

## **Jerry Brown Profile**

**Hypothetical Background:** Jerry Brown will be inducted into the California Hall of Fame.

Jerry Brown, the longest-serving governor in the history of California, will be inducted into the California Hall of Fame on Friday to recognize his transformative leadership and role in shaping California into a modern nation-state.

Edmund G. Brown Jr., also known as Jerry Brown, served as the 34th governor from 1975 to 1983 and the 39th governor of California from 2011 to 2019. He was once one of the youngest governors of California and later became the oldest. He served a total of 16 years and 5 days in office.

The New York Times proclaimed in 1976, “Brown is not a particularly likable young man...” he asks hostile and irreverent questions, yet he was once one of the most popular governors in California. “Humble, egotistical, brash, and diffident” were ways many would describe Brown, wrote Alan Ehrenhalt, an editor from *Governing* magazine.

Brown was born on April 7, 1938, in San Francisco and is the son of former governor Pat Brown. Being the son of a former governor, Brown was often attacked by opponents when running for office with claims that he benefited from the legacy of his last name.

A few years before that election, Brown ran for the Los Angeles Community College District. With that decision, his father’s old campaign advisor, Joe Cerrell, questioned his actions, according to Richard Reeves, a New York Times writer and social scientist, who interviewed Brown in 1975. Brown, however, wanted to prove himself to the public.

“I want to make a name for myself,” Brown told Reeves in the interview. “So I want to run for something where I’ll win and win big.”

With those words, Brown successfully defeated 133 candidates in 1969 and was elected to the Los Angeles Community College District Board of Trustees. In 1970, he was then elected California Secretary of State, serving as the 23rd Secretary of State of California.

Brown was later elected governor in 1974 and began his service in 1975. After taking office, he gained a reputation as a fiscal conservative. Brown refused many of the privileges of the office, from governor’s mansions to limousines. He rented apartments in downtown Sacramento, walked to work, and drove a powder blue Plymouth.

Gray Davis, the 37th Governor of California and Brown’s chief of staff during his first two terms, recalled in a foreword for an article published by the University of California, Berkeley: “No California governor has ever been driven around in a powder blue Plymouth. I felt beyond

embarrassed.” But, the public took pride that their governor had chosen a less expensive car as his official vehicle.

During Brown’s tenure, California’s new jobs increased by 1.9 million, which was almost double the national rate, according to the Governor of California’s Archive. His first term as governor presided over an era of economic expansion. He eliminated capital gains taxes for many small businesses, abolished the business inventory tax, and indexed personal income taxes to inflation. Brown’s actions also enacted the nation’s first energy efficiency standards.

Brown, said Davis, understands the power of his frugality to fight off excessive demands in the budget. After a morning meeting three months into Brown’s administration, Davis insisted on repairing a 10-inch hole in a rug adjacent to his desk. Surprisingly, Brown refused the spending proposal.

“That hole will save the state at least \$500 million,” Brown answered, “because legislators cannot come down and pound on my desk demanding lots of money for their pet programs while looking at a hole in my rug!”

During Brown’s service, he opposed an \$11,000 increase in his salary of \$49,100. His actions weren’t just directed at himself, he also ordered a 7 percent cut in his staff’s salaries, which were the only pay scales he had control over. Following these actions, conservatives praised Brown. Yet, being the liberal person he is, Brown does not equate social justice with material equality.

“I don’t believe that janitors should be paid more than judges,” Brown told Reeves during their interview. “But I think the gap between them is too great now. If work is interesting and challenging, people should be paid less. Those are the people who get great psychic rewards. Their lives are better because they have the privilege of interesting work... I’m trying to put things like this in the public domain. I want these ideas discussed. Let people react. See what happens.”

While Brown was driven in philosophical convictions, he also was deeply involved in civil rights movements and fought against crime. He enacted hundreds of tough anti-crime measures, including the “Use a Gun, Go to Prison Law,” as stated in the California Governor Archive. He established and funded the Career Criminal Prosecution Program and many other initiatives to address various crimes.

In 1976, after serving two terms as governor, Brown ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination. He then made an unsuccessful run for the U.S. Senate that same year. After those attempts, Brown decided to travel abroad.

When Brown returned to California, he served as the sixth chairman of the California Democratic Party and once again ran for president in 1992. His campaign accepted only donations under \$100 and was widely seen as fringe, according to Mike Lux, Special Assistant to Bill Clinton. Although Brown did not win the nomination, he defied expectations by winning seven state primaries and becoming a serious threat to Clinton. Lux said Brown's ratio of votes to money raised was among the best of any candidate in the race.

In 1999, Brown became the mayor of Oakland by running against 11 other candidates. He was later reelected with 64% of the vote in 2002. Throughout his service, Brown created new housing units for more than 10,000 people and later founded the Oakland School for the Arts and the Oakland Military Institute. These schools became the best-performing schools in Oakland.

Brown was elected governor of California once again in 2010. During his final term from 2011 to 2019, he cut the state's budget deficit and improved California's credit rating. Davis called Brown "the best and possibly the only leader" capable of pulling the state out of the crisis it faced in 2011. Under Brown's leadership, California rebounded to become the fifth-largest economy in the world. By the time Brown walked out of the governor's office in January 2019, only the United States, China, Japan, and Germany had larger economies.