

Eric Greitens

Eric Robert Greitens (born April 10, 1974) is an American politician, author, and former Navy SEAL currently serving as the 56th Governor of Missouri, since January 2017.^[1] At age 42, he is the second youngest incumbent Governor in the United States, after New Hampshire's Chris Sununu.

Born and raised in St. Louis, Greitens graduated from Parkway North High School before attending Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. After attending Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, Greitens later became a Navy SEAL, serving four tours of duty around the world and commanding an Al-Qaeda targeting cell. Following his military service, Greitens founded The Mission Continues, a non-profit organization serving veterans which he led until 2014.^[2] His work led Time Magazine to recognize him on their list of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2013.^[3]

Previously identifying with the Democratic Party,^[4] he announced his candidacy for governor as a Republican, campaigning on a platform centered around ethics reform. After defeating three other candidates in the Republican primaries, he faced state Attorney General and former Republican Chris Koster who he defeated in the general election on November 8, 2016.

1 Early life

Greitens was born on April 10, 1974 in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of Becky and Rob Greitens. He was raised in a Jewish household.^[5]

Greitens attended Parkway North High School^[6] and was named a member of the 1995 USA Today All-USA Academic Team. Greitens was an Angier B. Duke Scholar^[7] at Duke University where he studied ethics, philosophy, and public policy. After graduating in 1996, he was selected as a Rhodes^{[8][9]} and Truman Scholar.^[10] Greitens attended Lady Margaret Hall, a constituent college of the University of Oxford, where he earned a D.Phil. in development studies in 2000.^[11] Some of his photographs appear in the publication *Children in War: Community Strategies for Healing*.^[12]

Greitens is a former Senior Fellow at the Harry S. Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri.^[13] In the past, Greitens has taught classes at both the University of Missouri in Columbia and at Washington University in St. Louis.

2 Career

2.1 Armed services

Greitens attended Naval Officer Candidate School in January 2001,^{[14][15]} after graduating from Oxford. He began Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S)^{[16][17]} and graduated with Class 237 in Coronado, California, in February 2002.^[18] Greitens was a lieutenant commander in the United States Navy Reserve, and he was deployed four times to Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia. He served as the commander of a joint special operations task unit, commander of a Mark V Special Operations Craft detachment,^[19] and as commander of an al Qaeda targeting cell.^[20] Some of his personal military awards include the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal.

2.2 White House Fellowship

In 2005, he was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as a White House Fellow.^[21] As a White House Fellow, Greitens worked in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)^[22] and developed a new program to assist with the rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Katrina. The program, called the Universities Rebuilding America Partnership (URAP),^[23] was a \$5.6 million effort to engage architecture and engineering students in the continued effort to rebuild New Orleans. During his time as a White House Fellow, he also co-founded the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Program.^[24]

2.3 The Mission Continues

After returning from Iraq, Greitens used his combat pay and the disability pay of two friends to start The Mission Continues. The mission of the organization is to "challenge veterans to serve and lead in communities across America."^[25] It encourages veterans to heal themselves through public service by engaging in volunteer organizations across the country.^{[26][27]} In 2014 the organization won the CLASSY Award, recognizing its effectiveness in active-duty and veteran services.^[28] Greitens stepped down as CEO in July 2014. He resigned the board of

directors in 2015.^{[29][30][31][32][33]}

As CEO of The Mission Continues, Greitens worked without a salary from 2007 to 2008. Later, Greitens received compensation of between \$150,000 and \$200,000.^[34] While Daniel Borochoff, president and founder of CharityWatch (which evaluates nonprofit organizations) remarked that Greitens' wages "seem within a reasonable range," the AP noted that his salary was about one-third higher than the \$131,000 median compensation for chief executives of 237 medium-sized charities in the Midwest.^[35]

2.4 Author

Strength and Compassion is a collection of photographs and essays by Greitens. Published in 2008,^[36] it is Greitens' first book, with a foreword by Rwandan humanitarian Paul Rusesabagina and an introduction by Bobby Muller, co-founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.^[37]

Greitens' second book, *The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy SEAL*, was published on April 11, 2011, by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.^{[38][39]} *The Heart and the Fist* is Greitens' memoir of service, featuring stories of his humanitarian work, his training as a naval officer and SEAL and the military experiences that led him to adopt the paradoxical philosophy that you have to be strong to do good, but you also have to do good to be strong. The book was ranked 10th on the New York Times bestseller list for hard-cover non-fiction in May 2011^{[40][41]} and debuted on The St. Louis Independent Bookstore Alliance Best Sellers list at No. 1 for the week of April 17, 2011.^[42] The following year, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt also released a young adult edition of *The Heart and the Fist* titled *The Warrior's Heart*.^[43]

In March 2015, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt released Greitens' book *Resilience: Hard-Won Wisdom for Living a Better Life*. It draws on letters Greitens wrote to a fellow SEAL struggling with PTSD.^{[44][45]}

As an author and former SEAL, Greitens is represented by the speakers' bureau Leading Authorities. In 2016, an anonymous attack group charged in a YouTube video that he exaggerated his record and was unduly benefiting from his time in the SEALs; Greitens later debunked the claims in a video he uploaded to his channel. The dispute revealed a widening rift among Navy SEALs, provoked by what leaders and many in the ranks described as rampant commercial and personal exploitation of a brotherhood that once prized discretion.^[46]

3 Governor of Missouri

3.1 2016 election

Main article: [Missouri gubernatorial election, 2016](#)

On September 26, 2015, Greitens officially an-



Gubernatorial election campaign logo

nounced his candidacy for Governor of Missouri^[47] as a Republican.^[48]

Greitens won the August 2 Republican primary with 236,250 votes (34.6%), defeating businessman John Brunner's 169,425 (24.8%), Lieutenant Governor Peter Kinder's 141,498 (20.7%), and former Speaker Catherine Hanaway's 136,350 (19.9%).^[49] Greitens faced Democrat Chris Koster in the general election on November 8, 2016 and won with 51.3% of the vote to Koster's 45.4%.

3.2 Tenure



Greitens meeting with Vice President Mike Pence in January 2017

Greitens assumed office as Governor on January 9, 2017. His first two executive orders banned employees in the executive branch from accepting gifts from lobbyists and froze all new regulations through February 2017. Greitens expressed interest in working with the Missouri legislature to pass [Right to Work](#) legislation, which would

allow Missouri workers to hold unionized jobs without having to pay any of the cost of union representation. He also remained opposed to accepting the federal Medicaid expansion in Missouri.^[50]

On February 6, 2017, Greitens signed a bill into law making Missouri the 28th right-to-work state.^[51] In response, unions, who opposed the law, filed a referendum to overturn the law for 2018.^[52]

4 Personal life



Eric and Sheena Greitens dancing at the inaugural ball

Greitens married Sheena Elise Chestnut on August 7, 2011 in Spokane, Washington.^[5] They had lived in St. Louis, Missouri, with their two sons.^{[53][54]} Greitens' first marriage ended in divorce.^[5]

5 Honors and awards

On October 3, 2008, President George W. Bush personally awarded Greitens the President's Volunteer Service Award outside Air Force One at Lambert International Airport in St. Louis, Missouri, for his work at The Mission Continues.^[55]

Greitens was honored with the HOOAH Award, commissioned by the Major George A. Smith Memorial Fund in 2009.^[56] Greitens was named the 2010 Reader of the Year by *Outside* magazine.^[57]

In June 2010, Major League Baseball and *People Magazine* announced Greitens as a winner in *People Magazine's* All-Stars Among Us competition. He was selected to represent the city of St. Louis and the Cardinals at the 2010 All-Star Game in Anaheim, California.^{[58][59]}

On May 20, 2012, Greitens was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Tufts University when he gave the commencement speech at the school's 156th commencement.^[60] That same year, Greitens received the Bronfman Prize, which recognizes dynamic leaders whose innovation and impact serve as inspiration for the next generations.^[61]

In 2014, *Fortune Magazine* featured Greitens as one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders.^[62] On April 18, 2013, *Time* magazine named Greitens to its 2013 one hundred Most Influential People in the World.^[63]

Greitens has appeared on *NBC Nightly News*,^[64] the *Today Show*,^[65] the *Colbert Report*,^[66] and *The Daily Show*.^[67]

6 Publications

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8 External links

- Appearances on C-SPAN
- *Eric Greitens* on *Charlie Rose*
- Works by or about Eric Greitens in libraries (WorldCat catalog)

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