

Former Ohio lawmaker Niraj Antani announces run for secretary of state

By Erin Glynn
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Former Ohio lawmaker Niraj Antani is running to be Ohio's next secretary of state in 2026.

Antani, a Republican, finished his term representing part of Montgomery County in the Ohio Senate in December. He said he decided to seek the secretary of state's office because of his family's experience without the right to vote in India.

"My family grew up under British oppression in India," he told our Statehouse news bureau. "Within a lifetime, we have gone from being not free people without the right to vote to being able to live in the most vibrant democracy in the world. I feel I have a special appreciation for the right to vote, for making sure that the right to vote is secure, and that's what draws me to this office."

Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose will leave office in 2027 due to term limits.

Antani previously ran for Congress in 2024. He served for six years in the Ohio House and four in the Ohio Senate.

Antani said he opposes automatic voter registration, ballot drop boxes and having more than one early voting location in a county, all parts of a proposed amendment to the Ohio Constitution that could go before voters this year.

"I think we have to secure our elections. The right to vote is too sacred and too important and elections are won by too small of a margin, not to make sure that every vote is by a registered legal voter who is a citizen of the United States," he said.

Antani said Ohio needs a secretary of state with a "steel spine" to protect the integrity of the election system and pointed to controversial positions he's stuck to in the legislature, such as supporting the ban on abortions when cardiac activity is detected and opposing the gas tax increase.

"We need a secretary of state who's going to stand up for the voters, who will not crumble and sway with shifting winds," Antani said.

Democrat Bryan Hambley, a Cincinnati doctor, announced his campaign for secretary of state on Jan. 2.

State Sen. Theresa Gavarone, R-Bowling Green, is considering a potential run. She said in a statement that leaders throughout the state have approached her about running for secretary of state.

"I'm proud to have authored successful legislation to strengthen Ohio's elections by finally requiring a photo ID to vote, ensuring stringent post-election audits and listing the partisan affiliation for certain judicial offices on the ballot," she said.