



Life In Brief

Current Title: Governor

Political Party: Democratic Party

Born: January 19, 1965

Birthplace: Atherton, CA

Religion: Jewish

Ethnicity: White/Caucasian

Marital Status: Married

Education Summary:

- Northwestern University School of Law (IL), JD, 1993

Family:

2 children

Work History:

- Governor of Illinois, 2019-CURR
- Founder and Managing Partner, Pritzker Group, 1996-2019
- Co-chairman, Hillary Clinton 2008 Presidential Campaign, 2008
- Founder, 1871, 2012-2016
- Office of Sen. Alan Dixon (D-IL)
- Office of Sen. Terry Sanford (D-NC)

Quick Summary

Progressive with an investment and philanthropy background; Democratic majorities in state legislature allowed him to achieve significant policy victories in his first year

- Handily defeated incumbent Bruce Rauner (R) in 2018, despite scandals related to his campaign, property taxes and past comments
- Lifelong liberal campaigned for Sens. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Terry Sanford (D-NC) as a student; worked for Sanford on Capitol Hill
- Used fortune to address his core issues, entrepreneurship and early childhood education
- Born and raised in California but identifies with Chicago, where he made his investing career
- Founded 1871, a successful start-up “incubator” that provides capital, training, and workspace to Chicago entrepreneurs
- Pursues greater state spending on public services, such as education, while attempting to tackle enormous fiscal deficit
- Budget proposals criticized by IL Republicans, who blame Pritzker for increasing taxes
- Democratic legislature majorities allowed Pritzker to pass several of his priorities in 2019, including a minimum wage hike

Approach and Motivations

Driven by deep commitment to Chicago and influenced by mentor Terry Sanford; sees combination of increased revenue and public investment as solutions to intractable problems

- Chicagoan speaks glowingly about the city's past and has invested significantly in its future; made his ventures there a centerpiece of his campaign and vision for the state
- Mentor figure Terry Sanford's imprint is visible on Pritzker's agenda; like Sanford, Pritzker wants to raise taxes to pay for education
- Believes the answer to high public debt and out-migration is to increase state revenue and improve social services and infrastructure
- Officeholding novice facing severe challenges has brought in experienced operatives to top



levels of government, doubling their salaries with his own fortune

Policy Position and Areas of Focus

Seeks to increase state revenue and level the playing field for disadvantaged state residents

State Budget: *Finding new sources of income to pay for policy objectives and balance the budget*

- Entering his first year in office, Pritzker called the state budget his number one priority; state has billions in debt, low credit ratings
- Supports a graduated income tax that places a greater burden on wealthier residents; must be approved by voters in November, 2020
- Signed bill legalizing marijuana; offered conservative projection that sales would raise \$46 million for the state
- Proposed full funding for state pension system, which has been underwater for decades

Social Equity: *Enacting liberal priorities to benefit workers and marginalized communities*

- Signed legislation raising state minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025, which he claims will raise 1 million people out of poverty
- Pardoned over 11,000 residents convicted of minor marijuana-related charges; called for an end to the “war on cannabis” that has mostly affected African American residents
- 5-year economic plan specifically calls for expanding capital access and improving educational opportunities for disadvantaged communities

Disadvantaged Children: *Increasing education opportunities, funding for school meals and child welfare department*

- As a philanthropist, Pritzker participated in a public-private partnership to a fund preschool program for disadvantaged children in Utah
- JB and MK Pritzker Family foundation provided funding to Rise and Shine Illinois to promote school breakfast for low-income students
- In a 2017 op-ed, called early childhood education a “fiscally sound investment”
- Proposed raising IL Department of Children and Family Services budget by \$147 million and state spending on preschool and early learning by \$100 million in 2020

Core Communities

Pritzker leverages experienced, well-paid staff; his network is centered on Chicago, where he has ties in business, philanthropy, and political circles

Staff: *Prioritized experience for key roles*

- Deputy Governor for Budget and Economy Dan Hynes was state comptroller from 1999-2009
- Deputy Governor for Public Safety, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment Christian Mitchell is a former state legislator and director of IL Democratic Party
- Brought in former state Sen. Toi Hutchison to implement cannabis law; longtime advocate for cannabis reform

Chicago Business: *Investor and philanthropist with relationships in business community*

- Speaks at Chicago-area business forums (e.g. Economic Club of Chicago)
- Top campaign donors include Chicago-based investor James Star
- Founded high-tech incubator 1871 with Chicago investor Howard Tullman; organization board consists of prominent Chicago business leaders



Chicago Democrats: *Relationships with significant figures past and present*

- Boosted by endorsement from Pres. Barack Obama, who built his political career in Chicago
- Lt. Gov. Julianna Stratton is a Chicago native and represented part of the city in the IL state legislature
- Donated over \$180,000 to the campaigns of former Chicago mayor and Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel

Pritzker Family: *Wealthy allies based in Chicago*

- Cousins and fellow billionaire philanthropists Matthew, John, and Karen made significant contributions to J.B.'s campaign
- Sister Penny Pritzker is a former U.S. cabinet secretary; asked by J.B. to chair the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund

Political History

- Candidate (IL09), US House, 2008

Relevant Financial Information

Nation's wealthiest officeholder and major Democratic donor mostly self-funded his 2018 campaign; ran successful private equity firm with his brother

