidate states, Alaska not only had the highest score based on the FSP ratings, but had a *perfect* score of 10. New Hampshire received only a 1.04, Wyoming a 5.26, with Montana and Idaho with *dismal* scores of .20 and .04 respectively.

Taxes

Perhaps the most important measure of a state's current commitment to freedom is the rate at which the state confiscates the productive capital of its residents through taxation. Alaska again comes out on top, with yet another perfect score, where New Hampshire scores a full 25% lower, and Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming each 35% lower. Unlike marijuana regulations and gun control laws, however, tax laws are far more difficult to change because they often require cuts in government programs.

By choosing the state with the lowest tax burden, we avoid the potential risk of awaking special interest groups previously un-threatened by the status quo government, but would be substantially affected through the massive reduction of taxation and government spending. Alaska's low taxes are unmatched, despite the claims of some of the other frontrunner states, and this is another crucial point in the column of Alaska.

Outside Stigmatization

There has been a frequent refrain among the advocates of the Northeastern states that the Western states already have a stigma from everybody else in the country. This is largely overstated to begin with, particularly given the fact that they speak from the perspective of Northeasterners, not taking into account those living in the Midwest and South, who are far less unsympathetic with the Western states. However, Alaska does not suffer from the same asserted stigma as do the other Western states. Additionally, it does not suffer from the unfair characterization of Northeastern states by many Southerners and Westerners as being made of stuffy, rude, arrogant, and elitist people. While recognizing that both of these characterizations, of Western states by Easterners, and Eastern states by Westerners and Southerners, is inaccurate, Alaska does offer a third way, with its only real problem being that everybody assumes that it is too cold (this will be addressed in latter pages).

The Politics of Rural States

One striking reality that is quite obvious after the 2000 presidential election is the propensity of states with vast quantities of rural land to cast votes for candidates who campaign on pro-liberty agendas and the propensity of states with less land to support more statist politicians.

While noting that New Hampshire did indeed cast its electoral votes for President Bush in 2000, it was a narrow victory, only 48% of the vote, and without the aid of Ralph Nader, the Bush Electoral College victory in New Hampshire might not have been. In Alaska, however, the ultra-statist agenda of higher taxes, socialized medicine, and gun control received a meager 37% of the vote, including both the Gore/Lieberman and Nader/LaDuke tickets. Gore/Lieberman and Nader/LaDuke, the vanguard of the ultra-left and defenders of the principles of socialism received a combined total of 50.7% of the vote. The claims that New Hampshire is a solidly pro-liberty state seem to be seriously weakened by this evidence.

THE CRITICISM

The Weather Outside is Frightful

The most prevalent concern among those resistant to moving to Alaska is the climate. Admittedly, Anchorage is no Miami, but nevertheless, the climate prejudice held against Alaska is much less warranted than most people initially believe.

According to the Alaska Climate Research Center²², the city of Anchorage records annual high temperatures of over 65 degrees Fahrenheit, and annual lows of around 10 degrees. It is not uncommon even among many of the Southern states (like my home state of Arkansas) to experience temperatures of below 10 degrees Fahrenheit, but the most significant difference in climate is not the lows, but the highs.

There are places in Alaska with winter lows that are significantly higher than Anchorage. For example, the city of Annette, which is in Southeast Alaska, has high temperatures in the summer of over 65, and winter lows that rarely drop below 30 degrees Fahrenheit. The city of Fairbanks experiences summer temperatures of over 70 degrees in June, July, and part of August; and the capital city of Juneau enjoys summer highs of 65 with winter lows of only 20 degrees. There are few, if any, states under consideration whose major cities have annual lows higher than 20 degrees.

Furthermore, unlike many of the Western states, prolonged drought conditions are not serious worries. The city of Juneau, for example, averages between 3 and 5 inches of precipitation per month. Cities such as Fairbanks, that receive relatively little precipitation each year, nevertheless do not fear drought conditions because of the abundant supply of surface water in the form of streams, rivers, and lakes.

²² <http://climate.gi.alaska.edu/>

Finally, the consideration of climate should only be one of many secondary factors when selecting our target state. Political viability is a far more important concern, and should take primacy in making our decision.

