

Rankings

The Maine Jobs Council recently commissioned a study of Maine's national rankings using criteria that reflect economic and demographic standing. There were no instructions other than to use unbiased, quality sources with criteria that were meaningful and reproducible. The research team ended up selecting 22 different measures. Maine ranked:

- **41st (bold select content for attention and to catch those who will only skim)** for the excess of federal funds received over paid federal taxes (\$1.62 in federal payments to Mainers for every dollar of federal taxes), and income taxes;
- **42nd** for venture capital investment, personal income, health care/capita, and GDP/capita;
- **43rd** for our overall economy and as a state to do business;
- **44th** for corporate taxes and the job market;
- **45th** for workforce;
- **46th** for our business environment;
- **47th** for access to capital;
- **48th** for the regulatory environment and overall taxes;
- **49th** for infrastructure and the percentage of the population under 18; and
- **Dead last** for property taxes and the percentage of the population over 65.

Maine is the oldest, whitest state in the union and getting older faster than any other state.

So, over the 22 criteria, Maine is in the bottom 10 in 19 of them. We are also 40th in job growth and cost of living, 39th in reliance on federal funding, and 38th (our "best" score) in the cost of energy. Among the peer states rated, West Virginia had the second most bottom 10 rankings with 16, followed by Vermont with 13, Alaska with 12 and Hawaii with eleven. No other state had more than eight, so there's a case to be made that overall, Maine has the lowest rankings in the country.

MAINE COMPANIES SOLD OUT OF STATE

Pottles	Maritime Energy convenience stores	Thayer Corp. Maine
Exactitude	Getchell Brothers	Manufacturing NH
Sure Winner Foods	Deering Lumber	Bragg Grafman's
On Target	Emery Waterhouse	James W. Sewall
Sprinkler Systems Keiser	Applicator Sales	Oakhurst Dairy
Homes	Downeast Energy	JSI Store Fixtures
Murray Oil	Heutz Oil	UniTel
Hartt Transportation	Covetrus	Dodge Oil
Norris, Inc.	Enefco	Central Maine Power
Kenoco	Pathway's Inc.	Central Tire
Dead River	Bangor Hydro	Group Dynamic Hogan
Kris-Way Truck Leasing	Gagne & Son Concrete	Tire
Temp Shield	Eastern Fire Protection	Brockway-Smith
Augusta Fuel Company	HA Mapes	Masthead Maine

INVESTMENT

People have a lot of varied feelings about money. We want it, often want more of it, are concerned about how fairly it is distributed, can resent those with lots of it, don't want to be a slave to it, and while we know it can't buy happiness, we might be willing to put that theory to the test.

What's undoubtedly true is that there are a lot of things you can't do without it, and run a business is one of them—have a quality job is almost certainly another. A carpenter can't build anything without tools, a machinist can't work without machines, a truck driver can't drive without trucks. Things get done because people work—and almost always that work requires something that it takes money to acquire.

A business starts with an idea, experience, expertise, and a willingness to compete and take risk. It goes nowhere without investment. A trucking company needs shippers and goods to deliver, contracts for services, drivers, technicians for maintenance and repairs, and services like lawyers, accountants, health care providers, and more. But it goes nowhere and does nothing without trucks. And you need money to buy trucks.

And so, it is with virtually every business. There has to be investment. Investment is a bet on the future. It is a decision to support a company so it can be successful, do meaningful work, employ quality people, provide decent jobs, and yes, make money. Investors want to make a profit on their money and so invest where they think there is a bright future, innovation, opportunity, and success.

Today, Maine is one of the lowest ranking states for both access to capital and venture capital investment. One of Maine's overriding goals should be to attract as much investment as possible to create and support quality foundational jobs, build our tax base, attract innovation and young families, and make Maine more productive. Productivity results from an effective business plan or idea, the number of people working, the training and education of the workers, the technology supporting the workforce, and the money to fund training, equipment, salaries, innovation, and growth. Those are the things that ought to be the focus of Maine's public policies.

GOALS

The United States uses SMSA's (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas) to generate all kinds of statistics, understand economic activity, and plan for the future. A key metric is overall population and on that basis the New York City SMSA is the country's largest at almost 20 million, LA is next at 13 million, Chicago comes in third at 9.5 million, Washington, DC is sixth at 6.3, Boston is 11th at 4.9, San Francisco is 13th at 4.6 million and so on.

If the entire state of Maine was an SMSA, at 1.3 million it would rank in the 40's somewhere between Richmond, VA and Louisville, KY in the neighborhood of Buffalo, NY and Hartford, CT. The fact is that Maine has the population of a middling US city but with the disadvantage of being spread out over an enormous area. Thus, we need more schools, more roads, more hospitals, and more of most everything per person just to provide basic services. Of course, we avoid most of the problems of overcrowding, but we lose the efficiencies of proximity and critical mass.

But we aren't a city. We are a state. What sets us apart from Richmond and Buffalo is that we have a sovereign Legislature, a Governor, and our own court system. We have a great deal more control over our destiny and have the structure and opportunity to do much greater things than any American city.

Some of the things we could work together to do include:

- making Maine a magnet for young people and families;
- utilizing the latest technology and understanding to update and modernize K-12 education;
- doing what it takes to reduce the number of people in our jails;
- connecting with MIT, Harvard, UMaine and other top area universities to create world beating companies;

- finding out what it would take to increase Maine’s collective productivity—better ideas, better training, better funding;
- developing and executing a plan to attract cutting edge 21st century jobs that fit within our lifestyle and environment;
- increasing our GDP per person;
- becoming a magnet for remote workers;
- making sure none of Maine’s quality family businesses get sold out of state;
- integrating education starting with pre-school and running through graduate degrees;
- planning for Maine to benefit from the recent federal legislation bringing manufacturing back onshore and growing the chip industry;
- solving our worker shortage by attracting people to move to Maine;
- creating an environment to grow foundational jobs;
- taking steps to make Maine the most attractive state in the northeast for investment;
- improving Maine’s overall economic rankings until we are in the top half instead of the bottom ten;
- making Maine a net contributor to the national economy instead of a statewide charity; and
- creating an economic and educational environment that enables people to turn away from drugs.

We could and should be doing some of these things with the power we have as a state. We should be much better at it than any city, but we’re not. Unfortunately, our politics has for years been about short-term, self-interested issues and the belief that whichever party wins an election should give its supporters what they want. That isn’t vision, that isn’t leadership, and that isn’t the road to success. While we have the power of a state, with only 1.3 million people we don’t have the ability to be successful fighting amongst ourselves. We need to aim high, have a vision, and work together to tackle big ambitious projects together.