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J. B. Pritzker

Jay Robert "J. B." Pritzker (born January 19, 1965) is an American businessman, philanthropist, and politician serving as the 43rd governor of Illinois. He is a private business owner based in Chicago and a managing partner and co-founder of the Pritzker Group, and a member of the Pritzker family that owns the Hyatt hotel chain. He has an estimated personal net worth of \$3.6 billion.^[1]

Pritzker was the Democratic nominee for governor of Illinois in the 2018 gubernatorial election.^[2] He defeated Republican incumbent Bruce Rauner in the general election on November 6, 2018, and took office on January 14, 2019.^{[3][4]}

Contents

Early life, family, and education

Business career

Early political career

Rod Blagojevich FBI wiretap

Governor of Illinois

Elections

2018

2022

Tenure

2019–2020 fiscal year

Abortion legislation

Child welfare and education

Climate change

COVID-19 pandemic

Criminal justice and law enforcement

Gambling

Gun control

Health care

Immigration

Infrastructure

Labor

LGBT rights

Marijuana

Taxation

Tobacco

Voting rights

Welfare

Approval rating

Political positions

Abortion

Environmental issues

Immigration

LGBT rights

Marijuana

J. B. Pritzker



Pritzker in 2019

43rd Governor of Illinois

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 14, 2019

Lieutenant Juliana Stratton

Preceded by Bruce Rauner

Chair of the Illinois Human Rights Commission

In office

2003 – July 26, 2006

Governor Rod Blagojevich

Succeeded by Abner Mikva

Personal details

Born Jay Robert Pritzker
January 19, 1965
Atherton, California, U.S.

Political party Democratic

Spouse(s) Mary "M. K." Muenster (m. 1993)

Children 2

Relatives Pritzker family

Residence(s) Illinois Governor's Mansion (public)

Minimum wage
Net neutrality
Philanthropy
Electoral history
Personal life
See also
References
External links

	Chicago, Illinois (private)
Education	Duke University (BA) Northwestern University (JD)
Website	Government website (https://www2.illinois.gov/gov/)

Early life, family, and education

Pritzker was born and raised in Atherton, California, a member of the Pritzker family, a Jewish family prominent in business and philanthropy during the late 20th century.^{[5][6]} The Pritzkers are consistently named near the top of the *Forbes* "America's Richest Families" list since its 1982 inception.^[7] One of three children of Sue (née Sandel) and Donald Pritzker,^{[8][9]} his elder siblings are Penny Pritzker, former United States Secretary of Commerce, and Anthony Pritzker.^[10] Pritzker is named after both of his father's brothers, Jay and Bob.^[11] His grandfather Abe Pritzker, was a business lawyer.^{[12][13]}

He attended Massachusetts boarding school Milton Academy and then graduated from Duke University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. Pritzker went on to earn his Juris Doctor degree from Northwestern University School of Law. He is an attorney and a member of the Illinois State Bar Association and the Chicago Bar Association.

Business career

Pritzker served as chairman of ChicagoNEXT,^[14] Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's council on innovation and technology, and he founded 1871, a non-profit digital start-up incubator^[15] (named for the year of the Great Chicago Fire), Chicago's digital start-up center. He played an important role in the creation of the Illinois Venture Capital Association and the Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center. He also co-founded Chicago Ventures and funded the start-up of Techstars Chicago and Built in Chicago.^[16]

Together with his brother Tony, Pritzker co-founded Pritzker Group Private Capital, which owns and operates middle-market companies. The group includes a growing family of companies including pallet rental leader PECO Pallet and medical device maker Clinical Innovations. In 2008, Pritzker received the Entrepreneurial Champion Award from the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce for his efforts to promote economic development and job creation.^{[17][18]}

Early political career

In the 2008 presidential election, Pritzker served as national co-chairman of Hillary Clinton's campaign. He was a delegate to the 2008 Democratic National Convention and the 2016 Democratic National Convention. He supported President Barack Obama in the 2008 general election and helped bring the Clinton and Obama campaigns in Illinois together.^[19]

Pritzker founded Democratic Leadership for the 21st Century,^[20] a national organization dedicated to attracting voters under the age of 40 to the Democratic Party. He also served on the Washington, D.C. legislative staffs of U.S. Senator Terry Sanford (D-NC), U.S. Senator Alan J. Dixon (D-IL), and U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA), for whom he handled multiple domestic and international issues.

