

JB PRITZKER

Governor of Illinois

Victory Speech, Tuesday, November 11, 2022

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Good evening, Illinois. Tonight, you made history. Four years ago, I told you that we would think big – that we would write a new playbook, that we would put government back on the side of working families, that we would be bold – and we didn't waste any time. We raised the minimum wage to a livable wage. We guaranteed a woman's right to choose. We balanced the budget, paid all our overdue bills, and got six credit upgrades. We expanded healthcare to half a million more people, we increased college scholarships for 26,000 more students, and we legalized cannabis. We created more small businesses than ever before and we grew our economy to over one trillion dollars.

Just a few minutes ago, the news networks called this race in our favor, and I am grateful tonight. I'm grateful tonight that Illinois continues a long tradition of peaceful and fair elections. I am so thrilled to spend four more years as your governor.

There are a few people that I want to thank this evening, starting with my wonderful wife and children. Public service is demanding, especially on the loved ones who sacrifice more than they ask for. So to M.K., and to Teddi and Don, thank you for supporting me in this endeavor. I love you more than life itself.

To my running mate and the best lieutenant governor Illinois has ever known: Juliana, I am privileged every day of this wild ride to have your partnership, share in your strength, and find joy in your friendship. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

To my campaign manager, Mike Ollen, and my tremendous staff: you are the finest campaign team anywhere. Two of the nation's biggest MAGA Republican billionaires along with their teams of political grifters – they spewed lies and innuendo and you showed them that Illinois is a state that stands up for working families and rejects their selfish agenda.

To Ann Caprara, who can finish my sentences and almost knows before I do what my instincts are on every policy matter, the depths of my gratitude and admiration are endless.

Most importantly, to the people of Illinois: thank you for placing your trust in me to carry out this mission for four more years. I won't let you down.

“Are you ready for the fight?” That is a question that I have ended a lot of my political speeches with during this campaign. But tonight, I begin with it. Ninety years ago, Illinois elected a new governor named Henry Horner, who took office in 1933 during the Great Depression and when fascism was on the rise worldwide. Shortly after his inauguration, he delivered one of the most important speeches of his. In retrospect, his words were eerily timeless and prescient. Horner said, “We all realize that we are living in abnormal and unusual times – times requiring unusually clear thinking and sacrificial action. Do you realize that our vaunted civilization is at stake, and the responsibility of preserving it is laid upon all of us who believe in sustaining it?”

This was Henry Horner's way of asking, “are you ready for the fight?”

When I was making the decision to run for a second term as governor of Illinois, I asked myself if I was ready for the fight again. Because this is a moment requiring a steel spine for the years ahead, as our nation's fundamental ideals are under siege. I love this job and I have never shied away from its demands. I love you, too. But if I was going to serve for another four years, I wanted to make sure that I was prepared to bring the “happy warrior” spirit into this job again, because leading the fight in a battle ought to bring joy if the purpose is meaningful. Optimism in politics is often dismissed as “pollyanna-ish”. But, like most virtues worth cultivating, its power is in its humility. I admire happy warriors and I think of myself as among them. Because here's what it is to be a happy warrior: to find calm when the times are chaotic, to respond to cruelty with compassion, to gladly be the first to suit up

for a worthwhile battle and be the last to give up in a difficult dog fight. To celebrate victory but never dwell in it. To laud progress but never let it be enough. And precisely when the battles are hard and the challenges many, that's when the spelunkers for misery feed off the dark fears that people harbor in difficult times. And that is the moment when a happy warrior can carry us forward and says, "I've been in this dark place before, and I know the way out."

Let's be honest: the abnormal and unusual times that Henry Horner talked about are here once again. And just like back then, our values are under siege – but they are worth fighting for, and I will not let our challenges crush the spirit that I have always brought to this job. Facing this moment requires that every happy warrior find a little bit of a “nomadic warrior” in them as well. Facing this moment means fighting these battles together. Together we must be bold and we must never shy away from our “big-D-Democratic” or “little-D-democratic” values.

Together with pride and dignity, today, we reaffirm what we are fighting for. Jobs that lift you up, not wear you down. A quality education that's not just a prize you win for growing up in the right part of town or being born to the right set of parents. Access to healthcare that doesn't just keep you alive but keeps you healthy. Better wages that fund joy and not just survival. A world that is just a little easier to live in, where it's not so hard to make ends meet. Climate and an environment that is made better for our children than the way we found it. Public safety that brings peace to our neighborhoods, justice to our communities, and addresses not just the aftermath of crime, but the causes of it. A world where public health policy is based on science, not fantasy, one where polio and AIDS and yes, COVID can be eradicated by new discoveries and not just wished away by Facebook fakery. Schools where books are not banned, nor children shielded from the truth about all of American history. Where this younger generation rising, a generation full of empathetic, courageous truth-tellers are not robbed of the critical thinking skills that are their best armor against a world of swirling disinformation. A Supreme Court that cannot take away from a woman what they never had the constitutional or moral right to regulate in the first place.

