

A Democrat's letter to Bruce Rauner

from Raja Krishnamoorthi

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Dear Mr. Rauner:

I'm a Democrat, and I supported Pat Quinn in the election. That said, I wish you the best. To that end, I respectfully submit 10 thoughts for your consideration.

1. Don't mimic your Republican brethren. It will be tempting to employ the Republican playbook used by Scott Walker in Wisconsin or others to govern Illinois. Don't do it. They created a toxic brew of partisanship that distracts their attention. You were elected to craft thoughtful economic solutions for the state, not to employ a right-wing agenda in Illinois.

2. Don't demonize labor. One-sixth of Illinois workers are covered by collective bargaining contracts, and an even higher proportion of households have union members. In my experience, union leaders are respected by their members. Sit down with them and attempt to find common ground where possible. Reach out with an open hand, not a clenched fist.

3. Raise the minimum wage. Given your changing positions on this particular issue, the public wants to know whether you understood the recent referendum results in which Illinoisans spoke loud and clear (by a 2-1 margin) that they want an increase now. The vast majority of Illinoisans have spoken positively on this issue. Show them that you're listening.

4. Don't engage in culture wars. Most Illinoisans are progressive on social issues. Defer to their wishes, avoid derogatory comments and focus on the economic challenges facing the state. That will keep you plenty busy.

5. Work with local leaders. Toni Preckwinkle, Rahm Emanuel and most mayors face fiscal challenges that track many of your own. At the same time, many of them have found creative ways to cooperate, attract new businesses and cater to increasingly diverse populations. Help them, and copy what works.

6. Work with House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton. The media will be following your relationship with these leaders very closely. Every missed phone call will receive outsized scrutiny (as you already know). In addition, while you won on Election Night, arguably so did both of these individuals; indeed, Madigan did not lose a single member of his caucus. Consult with them closely if you are to get anything done.

7. Don't obfuscate on the state's finances. The fiscal problems facing the state are well known. That said, come clean on what needs to be done, and be specific. Your statements during the campaign were extremely vague. As governor you will have to be clear about your plans now so the public can weigh in and plan for the future.

8. Work with the president and congressional delegation. Even though you won on Election Night, Dick Durbin won by a much larger margin. The same goes for various thoughtful congressional Democrats (such as my own congresswoman, Tammy Duckworth). The president is also well-liked in Illinois, and he has two years left in office. Illinois is large, but we do not always receive our fair share of federal resources because our leadership is often divided. When we all row together, good things happen.

9. Be Illinois' cheerleader-in-chief. You must champion all things Illinois and help bolster our brand. That means talking up its workers, businesses, schools, farmers and culture. Talk up everything good about our state. We all win.

10. Embrace the future. Illinois is becoming more diverse, more tolerant and even more green. For instance, in the solar sector, Illinois is viewed as a huge, untapped market for the solar revolution sweeping the world. These issues do not fit well within the Republican agenda; however, they do make Illinois a global destination for human capital and innovation.

Mr. Rauner, you have been given a grand responsibility. Observing the rules above will put us in a better state.

- Raja Krishnamoorthi is an engineer, tech company president and former deputy treasurer of Illinois. He lives in Hoffman Estates.