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Our Wreck-the-Economy, *Not-* Stopping-COVID Governor

I know Governor Pritzker never had to experience financial struggles personally. It's not his fault that he inherited billions of dollars from his legendary businessman father, instead of learning how to manage a budget or a business from the ground up like most of us.

But we should ask him to give the following "thought experiment" a try, anyway.

Imagine that you own and operate a neighborhood dry cleaner. It's a family-run small business in which you're making a living starching shirts and pressing pants, one by one.

You're having enough good days to keep up with the mortgage but not enough to buy a summer home in Wisconsin. Still, you have enough customers to keep the lights on and, maybe, just maybe, enough money made and saved to send a kid or two to college.

Until . . .

A COVID-19 epidemic turns into a pandemic and your state starts shutting down just about everything.

Suddenly, you have no customers. With no revenue, you must let go your three employees who help you dry clean, wash, and press.

They tell you they don't know what they'll do. But what can *you* do? Even if you could keep them, you can't restock your supplies because supplies can't be had. If they could, no one is around to deliver them.

The bank calls, wondering if you can make your mortgage payment. Maybe just the interest that's due? It's a family neighborhood bank — one of the few remaining — so they're afraid of bankruptcy too.

So, what do you do?

Well, what might help is the so-called free money coming from the federal government, money that you or your kids will have to pay back with higher income taxes — just like the income tax increases *for almost everyone like you* in the USA, which were just passed by the Democrats' Congress and signed by Joe Biden this past August. Both of your Illinois U.S. Senators — people you voted for — voted for these tax increases. One is up for re-election this year.

But the federal freebies can only last for a little while. You're raiding your savings account — making your retirement, well, impossible.

Your only salvation is for your governor to call off the dogs and allow people to resume their productive lives and businesses to reopen — as did happen in Florida and some other Republican-governed states.

Day after day, you check the news to see if this is the day you'll be released from the lockdown.

The waiting goes on and on . . . for days, weeks, months, and now, years!

One version or another of the parade of lockdowns, mandates, and "executive orders" — not votes by your state legislature — cripple your state's economy *and* your small business. The governor says he can't open the state because he's just following "the science" from government experts.

Never mind that the experts' advice was usually confusing, often contradictory, and often wrong . . . so wrong that other states just ignored all of it and returned to normal. But not your state.

Did it ever enter the governor's mind that the economy would shrink when it was shut down like this? Tax revenue would fall and while all the state's employees would remain on full salary (unlike you and your employees), the state pension funds won't be able to guarantee their retirement. That's something you'll both have in common. Did it not even occur to your governor that a collapsed economy can be as painful and destructive as the pandemic?

Apparently not. You decide to move to Indiana, or maybe Tennessee. Anywhere but Illinois.

Illinois is in big trouble. People are abandoning Illinois. Businesses are fleeing the state. Workers have lost their jobs. Businesses are folding, including small

businesses, which are always the most fertile providers of jobs.

The headquarters of corporate giants Boeing, Caterpillar, and Citadel have all left Illinois, taking many millions of dollars in corporate and personal income tax money with them—money needed to pay for essentials like our roads and schools and police. This means more Pritzker tax increases are comin’ our way, just like what happened in August in Washington, D.C.

The big corporations left because of out-of-control crime in Chicago and also because of their enormous company tax burden. They had had enough of the perfect storm of property taxes, occupation taxes, unemployment insurance taxes, and workman’s compensation taxes— which are often two or three times higher than what they are in Indiana and other next-door states.

Okay, that’s just three big corporations. Let’s look at these studies:

- A *Harvard University* study shows that the number of Illinois small businesses dropped by 10.4 percent from January 2020 to January 2022. One out of every ten small businesses shut down! And all the jobs these businesses provided are gone too, perhaps even *your* job.
- The non-partisan *National Bureau of Economic Research* gave Illinois an “F” for health, education, and economic outcomes during

the pandemic. In April 2022, this group found that Illinois was the *sixth worst state* in positive outcomes from policies implemented during the pandemic.

- *The Wallet Hub* ranked Illinois *the worst state* for economic inequality.
- *The Illinois Policy Institute* found a 61 percent decline between October 2019 and 2020 in self-employed owners of retail stores – in other words, small businesses. Six out of every ten! They include *71 percent* fewer bar and restaurant owners. Almost three out of four, gone! In March 2022, Illinois was 154,000 jobs short of the number that existed in Illinois prior to the pandemic.

When lockdowns ended, the persecution didn't end. Indoor mask mandates lasted more than a year – only giving us a temporary reprieve before being reinstated. Even as people started to feel like things might be returning to normal, Pritzker reimposed another “emergency” declaration for the entire state. Why?

Enough. This is getting tedious.

The stark fact is that the mandates imposed by Pritzker are what makes ruined Illinois different from prosperous Florida and the other states that stayed open or opened earlier without *any* of the dire COVID health consequences that were predicted.

In fact, despite all the Pritzker mandates, Illinois had the *fifth highest number of COVID cases in the U.S. and eighth highest number of deaths*. In other words, Pritzker's rules did *nothing* to make Illinois deal with COVID better than *any* other state.

Illinois did far worse than many of them.

At the same time, he destroyed thousands of businesses and *lost more than one hundred thousand Illinois jobs*.

Why was Pritzker stubborn? Why didn't he look at what was working in some of the rest of America and do the same?

Was it because he has never had to live in the real world like the rest of us? Because he never ran a business that prospered because it met the needs of its customers? Or was it because he cared more about his political party's power, its financial benefits from being in charge, than the extreme pain of the citizens he was supposed to be caring for and representing as governor?

Many Democrats used to rightly claim to belong to the "Working Man's Party," the middle-class knight, the friend of struggling families. Pritzker has proved that my old Democratic Party is gone, replaced by uncaring boss rule. It's time for Democratic and Independent voters to see that.