

Ohio's 2025-2026 legislative session kicks off under new leadership

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Cleveland.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio— A new two-year session of the Ohio General Assembly kicked off Monday, with new, closely allied Republican leaders taking over in both the Ohio House and Senate.

Statehouse Republicans, who have maintained supermajorities in both legislative chambers, say they hope to take action this session on a wide array of conservative priorities, from regulating marijuana to curbing perceived liberal influence on college campuses.

Other major issues lawmakers will have to take up this year include crafting a new two-year state budget plan (with [far less money than they've had to work with in recent years](#)), expanding publicly funded vouchers for private schools, and further cuts to the state's income tax.

And with Monday's election of state Rep. Matt Huffman of Lima as House speaker and state Sen. Rob McColley of Napoleon, a Huffman acolyte, as Senate president, several Republicans have said they expect the legislature will be far more effective this session at passing that agenda than during the last two years, when GOP infighting [contributed to a historically unproductive session](#).

Huffman and McColley, [as expected](#), were elected to head their respective chambers without opposition immediately after all 99 House members and 17 of 33 Senate members were sworn in, respectively.

The two top legislative Democratic leaders -- Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio of Lakewood and House Minority Leader Allison Russo of suburban Columbus -- were also reelected to their positions.

Huffman, who had been Senate president since 2021, officially became the first state lawmaker since the 19th Century to serve as head of both chambers -- and the first in state history to move between them without interruption. He's widely [expected to wield greater-than-usual power this session](#), given his experience and connections.

Republicans start the 2025-2026 session with control over 65 of 99 House seats and 24 of 33 Senate seats – enough to not only easily control which bills pass the legislature but to override vetoes from Gov. Mike DeWine, a fellow Republican.

However, last session – when Republicans controlled even more seats – showed that having such large caucuses sometimes made it hard for GOP leaders to keep their members in line on key votes. House Republicans, in particular, were bogged down by [near-constant quarrelling](#) between then-House Speaker Jason Stephens, a Lawrence County Republican, and intra-caucus critics.

The newly seated 136th Ohio General Assembly includes 27 new House members (17 Republicans and 10 Democrats) and six new state senators (three Republicans, three Democrats).

That includes several lawmakers from Northeast Ohio, including:

- State Sen. Tom Patton, a Strongsville Republican
- State Sen. Casey Weinstein, a Hudson Democrat
- State Rep. Mike Dovilla, a Berea Republican
- State Rep. Chris Glassburn, a North Olmsted Democrat
- State Rep. Derrick Hall, an Akron Democrat
- State Rep. Tristan Rader, a Lakewood Democrat
- State Rep. Eric Synenberg, a Beachwood Democrat

While none of the new House members have served in the legislature before (except for Huffman and Republican state Rep. Mike Dovilla of Berea), all six new senators have previous legislative experience.