You Can't Get There From Here

The second most serious criticism of the Alaskan choice is that the state is simply a long distance from anywhere else in the United States. First, this is one of Alaska's strengths, for reasons previously discussed. Second, air transportation to Alaska is surprisingly not as expensive as one might believe, though it is admittedly not as inexpensive as flying to Dallas. Anchorage is serviced by the Ted Stevens International Airport, one of the largest cargo airport hubs in the world, and thus is capable of landing virtually any make of aircraft. Additionally, the Alaska Highway and Alaska marine transportation provide alternative routes for those who prefer not to fly. Again, the consideration of distance, like the consideration of climate, should be of only secondary importance. People committed enough to freedom will not balk if the prospect of actually achieving liberty in our lifetime is truly viable.

Federal Land Ownership

I have discussed this previously, but will briefly rehash the argument again here. The argument that Alaska's percentage of government-owned land is a decidedly negative factor simply ignores several considerations. Primarily, it fails to recognize the resentment held by the Alaskan people toward the federal government for its intervention into their lives. No single issue will be more easily utilized to galvanize the support of native Alaskans and rally them to our cause. When our movement proves that it is committed to defending the state against federal intrusion, and moreover, fight the federal government's current intrusion, we will win the hearts and minds of the Alaskan people.

CONCLUSION

Due to the time limitations placed upon my completion of this report, there will be a forthcoming document specifically comparing Alaska with the primary contenders for the target state of our coming vote: New Hampshire, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Included in that document will be a point-by-point refutation of New Hampshire's "101 Reasons" and concrete argumentation against the analysis provided by the other states.

In a final analysis, we see extremely clearly that Alaska provides the Free State Project with the best set of circumstances and opportunities. It would be ridiculously imprudent to expect that any state be the best in each and every category of comparison. After all, if such a state existed already, we would not be having such a debate. However, what has been argued for and proven here is that the state of Alaska is, on the whole, the most reasonable choice of any FSP member.

The political culture of Alaska is nearly ideal for liberty-loving people: from the extraordinarily low tax rates to the almost non-existent state regulation of guns and marijuana to the fact that a dynamically low proportion of the people in Alaska were not even born in the state. The freedom-loving Alaskan people will readily assimilate the Free State Project into its own population. There will not doubt be many who are hostile to our agenda, but that will be true in any of the states under consideration. Alaska, though, has the least potential for significant hostilities and opposition, because of its firmly rooted traditions of individualism and liberty.

The diverse and rapidly expanding economy of Alaska, which boasts the lowest poverty rates among the candidate states, gives Free State Project members the opportunity to find economically rewarding employment in any countless number of career fields, and gives those who desire to start their own small business a perfect opportunity in easy entry industries such as the very profitable tourism industry. The economic success of the members of the FSP is extremely vital to the movement's political success, and Alaska supplies the needed jobs that are not as readily available in the other Western states like Wyoming or Montana.

Alaska's breathtaking natural beauty will no doubt captivate the hearts of every FSP member if Alaska is ultimately chosen. The abundance of land, and the ability to acquire real estate cheaply, coupled with the bountiful supply of water and natural resources make Alaska the most richly endowed state of any we could choose.

But most importantly, Alaska is a truly open door for remarkable political change, both institutionally, and at the grassroots level. Its population, smaller than all but Wyoming, makes it a prime selection for a political organization that will require a small population in order to succeed. Idaho and New Hampshire will have grown far too large within the next half-decade for our additional 20,000 members to have significant impact. Moreover, the exceedingly high voter turnout in New Hampshire makes it even more difficult for a small number of activists to change the outcomes of elections. Further, Alaska's primary voter turnout is the lowest of all of the ten candidate states, making it most easily changed at the level of the institutional political party.

Additionally, the present strength of the Libertarian and Alaskan Independence parties bolster our numbers in the initial phases of our plans. This means a greater likelihood of early electoral success, victories without which our movement will grow weary and faint, and potentially fall. Nothing will deplete the morale of an already strained movement more than being dealt multiple successive defeats at the ballot box.

The geographic distribution of the population of Alaska uniquely offers the Free State Project the ability to engage in local, grassroots campaigning that is simply not available in the sparsely distributed populations of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, but allows for its members to enjoy as much land as they desire, unlike the Northeast.

Alaska's exceptional combination of land, resources, economic opportunity, a liberty-oriented culture, and most importantly, political viability, make it a choice far superior to

even its nearest competitor. For those of you who are reading this and have not decided finally for which state you will cast your first choice vote, I ask you to seriously consider the arguments presented here and cast your first vote for Alaska. However, for many who are reading this, you have already decided your first-choice state, and are quite adamantly supporting it. If the arguments presented herein have not persuaded you to change your mind, I ask that you would at least rank Alaska as #2 on your ballot, for you can do so without it hurting the viability of your first-choice state, because of the balloting method being used for this election.

The selection of our target state is the single most important decision we will make as a political movement, and thus it is vitally important that we choose carefully and wisely. Join me in voting for a greater tomorrow; a more prosperous tomorrow; a freer tomorrow; let us vote for Alaska, and head North to the Future; North to *our* future, where there will be liberty in our lifetime.

**NORTH TO THE FUTURE
THE CASE FOR ALASKA**

Appendix A

Platform of the Alaskan Independence Party

PREAMBLE We affirm that all political power is inherent in the people; that all government originates with the people, is founded on their will only, is instituted to protect the rights of the individual; that all persons have a natural right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the enjoyment of the rewards of their own industry; that all persons are equal and entitled to equal protection under the law. We stand on a firm constitutional foundation.

PLATFORM We pledge to exert our best efforts to accomplish the following :

1. To effect full compliance with the constitutions of the United States of America and the State of Alaska.
2. To support and defend States' Rights, Individual Rights, and the Equal Footing Doctrine as guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States of America and the state of Alaska.
3. To support the liberalization of initiative and referendum procedures to hold legislatures accountable to the will of the people.
4. To call and convene a State Constitutional Convention to address the flaws in the existing State Constitution.
5. To reinforce the unalienable rights endowed by our Creator to Alaska law, and to eliminate the use of the word privilege in the Alaska statutes.
6. To amend the Constitution of the State of Alaska so as to re-establish the rights of all Alaskan residents to entry upon all public lands within the state, and to acquire private property interest there in, under fair and reasonable conditions. Such property interest shall include surface and sub-surface patent.
7. To foster a constitutional amendment abolishing and prohibiting all property taxes.
8. To institute a majority vote for each elected office at every subdivision of government.
9. To seek the complete repatriation of the public lands, held by the federal government, to the state and people of Alaska in conformance with Article 1, Section 8, Clause 17, of the federal constitution.
10. To prohibit all bureaucratic regulations and rulings purporting to have the effect of law, except that which shall be approved by the elected legislature.
11. To oppose with rare exception, any secret activities or expenditures of funds of any government agency, state, federal or international.
12. To preserve and protect the Alaska Permanent Fund, Permanent fund earnings, earnings reserve fund and individual Permanent Fund Dividends.
13. To provide for the direct popular election of the attorney general, all judges, and magistrates.

14. To provide for the development of unrestricted, statewide, surface transportation and utility corridors as needed by the public or any individual.
15. To affirm and assert every possible right-of-way established under R.S. 2477 of July 26, 1866, before its repeal by the Federal Land Management Policy Act of October 21, 1976.
16. To support the right of the individual to keep and bear arms.
17. To support the complete abolition of the concept of sovereign or governmental immunity, so as to restore accountability for public servants.
18. To support the rights of parents to privately or home school their children and to provide them individually the right to access to a proportional share of all money provided for educational purposes as an unrestricted grant for such purposes.
19. To support the privatization of government services.
20. To oppose the borrowing of money by government for any purposes other than for capital improvements.
21. To strengthen the traditional family and support individual accountability without government interference or regulation.
22. To support the right of jurors to judge the law as well as the facts, according to their conscience.
23. To restore the open primary.
24. To support "Jobs for Alaskans...First!"