



Rauner's charitable giving veers left and right

By John O' Connor

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SPRINGFIELD — Republican governor candidate Bruce Rauner and his wife, Diana, have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to protect abortion rights and the environment — traditionally seen as liberal causes.

Rauner has given similar amounts to groups that advocate the privatization of Social Security and question climate change — traditionally conservative causes that Rauner says he does not support.

In his first bid for public office, Rauner and his views are far less known to voters than those of his opponent, Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn. But the private equity investor has a long scorecard as a philanthropist, activist and political donor that sheds light on his views on particular issues, if not his overall philosophy and what he might do as chief executive.

Records examined by The Associated Press found that over the last two decades the Rauner Family Foundation has given more than \$19 million to charitable and philanthropic causes, many with political agendas, on both the left and right.

The Rauners and a political committee he formed also have given more than \$15 million to political candidates on both sides, but mostly to local Republicans since Rauner got serious about running for governor last year.

The AP looked at Rauner's major avenues for giving, although perhaps not all, and found a mixed record that might confound attempts by Quinn and his allies to paint Rauner as too conservative for the normally blue state. But some of his individual donations raise questions about his campaign's attempt to portray him as a moderate.

Adam Bonica, a Stanford University political scientist who created a database measuring ideology based on giving, said Rauner's record appears to coincide with what one might expect from a moderate Republican.

"As for whether the charitable giving is an authentic expression of his preferences, your guess is as good as mine," Bonica said. "All I know is that money talks and it more often than not is an informative signal."

Rauner's campaign says his giving reflects someone open to new ideas who will work with anyone "willing to fight for lower taxes, better schools, clean government and a booming economy," spokesman Mike Schrimpf said in an email. In particular, supporters note his extensive giving toward school reform.

But, Schrimpf said, "contributions to these groups does not mean he endorses every one of their policy positions."

Quinn's campaign and an anti-Rauner political action committee have focused on Rauner's most conservative gifts, publicizing a list of contributions to not-for-profit groups, think tanks and candidates that they claim show "extreme right-wing" tendencies and, in other cases, an "anti-women" agenda.

An "Illinois Freedom" PAC news release highlighted more than \$2 million in giving to what it said were tea party groups and organizations affiliated with the right-wing Koch brothers, including \$700,000 to Donors Trust.

They highlighted \$1 million to organizations that oppose gay rights, including \$400,000 to the Illinois-based Family Taxpayers Foundation; \$10,000 to the Cato Institute, which advocates privatizing Social Security for younger workers; and \$50,000 to the Heartland Institute, which rejects the idea that humans are causing climate change.

The contributions "speak louder than his rhetoric on the campaign trail," Illinois Freedom spokesman Neal Waltmire said. "Before he knew voters were watching, the real Rauner ... funneled money to right-wing lobbyists."

The Rauner campaign rejected that portrayal. Schrimpf said Rauner believes "humans have had some impact on climate change," despite the Heartland donation. He said Rauner opposes privatizing Social Security, despite the Cato gift. On gay rights, Rauner won't say whether he personally supports gay marriage, noting Illinois adopted it as law last year and that overturning it isn't a priority. He said earlier this year that the only way he would act to undo the law is if voters pushed it in a ballot measure.

As for women's issues, Rauner's critics point to money he has donated to anti-abortion Republicans such as former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The campaign says both Rauners support abortion rights. The Rauner Family Foundation gave \$510,000 from 1999 to 2012 to the American Civil Liberties Union's Roger Baldwin Foundation — Illinois litigators for abortion-rights laws. ACLU spokesman Ed Yohnka noted that Diana Rauner — who has said she is a Democrat — has been the liaison on the family's donations.

Rauner has given more than \$650,000 to conservation and environmental groups, including the Nature Conservancy and Natural Resources Defense Council. Schrimpf said the Rauners "don't believe conservation is a partisan issue" and that Rauner supports "responsible" conservation and energy development.

Karen Page Winterich, a Penn State University marketing professor who has written on how ideology affects charitable giving, said Rauner's mixed record could benefit him in a moderate or left-leaning state.

"It shows that he's not completely close-minded," Winterich said, "and only fighting along political lines."

Associated Press researchers Monika Mathur and Judith Ausuebel in New York contributed.