

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

| | | |
|----------------|---|---------------------|
| THOMAS DEVORE, |) | |
| |) | |
| Plaintiff, |) | 2021L 000184 |
| |) | |
| VS. |) | NO. 21-L-_____ |
| |) | |
| J.B. PRITZKER, |) | JURY TRIAL DEMANDED |
| |) | |
| Defendant. |) | |

COMPLAINT

NOW COMES the Plaintiff, THOMAS DEVORE, by and through his attorneys, Polinske & Associates, P.C., and Brian L. Polinske, and in support of this Complaint states the following:

The Parties

1. The Plaintiff is an individual residing in Bond County, Illinois and conducting business in Sangamon County, Illinois.
2. The Defendant is the governor of the State of Illinois, who upon information and believe maintains an official residence and business office within Sangamon County, Illinois.

Jurisdiction and Venue

3. The alleged action which gives rise to this action occurred on October 21, 2021 on a “capitolfax.com” press release which was broadcast by the Defendant to members of the general public in the State of Illinois. The video broadcast was published to members of the general public in Sangamon County, Illinois, as well as other counties. Therefore, venue is proper per 735 ILCS 5/2-101.

4. The Plaintiff is a business owner (lawyer) who regularly conducts business throughout the State of Illinois.

5. Defendant's actions, as alleged, constitute the commission of a tortious act against the Plaintiff. 735 ILCS 5/2-209(a)(2) confers jurisdiction upon this court.

Factual Allegations

6. On October 21, 2021 the defendant conducted a press conference wherein he was questioned about Plaintiff's handling of a lawsuit against 145 school districts over the mask mandates. His response was "Well, you know, he's a grifter who is taking money from parents who are being taken advantage of." This response referred to the Plaintiff. He went on to state "So I hope that the, you know, the reign of grifting and terror that he is trying to bring about in the school districts will come to an[d] (sic) end." His comments were referencing a class action lawsuit recently filed by Plaintiff against various defendants. See attached Exhibit 1.

7. Allegations that the Plaintiff is a "grifter" accuse the Plaintiff of being engaged in acquiring money or property illicitly. See Merriam-Webster definition supra "1. Grift (verb). To obtain (money or property) illicitly (as in a confidence game).

8. The defendant's allegations that the Plaintiff is taking money from parents and taking advantage of his clients imputes that the Plaintiff lacks integrity in performing his duties as lawyer for some of his clients. Furthermore, the allegations impute the plaintiff lacks ability to perform his duties as lawyer.

9. The defendant's published statement was broadcast on Facebook and Captolfax.com. Such publication was transmitted to the general public viewing the broadcast. The publication was also reduced to written format and published to the general public. See Exhibit 1.

10. Said broadcast was published to persons in Madison County, Illinois.
11. The allegation that Plaintiff was a “grifter” imply that Plaintiff was illicitly taking money from clients whom he represents in pending litigation. See Exhibit 1.
12. Plaintiff is not a grifter nor is he engaged in any behavior that would lead any reasonable person to believe he was illicitly taking money from clients. Nor would any reasonable person believe he was acting in any manner which could be construed as a reign of “terror” by simply complying with lawyerly duties and filing a lawsuit on his clients’ behalf.

COUNT I
Defamation Per Se
Versus Defendant Pritzker

13. In support of Count I of this Complaint the Plaintiff restates and realleges paragraphs 1 through 11 *infra*.
14. Thus, Defendant’s statement:
 - a. imputed the Plaintiff had committed a criminal action;
 - b. imputed that Plaintiff was unable to perform or lacks integrity in performing his employment duties as an attorney;
 - c. imputed that Plaintiff lacked ability or otherwise prejudiced the Plaintiff in his profession;
15. Defendant’s statements are therefore actionable defamation *per se*.
16. Actionable defamation *per se* does not require Plaintiff to actually prove damage to his reputation because this type of defamation is so obviously and materially harmful to the Plaintiff that injury to his reputation may be presumed. *Byson v. News America Publications, Inc.*, 174 Ill.2d 77, 87 (1996).

