

Jason Rae

Secretary, Democratic National Committee
President & CEO, Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce
Partner, Nation Consulting
Member since August 2019

John and Lori Rae have always been big sports fans—attending all their kids’ high school games and cheering for the Packers on Sundays. Although sports wasn’t his thing, Jason Rae could always count on his parents’ support for all of his endeavors.

“I was into politics and theater from a really young age and my parents put up with all of it, came to all my shows and always supported me in everything I chose to do. They encouraged my brother, sister and me in whatever we were interested in and backed us 110 percent.”

With his parents’ steadfast support, inspired by their work ethic and driven by an innate sense of wanting to make a difference in the world, Jason’s civic engagement and altruism began at an early age, volunteering in his community and dipping his toes into politics. In high school, he was student council president, worked as a page for Sen. Herb Kohl and was senior-class president. Notably, at 17, he became the youngest person ever elected to the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Jason had hoped to be a delegate for the 2004 convention but state party rules had an age limit of 18. Finding no age restrictions to serve a four-year term as a DNC member, Jason filed to run. His opponents for the two-position race were a former state legislator and a firefighter union president, both endorsed by Wisconsin’s Democratic governor.

“I was told, ‘You can run, but you’re going to lose.’ So, I stood at the convention hall door with homemade signs that said ‘A Rae of Hope For the Future’ and I greeted every convention delegate.”



Jason and His Husband Phillip at U.S Capitol in Celebration of 20th Page Anniversary



Jason speaking on a panel discussion about LGBTQ Inclusion

Not only was Jason elected, he got the most votes, and attended the national convention in Boston after all. He was reelected in 2008, 2012 and 2016 and then won the election for DNC Secretary. Although the 2020 convention held here in Milwaukee was mostly virtual due to COVID, calling the rollcall of states is one of Jason’s proudest moments.

After high school, Jason’s dream was to attend George Washington University, but Marquette offered him a full academic scholarship, so Marquette won. The first in his family to attend and graduate from a four-year college, Jason, who majored in political science and history, was awarded an internship his senior year with Nation Consulting, a Wisconsin-based public strategies firm. He never left.

“My entire career has been here and I absolutely love it,” said Jason, who specializes in media relations, non-profit management and local, state and federal campaigns.

According to Jason, the diverse range of work, helping businesses be successful, a busy travel schedule and being able to juggle his multifaceted responsibilities keep him excited and engaged. He is especially proud of his role as founder, president and CEO of the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, which was initially sponsored and supported by his firm. In its third year, it was recognized as the national chamber of the year, the youngest organization to receive this award.



Jason at the White House for 4th of July

Outside of work, Jason, who has been married to Phillip Bailey since 2015, is an avid traveler, who visited all 50 states by the time he was 30. Next on his bucket list is every continent, with three down and four to go. He and Phillip have been active curlers for about five years, a sport Jason learned growing up in Rice Lake, Wisconsin.

“We can get out on the ice for two hours and just have a great time. It’s good for me to put my phone away and not think about work for a while.”

After being recognized as a *Milwaukee Business Journal* 40 Under 40, Jason received congratulations and an invitation to a Rotary meeting by then-president JoAnne Anton. Coincidentally, JoAnne and Jason had already crossed paths when she had accompanied her boss Sen. Kohl to the grand opening of the Boys and Girls Club of Barron County founded by Jason in high school. Then, when Jason was at Marquette, he reached out to JoAnne. She, in turn, encouraged him to intern for Sen. Kohl, which he did throughout college.



Jason with President Biden and Vice President Harris

“At that first Rotary meeting I immediately saw the opportunity to meet new people and make connections and said, ‘I want to be part of this.’ I love the diversity of people, experiences and backgrounds and having conversations with people I normally wouldn’t cross paths with.”

Rotary’s mission jibes with Jason’s altruistic nature.

“I’ve wanted to give back in some way since I was a kid,” said Jason, who serves on numerous civic boards, commissions and committees.

“I’m driven by wanting to have a sense of purpose and am always asking how I can make the world a better place. My parents taught me to work hard and that if you believe in something, never give up. That’s a lesson I’ve lived by.”

Editor’s Note: *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Mary Bolich.