In 1998, he ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in Illinois's 9th congressional district, spending a half-million dollars from his personal fortune on television ads in the Chicago market.^[21] Pritzker finished third among five candidates in the Democratic primary, receiving 20.48% of the vote, to then State Representative Jan Schakowsky's 45.14% and State Senator Howard W. Carroll's 34.40%.^[22]

Rod Blagojevich FBI wiretap

In May 2017, the *Chicago Tribune*^[23] published an 11-minute FBI wiretap of Pritzker and then-Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich in 2008 discussing campaign contributions and options for Pritzker to be appointed to statewide office.^[24] At the time, Pritzker was described as a "businessman with political ambitions". On the tapes, Blagojevich asked Pritzker if he would like to be appointed state treasurer, to which Pritzker, who has a background in finance, responded, "Yeah, that's the

one I would want." Pritzker's general election opponent GOP Governor [Bruce Rauner](#) and Pritzker's Democratic primary opponents took issue with Pritzker's conduct.^[25] Pritzker responded to the allegations by stating: "I've not been accused of any wrongdoing. I have not done anything wrong."^[26] No allegations of wrongdoing were ever made by law enforcement against Pritzker, and Pritzker has said: "over decades of my life, I have been doing public service, and the opportunity to continue to do public service as treasurer of the state was something that had been brought up, and so there was a conversation about that."^[27]

Pritzker later apologized for a number of controversial and incendiary comments made in that private conversation. Pritzker and Blagojevich discussed filling Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat, with Pritzker being recorded on the tapes as saying appointing then-Secretary of State [Jesse White](#) would "cover you on the African-American thing" and that he was the "least offensive" candidate.^[28]

Governor of Illinois

Elections

2018

On April 6, 2017, Pritzker announced that he was running for the Democratic nomination for Governor of Illinois. His campaign received the endorsements of Illinois Secretary of State [Jesse White](#), Illinois Congressman [Luis Gutiérrez](#), former Illinois Congressman [Glenn Poshard](#), more than a dozen members of the Illinois General Assembly, twenty-one local labor unions, and the Illinois [AFL–CIO](#).^[29]

On August 10, 2017, Pritzker announced that his running mate would be freshman State Representative and fellow Chicago resident [Juliana Stratton](#).^[30] By December 2017, Pritzker had spent US\$42 million of his own wealth on his campaign, without significant fundraising from any other source.^[31] On March 20, 2018, he won the Democratic gubernatorial primary, handily beating each of his primary opponents by more than 20%. In the November general election, Pritzker defeated incumbent Republican governor [Bruce Rauner](#). Pritzker received 54% of the vote, while Rauner received 39%.^[32] Pritzker was well ahead of Rauner in most polls from the summer of 2018 onward, and won by the largest margin in a gubernatorial race since 1994.

In total, Pritzker had spent US\$171.5 million of his own wealth on his campaign, primarily on digital outreach, television advertising, and staff.^[33]

2022

Pritzker will seek reelection as governor, with Stratton as his running mate.^[34] The primary election will take place on June 28, 2022 and the general election will follow on November 8, 2022.

Tenure

Pritzker was inaugurated as the 43rd governor on January 14, 2019.^[35]

2019–2020 fiscal year

On June 5, 2019, Governor Pritzker signed a bi-partisan \$40 billion balanced budget for the 2019–2020 fiscal year. This budget includes, among many other things, \$29 million in additional funding for efforts to encourage participation in the U.S. Census. Public spending increases were paid for by tax hikes. A separate bill signed by the Governor imposed sales taxes from online retailers, a tax on insurance companies, and decoupled the Illinois state income tax from a federal tax cut for companies that bring their foreign profits to the U.S. This budget neglected any potential revenue that might be collected from the legalization of recreational marijuana. In addition, people who owe their taxes from between June 30, 2011, and July 1, 2018, were able to take advantage of a "tax amnesty" program that allows them to pay without penalty.^[36] The Governor's office had expected a \$150 million surplus which it planned to use to pay down the state's \$6 billion backlog of unpaid bills.^[36]



Pritzker and President [Donald Trump](#) in 2018



Pritzker and President [Joe Biden](#) in 2021



Abortion legislation

In June 2019, Pritzker signed into law a bill that repeals the Illinois Abortion Law of 1975, which penalizes doctors for performing abortions considered "unnecessary", and the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act". This new bill ensures the "fundamental right to make autonomous decisions about one's own reproductive health", specifically the right to choose whether to carry a pregnancy to term or to terminate it, and denies a zygote, an embryo, or a fetus "independent rights under the law" of the State of Illinois. Pritzker encourages states that have passed restrictions on abortion to reconsider their positions, and added that women from other states can seek refuge in his. Pritzker signed this bill at a time when the landmark Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 legalizing abortion nationwide could be challenged.^[37] This bill is known as Senate Bill 25, or the Reproductive Health Act.^[38]

Child welfare and education

In the balanced budget for the 2019–20 fiscal year, worth \$40 billion, the State of Illinois authorized more spending on education, including grade schools, community colleges, and state universities. Funding for grade schools will rise by nearly \$379 million, more than the \$29 million required by the new state funding for education formula passed the previous year. Funding for community colleges will increase by \$14 million, for public universities by \$53 million. Grants for low-income students will receive a \$50 million bump. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, currently facing financial pressure, will receive a total of \$80 million for hiring new staff and improving services.^[36]