Political Donations

- Pritzker accounted for the vast majority of his campaign's funding (\$170 million out of \$176 million)
- Since 1998 Pritzker has also donated \$17 million to other candidates, overwhelmingly Democrats
- Top recipients include former Obama chief of staff and Chicago mayor Rahm Emmanuel, former VA Governor Terry McAuliffe (D-VA), and former IL Governor Pat Quinn (D-IL)

Biggest Interest Group Donors (2018)

- Illinois Education Association: \$111,000
- Illinois AFL-CIO: \$24,000
- National AFL-CIO: \$23,000

Biggest Individual Donors (2018)

- Matthew Pritzker, Founder, Matthew Pritzker Company (Chicago, IL): \$250,000
- James Star, CEO, Longview Asset Management (Chicago, IL): \$153,000
- Fred Eychaner, Chairman, Newsweb Corp. (Chicago, IL): \$100,000
- Haim Saban, CEO, Saban Capital Group (Los Angeles, CA): \$100,000
- James Sprayregen, Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP (Chicago, IL): \$100,000

Personal

- Heir to the Hyatt Hotel fortune has an estimated personal net worth of over \$3 billion, making him the wealthiest current officeholder in the U.S.
- Operated investment fund, the Pritzker Group, with his brother Tony until he ran for governor
- Company manages over \$7 billion in assets; portfolio includes tech companies and start-ups
- Upon taking office, Pritzker placed his assets in a blind trust

Publications, Media and Speaking

Pritzker has mostly focused on Chicago and Illinois media and events, with an emphasis on his philanthropy and policy objectives

Publications: *Writes occasional op-eds on education*

- Favorite Outlets: Southern Illinoisan
- Favorite Subjects: Early childhood education



Media: Interviews with Chicago and Illinois TV networks and newspapers to discuss policy objectives and accomplishments

- Preferred Outlets: Chicago TV stations (e.g. WGN), Illinois newspapers
- Favorite Subjects: Legislative achievements, legalization of marijuana
- Social Media Habits: Active personal and office Twitter accounts
- Prior to COVID-19, Pritzker used personal account to promote his policy priorities, condemned racism, announce endorsements, and share friendly articles

Speaking: Pritzker has mostly addressed philanthropic and non-profit organizations, mostly in Chicago and Illinois

- Favorite Subjects: Philanthropic ventures, early childhood education entrepreneurship, economic development
- Preferred Audience: Philanthropic organization events (e.g. Clinton Global Initiative America conference), Illinois non-profits (e.g. Chicago Innovation)

Professional Affiliations

- Former District Chair, ChicagoNEXT
- Chair, Pritzker Family Foundation
- Supporter, Center for Wrongful Convictions

Awards

- Children's Initiative
- Entrepreneurial Champion

Family and Personal Background

Heir to part of successful family's fortune; has been active in liberal politics since he was a teenager

- Full name is Jay Robert Pritzker
- Great-grandson of Jewish-Ukrainian immigrant who founded a Chicago law firm
- Describes himself as "very fortunate" to have grown up in a successful family
- Raised in CA, where his father worked on the Hyatt hotel chain founded by his uncle; mother was an activist for liberal causes, including the Equal Rights Amendment
- Family was deeply intertwined with Democratic politics; Pritzker worked on Ted Kennedy's primary campaign in 1980
- While at Duke, participated in former Duke University President Terry Sanford's successful 1986 Senate campaign
- Pritzker has called Sanford a model; southern Democrat fought for desegregation as North Carolina governor and increased education funding
- Worked in Sanford's D.C. office and for Sen. Alan Dixon (D-IL); met his wife Mary while they both worked on Capitol Hill
- Death of family patriarch and uncle Jay Pritzker in 1999 pitted the family's heirs against each other, including J.B. and his sister Penny; they have since mended their relationship
- Penny was the U.S. Secretary of Commerce from 2013-2017 under President Obama

Criticisms and Controversies

Campaign sued for racial discrimination; forced to apologize for remarks caught on 2008 wiretap about African American politicians; scrutinized



for potential tax avoidance maneuver on Chicago property

Lawsuit against campaign

- Ten Pritzker campaign staffers filed a racial discrimination lawsuit against his campaign, alleging that they were placed in race-specific roles, faced harassment and dangerous conditions, were not given opportunity to advance
- Plaintiffs requested a \$7.5 million settlement
- Pritzker and Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton denied the allegations

Leaked discussion with disgraced governor

- In conversations wiretapped by the FBI, Pritzker discussed political appointments with then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich in 2008; Blagojevich was later convicted of corruption
- Pritzker declined Blagojevich's offer to take former Sen. Barack Obama's (D-IL) seat
- Made disparaging remarks about potential African American appointees; called then-U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson a "nightmare"
- Release of the tapes by the Chicago Tribune prompted an outcry; Pritzker embarked on an apology tour to repair ties with the African-American community

Toilet removal from Chicago home

- In 2015, the Inspector General for Cook County (IL) alleged that Pritzker removed the toilets from a mansion he owned next to his home to reduce his tax liability for the property
- After the report surfaced during the 2018 campaign, Pritzker agreed to pay over \$330,000 to the county treasurer

Contact Information

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<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/contactus/Pages/VoiceAnOpinion.aspx>