2026

Ohio Post-Election Review & Legislative Outlook

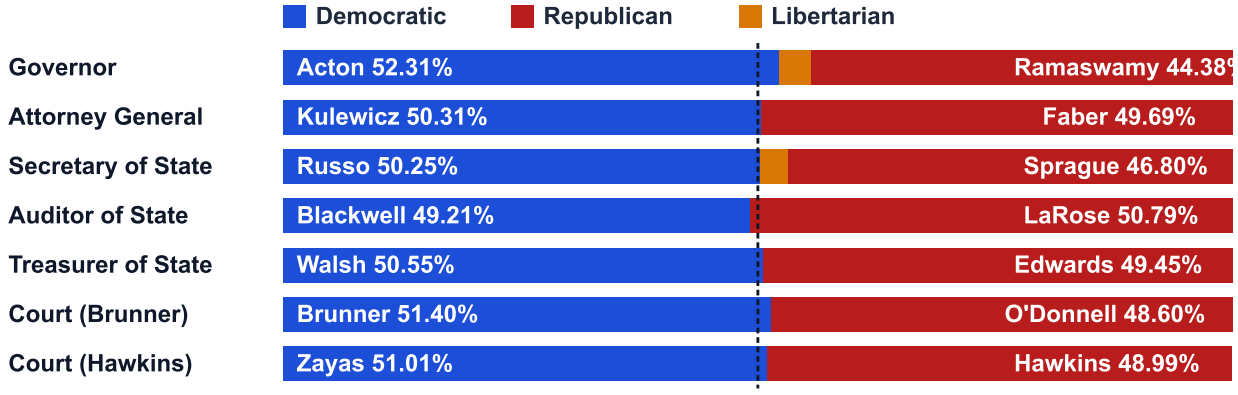
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Executive Summary: Ohio voters delivered a decisive realignment in a landmark midterm cycle. Democrats captured four of the five statewide constitutional executive offices—led by Dr. Amy Acton's 52.31% victory in the open gubernatorial race, the first Democratic win for governor in 20 years and the first time a woman has been elected to the office. They also swept both contested seats on the Supreme Court of Ohio and shattered the Republican three-fifths veto-override supermajority in the Ohio House with a nine-seat net gain (four races remain in recount territory). In Columbus, voters approved both Issue 8 and Issue 9, overhauling municipal council representation.

1. GUBERNATORIAL & STATEWIDE CONSTITUTIONAL CONTESTS

With Republican Governor Mike DeWine barred by constitutional term limits from seeking a third consecutive term, the race for the governor's mansion featured an open contest between former Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton—joined on the Democratic ticket by former state party chair David Pepper—and conservative entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, who ran alongside State Senate President Rob McColley. Libertarian candidates Don Kissick and James L. Mills also qualified for the ballot. Campaign debates centered heavily on structural tax reform, energy generation and industrial recruitment, public school financing formulas, and the scope of federal vs. state regulatory authority. Acton secured a decisive 52.31% majority over Ramaswamy's 44.38% and Kissick's 3.30%.

FIGURE 1: STATEWIDE EXECUTIVE & JUDICIAL VOTE SHARE COMPARISON (%)



Constitutional Office	Candidates & Verified Vote Share	Contest Context & Platform Priorities
Governor & Lt. Governor	**Amy Acton / David Pepper (D) — 52.31% (WINNER)** Vivek Ramaswamy / Rob McColley (R) — 44.38% Don Kissick / James L. Mills (L) — 3.30%	Open seat following Gov. Mike DeWine's term limit. Focused on state tax policy, energy and industrial expansion, public education funding, and state-federal regulatory balance.
Attorney General	**John J. Kulewicz (D) — 50.31% / 2,285,117 (LEADS / FABER CONCEDED)** Keith Faber (R) — 49.69% / 2,256,710	Open contest succeeding Dave Yost. Upper Arlington councilmember and Columbus attorney Kulewicz emphasized public ethics, consumer protection, and environmental law against State Auditor Faber's focus on police support, state legal defense, and administrative integrity.
Secretary of State	**Allison Russo (D) — 50.25% (WINNER)** Robert Sprague (R) — 46.80% Tom Pruss (L) — 2.95%	Open contest for chief elections and business officer. House Minority Leader Russo prioritized voter access, registration modernization, and redistricting transparency against State Treasurer Sprague's focus on voter roll maintenance, ballot security, and digital corporate filings.
Auditor of State	**Frank LaRose (R) — 50.79% (WINNER)** Annette M. Blackwell (D) — 49.21%	Outgoing Secretary of State LaRose captured the office campaigning on forensic public fund audits, school district oversight, and efficiency reviews. Maple Heights Mayor Blackwell stressed municipal executive experience and equitable local government fund distribution.
Treasurer of State	**Seth Walsh (D) — 50.55% (WINNER)** Jay Edwards (R) — 49.45%	Vacated by Robert Sprague. Cincinnati Councilmember Walsh prevailed on a platform of urban revitalization, sustainable municipal finance, and college savings plans over former State Rep. Edwards (R–Nelsonville), who emphasized infrastructure bonding, farm investment, and conservative treasury management.

2. SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

Ohio's highest court comprises seven justices elected to six-year terms on ballots bearing partisan designations. Entering the election, Republicans controlled a 6–1 majority, with Justice Jennifer L. Brunner serving as the sole Democratic jurist. With two seats before the electorate, Democratic candidates carried both contests, shifting the court's ideological balance to a 5–2 Republican majority:

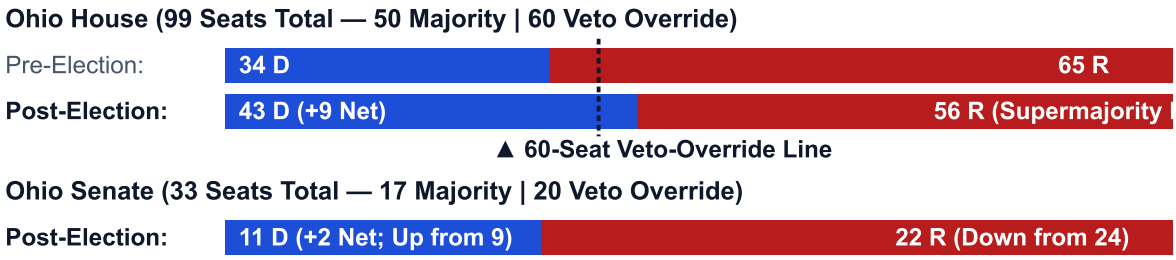
Brunner Seat: Incumbent Justice **Jennifer L. Brunner (D)** successfully defended her seat against Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Colleen Mary O'Donnell (R), winning **51.4% (2,324,212 votes)** to O'Donnell's **48.6%**. Campaign discourse centered on constitutional interpretation, judicial philosophy, and judicial deference to state administrative agencies.

Hawkins Seat: First District Court of Appeals Judge **Marilyn Zayas (D)** unseated incumbent Justice Dan Hawkins (R), securing **51.01% (2,307,346 votes)** against Hawkins' **48.99%**. While Hawkins underscored a philosophy of strict judicial restraint, Zayas emphasized her extensive appellate record in Southwest Ohio.

3. OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY OVERVIEW & CHAMBER BALANCE

In the lower chamber, all 99 seats of the Ohio House of Representatives were on the ballot, requiring 50 seats for majority control and 60 seats for a three-fifths veto-override threshold. Entering the cycle with a 65–34 supermajority, Republicans faced intense competition across suburban corridors in Central, Northeast, and Southwest Ohio. Democrats appear to have netted nine seats statewide (winning eight outright and leading in HD 37, with four close contests still pending final provisional counts and likely recounts), reducing the Republican caucus to an expected 56–43 margin and eliminating the GOP's unilateral veto-override power. In the 33-member Ohio Senate—where 17 seats are required for a majority, 20 for a veto override, and the 17 odd-numbered districts were contested—Democrats achieved a net gain of two seats, trimming the prior 24–9 Republican supermajority to a 22–11 margin.