On top of that, the Rebuild Illinois capital plan (2019) will spend some \$3.2 billion for public colleges and universities over a period of six years. \$78 million of that money is allocated to emergency repairs and delayed maintenance. However, because the capital plan relies on tax revenue on gambling and smoking, it will be a while before that money becomes available. For years, public institutions of higher learning in Illinois have struggled financially and have lobbied for increased funding without much success. Budget cuts and ballooning costs have been driving Illinois residents out of state. Tuition fees, room and board have doubled in virtually every state college or university since the 2003–04 academic year.^[39] According to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, in 2017, 48.4% of Illinois public high school graduates went on to attend out-of-state institutions. That number was 46.6% in 2016, and 29.3% in 2002. Moreover, data show that Illinoisans chose not just colleges and universities from nearby states such as Iowa and Indiana, but also as far away as Alabama and Utah, lured by financial aid and scholarship packages.^[40]

Below is a sample of state colleges and universities in-line for additional funding.^[39]

School name	Total additional funding
<u>University of Illinois system</u> (campuses in <u>Chicago</u> , <u>Urbana-Champaign</u> , and <u>Springfield</u>)	\$1,314,900,000
<u>Illinois State University</u>	\$199,300,000
<u>Northern Illinois University</u>	\$217,600,000
<u>Southern Illinois University</u>	\$475,600,000
<u>Western Illinois University</u>	\$173,000,000
<u>Northeastern Illinois University</u>	\$78,200,000
<u>Eastern Illinois University</u>	\$72,700,000
<u>Governors State University</u>	\$55,900,000
<u>Chicago State University</u>	\$86,400,000

In addition, community colleges statewide will receive a total of \$1,032,800,000 while private colleges and universities will get \$400 million for capital projects. AIM High, a merit-based scholarship program for Illinoisans, will see its funding rise to \$35 million, up \$10 million.^[39]

Pritzker created the College Student Credit Card Marketing and Debt Task Force (House Bill 1581), whose task it is to look for ways to help students reduce their credit card debts after graduating from an institution of higher education in the state. The task force is to report its findings to the General Assembly by December 4, 2019.^[41]



The Rebuild Illinois capital plan allocates \$3.2 billion for public colleges and universities. *Pictured:* Mechanical Engineering Laboratory, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Pritzker created a job training program for community colleges that will be funded based on the percentage of low-income students attending. It will launch in September 2020.^[42]

In July 2019, Pritzker signed House Bill 2512. Approved unanimously by both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly, it requires state universities to report what students pay in tuition fees to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. This is intended to increase transparency in the costs of higher education.^[43]

Climate change

He joined the U.S. Climate Alliance which was made after President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord.^[44]

COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pritzker took a number of measures to mitigate the pandemic in Illinois.

On March 13, Pritzker declared that public and private schools in Illinois would be closed from March 17 through March 31.^[45] On March 15, 2020, Pritzker announced that all bars and restaurants must be closed until March 30. Restaurant businesses with delivery and takeout options would still be able to serve.^[46]

On March 16, 2020, Pritzker issued an executive order limiting permitted crowd sizes to fifty people.^[47] Despite pressure from Chicago election officials, Pritzker refused to postpone the state's March 17 primary elections, since it was not something that he had the authority to do.^{[48][49]}

On March 20, 2020, Pritzker issued a stay-at-home order to take effect the following day. Under this order, all non-essential businesses were required to be closed while essential businesses such as grocery stores, gas stations, hospitals, pharmacies would remain open. The order originally ended on April 8.^[50] The state of Illinois government coordinated a public health response. The State of Illinois worked with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and companies of Wal-Mart and Walgreens in order to provide testing sites in the hardest-hit communities throughout the state of Illinois.^[51] By June, amid unrest by some municipalities unhappy with Pritzker's lockdown orders, Mayor Keith Pekau of Orland Park, a southwest suburb of Chicago, along with a local restaurateur sued Pritzker in federal court, alleging that the lockdown orders violated state law and the state Constitution. U.S. District Judge Andrea Wood sided with Pritzker, allowing the lockdown orders to stay in place. In her ruling, Wood cited *Jacobson v Massachusetts*, a 1905 U.S. Supreme Court case which upheld the authority of U.S. states to compel people to get vaccinations.^[52]

On March 25, Pritzker announced that the Illinois tax filing deadline was extended from April 15 to July 15. Pritzker also announced that three new emergency assistance programs that allow for small businesses to have access more than \$90 million in aid.^[53]

On April 23, Pritzker extended the stay-at-home order through May 29 with some modifications.^[54] Churches were prohibited from holding meetings that had more than 10 people in attendance. Some churches defied Pritzker, held meetings and then filed federal lawsuits.^[55]

On May 1, Pritzker enacted a state-wide mask mandate.^[56]