And to all of you, let me be even clearer: to anyone who thinks they can come into this state and try to force some right-wing MAGA war on a woman's body, you will never get an inch of Illinois. And finally, here in the land of Lincoln, the home state of Barack Obama, the first state to ratify the Thirteenth and Nineteenth Amendments – ending slavery and guaranteeing a woman's right to vote – we will never surrender in the battle against hate. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, antisemitism – we have conquered none of these obscenities. In fact, every effort to call them out has fueled the rise of a new movement devoted to their skillful repackaging, in the hopes that we will be so afraid of being called “woke” that we will be too exhausted to fight the next resurgence of the world's most persistent and ancient evils.

You see, hate is a chronic condition. The patient can get better, but we can never stop being vigilant in preventing its return. Unfortunately, a cancer has spread through one ideological wing of this nation to infect the patient itself. They have had ample opportunity to treat the disease, and they have refused to do so at every turn. The result has been treasonous insurrectionists tearing down the doors of the U.S. Capitol, the maiming of the capitol police, and an attack on the 82-year-old husband of the Speaker of the House with a hammer in his own home. There is no nice or easy way to say this, but until the Republican Party is ready to expel the extremists in their midst, we need to do it for them at the ballot box. The fight for democracy, the fight for freedom, the fight for liberty, the fight for decency should be peaceful, but not timid. It needs to be out loud. It should afford no politician a convenient rhetorical hiding place. You don't get to wave a moderate flag from your front porch while you're having a picnic in the back yard with insurrectionists.

And don't claim that the Republican party is being labelled unfairly. Because here we are, two years into cleaning up the wreckage of Donald Trump's presidency, poised to watch this man announce his return to national politics within days. You know why? Because GOP politicians – with the exception of only a few souls – are too cowardly, too simpering to support the best interests of the nation because they're afraid of being called insulting nicknames by a whiny bully. To the fake patriots and their enablers: you don't love the United States if you're not willing to defend it against a man who would destroy it. Donald Trump is the modern embodiment of tyranny that our founders feared the most. So don't lecture us about “norms” or “typical political practices”. Against a party that nominates and endorses antisemites and racists, and anti-immigrant zealots, appeasement and complacency does not work. I know. My family fled that kind of tyranny and I helped survivors build a Holocaust museum.

You know what works? Winning works. When the rights and freedoms of our most vulnerable people are disregarded when the welfare and education of all of our children are under siege, when the guardrails of our democracy – the load-bearing walls of institutions of government, the freedoms that this state’s most famous son died to protect – are under attack, well, then winning is not a luxury but a necessity.

So yes, Illinois, I am here and I am ready for the fight. Are you ready for the fight, too?

These days ahead will be hard, but do not tell me that the fight cannot be won. The fabric of our nation has been frayed and torn before, and Illinois has always had a large role in putting it back together. This state is a special place. This sacred patch of land, sandwiched between great rivers and a great lake, keeps finding a way to produce great people. Whether your bread is served at Blackbird Bakery or Brown Sugar Bakery; whether your beer is poured at Galena Brewing Company or at Revolution Brewery; whether you like your short rib at Broadgauge or Virtue or 17th Street Barbecue; whether you’re a Saluki, a Wildcat, or a Fighting Illini, Illinois’ excellence defies division. Our land is as beautiful as it is vast, and our people as kind as they are courageous. Over the last four years, you have found a way to show the world that goodness is a choice that so many people here in Illinois make. Like Chef Q, of Evanston, who turned her successful catering business into a meal delivery service for families in need during COVID. Or the Granite City High School student council who spends the entire year raising money to distribute Thanksgiving dinners to over 150 families in need. Or Rabbi Yosef Schanowitz who on July 4 of this year rushed to Highland Park Hospital to go door-to-door for people of all faiths to provide counseling and healing.

At every possible opportunity, Illinoisans reach for small moments of joy and great heights of achievement. From street performer Andrew David serenading the streets of Chicago with the song *Halelujah* during the early days of the pandemic, to Naperville teenager Lucy Westlake becoming the youngest American woman to summit Mount Everest, to Kimberly Adami-Hasegawa putting a smile on my face during the worst days of the pandemic with her “Spritzers with Pritzker” Twitter account, our people are rich in the things that make life grand. We have earned the right to take pride in this state, and I remain humbled that you have chosen me again to be your governor.

Four years ago I told you about my mom, about the struggle that she waged with alcoholism that ultimately took her life. And I told you how the burden of anyone who loses a parent young is to feel the weight placed upon you of the potential of your parents’ un-lived years. Never has that responsibility seemed more important to me than right now in the battles for choice, for justice, for freedom that my mother thought she had won before she died. So I choose to fight. I choose to fight to protect Illinois families. I choose to fight to protect our workers. I choose to fight for women’s rights, for civil rights, for voting rights. I choose to fight for the better world imagined by those who never let their hopes be reigned in by their experiences. I choose to fight the fights my mother never gave up on, the fights she left for me to finish.

Henry Horner said something else that night back in 1933, and it’s his words that I want to leave you with. He said: “The only way to carry out any great purpose is not on your shoulders, but in your heart. Carry it on your backs, and it may tear you down. Carry it in your hearts, and it will lift you up.” Horner was right. So, Illinois, we will carry in our hearts the great purpose of our time, so we will survive and thrive, and love, and heal. Thank you, Illinois. God bless you, and God bless this great state.