2018 Meet the Freshmen: Governors

Biographical and electoral data for all new governors

November 19, 2018
Data compiled 9 a.m.;
Election results may have changed slightly

National Journal Presentation Center

Gov. Mike Dunleavy (R-AK)

Background

Dunleavy was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1961. He has a BA in history from Misercordia University and an MA in education from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He has lived in Alaska since the early 1980s. Dunleavy has worked as director of K-12 outreach for the University of Alaska, program manager of the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project and owner of Dunleavy Educational Services. From 2013 to 2017, he was a member of the Alaska Senate, representing District E. In his 2018 gubernatorial campaign, Dunleavy emphasized Alaska's high unemployment and crime rates, as well as its declining private sector investment, which he claimed was the result of incumbent Governor Bill Walker's administration. He presented himself as the candidate that would restore prosperity and order to Alaska, highlighting his record in the Alaska Senate. In addition, he committed to investing in public safety and preserving the Permanent Fund Dividend program.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 05/05/1961

Education: MA, Education, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1986-1991;BA, History, College Misericordia, 1983

Family: Spouse: Rose; 3 Children: Maggie, Catherine, Ceil Ann

Election Results

2018 General

Mike Dunleavy (R)	52%
Mark Begich (D)	44%

Gov. Gavin Newsom (D-CA)

Background

Before entering politics, Newsom ran the PlumpJack Group, 23 businesses named for an opera written by a family friend. PlumpJack began with a San Francisco wine store which Newsom founded soon after graduating from college. Newsom's political career began on the San Francisco board of supervisors, a position he held from 1997-2004; one of his key initiatives was reforming the "Muni" transit system. Newsom became mayor of San Francisco in 2004 and served until 2011. As mayor, he created a plan for universal health care and issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples, despite the illegality same-sex marriage under California law at the time. Newsom served as Gov. Jerry Brown's lieutenant governor since 2011. As lieutenant governor, Newsom endorsed a ballot measure for legalizing marijuana and two different measures which would have abolished capital punishment.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 10/10/1967

Education: BA, Political Science, Santa Clara University, 1989

Family: Spouse: Jennifer; 3 Children: Montana, Hunter, Brooklynn

Election Results

2018 General	
Gavin Newsom (D)	59%
John Cox (R)	41%

Gov. Jared Polis (D-CO)

Background

Polis is the first openly gay man elected to Congress. He was born in Boulder, but grew up in San Diego, returning to Colorado with his family during the summers. Several successful business ventures, including American Information Systems, an internet access provider; bluemountainarts.com and Proflowers.com, a flower delivery service, made Polis a multimillionaire and one of the wealthiest members of Congress. When Democratic Rep. Mark Udall in Colorado's 2nd District decided to run for an open Senate seat in 2008, Polis ran for Udall's House seat. In 2009, Polis jumped into the health care debate, taking a leading role in fighting a proposal by his own party that would pay for elements of the overhauled system with a tax on wealthy Americans. Polis is an impressive fundraiser, collecting from liberal interest groups and investment companies and donating money to politically vulnerable Democrats through his Jared Polis Victory Fund. In June 2017, Polis announced his candidacy for Governor of Colorado, winning the Democratic primary in June 2018.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 05/12/1975

Education: BA, Political Science, Princeton University, 1992-1996

Family: Partner: Marlon Reis; 2 Children

Election Results

2018 General

Jared Polis (D)	52%
Walker Stapleton (R)	45%

Gov. Ned Lamont (D-CT)

Background

Lamont was born in Washington, DC. He attended Phillips Exeter Academy, Harvard and the Yale School of Management. After graduating from Yale, Lamont worked in the cable television industry, first managing a start-up and later founding his own cable television company, Campus Televideo. He became a member of both the Greenwich Board of Selectmen and the Board of Estimate and Taxation, where he managed the budget. He also was chair of the State Investment Advisory Council, where he oversaw the investment of state pension funds. In 2006, he ran for the US Senate and defeated Sen. Joe Lieberman in the Democratic primary, but then lost to Lieberman, who ran as an independent candidate, in the general election. In 2010, Lamont ran to be the Democratic nomination for governor of Connecticut, but lost to Stamford Mayor Dan Malloy, who eventually became governor.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 01/03/1954

