

Ex-Ohio Supreme Court Justice Bill O'Neill to challenge Rep. Dave Joyce in 2026

By **Jeremy Pelzer**
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COLUMBUS, Ohio—After seven years in political retirement, Democratic ex-Ohio Supreme Court Justice Bill O'Neill says he will soon file to challenge Republican U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce next year.

O'Neill, a 77-year-old Chagrin Falls resident, will face an uphill battle to unseat Joyce, who has never faced serious opposition during his seven terms representing Ohio's 14th Congressional District.

O'Neill ran unsuccessfully in 2008 and 2010 for the 14th District, which currently covers Ashtabula, Lake, Trumbull and Geauga counties, as well as most of Portage County.

A retired nurse, O'Neill has stayed out of Ohio politics since he unsuccessfully sought the 2018 Democratic nomination for governor, running on a platform that included legalizing recreational marijuana and raising the state's minimum wage to \$15 per hour. During that race, [he drew headlines](#) for a social-media post about his sexual history, including an assertion that he once had a tryst in a barn with a personal secretary to U.S. Sen. Robert Taft Sr.

O'Neill, in an interview, said he's now coming out of retirement because of his outrage over several actions by President Donald Trump and other Republicans -- such as a House GOP-passed budget that Democratic critics say will [result in major cuts to Medicaid](#).

"I don't think I have the right to sit back and watch my government be destroyed," O'Neill said.

Last November, Joyce easily won reelection over Democrat Brian Kenderes, who got 37% of the vote after [receiving a 30-day jail sentence](#) during the campaign for filing a false voter registration.

O'Neill, who scored a shocking upset in 2012 by unseating well-funded Republican Ohio Supreme Court Justice Bob Cupp on a shoestring campaign, expressed optimism that he can do a lot better in 2026.

"If I can't beat (Kenderes') record by 15 (percentage) points, I should stay in retirement," O'Neill said in an interview.

It remains to be seen whether any other Democrats will also look to run in a primary against Joyce. An even bigger unknown is what Ohio's 14th Congressional District will look like in 2026, as state officials have to redraw all of the state's congressional district lines later this year.

O'Neill said he thinks his entry in the race will lead Republicans to redraw the district to be even more GOP-friendly for Joyce in 2026.

The Plain Dealer/cleveland.com has reached out to a Joyce spokesperson for comment.