2026 CATHOLIC VOTER GUIDE · ILLINOIS · LETTERS FROM LEO

Governor

JB Pritzker seeks a third term in a rematch of 2022. Rated Solid Democratic by Cook Political Report; a Sept. 30–Oct. 1 PPP (D) poll showed Pritzker 54%, Bailey 34%.



Darren Bailey

REPUBLICAN · CHALLENGER

Farmer and former state senator; 2022 Republican nominee for governor.



JB Pritzker

DEMOCRAT · INCUMBENT

Governor of Illinois since 2019; businessman and investor.

Where the candidates stand on the issues Pope Leo XIV has raised, in their own words and votes. Bracketed numbers link to sources. We do not rate, score, or endorse candidates.

WAR & PEACE

POPE LEO XIV *Leo invited citizens of every country involved in the war with Iran to contact their leaders and members of Congress "to work for peace and to reject war and violence."* Remarks at Castel Gandolfo, Apr. 7, 2026 (Vatican News via The Good Newsroom)

DARREN BAILEY

No public position found.

JB PRITZKER

Blames "Trump's Iran war" and trade orders for high diesel costs.

[1] NPR Illinois: 6 takeaways from the Pritzker–Bailey debate

AI & THE DIGNITY OF WORK

POPE LEO XIV *"No one can be reduced to productivity, to cognitive performance, or to mere data."* Magnifica Humanitas presentation, May 25, 2026

DARREN BAILEY

No public position found.

JB PRITZKER

Says he fought to put the right to join a union in the Illinois constitution and cites "nation-leading clean energy and AI legislation."

[1] Ballotpedia: JB Pritzker (2026 Candidate Connection survey)

THE POOR & THE SAFETY NET

POPE LEO XIV *The preferential choice for the poor is "a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society."* Dilexi Te, Oct. 4, 2025

DARREN BAILEY

Backed the federal freeze of about $1 billion in Illinois social service and child care funds — "fair for any administration to demand accountability" — and says lawmakers should "reprioritize spending" to help hospitals.

[1] Chicago Tribune via Yahoo: Bailey distances himself from Trump, defends immigration crackdown
[2] Capitol News Illinois: Pritzker, Bailey meet in only governor debate

JB PRITZKER

Cites raising the minimum wage to $15 and erasing over $1 billion in medical debt; says "I've been fighting for universal health care" and blames federal cuts for hospital strains.

[1] Ballotpedia: JB Pritzker (2026 Candidate Connection survey)
[2] NPR Illinois: 6 takeaways from the Pritzker–Bailey debate

ELECTIONS & CIVIC LIFE

POPE LEO XIV *Authentic democracy, "far from being a mere procedure," "recognizes the dignity of every person and calls each citizen to participate responsibly in the pursuit of the common good."* Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Apr. 9, 2026

DARREN BAILEY

No public position found.

JB PRITZKER

Lists protecting voting rights as a priority. In April 2026 said Trump could send ICE agents to polling places and urged voters to "go with purpose and push them out of the way."

[1] Ballotpedia: JB Pritzker (2026 Candidate Connection survey)
[2] Patch: Pritzker on ICE agents and the polls

LIFE OF THE UNBORN

POPE LEO XIV *Abortion "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life."* Address to the Diplomatic Corps, Jan. 9, 2026

DARREN BAILEY

Calls himself pro-life but in 2026 urged withdrawal of a GOP bill penalizing women: "Criminalizing women in these situations doesn't solve problems." His campaign says he is not seeking to restrict abortion access in Illinois.

[1] Capitol Fax: Bailey denounces Anderson abortion bill; Tracy opposes penalties
[2] Chicago Sun-Times: Bailey's running mate and abortion

JB PRITZKER

Cites signing a law guaranteeing Illinois women's right to reproductive care before Roe was overturned.

[1] Ballotpedia: JB Pritzker (2026 Candidate Connection survey)

THE DEATH PENALTY

POPE LEO XIV *Someone who opposes abortion but favors the death penalty "is not really pro-life."* AP via PBS NewsHour, Sept. 30, 2025

DARREN BAILEY

No public position found.

JB PRITZKER

No public position found.

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

POPE LEO XIV *"Defending human life also includes welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

DARREN BAILEY

Defends federal immigration enforcement and blames state sanctuary policies: "None of this should be happening if state government would be upholding the law." His platform calls for repealing sanctuary laws.

[1] Chicago Tribune via Yahoo: Bailey distances himself from Trump, defends immigration crackdown
[2] Capitol Fax: Bailey, Pritzker comment on Minnesota ICE shooting

JB PRITZKER

Launched the Illinois Accountability Commission to collect evidence on federal agents' "unlawful behavior" during immigration operations; said ICE agents are "clearly not trained."

[1] Ballotpedia: JB Pritzker (2026 Candidate Connection survey)
[2] Capitol Fax: Bailey, Pritzker comment on Minnesota ICE shooting

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY & EDUCATION

POPE LEO XIV *Religious freedom is "the right of every person to worship according to conscience."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

DARREN BAILEY

Pledges to "empower parents to make the best choices for their children"; he and his wife founded a pre-K–12 Christian school in southern Illinois.

[1] Bailey for Illinois: Issues
[2] Ballotpedia: Darren Bailey

JB PRITZKER

Has not decided whether to opt Illinois into the federal tax-credit scholarship program; his office says he will decide based on "what best supports working families."

[1] Chalkbeat Chicago: Pressure builds on Pritzker over federal education tax credits

CARE FOR CREATION

POPE LEO XIV *“We cannot love God, whom we cannot see, while despising his creatures.”* AP, Oct. 1, 2025

DARREN BAILEY

Opposes state laws phasing out fossil-fuel power by 2045 — “We’re phasing out reliable energy far too soon” — and calls for repealing energy efficiency laws.

[1] Capitol News Illinois: Pritzker, Bailey meet in only governor debate
[2] Chicago Tribune via Yahoo: Bailey distances himself from Trump, defends immigration crackdown

JB PRITZKER

Joined the U.S. Climate Alliance; says “We should have no more data centers, unless they bring their own clean energy,” and has paused state data-center tax incentives.

[1] Ballotpedia: JB Pritzker (2026 Candidate Connection survey)
[2] NPR Illinois: 6 takeaways from the Pritzker–Bailey debate

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