Education: MBA, Yale School of Management, 1978-1980;Graduated, Harvard University, 1972-1976

Family: Spouse: Annie; 3 Children: Teddy, Lindsay, Emily

Election Results

2018 General

Ned Lamont (D)	49%
Bob Stefanowski (R)	46%

Gov. Brad Little (R-ID)

Background

Little was born in Emmett, Idaho. He attended the University of Idaho and earned a BS in Agribusiness. After graduation, he returned to work at his family's ranch, Little Land and Livestock Company. He eventually became the owner and general partner, and serves on the boards of Home Federal Bank and Performance Design Incorporated. Little first entered politics when he was appointed to fill a vacant seat in the Idaho State Senate. He was then elected and re-elected to the seat four times and became the Republican Caucus chairman. In 2009, Little was appointed to lieutenant governor of Idaho. As governor, Little plans to allow all college and universities to keep the sales tax that is generated on their campuses to control tuition costs. He also plans to cut the income tax for Idahoans by $350 million.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 02/15/1954

Education: BS, Agribusiness, University of Idaho, 1976

Family: Spouse: Teresa; 2 Children: Adam, David

Election Results

2018 General	
Brad Little (R)	60%
Paulette Jordan (D)	38%

Gov. JB Pritzker (D-IL)

Background

Pritzker was born in California. The Pritzker family own the Hyatt hotel chain. It is estimated that his net worth is $3.5 billion. In 1998, Pritzker ran for the House in Illinois' 9th district. He then served as a trustee of Northwestern University and was the Chair Emeritus of ChicagoNEXT, Rahm Emmanuel's council on technology. Pritzker ran a progressive campaign for governor of Illinois, with a focus on immigration, creating more jobs and legalizing marijuana in the state. Like many other Democrats, Pritzker also ran on the platform of expanding the ACA and access to healthcare. The Illinois governor race was one of the most expensive races in US history, with Rauner and Pritzker injecting the race with millions of their own funds.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 01/19/1965

Education: JD, Corporate, Finance, and Securities Law, Northwestern University School of Law, 1990-1993;AB, Political Science & Government, Duke University

Family: Spouse: M.K.; 2 Children: Teddi, Donny

Election Results

2018 General

JB Pritzker (D)	54%
Bruce Rauner (R)	39%

Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-FL)

Background

DeSantis grew up in northeast Florida. He attended Yale University and Harvard Law School. After, DeSantis commissioned in the U.S. Navy as a JAG officer, working at Guantanamo Bay and in Iraq, as an adviser to a U.S. Navy SEAL commander. Outside of his military service, DeSantis worked as a federal prosecutor. In 2012, DeSantis won a seat in the House, representing Florida's 6th district. In Congress, DeSantis championed legislation to make it easier for the military to prosecute sexual assault. DeSantis is a proponents of working to stop toxic algae discharges. He also supports immigration reform, including enacting E-verify and not allowing sanctuary cities in Florida.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 09/14/1978

Education: BA, History, Yale University;JD, Harvard Law School

Family: Spouse: Casey; 2 Children: Madison, Mason

Election Results

2018 General

Ron DeSantis (R)	50%
Andrew Gillum (D)	49%

Gov. Brian Kemp (R-GA)

Background

Kemp was raised in Athens, Georgia and later attended the University of Georgia, where he graduated with a BS in agriculture. After graduating, Kemp was a home builder and developer, owning the Athens-based business Kemp Properties. First elected as a Georgia State Senator in 2003, Kemp served for four years in the state legislature. He then ran for agriculture commissioner of Georgia, but came second in the primary. Kemp was appointed in 2010 as Georgia's secretary of state, and won the 2010 election, as well as reelection in 2014. In March 2017, Kemp announced his candidacy for governor of Georgia. Key aspects of his platform include promoting economic development and investment in rural Georgia, placing caps on state spending, combating street violence and reducing state regulations.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 11/02/1963

Education: BS, Agriculture, University of Georgia

Family: Spouse: Marty; 3 Children: Jarrett, Lucy, Amy Porter

Election Results

2018 General

Brian Kemp (R)	50%
Stacey Abrams (D)	49%

Gov. Laura Kelly (D-KS)

Background

Kelly earned a BS in psychology from Bradley University and an MS in Park and Recreation Administration with an emphasis in therapeutic recreation from Indiana University Bloomington. She served as the executive director of the Kansas Recreation and Park Association for 16 years and as director of Recreation Therapy and Physical Education at the National Jewish Hospital for Respiratory and Immune Diseases. Kelly was first elected to the Kansas State Senate in 2004, where she became the minority whip and later the assistant minority leader. She was also the ranking member on the Ways and Means committee. Kelly defeated former Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, in the election to become governor.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 01/24/1950

Education: BS, Psychology, Bradley University;MS, Park and Recreation Administration, emphasis in Therapeutic, Indiana University Bloomington

Family: Spouse: Ted; 2 Children: Kathleen, Molly

Election Results

2018 General

Laura Kelly (D)	48%
Kris Kobach (R)	43%

Gov. Janet Mills (D-ME)

Background

Mills was born in Farmington, Maine. She obtained her BA from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, before going on to receive her JD from the University of Maine School of Law. From 1976 to 1980, she worked as an assistant attorney general for Maine. She then became district attorney for Androscoggin, Franklin and Oxford counties in 1980. This made her the first woman district attorney in New England. In 2002, she became a representative in the Maine House of Representatives. She served from 2002-2010, after which time she became the vice chair of the Maine Democratic Party. From 2012-2018, she has again served as attorney general. During her 2018 campaign to become governor of Maine, she voiced her support for implementing universal pre-K education for every four-year old in Maine, expanding Medicaid, limiting the effects of rollbacks of ACA protections in Maine and protecting abortion rights in the state.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 12/30/1947

Education: BA, University of Massachusetts, Boston;JD, University of Maine School of Law

Family: Spouse: Stanley; 5 Step-Children

Election Results

2018 General

Janet Mills (D)	51%
Shawn Moody (R)	43%

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D-MI)

Background

Whitmer was born in Lansing, Michigan. Whitmer attended Michigan State University, where she earned both her undergraduate degree in communications and her JD. After school, she worked as a policy analyst in the Michigan State House of Representatives and was a lecturer on gender and the law at Michigan State University. She also spent time in a private practice, Dickinson Wright, LLC where she worked as an associate attorney and then as counsel. Further, Whitmer was a Towsley Policy Maker in Residence for the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at University of Michigan. She served as prosecutor for Ingham County in 2016. She was a state representative from 2000-2006 and a state senator from 2006-2014. While in the Michigan Senate, she was minority leader from 2011-2014.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 08/23/1971

Education: JD, Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University, 1998;BA, Communications, Michigan State University, 1989-1993

Family: Spouse: Marc; 5 Children: Sherry, Sydney, Mason, Alex, Winston

Election Results

2018 General

Gretchen Whitmer (D)	53%
Bill Schuette (R)	44%

Gov. Tim Walz (D-MN)

Background

Walz, a Democrat first elected to the US House in 2006, has entrenched himself in his rural district by balancing strong support for farmers, military veterans and gun owners with a commitment to the main economic planks of his party's agenda. Walz joined the Army National Guard when he was 17 and retired from the military in 2005. He earned his teaching degree in Nebraska, taught in China for a year and later established an educational travel company. He and his wife moved to Minnesota in 1996, where he taught high school geography and coached the football team. In 2006, Walz successfully challenged six-term Republican Rep. Gil Gutknecht to win in a historically Republican district. In the House, Walz established a mostly centrist voting record with an emphasis on good-government. In March 2017, Walz announced his bid for governor and beat two competitors in the primary. His lieutenant governor running mate is Peggy Flanagan, who has served in the Minnesota State House since 2015.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 04/06/1964

Education: Attending, Saint Mary's University, present;MS, Educational Leadership, Minnesota State University, Mankato, 2001;BS, Social Science Education, Chadron State College, 1989

