

Legislative News



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MAY 2018

At the Statehouse

2018 primaries lack upsets; familiar names to appear on November ballot

The negative ads aired, and the big money flowed in the 2018 primary battles; however, the results were not surprising. At stake this year are all statewide offices, one of the U.S. Senate seats, congressional seats and many of the state legislative seats — as just 16 of the 33 state Senate seats are not up for re-election.

As the Democratic party sees the opportunity to take control of the U.S. Senate with the 2018 elections, no doubt the match-up between the sitting senior Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Avon Lake) and Congressman Jim Renacci (R-Wadsworth) will be a closely watched race. Sen. Brown is running for a third term. His challenger, Congressman Renacci, is serving in his fourth term in the U.S. House and had considered running for governor until Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel decided against a second Senate run earlier this year. At that point, Renacci, a Capitol Hill ally of the president's, opted to switch to run for the Senate.

As mentioned, all Ohio statewide offices will be on the ballot this fall. Hotly contested primary campaigns were waged by both the Republicans and the Democrats for the top job with current state Attorney General Mike DeWine and his running mate current Secretary of State Jon Husted besting Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor. Early on, Husted was also considering a run at the governor's office, but then decided to team-up with DeWine — who has held numerous elected offices including being a member of both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. DeWine and Husted face Richard Cordray and Betty Sutton in the November elections. Cordray, a former Ohio treasurer and attorney general, was also appointed by President Obama to lead the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This won't be the first time DeWine and Cordray will square up against each other, as Cordray was the sitting state attorney general in 2010 when DeWine challenged him and won. Cordray faced down three opponents in this May's primary, but was the front-runner from the time he announced his candidacy.

The remaining campaigns for Ohio's statewide offices will include the current state auditor David Yost, a Republican, and Steve Dettelbach, a Democrat, who will be vying to replace DeWine as attorney general. Dettelbach is an attorney in private practice in Cleveland after having served as the U.S. attorney for the Northern District under President Obama. Yost is serving in his second term as state auditor and was elected to that position after serving as the county prosecutor for Delaware county. The race for the position currently held by Yost — state auditor — is being waged by former Senate President-turned state Rep. Keith Faber, a Republican from Celina. Faber's opponent is a former congressman serving the eastern part of the state, Democrat Zach Space. Two sitting state legislators are vying to become the secretary of state. Kathleen Clyde, a Democratic member of the House of Representatives from Kent is facing Sen. Frank LaRose, a Republican from Hudson. Last, but certainly not least, is the campaign to replace term-limited State Treasurer Josh Mandel. Running for the Democratic party is Rob Richardson, an attorney from Cincinnati. His Republican opponent is Ohio House Rep. Robert Sprague of Findlay.

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2018 primaries lack upsets; familiar names to appear on November ballot *(continued)*

Other notable races for both congress and the statehouse include the race to replace former Congressman Pat Tiberi, a Republican from Westerville who retired earlier this year to take a position in the private sector. Both the Democratic and Republican fields were crowded with contenders, but the ultimate winners were current state Sen. Troy Balderson (R-Zanesville) and Democrat Danny O'Connor, an attorney from Columbus. The race to replace Congressman Renacci included a sitting state legislator, Republican Christina Hagan. However, Hagan was not able to withstand the challenge from former Ohio State University football player Anthony Gonzalez, who will face Democrat Susan Palmer in a bid to assume the seat for the 16th Congressional District.

At the statehouse, of all those eligible to run again for the seat they currently hold, only one member lost. Republican Wes Retherford of Hamilton, who was running to serve a fourth term in the House, lost in the primary to Sara Carruthers. Several members of the House are looking to make a move to the Senate — including Ohio Retirement Study Council Chairman Kirk Schuring (R-Canton), who is looking to switch seats with Sen. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton). Additionally, Republicans Anne Gonzales of Westerville, Steve Huffman of Tipp City, Nathan Manning of North Ridgeville, Andy Brenner of Powell, and Kristina Roegner of Hudson, along with Democrats Teresa Fedor of Toledo, Hearcel Craig of Columbus, Nickie Antonio of Lakewood and John Bocchieri of Poland are hoping to become members of the Senate. Manning and his mother, state Sen. Gayle Manning are looking to exchange seats but will have to defeat Sharon Sweda and Kelly Mencke, respectively, to switch chambers. Facing similar circumstances are Brenner and state Sen. Kris Jordan, a Republican from Powell. They must fend off Democratic challengers Louise Valentine and Cory Hoffman, respectively. From the Senate, the only other member looking to move to the House is Senator Michael Skindell, a Democrat from Lakewood. He is seeking the seat currently held by Rep. Antonio and will face Republican Jay Carson in the general election.

Ohio Retirement Study Council reviews STRS Ohio budget, other administrative reports

The Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC) met on May 10 and reviewed the fiscal 2019 budgets presented by STRS Ohio and the School Employees Retirement System (SERS). STRS Ohio's proposed operating budget reflects a 2.2% increase over the current year budget. The balance of the ORSC agenda consisted mainly of administrative reports.

All five systems reviewed their annual internal audit reports, and SERS presented its updated communication plan to the Council. In addition, Council members received Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund's (OP&F) most recent disability report.

Council members approved the ORSC fiscal year 2019 budget. The ORSC budget is paid by the five statewide public retirement systems. The total budget is \$781,800, although the actual amount that will be requested will be \$700,360.98 because there is a carryover balance from fiscal year 2018. The systems are required by state law to each pay a proportionate share of the budget based on their assets. STRS Ohio's assets account for 37.3% of total assets held by the five systems; therefore, the system's share is \$261,187.88.

In addition to the budget, the Council renewed the health care memorandum of understanding. STRS Ohio provides health care coverage for ORSC employees. The health care memorandum of understanding is an agreement signed by all five systems and the ORSC that states the systems agree to share the costs for certain health care benefits for ORSC staff and their dependents. This agreement has been in effect since 1994.

ORSC staff recommended a statutory cap on penalties that STRS Ohio may charge when employers are late in submitting reports and contributions. ORSC staff recommended, and the Council agreed, that SERS' language should be replicated. STRS Ohio staff noted that the system agrees in concept with this recommendation and will work with ORSC staff to draft acceptable language.

Council staff also made a recommendation regarding a statutory requirement that the Council review the adequacy of the Ohio Highway Patrol Retirement System's employer contribution. Staff recommended the report be removed from statute because there are other reports that provide the same information. Council members agreed to this recommendation. In light of the fact that the Council conducts the same review of OP&F's employer contribution rates, Chair Schuring asked staff to look into whether it would be appropriate for the OP&F review to be removed from statute as well.

The next ORSC meeting is scheduled for June 14.