FIGURE 2: GENERAL ASSEMBLY PARTISAN BALANCE & VETO-OVERRIDE THRESHOLDS



Targeted Ohio House District Outcomes

District & Rating	Candidates & Election Result	Geographic Profile & District Dynamics
HD 31 Summit County *Index: Toss-Up*	**J. Noah Spinner (D) — 57.0% / 31,326 (WINNER — Flip)** Mike Kahoe (R) — 43.0% / 23,580	Suburban Akron corridor encompassing Hudson and Cuyahoga Falls. Open seat following Bill Roemer's departure; characterized by high participation, college-educated suburbanites, and ticket-splitting habits.
HD 60 Delaware County *Index: Toss-Up*	**Shelby Kimball (D) — 52.1% / 32,307 (WINNER — Flip)** Brian Lorenz (R - Incumbent) — 47.9% / 29,705	Southern Delaware County north of Columbus, including Powell and expanding master-planned developments. One of Central Ohio's fastest-evolving suburban battlegrounds.
HD 52 Lorain County *Index: Lean R*	**Mike Baker (D) — 54.9% / 28,230 (WINNER — Flip)** Cliff Winkel (R) — 45.1%	Northern Lorain County along Lake Erie (Avon, Avon Lake, North Ridgeville). Blends expanding commuter subdivisions with traditional industrial heritage.

District & Rating	Candidates & Election Result	Geographic Profile & District Dynamics
HD 36 Montgomery County *Index: Toss-Up*	**Rose Lounsbury (D) — 55.5% / 25,727 (WINNER — Flip)** Andrea White (R - Incumbent) — 42.1% / 19,496 Chuck Horn (Ind.) — 2.4% / 1,095	Suburban Dayton communities of Kettering and Oakwood. High-turnout, densely populated district where slight Democratic top-of-ticket leanings overcame incumbent familiarity.
HD 39 Montgomery County *Index: Lean R*	**Daquan Neal (D) — 51.7% / 22,677 (WINNER — Flip)** Mark Campbell (R) — 48.3% / 21,219	Northern Montgomery County (Huber Heights, Vandalia, Englewood). Open seat vacated by Phil Plummer combining airport logistics centers, manufacturing plants, and working-class neighborhoods.
HD 49 Stark County *Index: Toss-Up*	**Krista Allison (D) — 54.9% / 21,425 (WINNER — Flip)** Jim Thomas (R - Incumbent) — 45.1% / 17,582	Anchored by Canton and neighboring Stark County townships. A classic Northeast Ohio bellwether balancing organized labor households with conservative residential enclaves.
HD 37 Montgomery County *Index: R+8.2 (Likely R)*	Tom Herner (D) — 50.1% / 26,227 Tom Young (R - Inc.) — 49.9% / 26,093 **TOO CLOSE TO CALL / RECOUNT RANGE** *Herner leads by 134 votes (0.25% margin)*	Southern Montgomery County encompassing Centerville, Washington Township, and Miamisburg. Affluent Dayton commuter suburbs that historically favor Republicans down-ballot.

HD 44 Lucas & Wood *Index: Likely R*	Edward L. Schimmel (R) — 48.0% / 26,612 David J. Fournier (D) — 47.9% / 26,556 Lyndsey Stough (Ind.) — 4.2% / 2,313 **TOO CLOSE TO CALL / RECOUNT RANGE** *Schimmel leads by 56 votes.*	Outer suburban and rural territory encircling Toledo. Open contest triggered when Rep. Josh Williams exited to seek federal office.
HD 29 Hamilton County *Index: Likely R*	Cindy Abrams (R - Inc.) — 50.03% / 23,782 Jonathan Bradner (D) — 49.97% / 23,751 **TOO CLOSE TO CALL / RECOUNT RANGE** *Abrams leads by 19–31 votes*	Western Hamilton County ("West Side" Cincinnati suburbs, Harrison, Miami Township). Culturally conservative Republican stronghold inside an otherwise blue metropolitan county.
HD 75 Wood County *Index: Likely R*	Haraz Ghanbari (R - Inc.) — 50.1% / 23,193 Richard Rettig (D) — 49.9% / 23,067 **TOO CLOSE TO CALL / RECOUNT RANGE** *Ghanbari leads by 126 votes*	Northern Wood County stretching from Perrysburg and Toledo's outer ring down to Bowling Green. Mixes university precincts, suburban commuters, and farm communities.

District & Rating	Candidates & Election Result	Geographic Profile & District Dynamics
HD 89 Erie & Ottawa *Index: Safe R*	**Caleb Stidham (R) — 55.0% / 27,244 (WINNER)** Easton Retzke (D) — 45.0% / 21,190 Steven Kraus (Ind. Write-in)	Lake Erie shoreline towns including Sandusky, Port Clinton, and Marblehead. Driven by seasonal hospitality, maritime commerce, and light industry with reliable GOP leanings.
HD 72 Portage County *Index: Safe R*	**Heidi Workman (R - Inc.) — 49.1% / 22,880 (WINNER)** Jeff Clapper (D) — 47.6% / 22,179 Michael Fricke (L) — 3.2% / 1,490	Portage County communities of Ravenna, Streetsboro, and surrounding rural townships. Features historic manufacturing towns, exurban commuters between Akron and Youngstown, and agriculture.

Targeted Ohio Senate District Outcomes

District & Rating	Candidates & Election Result	Geographic Profile & District Dynamics
SD 3 Franklin County *Index: Toss-Up*	**Stacie Baker (D) — 51.9% / 67,338 (WINNER — Flip)** Michele Reynolds (R - Incumbent) — 48.1% / 62,450	Southern and eastern Franklin County (Canal Winchester, Reynoldsburg, Gahanna, Groveport). Rapidly growing, demographically diverse Columbus suburbs targeted heavily by both parties.

SD 13 Lorain, Huron & Erie *Index: Toss-Up*	**Gayle Manning (R) — 50.7% / 73,773 (WINNER)** Joe Miller (D) — 49.3% / 71,639	Spans Lorain County alongside coastal Lake Erie and agricultural precincts. Marquee contest pitting veteran legislator Gayle Manning against sitting Democratic State Rep. Joe Miller.
SD 27 Summit, Stark & Portage *Index: Toss-Up*	**Mike Roberto (D) — 53.5% / 86,591 (WINNER — Flip)** Steve Demetriou (R) — 46.5% / 75,132	Suburban and exurban Northeast Ohio corridors linking Akron, Canton, and Kent. Former State Rep. Steve Demetriou sought to hold the seat against Democratic challenger Mike Roberto.

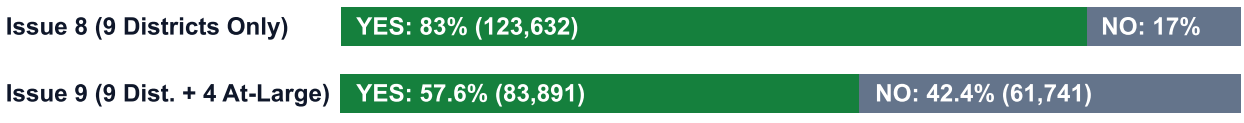
4. CITY OF COLUMBUS MUNICIPAL CHARTER AMENDMENTS (ISSUES 8 & 9)

Voters in the City of Columbus approved two concurrent municipal charter amendments restructuring how members of Columbus City Council are elected:

Issue 8 — Citizen-Initiated District Voting (APPROVED): Originating from a grassroots citizen petition campaign, Issue 8 passed overwhelmingly by an **83% YES (123,632 votes) to 17% NO (24,686 votes)** margin. The amendment ends citywide at-large voting in general elections for district seats, stipulating that only registered voters residing within each of the nine council districts may vote for their respective district representative.

Issue 9 — Council-Referred Structural Expansion (APPROVED): Placed on the ballot by Columbus City Council, Issue 9 was approved by a **57.6% YES (83,891 votes) to 42.4% NO (61,741 votes)** tally. In addition to establishing resident-only voting within the nine geographic council districts, Issue 9 expands the body by adding four council seats elected at-large by voters citywide, mandates a redrawing of council district boundaries in 2028, and modifies candidate nominating petition signature rules.

FIGURE 3: CITY OF COLUMBUS CHARTER REFERENDUM TALLIES



5. LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK: LAME DUCK SESSION & BIENNIAL BUDGET

We now turn to the lame duck session beginning next week and running through December. During this time, it is expected to be a very hectic legislative schedule for policy priorities to be considered before the new General Assembly is sworn in. Parallel to that, we are preparing for the biennial budget process next year, which will be the first major test of the new administration's fiscal priorities and where the real negotiations over education, workforce, and infrastructure funding will take place. We look forward to working with each of you through both. If you have questions about this process, please do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on our team.



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