

# A National Model For Freedom And Opportunity

An Interview with The Honorable Mike Braun, Governor of Indiana

**EDITORS' NOTE** Mike Braun is the 52nd Governor of Indiana and a conservative outsider who spent his career as a main street entrepreneur building a business and creating thousands of good-paying Hoosier jobs before being elected to the U.S. Senate in 2018. After graduating from Jasper High School in 1972 as class president and a letterman in football, basketball, and track, he attended Wabash College from which he graduated summa cum laude with a degree in economics



The Hon. Mike Braun

and as student body president. After college, he married Maureen, his high school sweetheart, and the two moved to Boston where he attended Harvard Business School and earned his MBA. After business school, while the majority of his classmates took high-paying jobs on Wall Street, he chose to move back to Jasper to raise a family and build a career. After a few years working for a national kitchen cabinet company in Jasper, in 1981 Braun got the entrepreneurial itch and took over a struggling farm equipment manufacturer called Meyer Body. Over the next 20 years, he lived the hardscrabble existence of a small business owner with 15 employees and his office in a used mobile home. In the early 2000s, Meyer began to grow into a regional company and over the next 15 years grew into a national company that currently employs thousands of Americans with locations in 38 states. Braun began his public service as a member of the local School Board for ten years and then as a State Representative from 2014-2017. He has been a conservative voice for Hoosiers since his historic victory in the 2018 U.S. Senate election, having led over 40 bills into law and was named the most effective first-term Republican Senator. He was also consistently ranked as one of the most conservative members of the United States Senate, earning endorsements from Americans for Prosperity and CPAC, and maintains excellent ratings from the NRA, Family Research Council, National Right to Life, and Susan B. Anthony List.

## Will you discuss your career journey?

After college, my wife Maureen and I decided to move back to our hometown – Jasper, Indiana – and start businesses. It was the most important decision we ever made, and over the next 37 years I built a company from

a small hardscrabble business into a national industry leader.

## What attracted you to public service?

I made the decision to leave my company to run for U.S. Senate frankly because I was fed up with business-as-usual in Washington. I knew that if more people from the business world ran for office, signed a term limits pledge, and voted against big spending packages, we'd instantly get a better product for the American people.

My decision to go back to Indiana to serve as Governor was all about my belief that Indiana should be a national model for freedom and opportunity, and the best place to start a business and raise a family like I did. That was the guiding vision for my campaign, and I'm honored to have the chance to put these ideas into action.

## Will you highlight the priorities for your administration?

My administration is laser-focused on getting results on kitchen table issues that

matter to Hoosier families. We're bringing the breakneck pace of industry to state government with a focus on efficiency and accountability: cutting 25 percent of all regulations, and making 5 percent spending cuts across the board to become leaner and more productive.

We've already secured major victories for my Freedom and Opportunity agenda on healthcare price transparency, education choice, public safety, and government efficiency.

My administration's priorities are best exemplified by our new approach to economic development, focused entirely on two "North Star" metrics: wage growth and new job opportunities for Hoosiers.

Across the board, we're taking an entrepreneurial approach and shaking up business as usual, and we're already starting to see that approach pay off.

## How do you describe Indiana's strengths?

Indiana's biggest strength is its people: Hoosiers are good-hearted, hard-working, entrepreneurial people, and anyone who has spent time here will tell you "Hoosier hospitality" is more than just a slogan.



Governor Braun speaks with a team member at Meyer Distributing, the company he built for 37 years from his hometown of Jasper



**“We’ve already secured major victories for my Freedom and Opportunity agenda on healthcare price transparency, education choice, public safety, and government efficiency.”**



*Governor Braun and Purdue President Mung Chiang (fourth and fifth from right) break ground for Purdue's Academic Success Building in Indianapolis*

We're also an economic powerhouse. Our gross domestic product has grown 9.3 percent since the pandemic – more than any other state in the Midwest and double or triple our neighboring states.

Indiana's powerful manufacturing sector has made it a national leader in automotive production, and our world-class universities like Indiana University and Purdue make us a destination for companies seeking top-of-the-line talent.

Our central location as the crossroads of America makes us central to so much of American commerce, and by investing in our

workforce and leading the way on cutting-edge technology like nuclear energy generation, semiconductor fabrication, and EV batteries, we're setting up Indiana to be the destination to start, scale, or expand a business.

#### **How important is a strong public/private partnership in Indiana?**

As a former business owner myself, I approach the productive side of the economy – the private sector – as a peer rather than as a politician. Partnerships between job creators and our state government are some of the most exciting things we're working on here in Indiana.

Recently we rolled out our new diploma system, where students have a clear path they can follow to be automatically accepted to Indiana's great universities, or a career path heavy on hands-on experience where students can get a foot in the door immediately upon graduation with Indiana's top employers. We developed this diploma system together with Hoosier employers, because we have over 100,000 jobs that need to be filled today.

It's important to have business partners that bring you solutions rather than problems. That's what I see as my role for businesses investing in Indiana.

#### **Will you discuss your administration's focus and commitment to transparency?**

Transparency is non-negotiable. I believe government would be a better steward of the people's money if more public business was conducted in the cold light of day. I've taken major transparency steps in my short time as Governor, including major audits of our healthcare spending and executive orders mandating that our state's economic development entities file financial transparency reports, even retroactively.

#### **What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?**

I recently gave a commencement address where I encouraged the graduates to really think about what is important to them in life. It can be easy for young people to put their life on autopilot and prioritize what the world tells them to, but then it's easy to end up focusing your energy on a job title or a bigger paycheck when what really mattered to you may have been family time or entrepreneurship.

The ability to take calculated risk is the biggest difference-maker in life, and when you know what really matters to you, it becomes easier to decide when the time is right to stick your neck out. ●



*Governor Braun joins the CFA Society Investment Forum at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway for a fireside chat with high-profile professionals from across the state and country to discuss popular investment topics*