Family: Spouse: Gwen; 2 Children: Hope, Gus

Election Results

2018 General

Tim Walz (D)	54%
Jeff Johnson (R)	42%

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM)

Background

Lujan Grisham was born in Los Alamos. In 1991, she was appointed to be the director of the State Agency on Aging and served as director for 13 years under both Republican and Democratic governors. After her husband's death in 2004, Grisham was appointed New Mexico's Secretary of Health. During her tenure, Grisham emphasized precautionary principles to combat medical mistakes. In 2008, Grisham unsuccessfully ran for New Mexico's 1st congressional district. Two years later she became the commissioner of Bernallio County. In 2012, Grisham ran again for New Mexico's 1st congressional district, and won. In the House of Representatives, Grisham has been a consistent advocate for protecting the elderly and supporting social safety net programs like Medicare and Social Security. She currently chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 10/24/1959

Education: JD, School of Law, University of New Mexico, 1983-1987;Bachelors, University Studies, University of New Mexico, 1977-1981

Family: Widow; 2 Children: Taylor, Erin

Election Results

2018 General	
Michelle Lujan Grisham (D)	57%
Steve Pearce (R)	43%

Gov. Steve Sisolak (D-NV)

Background

Sisolak was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his master's degree from University of Nevada Las Vegas in 1978. He started a communications business and served on various boards, including the Nevada Board of Regents and the Las Vegas District Board of Directors. Most recently, Sisolak served as the chairman of the Clark County Commission and as the chair of Big Bend Water District Board of Trustees. During the 2018 campaign, Sisolak ran on education as his primary focus. He has publicly stated his interest in increasing funding for the public school system in Nevada and increasing the salaries of teachers. Sisolak also ran on a platform of increasing jobs in Nevada by promoting clean energy and the manufacturing industry.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 12/26/1953

Education: MBA, University of Nevada Las Vegas, 1978;BA, Univeristy of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, 1974

Family: Spouse: Dallas; 2 Children

Election Results

2018 General	
Steve Sisolak (D)	49%
Adam Laxalt (R)	45%

Gov. Mike DeWine (R-OH)

Background

DeWine was born in Springfield, Ohio. He received a BS in Education from Miami University of Ohio and a JD from Ohio Northern University College of Law. He has been a visiting scholar at Miami University of Ohio, Ohio Northern University, and Cedarville University. DeWine served as assistant prosecuting attorney and then prosecuting attorney of Greene County, Ohio. He has spent much of his life in politics first serving as senator for the Ohio State Senate in 1980. He then served four terms in the US House of Representatives and as lieutenant governor of Ohio from 1990 to 1994. DeWine had a failed campaign for US Senate in 1992, but won his bid for the Senate in 1994. He then lost his second re-election to US Senate in 2006. He is currently serving as the attorney general of Ohio.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 01/05/1947

Education: JD, Ohio Northern University College of Law, 1972;BS, Education, Miami University of Ohio, 1969

Family: Spouse: Frances; 8 Children: Patrick, Jill, Rebecca, John, Brian, Alice, Mark, Anna

Election Results

2018 General

Mike DeWine (R)	51%
Richard Cordray (D)	46%

Gov. Kevin Stitt (R-OK)

Background

Stitt is a fourth generation Oklahoman, and graduated from Norman High School. He attended Oklahoma State University, where he earned a degree in accounting. Stitt is the founder and CEO of Gateway Mortgage Group, which employs 1,200 people and has offices in 41 states. His candidacy for governor was his first attempt at political office. Stitt plans to prioritize government efficiency and give the governor the authority to fire underperforming leaders in appointed positions. He also plans to reform education by raising teacher pay to match the pay in neighboring states, and expand the use of video technology in the classroom. Further, Stitt plans to enhance recruitment programs to bring businesses to Oklahoma and create jobs.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: Unknown

Education: Bachelor's, Accounting, Oklahoma State University, 1991-1996

Family: Spouse: Sarah; 6 Children

Election Results

2018 General

Kevin Stitt (R)	54%
Drew Edmondson (D)	42%

Gov. Kristi Noem (R-SD)

