

To my fellow Illinoisans and Americans,

It is interesting writing a letter for 250 years from now. I think of what America and the land we now call Illinois was like 250 years ago and wonder how much it will have changed by the time you read this. I do know this: Illinois has and continues to be in the middle of the American story and I am confident that will still be the case in 2276.

From the Illinois Confederation, Kickapoo, Ho-Chunk, Sac and Fox, and Potawatomi nations, to its admission to the Union in 1818, to its role in ending slavery and fighting fascism in Europe, Illinois has always been at the forefront of American history. Our farms fuel the nation, our companies power the economy, and our universities drive innovation and help create tomorrow's leaders. I truly could spend the rest of this letter talking about all the things that make Illinois the greatest state in our union, but there's one aspect that I want to focus on – our people. Nearly every day as Governor I am left in awe at the people of Illinois and their stories. From Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama, Jane Addams, Buddy Guy, and Ida B. Wells, to Chief Obwaandi'eyaag, and Pope Leo XIV, Illinois has no shortage of people who have shaped the nation's history.

At the end of the day though, it is the everyday Illinoisan that inspires me the most. It's the farmer in Sumner who tends the same land as their ancestors, the small business owner in Carbondale, the immigrant family in Chicago, the teacher in Rockford. All of these people to make Illinois what it is today, and they will shape what our state is for the next 250 years.

As we fight today to preserve the rights we hold dear, I am reminded of a quote from President Lincoln's first inauguration, "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people?" I have faith in the people of Illinois because I have seen first-hand their fortitude and power in standing against injustice and fighting for their neighbor. Illinois has always played a leading role in bridging the fractures that emerge in a democracy, and I am immensely proud to continue that work with my fellow Illinoisans.

My hope for the next 250 years, is that we as a state and nation learn to embrace the most risky of emotions – love. Love for country and its people, but also an expectation that your country loves you back. A love that manifests in respect for all people, and a lifting up of those who for so long have been marginalized by society. A love that I see constantly in the people of this great state, and a love that we as Illinoisans are ready to share with America. Love is the greatest of weapons in the fight against injustice and I'm ready for that fight.

With abundant hope for the future,

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker