

Bill Seitz to retire: Cincinnati GOP lawmaker won't run again, ending 24-year tenure

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Republican Bill Seitz, the House majority leader known for his colorful oratorical skills, will not run for another term in the Ohio General Assembly, a place where he's loomed large since he was elected in 2000.

Seitz, of Green Township near Cincinnati, is among a handful of legislators who have sidestepped term limits by switching between the House and Senate when time was up. Seitz was in the House from 2001 to 2006, then the Senate from 2007 to 2016 and returned to the House in 2017. He is currently the majority floor leader, having served in a variety of leadership roles.

Seitz, whose House term ends next year, said he won't challenge state Sen. Bill Blessing in a GOP primary to move back to the Senate.

"I've been friends with Bill Blessing and his dad (former state Rep. Louis Blessing) for a million years. I wouldn't do that in a million years," Seitz said.

"I'll be 70 years old by the end of my term and I don't want to be a blithering idiot like Joe Biden, so I think that's probably long enough."

What are some major issues Seitz backed?

Seitz is a social and fiscal conservative.

In 2001, he sponsored legislation to block Ohio from recognizing out-of-state same-sex unions or providing benefits of marriage to same-sex couples. It was the precursor to Ohio's voter-approved constitutional amendment in 2004.

A master of the floor speech, Seitz is also known for his deep, booming voice that eloquently rails against "mandate mountain" – the government's pile of regulations – and windmills, which he calls "monstrosities all over rural Ohio." He doesn't have any filler words. Seitz packs everything into concise, snappy, to-the-point sentences.

And when he decides he is on the right side of an issue, Seitz won't back down.

In 2011, Seitz was one of the few Republican lawmakers who opposed Gov. John Kasich's attempt to gut collective bargaining rights for public employee

unions. Seitz gave interviews to state and national reporters, sharply criticizing Senate Bill 5, which voters later rejected.

In 2011 and 2012, Seitz advocated for criminal justice reforms that removed extra punishments beyond prison, such as taking away someone's driver's license for a non-driving offense and sending fewer nonviolent low-level felony offenders to state prisons.

Seitz, who was ticketed for rolling through a red light to turn right, launched a multiyear fight against local municipalities using traffic enforcement cameras.

More recently, Seitz took up the mantle of former House Speaker Larry Householder's most vocal defender. In 2021, Seitz argued forcefully against expelling Householder from the Ohio House as he awaited trial in a federal racketeering conspiracy case. Householder was found guilty in March and sentenced to 20 years in federal prison. Seitz was a strong proponent of House Bill 6, the energy bill at the heart of the federal investigation.

Seitz has also worked across the political aisle, recently passing legislation with Democratic Rep. Jessica Miranda to help survivors of Boy Scout sexual abuse obtain settlement money. He recently worked with Rep. Latyna M. Humphrey, a Columbus Democrat, on a bill to allow campaign funds to pay for some child care.

Seitz quit smoking after 50 years

Seitz was also widely known for his smoking habit, which has also come to an end.

Reporters and lobbyists could often find Seitz just outside the Ohio Statehouse doors, smoking cigarettes. He'd dash from floor sessions to light up.

Over his legislative career, Seitz worked to block or weaken indoor smoking bans and tax hikes on tobacco.

However, Seitz developed kidney cancer, prompting the removal of one of his kidneys. Seitz quit smoking in August, 50 years after picking up the habit as an 18-year-old.

Jessie Balmert contributed to this report.