



Life In Brief

Current Title: Governor

Political Party: Democratic Party

Born: June 21, 1960

Birthplace: Torrejon de Ardoz, Spain

Ethnicity: White/Caucasian

Marital Status: Married

Education Summary:

- University of Colorado, Boulder, BA, 1981
- Lewis & Clark Law School (OR), JD, 1985

Family:

2 stepchildren

Work History:

- Member of the Oregon House of Representatives from the 13th District, 1991-1997
- Member of the Oregon Senate from the 21st District, 1997-200
- Oregon Secretary of State, 2009-2015
- Governor of Oregon, 2015-present

Quick Summary

Passionate feminist who has spent her career advocating for marginalized groups. Civil and women's rights advocate who has adopted a collaborative approach, while occasionally clashing with the Trump Administration

- Became Governor after her predecessor resigned following a corruption scandal; Brown was next in line as Secretary of State

- First openly bisexual governor
- Had demonstrated interest in feminism and reproductive rights since she was a teenager
- Initially wanted to practice environmental law, but her existing passion for women's reproductive choice had intensified, leading her to shift to women's rights and family law
- In the Oregon Senate, shifted from a radical feminist to a moderate Democrat focused on bipartisanship, as her previous style garnered little support
- Eventually garnered enough support among her peers to become Majority Leader
- Aim to achieve policy goals through state investment in resources to aid residents

Approach and Motivations

Entered public service to “be a voice for the voiceless,” and advocate for those who are unable to do so; her experience as a member of a minority group fuels her desire for equality

- Became interested in advocacy after exposure to anti-abortion rhetoric during *Roe v. Wade*
- Went to law school because she believed it would help her work for justice and equality
- Claims to have made less than her male counterpart due to her gender while practicing law; inspired her to fight for pay equality
- Experienced the fear of possibly losing her job solely due to her sexual orientation; has pledged to protect others from that same fear

Policy Position and Areas of Focus

Brown focuses on accessible civic participation, employment opportunity, and education policy



Voting Reform: *Supports measures that expand voting access, as well as election transparency*

- Increased voter registration through online voter registration and a motor voter bill
- Increased the availability of iPads and tablets to provide accessibility to voters with disabilities
- Pushed for the ORESTAR campaign finance reporting system to increase transparency

Gender Parity: *Champions policies that focus on women's needs to address gender imbalances*

- Signed the Oregon Equal Pay Act into law, which addresses pay discrepancies through measures such as prohibiting employers from asking applicants their current pay
- Signed legislation establishing paid family leave; this also required insurance companies to cover annual women's health exams
- Signed legislation preventing domestic violence offenders from purchasing and owning guns

Education: *Aims to invest in Oregon's education system to ensure widespread education access*

- Secured \$100 million in early childhood education investments since taking office and aims to expand quality preschool access
- Secured \$1 million to pilot trauma-informed practices to aid teachers in addressing students who have experienced trauma
- Implemented the Oregon Promise, which will cover community college costs for need-based high school graduates and GED recipients

Environment: *Strong supporter of clean energy*

- Signed the nation's first "coal-to-clean" law to phase out coal power by 2030
- Implemented the Cleaner Air Oregon program to regulate commercial facilities' toxic air contaminants

Core Communities

Brown's core communities include women's interest groups, a staff of seasoned private sector experts, and labor unions

Women's Interest Groups: *Began her career as a women's rights advocate and continues to garner support from women's interest groups*

- Volunteered at the Portland Feminist Women's Health Center during law school
- Lobbied the state legislature on behalf of the Oregon Women's Rights Coalition
- Co-founded the Oregon Women's Health & Wellness Alliance
- Has been endorsed by numerous women's advocacy groups such as the Mother PAC, NARAL, NOW, and Planned Parenthood

Staff: *Diverse staff includes experience in business and nonprofits*

- Chief of Staff Nik Blosser bridges policy and business interests, as he co-founded the Oregon Business Administration
- Former Chief of Staff Kristen Leonard was the owner of financial services and government relations company C&E Systems
- Former legal counsel Misha Isaak now works at prestigious law firm Perkins Coie, where he practiced before joining Brown's team
- Deputy Director of Health Care Policy Linda Roman has experience with health care-focused interest groups

Labor Unions: *Strong ties to Oregon unions*

- Authored a joint statement with leaders of Oregon AFL-CIO, the Oregon Education Association, SEIU Local 503, and Oregon AFSCME to denounce the *Janus* decision



- American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten campaigned for Brown and phone banked with Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain to garner union votes
- Receives significant funding from unions

- Oregon Public Employees Local 503 (Salem, OR): \$910,000
- Defend Oregon’s Values (Portland, OR): \$890,000