On May 5, Pritzker announced his reopening plan called "Restore Illinois". The plan has five phases and splits up the state's 11 existing Emergency Medical Services Regions into four reopening regions. The regions may reopen independently of one another. All regions were currently in Phase Two, which allows for retail curbside pickup and delivery along with outdoor activities such as golf, boating, and fishing. Phase Three will allow manufacturing, offices, retail, barbershops, and salons to reopen with capacity limits, along with gatherings of fewer than 10 people. In Phase 4, gatherings of up to 50 people are allowed, restaurants and bars can reopen, travel resumes, child care and schools reopen under guidance from the IDPH. In Phase 5, the economy fully reopens. Conventions, festivals and large events are permitted, and all businesses, schools, and places of recreation can be fully open.^[57]

On July 15, Pritzker announced a new COVID-19 mitigation plan in the event of a resurgence of COVID-19. The metrics that would be used to determine if the spread of COVID-19 in a region requires additional mitigations are a sustained increase in 7-day rolling average (7 out of 10 days) in the positivity rate and one of the following: a sustained 7-day increase in hospital admissions for a COVID-19 or the reduction in hospital capacity. Another metric was a three consecutive days averaging



Pritzker (right) accompanies Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot (left) in an April 2020 visit to inspect a temporary hospital facility being erected at Chicago's McCormick Place amid the COVID-19 pandemic

greater than or equal to 8% positivity rate.^[58]

On December 4, Pritzker announced that the state of Illinois would receive 109,000 initial doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine once the vaccine is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.^[59]

On February 26, Pritzker along with Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Senator Dick Durbin, Senator Tammy Duckworth, and The Biden Administration announced that eligible Illinoisans throughout the state of Illinois will be able to be vaccinated starting March 10 at a new mass vaccination site at the United Center.^[60]

On July 29, Pritzker announced that everyone who enters a state building is required to wear a face mask regardless of vaccination status.^[61]

On August 5, Pritzker announced that face masks must be worn at all times while inside P-12 schools, daycares, and long-term care facilities regardless of vaccination status. Pritzker also announced that face masks are required for all P-12 indoor sports. Pritzker also announced that all state employees in congregate facilities must be vaccinated by October 4.^[62]

On August 26, Pritzker announced that a statewide indoor mask mandate would be reimposed in order to handle the surge caused by the Delta variant beginning on August 30. Pritzker also announced a vaccine mandate for all education employees for P-12 and higher education statewide. Pritzker also announced a vaccine mandate for all higher education students and healthcare workers. Pritzker announced that anyone who does not get a COVID-19 vaccine by September 5 will have to do weekly COVID testing.^[63]

Criminal justice and law enforcement

On April 1, 2019, Pritzker created the Youth Parole system for the State of Illinois.^[64]

He signed into law the Senate Bill 1890, whose goal is to crack down on human trafficking. It requires hospitality business owners to train their employees in recognizing victims of human trafficking and on protocols of reporting to authorities. It also establishes the penalties for engaging in human trafficking, including a fine of up to \$100,000 and a charge of Class 1 Felony.^[41]

While serving in the Illinois Senate, Barack Obama sponsored an initiative that would collect data on traffic stops. This was codified when Pritzker signed House Bill 1613 into law. It creates a task force to collect and analyze data on traffic stops in order to address racial disparities. The task force is to report to the Governor and the General Assembly by March 1, 2022, and every three years thereafter.^[41]

According to the Governor's office, the 2019–2020 budget will fund two classes of Illinois State Police cadets.^[36]

In July 2019, Pritzker signed a bill that increases penalties for drivers who got involved in a road incident with injuries while texting. Under this bill, a person who causes serious injuries due to driving while texting could be fined at least \$1,000 and have their driver's license suspended for a year. This law takes effect immediately.^[65] In the same month, he signed House Bill 2045, ending the practice of collecting a \$5 copay for offsite medical and dental treatments from individuals detained at a juvenile correction facility. This took effect January 2020.^[43]

On December 31, 2020, Pritzker announced the expungement of approximately 500,000 non-felony cannabis-related arrest records.^[66]

On February 22, 2021, he signed a criminal justice reform bill, which, among other things, is planned to make Illinois the first state in the country into law to eliminate cash bail. The provision will come into effect in January 2023.^[67]

Gambling

In order to help pay for his 2019 capital spending bill, Pritzker expanded gambling, that is, allowing for more casinos and legalized sports betting. This does not mean new casinos can be built and sports betting can begin right away, however. Granting licenses for such activities is the job of the Illinois Gaming Board, and the process is a complex one, lasting for several months or more and involving extensive criminal background checks, among other requirements. According to the Governor's office, gambling will bring an additional \$350 million in revenue each year.^[68] This gambling expansion bill extends to Chicago, something desired by the city. Mayor Lori Lightfoot emphasized economic development in the South and West sides of the city during her campaign. She has argued that a new casino, privately owned, and associated hospitality and entertainment venues would bring money in to the city.^[69]

On May 5, 2022, Lightfoot announced that she had selected the bid from the Bally's Corporation to construct a casino resort near the Chicago River.^[70]