Background

Born in Watertown, South Dakota, Noem received her BA in Political Science from South Dakota State University. Before getting into politics, Noem was a small business owner and manager, as well as a rancher, operating her family's farm after her father died. She was elected to the South Dakota State House of Representatives in 2006 and then as the singular at-large member U.S. representative in 2010. She sat on the House Ways and Means Committee. While in Congress, Noem voted against her party 4.1% of the time, below the House average. While campaigning for governor, Noem highlighted what she refers to as the "four pillars of protection". This includes, protection from tax increases, protection from government growth, protection from federal intrusion and protection from government secrecy.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 11/30/1971

Education: BA, Political Science, South Dakota State University, 2011;Attended, Northern State University, 1990-1992;Attended, Mount Marty College, Watertown

Family: Spouse: Bryon; 3 Children: Kassidy, Kennedy, Booker

Election Results

2018 General

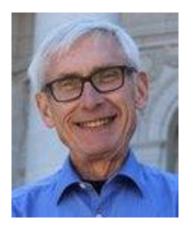|	
Kristi Noem (R)	51%
Billie Sutton (D)	48%

Gov. Bill Lee (R-TN)

Background

Lee was born and raised in Franklin, Tennessee. After attending Williamson County Schools, he studied mechanical engineering at Auburn University. He then returned home to work at his grandfather's business, Lee Company. He served as president of the Lee Company from 1992-2016 and then as Chair of the Lee company from 2016 on. The Lee company employs more than 1,200 individuals and generates $215 million in annual revenue. Lee served as the 7th congressional district's representative to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and on the Board of Trustees at Belmont University. Further, Lee has previously served as president of Tennesseans for Economic Growth, chairman of the YMCA of Middle Tennessee and president of the Associated Builders and Contractors. Prior to running for governor, Lee did not have any experience in elected office.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 10/09/1959

Education: BSME, Mechanical Engineering, Auburn University, 1977-1981

Family: Spouse: Maria; 4 Children: Jessica, Jacob, Caleb, Sarah Kate

Election Results

2018 General

Bill Lee (R)	60%
Karl Dean (D)	39%

Gov. Tony Evers (D-WI)

Background

Evers was born in Plymouth, Wisconsin. Before entering politics, Evers spent his entire career in education. He has been a principal, the superintendent of Verona School District and Oakfield School District, and the chief administrator of the Cooperative Educational Service Agency 6. His first political role was as Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Wisconsin which he was elected to in 2009. As governor, Evers plans to increase investments in early childhood education and quality childcare, including helping families afford increasing childcare costs. He also plans to accept the Medicaid expansion dollars offered by the federal government, and to lower prescription drug costs. Further, he plans to ensure access to broadband throughout Wisconsin, as well as invest in the state's infrastructure.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Democrat

Birth Date: 11/05/1951

Education: Doctorate, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1986;Masters, Educational Administration, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1976;Bachelors, Educational Administration, University of Wisconsin at Madison, 1973

Family: Spouse: Kathy; 3 Children: Erin, Nick, Katie

Election Results

2018 General	
Tony Evers (D)	50%
Scott Walker (R)	36%

Gov. Mark Gordon (R-WY)

Background

Gordon is a native of Wyoming. He graduated from Middlebury College in 1979 with a degree in history. After working as a rancher and serving on the Board of Directors for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, he was appointed as treasurer for the state of Wyoming. Gordon unsuccessfully ran for Wyoming US House at-large in 2008. He was then elected to serve a full term as state treasurer in 2012. During his gubernatorial campaign, Gordon emphasized his plans to reduce the size of government and decrease spending. Gordon also plans to work on decreasing federal regulations on Wyoming's natural resources, while still protecting open spaces and access to public lands. He supports the second amendment and has been a lifelong member of the NRA, using guns on his ranch and for personal protection.

Biography

First Elected: 2018

Party: Republican

Birth Date: 03/14/1957

Education: BA, History, Middlebury College, 1979

Family: Spouse: Jennie; 4 Children

Election Results

2018 General	
Mark Gordon (R)	67%
Mary Throne (D)	28%