

# Will having two brand-new U.S. Senators hurt Ohio's clout in Congress?

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WASHINGTON, D. C. - With two freshman legislators beginning their terms within weeks of each other, Ohio is guaranteed to have the U.S. Senate's least senior delegation.

Newly-elected Westlake Republican [Bernie Moreno began his Senate term](#) on Jan. 3. The date when Lt. Gov. Jon Husted will fill the Senate vacancy left by [JD Vance's resignation](#) to serve as Donald Trump's vice president is to be determined.

Their lack of seniority could be a problem for Ohio in an institution where senior members are rewarded with chairmanships that give them power to decide what legislation Congress will and won't consider, and to write that legislation, says [Center for Effective Lawmaking](#) co-director Alan E. Wiseman.

His organization's research shows a strong correlation between a legislator's seniority and their lawmaking effectiveness, as measured by the [scores it has tabulated](#) for every Congress since the 1970s.

"Those senators who have served in the U.S. Senate for a greater number of terms have greater success at seeing their sponsored bills move further through the lawmaking process (including, possibly, ultimately becoming law) than those senators who are more junior in seniority," says Wiseman, a Vanderbilt University political scientist. "So, all else equal, freshman senators are expected to be less successful at advancing their sponsored bills than more senior senators."

While there may be positive benefits from bringing new ideas into the chamber from new members and having an Ohioan as vice-president might help the Buckeye State move its agenda through Congress, Weissman expects the decrease in Ohio senators' seniority "will lead to a decrease in their relative lawmaking effectiveness in the 119th congress, compared to more senior senators."

Longtime Toledo Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur, who [has served in Congress longer](#) than any other woman in history, agrees that seniority counts. She argues it's crucial for states in the heartland to accumulate it so their interests aren't subordinated to those of coastal states with larger congressional delegations.

Kaptur, who was first elected in 1982, is the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, which she has used to secure money for [Great Lakes projects](#) important to the region, like [a new lock](#) to connect Lake Superior with the rest of the lakes.

She says it often takes many years to move legislation through Congress, such as the bill she authored that led to the 2004 dedication of the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"I thought that would take two years," she recalls. "It took us 17 years from the moment of introduction until the the dedication. And now over 100 million people have gone there. It's something the American people wanted. And when we did that, I thought, 'Oh, my goodness, it is so hard to get anything done here.'"

Former U.S. Sen. [Sherrod Brown](#), a Cleveland Democrat who [Moreno defeated in November](#), began serving in the Senate in 2007 and, before losing the November election, chaired its Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs. Former U.S. Sen. [Rob Portman](#), a Cincinnati Republican who Vance succeeded after his 2023 retirement, started serving in the Senate in 2011 and was the top Republican on the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

[Moreno](#), who served as [Ohio state chair for U.S. Term Limits](#), and has pledged to [serve only two terms](#), is more skeptical about the value of seniority. He says members of legislative bodies, including Congress, lose touch with constituent interests after years in office, and incumbency makes them hard to dislodge.

He says Washington, D.C., is "a total and complete disaster" because the politicians who run it have been there for too long.

"You need people with fresh ideas and fresh thinking," [Moreno says](#).

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, who served [12 years in the U.S. Senate](#) before Brown [defeated him](#) in 2006, says Ohio will be well represented in the Senate between Moreno and Husted, his pick to replace Vance.

“Will they be two of the newest members of the Senate?,” said DeWine. “Yes, they will. That’s where we are. But what I found as a United States senator, while being there longer does help, as the United States senator, you can walk in and if you know what you want to accomplish, you can get a lot done.”

DeWine, who also spent eight years in the U.S. House of Representatives, said it is much easier to accomplish things in the Senate than in the House, particularly for those in the majority, as Moreno and Husted will be. But he said that even in the minority, individual Senators have huge influence.

“When you go to the United States Senate, whether you’re the last person in the door, or whether you’ve been there for 30 or 35 years, if you want to have influence and make a difference, you can make a difference,” DeWine said. “The great thing about being a United States senator is there’s only 100 of them. Each state only gets two.”

Ohio State University political scientist [Paul Beck](#) says new Senators are always disadvantaged relative to their more veteran colleagues because they need to “learn the ropes” and develop working relationships with colleagues in both political parties. That takes on particular importance given the narrow GOP control of the Senate, he says.

“That said, the disadvantage may be mitigated by the ties to Trump that Moreno, certainly, and (Husted) possibly will have,” says Beck.

He predicts the primary player for Ohio will be Trump going forward and, through him, Vance, who will serve as something of a third U.S. Senator from Ohio since vice presidents cast the Senate’s tie breaking votes.

Baldwin Wallace University political scientist [Thomas Sutton](#) said the last time Ohio had two newbies in the U.S. Senate was in the late 1970s, when Democrats [John Glenn](#) and [Howard Metzenbaum](#) both began their service.

Democratic Ohio Gov. John Gilligan appointed Metzenbaum to replace Republican U.S. Sen. William Saxbe, who President Richard Nixon picked as his Attorney General, in January of 1974. Later that year, Metzenbaum lost his Democratic primary bid for reelection to Glenn, who won the job and held the seat until his retirement in 1999. Metzenbaum tried again in 1976, and won the state’s other Senate seat by defeating incumbent Republican U.S. Sen. Robert Taft, Jr.. Metzenbaum retired from the job in 1995.

Sutton pointed out that Vance and Moreno had not held public office before they were elected to the Senate, observing that Vance “caught on pretty quick” to the job, introducing [an assortment of bills](#) designed to appeal to the Republican base but that had no chance for passage while Democrats controlled the institution. Among other things, the bills Vance introduced would have banned “X” gendered passports, dismantled federal “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” programs, and made it a federal felony to provide “gender-affirming care” to minor.

“Vance being vice president is an advantage to Ohio,” says Sutton, noting that Trump is likely to try to concentrate more power in the White House. “I think you really have a trio representing Ohio in the Senate, which certainly can’t be bad for the state.”

Describing Trump as “basically, the king of Ohio given what we’ve seen in these last several election cycles,” he notes that Trump’s endorsement helped both Moreno and Vance win contested Republican primaries and subsequently the general election. Trump also didn’t hold elected office before winning the presidency as a political outsider.

He said Trump has built power and influence in the GOP with this outsider mentality, and by threatening incumbents with primary campaigns from his hand-picked candidates.

“It’s kind of a paradox, but he is inside the halls of power using an outsider approach that’s actually become very effective politically in terms of power,” said Sutton.

[Cleveland.com](#) reporter *Jeremy Pelzer* contributed to this report.