



**PRESS RELEASE from the
LIBERTY JUSTICE CENTER**

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Republicans sue over ban on gatherings

CHICAGO (June 16, 2020) — The Illinois Republican Party and three local Republican party committees have filed a federal lawsuit against Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker over his ban on gatherings of more than 10 people.

Last week the governor marched in and endorsed large-scale rallies with crowds numbering in the thousands, yet other political speech groups including the Republicans are banned from gathering in groups of more than 10 under Pritzker's Executive Order. Attorneys are asking the court to take immediate action to allow the party to operate in-person events in the run-up to the November 2020 election.

The lawsuit, *Illinois Republican Party v. Pritzker*, was filed on June 15, 2020, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. The Illinois Republican Party, Schaumburg Township Republican Organization, Northwest Side GOP Club and Will County Republican Central Committee are represented by attorneys from the Liberty Justice Center, the Chicago-based public interest law firm that won a landmark First Amendment case at the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018.

Under the state's lengthy, successive executive orders, Illinoisans cannot gather in groups greater than 10. Yet last week the governor personally participated in rallies with crowds numbering in the thousands as well as other gatherings in which people were not socially distanced. Pritzker defended the large gatherings, telling the Chicago Tribune: "It's important to stand up for people's First Amendment rights ... It's important to have the governor stand with them on issues that are important."

The lawsuit highlights the selectivity and arbitrary nature of Pritzker's Executive Order regarding group gatherings. Some groups can exercise their First Amendment rights, while others face restrictions and the threat of criminal penalties for violating the governor's order. It also calls into question his legal authority to issue a second, third and fourth disaster declaration after his initial declaration in March.

"The governor's actions are both hypocritical and illegal. The First Amendment applies equally to everyone in Illinois — not only people whose political views are supported by Gov. Pritzker," said **Patrick Hughes, president and co-founder of the Liberty Justice Center**. "The governor claims to believe that the freedom of assembly is such a critical right that he not only allowed last week's rallies, he even walked in one in violation of his own executive order. The governor must be stopped from depriving the Republican Party and its local groups of the same right."

While Pritzker grants carve-outs to organizations he likes, other groups are limited to gatherings of 10 people. For fear of criminal penalty, the Illinois Republican Party held a statewide convention virtually on June 12-13 — over videoconference — instead of in person.

"Last week the governor's double standard was on full display as he defended, joined and endorsed large gatherings that violate his very own Executive Orders," said **Tim Schneider, chairman of the Illinois**

Republican Party. “It’s clear the governor keeps one set of rules for the people in politically advantageous photo ops and another for the rest of Illinois.”

A copy of the case is available here: <https://libertyjusticecenter.org/media/illinois-republican-party-v-pritzker>

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The Liberty Justice Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-interest litigation center that represents clients at no charge and was founded to fight against political privilege. The most recent example of the Liberty Justice Center’s national success in this arena is its 2018 U.S. Supreme Court victory in *Janus v. AFSCME*. Beyond its work in the *Janus* case, the Liberty Justice Center’s team of talented, liberty-minded attorneys also fight to protect economic liberty, private property rights, free speech, school choice and other fundamental rights. The Liberty Justice Center pursues its goals through strategic, precedent-setting litigation to revitalize constitutional restraints on government power and protections for individual rights. Learn more about the Liberty Justice Center at LibertyJusticeCenter.org.