

Election 2018: An overview of the contentious governor's race

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
November 5 2018 3:14 PM



SPRINGFIELD – With election day coming next Tuesday for the mid-terms, many people across the country are pushing for high voter turnouts.

Social media is full of political ads, voter education, and people displaying their early voting stickers for what is forming into an extremely important election cycle for Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike. Many state and local positions are currently up for grabs.

Much of this information is public record, but some of the candidates were able to complete questionnaires sent by reporters. Not everyone responded to those, so research into campaign promises, funding and voting records was conducted in order to properly display the candidates and what each represents.

The first such election up for grabs is the position of Illinois Governor. Current Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican, is being challenged and outspent by hotel fortune heir, J.B. Pritzker. Some of the contentious issues up for debate this election include Illinois budget woes, government worker unions, school funding and marijuana legalization, just to name a few.

BRUCE RAUNER'S CAMPAIGN

Rauner's campaign platform promises that “Illinois is worth fighting for,” claiming the state's current woes are caused by a government, which works for itself instead of the people. He stated the majority of Illinois politicians are politically-connected to a fault and touts the need for bi-partisan reforms with the goals of “growing good jobs, delivering value for the taxpayers, giving every child access to world-class schools, and enacting term limits to get rid of career politicians.”

Part of his platform is “standing up for taxpayers,” as he believes Illinois taxpayers have been “burdened for too long by career politicians who would rather spend your money than do the people's work.” He specifically targeted Mike Madigan's 32 percent permanent income tax hike in his 2018 campaign, claiming it hurts families and businesses. He promises Illinois families a \$1 billion tax cut if reelected. He also promises to fight for lasting property tax relief by “freezing property taxes and giving local communities more flexibility to control their costs and lower taxes.” Rauner claimed to have helped save Illinois taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars by “rooting out fraud, cutting wasteful spending in state operating costs and negotiating innovative government contracts.”

Rauner also described Illinois's criminal justice system as “broken.” He said Illinois has been “plagued” by a criminal justice system that is “tearing families apart and hurting communities of color.” He said he prioritizes rehabilitation over early release programs, saying he has signed more than two dozen bipartisan criminal justice reform bills over his three year term.

He also claims to have helped offenders find tools to “lead productive lives after they've served their time.”

Jobs are another platform on which Rauner is running – specifically 21st century jobs. He blames “career politicians” and “special interests” on blocking job reforms, claiming he wants to make Illinois more competitive on the job growth scene. He said he wants to lower the cost of doing business in Illinois by “reforming the expensive workers compensation system, reining in out-of-control lawsuit abuse and freezing property taxes” as well as modernizing Illinois's economic growth.

To tout this, Rauner claims his administration helped bring 8,000 Amazon jobs to Joliet, Monee and Romeoville. He also claimed to have brought Rivian Automotive Normal, which will create 1,500 jobs he said. He also claimed to have brought Flex-N-Gate with hundreds of “quality jobs” to Chicago's South Side. Rauner also praised Illinois's Future Energy Jobs Act, which promises to bring thousands of clean energy jobs to the state.

In education, which was reformed under Rauner's administration following weeks of arguments and compromise, Rauner took credit for increasing K-12 funding in Illinois by \$1.2 billion, and said early childhood education was brought to “historic levels” under his administration. He also touted the new law, which he claims gives educational choice to low-income families while providing more funding for in-need school districts as well as funding for charter schools.

If reelected, Rauner said he wants to reform Illinois politics, again blaming “career politicians” for Illinois's woes. He said he would “clean up Springfield” by getting rid of illegal patronage hires and implementing ethics reforms to “stop the revolving doors between lobbyists and government.”

BRUCE RAUNER'S ADMINISTRATION

While in office, Rauner's administration has overseen a fair amount of noteworthy changes in Illinois politics. Among them was the signing of House Bill (HB) 40, which removed a clause in the Illinois State Constitution, which would have made abortion illegal in the state if the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. This went against usual Republican party lines and also required Medicaid and state employee health insurance packages to cover abortion.

Following more traditional Republican stances, Rauner also vetoed a collective bargaining agreement between the State of Illinois and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) after their contract expired. Democrats in the General Assembly failed to override the veto, which would have mediated the dispute by a neutral third party in a binding arbitration process.

After the Nov. 13, 2015, terror attacks in Paris, Rauner also declared Illinois would not be accepting any Syrian refugees.

BRUCE RAUNER'S CAMPAIGN FINANCES AND DONORS

Most of that funding comes from Rauner himself. As much as \$95.3 million of that funding comes from his own pockets. Second to him is Kenneth Griffin, the founder and CEO of global investment firm, Citadel. That group is among the most successful hedge fund management firms in the world with an estimated \$25 billion in investment capital.

Griffin is based in Chicago and has donated around \$36.1 million to Rauner's reelection campaign. The Republican Governor's Association has donated around \$8.7 million to his campaign.

The Illinois Republican Party has donated around \$3.6 million, shipping company owner and major Republican donor, Richard Uihlein contributed \$2.6 million and Target Enterprises has donated just under \$750,000 to his campaign.