Gun control

On January 17, 2019, Pritzker signed a bill requiring state certification for gun dealers,^[71] which was passed during the tenure of his predecessor, Bruce Rauner. It also requires gun dealers to ensure the physical security of their stores, to keep a detailed list of items on sale, and employees of such stores to undergo annual training. These requirements come on top of the mandatory federal license issued by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Proponents say Senate Bill 337 prevents guns from falling "into the wrong hands" while opponents argue it creates additional bureaucracy, imposes a financial burden on gun business owners, and will neither enhance public safety nor reduce crime. The Illinois State Rifle Association in particular argues that the bill violates the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution because it interferes with the right to bear arms and has filed a lawsuit alongside eight gun dealers.^[72]

On May 25, 2022, in response to Texas governor Greg Abbott's comments in the aftermath of the Robb Elementary School shooting that Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City crime proves harsher gun laws are not a solution, Pritzker said that a "majority of guns used in Chicago shootings come from states with lax gun laws".^[73] Abbott's comments were also criticized by other city and state officials, including Chicago mayor Lori Lightfoot and Attorney General Kwame Raoul. Alexandra Filindra, UIC professor of political science and described as an expert on gun policy, said preventing gun violence must be done on a federal level, that protecting gun rights with restrictive laws can co-exist, and acquisition of weapons in general became easier with the 2008 U.S. Supreme Court District of Columbia v. Heller decision.^[74]

Health care

In 2019, Pritzker approved of a tax on private insurance that will go into the state's Medicaid program.^[36]

Immigration

On January 24, 2019, Pritzker signed an executive order expanding access to welcome centers in Illinois for immigrants and refugees.^[75] Welcome centers help guide immigrants on a path to citizenship and refugees with access to health care, education, jobs, and legal services.

On June 21, 2019, Pritzker signed a bill banning the operation of private immigration detention centers in Illinois.^[76] Another bill forbids state and local police to cooperate with U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) to deport illegal immigrants. Undocumented individuals who identify as transgender may apply for state financial aid. (Federal aid requires proof of citizenship and those who were assigned male at birth to register for the draft.)^[77]

Pritzker erased the drug conviction of an Army veteran in August 2019. Miguel Perez Jr. suffered a brain injury while serving in Afghanistan and has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. He was deported to Mexico in 2018 after spending seven years in prison. He had pled guilty to a drug crime and held a green card as a permanent U.S. resident. Perez's supporters hope the pardon will help him return to the U.S.^[78]

Infrastructure

In late June 2019, Pritzker signed the bi-partisan capital bill named Rebuild Illinois, worth \$45 billion to be spent in six years and estimated to create 540,000 jobs.^[79] It is the first capital spending bill in Illinois in 10 years.^[80] The plan includes \$33.2 billion for transportation projects, including \$25 billion for road upgrades across the state, though local governments will be able to decide which roads they want to prioritize, \$3.5 billion for public and private schools and universities, \$1 billion for environmental protection, \$420 million for expanding broadband Internet service to rural Illinois, \$465 million for health care and human services facilities, and \$1.8 billion for libraries, museums, and minority-owned businesses. Financing for this plan will come from multiple sources. The gas tax was set to match inflation since the last gas tax increase in 1990, increasing from 19 cents per gallon to 38 cents; the special fuel tax on diesel, liquefied natural gas, and propane increased to 7.5 cents per gallon. Fuel taxes will be indexed to inflation. Vehicle registration fees increased by \$50. The state's bonding authority will increase from \$22.6 billion to \$60.8 billion. Newly authorized casinos are expected to create thousands of jobs and deliver hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue for construction projects. Municipalities of Cook County may raise their own gas taxes by up to three cents per gallon.^{[68][79][81]} However, the Mayor of Chicago Lori Lightfoot said she opposed raising the gas tax in her city and increasing Chicago Transit Authority fares.^[82] The capital bill also stipulates the creation of an apprenticeship program in the construction industry in order to provide part of the labor force necessary.^[79]

Transportation spending includes money for mass transit and pedestrian paths, with hundreds of millions going to projects involving Chicago. Some of the major projects are the reconstruction and capacity enhancement of the Kennedy Expressway (\$561 million), expanding an Amtrak service between Chicago and Rockford (\$275 million), and upgrades for the Pace suburban bus service (\$220 million).^[82] Millions of dollars will be spent on improving the Chicago-St. Louis higher-speed railway, and moving passenger and rail traffic in Springfield to just one set of tracks, eliminating a physical barrier in the state capital.^[68]

As justification for the multi-billion-dollar spending bill and the accompanying tax hikes, Pritzker said that Illinois had not had a major infrastructure plan for two decades and asserted that improved infrastructure would help drivers on repairs.^[83]

In June 2019, Pritzker deployed 200 Illinois National Guardsmen to combat flooding across central and southern parts of the state. These troops were tasked with sandbagging, protecting levees and keeping evacuation routes open.^[84] In August 2019, he officially requested a federal disaster declaration to be issued for 32 counties due to flooding in Illinois since February 2019. The request came after the state's disaster assessment was concluded.^[85]

Labor

On February 19, 2019, Pritzker signed into law a bill that raises the minimum wage statewide to \$15 an hour by 2025, making Illinois the fifth state in the nation and first state in the Midwest to do so.^{[86][87]} The bill includes a tax credit for small businesses to help them deal with higher costs of labor and maintains the ability of restaurant owners to count tips towards pay.^[88]

On Friday April 12, 2019 he signed the Collective Bargaining Freedom Act which protects the right of employers, employees, and their labor organizations to collectively bargain, ensuring that the State of Illinois complies with the National Labor Relations Act.^[89] On May 17, 2019, Pritzker signed legislation that helped workers exposed to toxic substances.^[90]

Pritzker signed the House 2028 bill, which passed both the Senate and House of Illinois unanimously. This bill doubles the compensation rate for families of officers of the law and firefighters killed in the line of duty from \$10,000 to \$20,000.^[41]

177 members of the Illinois legislature will receive \$1,600 each in cost-of-living increases.^[36]

Pritzker refused to take on the City of Chicago's pension liabilities, believing that it would jeopardize the state's credit rating. Moody's raised it to one level above "junk" after the state passed a balanced budget in 2019. Pritzker did not reject the possibility of allowing Chicago to pool its pension funds with other parts of the state, however, and created a task force looking for ways to tackle the ballooning pension debts of municipalities across the state.^[91]

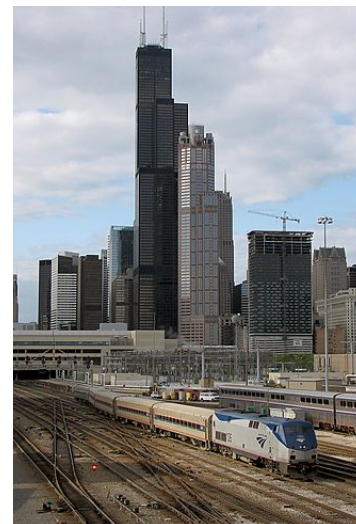
LGBT rights

In late June 2019, Pritzker signed an executive order requiring schools across the state to be "affirming and inclusive" of transgender and non-binary students. He also asked the State Board of Education to take a lead on the LGBT issue, by making resources pertaining to the legal rights of LGBT people easily accessible.^[92]

Marijuana

On May 31, 2019, the Illinois General Assembly passed the Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act legalizing and regulating the production, consumption, and sale of adult-use cannabis. On June 25, 2019, Pritzker signed the legislation into law, which went into effect on January 1, 2020.^{[93][94][95]} Illinois was the eleventh state in the Union to legalize recreational use of marijuana. Criminal records of individuals caught possessing less than 30 grams will be cleared. Tax revenue collected from marijuana sales will be used to invest in impoverished communities impacted by the War on Drugs and in rehabilitation programs for drug users.^[42] After the first month of legalization in January 2020, marijuana sales had generated approximately \$10.4 million in tax revenue for the state.^[96] By July 2020, it had generated the state over \$52 million.^[97]

On December 31, 2019, Pritzker pardoned approximately 11,000 individuals for low-level marijuana convictions.^[98]



Large sums of money will be spent on transportation projects involving Chicago. *Pictured: An Amtrak Lincoln Service train leaving Chicago en route to St. Louis.*

Taxation

Along with the 2019–2020 state budget, Pritzker also signed the "Fair Tax" law on the same day which will offer a constitutional amendment to voters in the November 2020 election to replace Illinois's flat tax with graduated rates.^[99] He promised that income taxes will not increase for Illinois residents who make \$250,000 a year or less, which is to say 97% of the state's wage earners. Pritzker and his supporters said changing income tax laws was the first step towards a comprehensive tax reform in Illinois.^[100] The proposed graduated income tax rates are as follows.^[101]

Proposed changes to personal income tax rates under the Fair Tax^[102]

Taxable income (for single filers)	Marginal tax rate in 2019 (Current)	Proposed marginal tax rate (for single filers)	Proposed marginal tax rate (for joint filers)
\$0 - \$10,000	4.95%	4.75%	4.75%
\$10,001 - \$100,000		4.90%	4.90%
\$100,001 - \$250,000		4.95%	4.95%
\$250,001 - \$350,000		7.75%	7.75%
\$350,001 - \$500,000		7.85%	
\$500,001 - \$750,000		7.99% on net income	7.85%
\$750,001 - \$1,000,000			7.99% on net income
\$1,000,001 and above		7.99% on net income	

According to the Governor's office, under this proposal, families and couples would see tax cuts across the board. For example, a family of four making \$61,000 a year would pay \$41 less income taxes before any other tax exemptions or deductions. Moreover, there will be a tax credit of up to \$100 per child for individuals making less than \$80,000 and joint filers earning under \$100,000. The corporate tax rate would rise from 7% to 7.95%, equal to the highest personal rate. In addition, Pritzker wants to increase the property tax credit to 6% from the current 5%.^[101]

