

The “Red State” “Blue State” Debate



by Gary Fouse

Aside from the possible implications of the Newsom-DeSantis debate for the 2024 presidential election, there is another issue that I hope will get more play in the coming months: As Sean Hannity, himself has stressed, hopefully, the nation will take a serious look at why so many people are leaving states like California, New York, and Illinois for states like Florida, Texas, the Carolinas, and Tennessee. Is it just for lower taxes, or together with many other factors, the promise of a better life?

As a native and current retiree in California, I have pondered that question myself, especially after a recent two-week trip to Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas. It would be great to

spend the remaining years in one of those states even if I had to give up the ideal weather of Southern California. Realistically, however, it's just a pipe dream. All of our close relatives are here in Southern California, and our house is completely paid off. So we are not going anywhere.

But what made Gavin Newsom the loser in the debate was the undeniable comparison between California and Florida. Newsom had no credible answers for the high cost of living, taxes, gas prices, crime, lax law enforcement, homelessness, etc, all of which are driving thousands of people and businesses out of the Golden State. To use a baseball metaphor, he stepped into the batter's box with two strikes against him. He fouled off a lot of pitches, but the facts were there for all to see. Hannity and his staff did their homework and came armed with empirical numbers that proved DeSantis' points for him.

When people vote with their legs, it's hard to argue that they are making a big mistake. Newsom, however, basically told his audience not to believe their lying eyes. California really is a better place than Florida, he tried to argue. It just wasn't convincing, especially to a California native and current resident who has been watching the deterioration first-hand.

It is true that many residents of southern states are worried that the influx of transplants will bring their blue voting habits with them and turn red states into purple states, and eventually, into blue states. Others (like DeSantis) believe that the transplants are fleeing the political situation in blue states above all else in favor of places where people think like they do. It may turn out in the end that the transplants will strengthen the conservative (Republican numbers) in places like Tennessee, Texas, Florida, etc, and as those states gain population, they could gain more electoral votes with states like California losing electoral votes and House of Representatives representation. All that is above my pay grade. It may be anecdotal, but I know a fair number of people who have made the move, and they tend to list as

reasons the lower cost of living, quality of life, and to escape liberal government rule. Is it any coincidence that many residents of eastern Oregon have expressed their desire to secede from Oregon (a liberal state: think Portland) and join Idaho, a conservative state in stark contrast to its western neighbors of Oregon and Washington? That will likely never happen. Those folks will just have to move to Idaho, but that state is another place with a lot of transplants, including from California.

Putting aside the question of how the debate affected the 2024 presidential election, I think it served a valuable purpose in getting people to think about the differences between red states and blue states. Work and family ties will keep some people (like me) in blue states, but the bottom line is which states are better places to live in overall?