J.B. PRITZKER'S CAMPAIGN

Pritzker's campaign is centered on progressive values. His campaign promises include several progressive Democrat talking points nationwide, including net neutrality. Pritzker promises to sue the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in order to protect internet customers in Illinois. He said he would require internet service providers (ISPs) within the state to honor net neutrality for all customers and disclose their network management practices and performance while allowing the state to hold ISPs accountable.

He also promises to be an advocate for women's rights, adding he supported HB40 as well. He said “all women should be able to access reproductive healthcare in Illinois, regardless of their income.” He also claimed mentoring women entrepreneurs and investing in women-owned businesses are among his top priorities.

He said the current climate in Illinois in which women make 79 cents to the dollar compared to men with African-American women only making 63 cents to the dollar and Latina women making only 54 cents on the dollar is “unacceptable.” He said Rauner would hurt women, citing “drastic” cuts to the Child Care Assistance Program, which provides affordable child care to low-income families, three quarters of which are female-headed, single-parent homes. He also blamed Rauner for vetoing No Salary History bill, which he said would have helped narrow that wage gap by preventing employers from setting salaries based on previous ones.

Pritzker also said Rauner manufactured the state's 736-day budget crisis, which he said threatened access to free breast and cervical cancer screenings for more than 9,000 low-income women.

To remedy this, Pritzker promises to pass healthcare funding for low-income women, stand up against President Donald Trump's attempts to cut funding for Planned Parenthood, fight for legislation for equal pay and preventing employers from asking about salary history. He also supports a minimum wage increase and access to the Child Care Assistance Program.

Economic inclusion of people of color is also included in Pritzker's platform. He said he wants to expand opportunities for minority business owners to secure state contracts by use of sheltered markets. He wants to add diversity benchmarks to the metrics of contract procurement. He said he would also create a new, cabinet-level position dedicated to fostering diversity and economic inclusion and accountability.

Seniors are another part of Pritzker's list of campaign promises. He promises to strengthen the Community Care Program to help seniors remain in their homes by moving Illinois toward a universal, long-term care program, which would improve wages and benefits of caregivers as well as improved training opportunities. For those outside their homes, Pritzker promised to ensure nursing homes abide by staffing and safety requirements.

While the entire State of Illinois was recently declared a “sanctuary state” under Rauner's administration, Pritzker promised to protect immigrant families, calling immigrants, “neighbors and a critical part of our state, contributing to the culture and economy that make Illinois a great place to live.” He promised to stand against Donald Trump's attacks on immigrants, saying he would prevent Illinois from participating in any federal registry based on race, color, ancestry, national origin or faith.

Like Rauner, Pritzker supports Illinois's Future Jobs Act, but Pritzker wants to take it a step further, adding he is a staunch believer in man-made climate change. If elected he said he would move Illinois toward 100 percent clean, renewable energy while attracting commercial investment in clean energy production and transmission. He also claims to support clean water and air while attacking Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

Marijuana legalization is supported by Pritzker as well, who wants to include people of color in dispensary businesses and commuting the sentences of people previously incarcerated for marijuana-based charges. He also said he would invest into communities hardest hit by the War on Drugs's mass incarceration.

He also promised to treat gun violence as a public health crisis, adding he would invest in prevention and intervention through community programs, which interrupt violence and encourage non-violent conflict resolution. He also said universal background checks for every gun sale would take place in Illinois, and make a lethal violence protection order available. He also promises to ban assault weapons, high-capacity magazines and bump stocks in Illinois while making a gun crime investigation unit.

LGBTQ+ rights would also be protected under Pritzker, he said, promising to increase protections for such individuals under the law.

J.B. PRITZKER'S CAMPAIGN FINANCES AND DONORS

Pritzker, like Rauner, has funded the majority of his own campaign. In fact, the majority of the \$171.5 million behind his campaign comes from his own pocket, with the second highest contribution coming from the Democratic party of Illinois at \$1.2 million.

GRAYSON KASH JACKSON

Libertarian candidate, Grayson Kash Jackson, formerly known as Benjamin Adam Winderweedle, is also on the ballot for Illinois Governor. On his website, Jackson promises “real reform” in Illinois, promising to enact legislation to encourage job growth, implement budget reform and make Illinois business-friendly and appealing to small businesses, make Illinois living affordable for middle class residents by controlling spending and taxes, reforming Illinois policies so people can make choices deemed best for them to flourish and thrive and he promises to make Illinois safe and desirable by putting money back into road improvement, communities and schools.

WILLIAM "SAM" MCCANN

Illinois State Senate William “Sam” McCann is also running for governor on the ballot as a Conservative candidate. In the Illinois General Assembly, McCann served on the agriculture, environment and conservation, gaming, government reform, higher education and public health committees as well as the committee of the whole.

During his five years as a state senator, McCann introduced several bills, including Senate Bill (SB) 2505 which would reduce income tax to three percent in the state, an amendment to the Illinois Vehicle Code to outlaw automated traffic law enforcement systems for the purpose of issuing violations to driver and several other amendments to existing laws to change language and protections.

McCann currently has around \$3.3 million in campaign finances. Top donors include the Fight Back Fund, which is an organization claiming to sponsor the middle class. Donations from them have capped \$3.5 million. The Engineers Political Education Committee has also sponsored McCann to the tune of \$630,400.