Pritzker donated over \$55 million to "Vote Yes for Fairness" a committee which supports the tax change.^{[103][104]} The tax change set up a fight between Pritzker and Ken Griffin who donated over \$50 million to a group opposing the tax change.^{[105][106]} Griffin called Pritzker "spineless" accusing him of trying "to sell a trick disguised as a solution" and pointed to Pritzker's offshore trusts and personal tax avoidance schemes as hypocrisy.^[107]

Pritzker claimed that his income tax proposal would bring \$3.4 billion in tax revenue. As of 2019, Illinois has \$8.5 billion of unpaid bills and \$134 billion of pension liabilities.^[101]

The new gas tax that will fund the 2019 infrastructure plan, 38 cents per gallon and indexed to inflation, took effect on July 1, 2019. As of 2019, Illinois is home to one of the highest fuel taxes in the U.S.^[81]

Tobacco

On April 7, 2019, Pritzker made Illinois the first state in the Midwest to adopt Tobacco 21.^[108]

As part of his plan to fund capital projects, Pritzker raised the sales tax imposed on cigarettes by \$1. However, given that Illinois raised the legal age to purchase tobacco to 21 statewide, government revenue from tobacco tax could be limited. The previous tobacco tax increase, also \$1, took effect just before the 2013 state budget year began. By 2018, though, revenue from it dropped by 8% because fewer people smoked.^[68]

Voting rights

In June 2020, Pritzker signed legislation to expand voting by making Election Day a state holiday.^[109]

Welfare

The 2019–2020 budget spends \$230 million on a new Quincy Veterans Home, and \$21 million on the Chicago Veterans Home.^[110]

In July 2019, Pritzker signed House Bill 3343, creating a food program for the elderly, the disabled, and the homeless. Such individuals may collect their benefits from a private business that has a contract with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to provide meals with discounts. This is the state implementation of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The IDHS is to initiate this program no later than January 1, 2020.^[43]

Approval rating

<u>Segment polled</u>	<u>Polling group</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>Sample size</u>	<u>Margin-of-error</u>	<u>Polling method</u>	<u>Source</u>
Adults	1892 Polling/American Council on Trustees and Alumni	February 17-21, 2021	40.6%	41.0%	800	± 3.5%	telephone	^[111]
Adults	COVID-19 Consortium for Understanding the Public's Policy Preferences Across States	October 2-25, 2020	49%	-	-	± 5%	online	^[112]
		September 4-27, 2020	50%	-	-	± 5%		
		August 7-26, 2020	57%	-	-	± 5%		
		July 10-26, 2020	52%	-	-	± 6%		
		June 12-28, 2020	58%	-	-	± 5%		
		May 16-31, 2020	52%	-	-	± 6%		
		May 2-15, 2020	54%	-	-	± 6%		
		April 17-26, 2020	63%	-	-	± 5%		
Registered voters	Morning Consult	October 1-December 31, 2019	43%	41%	-	± 1%	-	^[113]
Registered voters	Morning Consult	July 1-September 30, 2019	44%	43%	21,533	± 1%	-	^[114]

Political positions

Abortion

Pritzker is pro-choice and a vocal supporter of women's rights.^[115] During the 2018 gubernatorial Democratic primaries, Planned Parenthood supported Pritzker, along with Kennedy and Biss.^[116]

On January 22, 2019, Governor Pritzker signed an executive order giving state employees and women covered under Illinois state health insurance expanded reproductive coverage which also includes abortions.^[117] The move was praised by Planned Parenthood officials who also attended the signing event.

Environmental issues

On January 23, 2019, Pritzker committed Illinois to the U.S. Climate Alliance which will aim to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions over 26% by 2025.^[118]

Immigration

Pritzker supports Syrian refugees, and has criticized the Trump administration and Rauner for "turning a blind eye on them".^[119] He also supports enhancing funding for immigrant and refugee services, increasing health care options for illegal immigrants, improving the U-Visa certification process for victims of violent crimes, and providing access to financial aid for undocumented students such as DACA recipients.^[119] Pritzker has said he would sign the "Illinois Trust Act", a pro-immigration bill.^[119]

LGBT rights

Pritzker has been a long-time advocate of LGBT rights, and has actively participated in the Chicago Gay Pride Parade.^{[120][121]} As part of his 2018 gubernatorial race, he has stated that his administration will address anti-LGBT hate crimes, expand LGBT access to health care, and oppose any anti-LGBT legislation.^[122]

Marijuana

Pritzker is a supporter of expanding the state's medical marijuana program and legalizing recreational cannabis in Illinois.^{[123][124][125]} In June 2019, he signed the Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act into law, which effectively legalized the possession and regulated sale of marijuana for recreational purposes, starting in 2020.^[126]

Minimum wage

As a candidate for governor, Pritzker campaigned on raising the minimum wage in Illinois to \$15 an hour.^[127]

Net neutrality

Pritzker is a supporter of net neutrality, and has stated on his gubernatorial campaign website: "As governor, I will ensure that all internet traffic is treated equally, so that everyone can continue to use the internet to grow their businesses, further their education, and enjoy the freedom of expression."^[128]