Political History

- Member, OR State House of Representatives, 1991-1996
- Member, OR State Senate (OR021 D), 1996-2008
- Majority Leader, OR State Senate, 2004-2007
- Former Chair, Council on State Governments West
- Secretary of State, State of Oregon, 2009-2015
- Ex-Officio Member, State Board of Education, State of Oregon, 2013-2015

Biggest Individual Donors (1991-2020)

- Michael Bloomberg, Founder of Bloomberg Inc. and former Mayor of New York City: \$250,000
- Barbara Lee, Founder of the Barbara Lee Family Foundation: \$192,222
- Eric D. Lemelson, Owner of Lemelson Vineyards: \$170,000
- Stephen Michael Silberstein, Founder of Innovator Enterprises: \$115,000
- George Kenneth Austin Jr., deceased, Founder of A-dec Inc.: \$107,500

Relevant Financial Information

Brown receives the majority of campaign contributions from interest groups and politically active organizations

Biggest Industry Donors (1991-2020)

- Public Sector Unions: \$3.6 million
- Liberal Policy Organizations: \$2.8 million
- General Trade Unions: \$1.6 million
- Lawyers & Lobbyists: \$1.6 million
- Abortion Policy Organizations: \$930,000

Biggest Interest Group Donors (1991-2020)

- Democratic Governors Association (Washington, DC): \$2.2 million
- Team Oregon (Corvallis, OR): \$1.4 million
- Oregon Democratic Party (Portland, OR): \$1.2 million

Political Donations

- Contributed \$4,365 to various candidates over eleven years; most of the races were Oregon-based

Publications, Media and Speaking

Uses media to engage with Oregonians on issues that include civic participation, diversity, and health policy

Publications: *Writes op-eds on topics such as voting accessibility and criticism of the Trump administration*

- “We’ve had Vote-by-Mail in Oregon for Decades. It’s Obviously the Best Way to Hold Elections Now,” *Newsweek*, April 17, 2020
- “The Importance of National Voter Registration Day,” *Teen Vogue*, September 24, 2019
- “Federal Leadership Vacuum means Governors Must Step Up,” *Oregon Live*, July 4, 2017
- “Do What’s Right: Disavow Donald Trump,” *The Huffington Post*, August 18, 2016



Media: Utilizes Oregon-specific media platforms to engage with constituents

- Preferred Outlets: Local news outlets such as KGW and KATU
- Favorite Subjects: Environmental policy, disaster prevention, housing, education policy
- Social Media Habits: Very active on Twitter and Facebook

Speaking: Speaks mainly about diversity and inclusion to politically-oriented groups

- Favorite Subjects: Gender and racial issues, voting accessibility, health care policy
- Preferred Audience: Political audiences and social-justice oriented groups; examples include the Oregon Diversity Conference, the Democratic Party of Oregon, and the National Governors' Association

Congressional Testimony: Testified before Congress to discuss the opioid epidemic

- Testified before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions about addressing the opioid crisis, March 8, 2018
- Brown outlined the measures she has already taken to address the state's crisis, and called on Congress to focus on substance abuse treatment rather than punishment for users

Professional Affiliations

- Member, Juvenile Rights Project

Awards

- National Public and Community Service Award, American Mental Health Counselors Association

Family and Personal Background

Despite not being an Oregon native, Brown moved to the state for law school and has since established a place for herself

- Born in Spain, where her father was stationed while serving in the U.S. Air Force
- Grew up in Minnesota
- Her parents were Republicans and often discussed politics with Brown and her siblings
- Became passionate about women's rights and reproductive rights at age 13, when *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion
- Moved to Oregon for law school
- Specialized in family law and juvenile rights
- Lobbied the Oregon legislature for the Oregon Women's Rights Coalition prior to running for office
- Has received several awards throughout her career, such as the Oregon Commission for Women's Woman of Achievement Award and the Oregon State Bar's President's Award of Merit
- Describes herself as a "fierce feminist"
- Enjoys horseback riding, hiking, yoga, and meditation

Criticisms and Controversies

Brown's notable controversies include allegations of an illegal agreement, as well as a controversial Court appointment

Ballot initiative agreement accusation

- In 2018, a complaint to the Oregon Department of Justice alleged that Brown negotiated an illegal ballot initiative agreement with Nike and public employee unions



- Brown had been meeting with corporate leaders and public employee unions to attempt to keep a corporate tax disclosure requirement off the ballot
- The Department of Justice reviewed the complaint and determined that an investigation was not warranted

Criticism of Court of Appeals appointee

- Brown faced criticism from the state's legal community in 2019 after appointing her general counsel, Misha Isaak, to the Oregon Court of Appeals
- The judicial vacancy had not been advertised through state and local bar associations, resulting in Isaak as the sole candidate
- Isaak's relative youth and lack of trial experience, combined with the lack of other candidates, led to accusations of cronyism
- Isaak declined the nomination following the criticism, staying with Brown's office for six months until leaving for a private firm

Contact Information

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