

[GOP aims to solidify majority on OH Supreme Court by squaring Deters against Stewart](#)

By Laura Hancock
cleveland.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Ohio Supreme Court Justice Joe Deters, a Republican [appointed to the court by Gov. Mike DeWine just last year](#), will challenge Democratic Justice Melody Stewart in 2024, instead of running for reelection to his seat, according to an Ohio GOP statement released Tuesday afternoon.

Currently the Ohio Republican party holds a narrow, four-to-three majority on the court – which is expected to determine the outer boundaries of Ohio’s newly passed abortion rights amendment, as many of the [three dozen anti-abortion laws](#) passed since the 1980s get challenged in the courts.

Republicans have wanted to clinch a larger majority on the court since 2020, [when Democrats gained a third justice](#) – a number it hadn’t had on the court in decades.

This narrow GOP majority means that in some instances, Republicans in the legislature haven’t always prevailed before the bench when a Republican chooses to side with Democrats. Notably, former Ohio Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor sided with Democrats in a series of redistricting cases, concluding the legislature illegally gerrymandered congressional and state legislative seats for Republicans.

Deters will be have most name recognition among the Ohio Republican Party’s Ohio Supreme Court slate, giving him the best chance of defeating a Democrat.

There’s another advantage for Deters to not run in his current seat on the bench: He’d have to seek re-election to the position in 2026. If he can win the seat currently occupied by Stewart, he wouldn’t have to run again for six more years.

Stewart is the first Black woman elected to the court. [She announced her re-election](#) in September.

In addition to the Deters’ announcement, the Ohio GOP announced the seats its other candidates will seek.

- Hamilton County Common Pleas Judge Megan E. Shanahan, a Republican who [announced her intention to run](#) for the high court last April, will challenge Democratic Justice Michael Donnelly, who has said he's seeking re-election.

- Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Dan Hawkins, a Republican, is running for the seat currently held by Deters. [Hawkins announced](#) he was running for the court in May. Ohio 8th District Court of Appeals Judge Lisa Forbes, from Shaker Heights, [is also running for this seat](#).

Ohio 10th District Court of Appeals Judge Terri Jamison, a Democrat from Columbus who ran unsuccessfully for Supreme Court last year, is considering running again this year. She has until Wednesday to notify the state if she chooses to run.

Ohio GOP Chair Alex Triantafilou said in a statement that Ohioans are ready to elect strong, conservative justices who will uphold the law as it is written.

"Earlier this year, the Ohio Republican Party was proud to endorse Justice Joe Deters, Judge Dan Hawkins, and Judge Megan Shanahan for Ohio's highest court," he said. "As experienced former prosecutors and principled jurists, Deters, Hawkins and Shanahan will serve the people of Ohio with an eye toward public safety and enforcing law and order."

But Matt Keyes, spokesman for the Ohio Democratic Party, said in a statement that abortion rights are once again on the ballot.

"Ohio is the only state in the nation with the opportunity to flip its state supreme court next year. And we must," he said. "The court has become too political, and next year, we have to make sure that out-of-touch statehouse Republicans don't use their political allies on the state's highest court to continue their ongoing war on women and overturn the will of Ohio voters."