Philanthropy

As president of the Pritzker Family Foundation, he funds research and programs focused on children in poverty. Under the leadership of Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman, he supported the creation of the Pritzker Consortium on Early Childhood Development at the University of Chicago.^{[129][130]} Along with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the Irving Harris Foundation, and the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Pritzker Family Foundation is a founding supporter of the First Five Years Fund, an organization focusing nationwide attention and resources on comprehensive, quality early care and learning programs for children from birth to age five.^[131] In 2013, Pritzker teamed with Goldman Sachs to fund the first-ever social impact bond for early childhood education.^[132]

As chairman of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, which opened in 2009, Pritzker successfully led the capital campaign and planning to build an international institution in the Midwest dedicated to teaching the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides.^[133] Pritzker is the principal funder of Cambodia Tribunal Monitor, the most significant online source for news and commentaries regarding the international criminal tribunal created to bring to justice the perpetrators of Pol Pot-era acts of genocide. He served as chairman of the Illinois Human Rights Commission, and was succeeded by former White House counsel and Federal Judge Abner J. Mikva.^[134] In 2013, Pritzker received the Survivors' Legacy Award for his leadership in the creation of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.^[135]

In 2007, Pritzker and his wife donated \$5 million to the University of South Dakota to build the Theodore R. and Karen K. Muenster University Center in honor of his wife's parents.^[136] In 2011, Milton Academy dedicated the Pritzker Science Center for which Pritzker provided the lead gift. Pritzker is a trustee and serves on the investment committee of Northwestern University and is a member of the Board of Governors of Northwestern University School of Law. He is a member of the Economic Club of Chicago and the Commercial Club of Chicago. He joined the Duke University Board of Trustees in 2017, and his term expires in 2023.^[137]

On October 22, 2015, Northwestern University School of Law announced that J. B. Pritzker and his wife, M. K. Pritzker, had made a \$100 million gift to the law school in honor of Pritzker's great-grandfather, Nicholas J. Pritzker. The 156-year-old school became named the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law.^[138]

He received the Spirit of Erikson Institute Award for his creation of the Children's Initiative.^[139]

The Better Government Association, an Illinois watchdog, has criticized Pritzker's charitable giving practices, saying he funneled the funds he gave to charity from offshore tax havens. "The result is that Pritzker's philanthropy, and any accolades that go with it, have been bankrolled with what is essentially found money. He did little to earn the proceeds and paid no taxes on the bulk of it before giving it away", the BGA article states.^[140]

Electoral history

 Illinois 9th Congressional District Democratic Primary, 1998^[141]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Democratic	Jan Schakowsky	31,443	45.14
Democratic	Howard W. Carroll	23,963	34.40
Democratic	J. B. Pritzker	14,256	20.46
Total votes		69,662	100.0

 Illinois Governor Democratic Primary, 2018^[142]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Democratic	J. B. Pritzker	597,756	45.13
Democratic	Daniel Biss	353,625	26.70
Democratic	Chris Kennedy	322,730	24.37
Democratic	Tio Hardiman	21,075	1.59
Democratic	Bob Daiber	15,009	1.13
Democratic	Robert Marshall	14,353	1.08
Total votes		1,324,548	100.0

 Illinois Gubernatorial Election, 2018^[143]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Democratic	J. B. Pritzker	2,479,746	54.53
Republican	Bruce Rauner (incumbent)	1,765,751	38.83
Conservative	Sam McCann	192,527	4.23
Libertarian	Kash Jackson	109,518	2.41
Write-in		115	0.00
Total votes		4,547,657	100.0

Personal life

In 1993, Pritzker married Mary Kathryn "M. K." Muenster of South Dakota, whom he had met in Washington, D.C., when she worked as an aide to U.S. Senator Tom Daschle of South Dakota.^[144] She is one of three children of Theodore and Karen Muenster. Her father unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate in 1990.^[145] They live in the Gold Coast neighborhood of Chicago with their two children.^{[1][146]}

The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that Pritzker had purposefully directed a mansion that he'd purchased next door to his multi-million-dollar home to become uninhabitable by removing the toilets from the residence. He then appealed his original property tax assessment,^[147] claiming that the newly built residential property was thus "uninhabitable"; the Cook County assessor reduced the home's value from \$6.25 million to about \$1.1 million, which granted Pritzker an 83% property tax reduction, equal to about \$230,000 per annum.^[148] Federal prosecutors are investigating the matter.^[149]

See also

- Infrastructure-based development

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External links

- Governor JB Pritzker (<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/Pages/default.aspx>) official government website
- JB for Governor (<http://www.jb-pritzker.com>) campaign website
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?115876>) on C-SPAN
- J. B. Pritzker (https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Illinois/Society_and_Culture/Politics/Candidates_and_Campaigns/Governor/J.B._Pritzker) at Curlie
- Profile (<https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/18341>) at Vote Smart

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