

Franz Josef Strauss was a German politician (CSU) and long-time minister-president of the state of Bavaria. Born in Munich as the second child of a butcher, Strauss studied German letters, history and economics at the University of Munich from 1935 to 1939. In World War II, he served in the German Wehrmacht on the Western and Eastern Fronts. While on furlough, he passed the German state exams to become a teacher. After suffering from severe frostbite on the Eastern Front at the end of 1942, he served as an Offizier für wehrgeistige Führung (political officer) at the antiaircraft artillery school in Altenstadt, near Schongau. He held the rank of Oberleutnant at the end of the war.

After the war, he was appointed deputy Landrat (county president) of Schongau by the American occupiers and was involved in founding the local party organization of the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU). He became a member of the first Bundestag (Federal Parliament) in 1949 and, in 1953, Federal Minister for Special Affairs in the second cabinet of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, in 1955 Federal Minister of Nuclear Energy, and in 1956 defence minister, charged with the build-up of the new Bundeswehr the youngest man to hold this office at the time. He became chairman of the CSU in 1961. Strauss was forced to step down as defence minister in 1962 in the wake of the Spiegel scandal.

In 1966 Strauss was appointed minister of the treasury in the cabinet of Kurt Georg Kiesinger. In cooperation with the SPD minister for economy, Karl Schiller, he developed a groundbreaking economic stability policy.

After the SPD was able to form a government without the conservatives, in 1969, Strauss became one of the most vocal critics of Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik.