

Why Ohio Supreme Court Elections Matter

In election years when statewide races such as Governor and United States Senate are on the ballot, important choices which appear further down the page can sometimes be overlooked. With the volume and intensity of messages about the higher profile elections, it can also be difficult to find the necessary information to make an informed decision about court elections.

Yet, the contests for Ohio's highest court often have some of the most direct, significant and lasting impacts on Ohio's business and jobs climate, and our ability to grow the economy.



The Supreme Court serves as the final authority on questions involving our state's laws and Constitution. Its decisions can determine how laws enacted by the General Assembly are interpreted and applied, influencing everything from business disputes and consumer protections to insurance, employment, and civil litigation.

For Ohio employers, workers, consumers, and families, a fair, balanced, and predictable legal system benefits everyone. Businesses make investments, create jobs, and serve customers with the expectation that the law will be interpreted consistently and applied as intended. When legal standards become unpredictable, litigation costs rise, uncertainty increases, and those costs often ripple throughout Ohio's economy.

Ohio has experienced those consequences before. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Ohio had a national reputation as a difficult legal environment, with a series of court decisions creating legal uncertainty and expanding liability beyond what lawmakers intended. One ruling alone cost Ohio employers more than \$1.5 billion. Those are dollars that could not be invested in development projects or paid to employees.

Fortunately, with the support of organizations like OHLA, Ohio made meaningful progress on restoring stability and predictability to its courts. This effort includes working in the legislature for better statutes, and a judiciary committed to interpreting the law as written and applying the law consistently.

In recent years, our judicial climate improved and Ohio became nationally recognized as a leading place to do business and work. In fact, Ohio was ranked as No. 1 state for business in [CNBC's 2026 America's Top States for Business rankings](#).

But it is important to continue those efforts and protect the steps that have been taken to ensure a fair and balanced judicial approach in Ohio.

Every voter can play an important part by being aware of these elections and the candidates.

Two Supreme Court races are on the November 3, 2026 ballot in Ohio.

Current Supreme Court Justice [Dan Hawkins](#) is running for re-election to the Ohio Supreme Court for a full term commencing in January 2027. He was first elected in November 2024, and prior to the Ohio Supreme Court, Justice Hawkins served on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas.

[Colleen O'Donnell](#) is running for election to the Ohio Supreme Court for a full term commencing in January 2027. Most recently, she served as a U.S. Immigration Judge in Laredo, Texas, and she previously spent nearly a decade on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas.

Justice Hawkins will face District Court of Appeals Judge [Marilyn Zayas](#). Zayas has served nearly nine years as an appellate judge, and was named the 2024 Hispanic National Bar Association Latina Judge of the Year.

Colleen O'Donnell is challenging Justice [Jennifer Brunner](#). Brunner was elected to the court in 2020 and was previously Secretary of State and candidate for the United States Senate in the Democratic primary election.

For information about voting in Ohio's November elections, see the [Ohio Secretary of State information website](#).

Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jim Tressel Recognize National Hotel Employee Day

Demonstrating the deep support for our industry and those who work in it by our state's top elected officials, an [official proclamation](#) recognizing National Hotel Employee Day in Ohio on September 1 was issued by the Governor and Lt. Governor.

DeWine and Tressel stated that the work done by hotel employees throughout the state highlights the very best aspects of the hospitality industry, and noted that hotel businesses are committed to creating a welcoming workplace where associates can enter a career field that allows them to develop new skills and advance professionally.

OHLA celebrated the day along with industry partners such as AHLA and recognizes employees all month during its Stars of the Industry Awards programs around the state.

Information on Immigration Status Rules Available on OHLA Website

A change in federal immigration rules impacts Ohio because of large concentrations of Haitians in communities such as Springfield and Columbus. As the federal government moves to change the EAD status of other foreign workers, this information will be relevant for those populations as well.

OHLA has provided [updated contact links and information](#) for several organizations with resources specific to the Haitian employees and families impacted by this most recent action. There are also numerous resources for impacted employees and employers.

See the complete resources page on the OHLA website. For more information or questions, email joe@ohla.org or call OHLA at 614-461-6462.