WHEREFORE, the Plaintiff prays for judgment in his favor, an award of damages in excess of \$50,000, and for all other relief to which he may be entitled.

Respectfully submitted,
Polinske & Associates, P.C.,


Attorney for Plaintiff

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SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

THOMAS DEVORE,

Plaintiff,

VS.

J.B. PRITZKER,

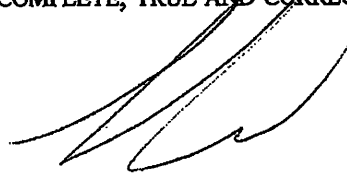
Defendant.

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NO. 21-L-_____

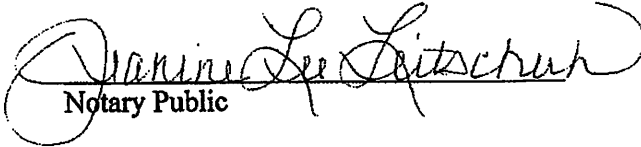
VERIFICATION

I, THOMAS DEVORE, HEREBY DECLARE UNDER OATH AND THE PENALTY OF PERJURY THAT THE STATEMENTS OF FACT IN THE COMPLAINT ARE FULL, COMPLETE, TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF.



Thomas Devore

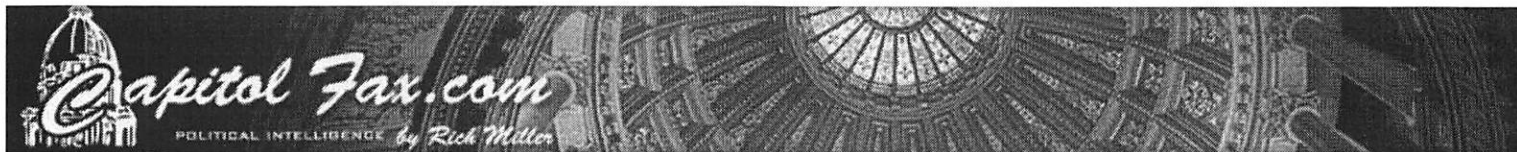
Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29th day of October, 2021


Notary Public



My Commission Expires:

3-25-25



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[Pritzker calls DeVore a "grifter"](#)

Thursday, Oct 21, 2021



* [Background is here](#) if you need it. Gov. Pritzker was asked today about attorney Tom DeVore's handling of a lawsuit against 145 school districts over the [mask mandate...](#)

Well, you know, he's a grifter who is taking money from parents who are being taken advantage of. This is, we are trying to keep kids and parents and grandparents and teachers and everybody that's in the community of the school safe. That's my job as governor, that's our job as elected officials.

And I have to say that, you know that going around and suing school districts and the governor and the Attorney General and everybody else in order to keep people less safe, that makes zero sense to me. So we're gonna push back as hard as we can, certainly we'll be in court.

The Attorney General, I just want to praise him and his staff. He has done an amazing job. You don't want to spend all your time doing this, there are an awful lot of things that the Attorney General's Office does to protect consumers out there. But the more you have to send lawyers out to fight these ridiculous lawsuits that are frankly making people less safe, that are harming our children, then you know, the less you can do to really lift up the entire state.

So I hope that the, you know, the reign of grifting and terror that he is trying to bring about in the school districts will come to and end.

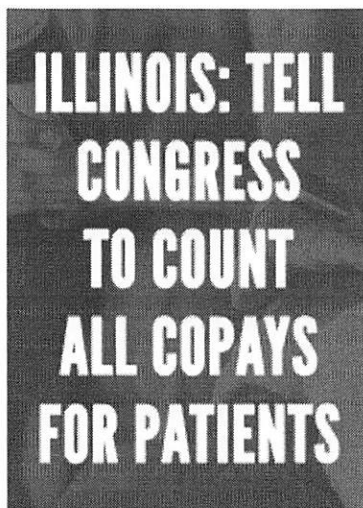
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