



ANN

EDUCATION

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign means a lot to my family. It's where my father went to school, where my husband and I went to school, and where we sent our son. Many in my extended family are graduates of Illinois state universities, and we truly understand the importance of our public university system. I live in Monticello, but I call Interstate 57 my home because I've spent the last 30 years commuting to my job as an English professor at Eastern Illinois University. I've worked under a number of governors. None of them ever damaged the state university system as badly as Bruce Rauner has.

Bruce Rauner campaigned against public employees, and after he became governor, he slammed our salaries and withheld funding for our schools. His unwillingness to compromise on a budget forced a crisis that put 400 of my colleagues at EIU out of work. His constant denigrating of our higher education system has damaged all of our public universities to the point that students and faculty no longer want to come here.

We in Illinois have always been proud of our strong and impressive public higher education system, which included universities and colleges up and down the state. For all his talk about "job creation," Bruce Rauner has willfully damaged the actual job creators in our state: the public colleges and universities. In Charleston, Macomb, Carbondale, DeKalb, Champaign, and other communities across Illinois, these schools generate economic activity and development.

Either Bruce Rauner doesn't understand this, or he doesn't care about it. He's failed to advocate for state universities, and he does not seem to appreciate that these institutions represent one of the best investments we citizens can make. It will take years, if not decades, to recoup all that we've lost because Bruce Rauner has focused on some misguided, idealized political agenda rather than the realities of Illinois citizens' lives and futures.

I am encouraged by JB Pritzker. He understands that our economy is enriched by the vitality of our colleges and universities. Our public colleges and universities graduate some of the most outstanding students in the world, and we can continue to contribute greatness by nourishing our system of higher education rather than starving it. JB recognizes our universities are the best resource Illinois has and that when we stop investing in them, our entire state suffers. I know JB will advocate for our students, our colleges, and our state.