

# Ohio Supreme Court justice confirms unprecedented move to challenge colleague's seat

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—Republican Ohio Supreme Court Justice Pat Fischer confirmed Wednesday that he's going to run next year against fellow Justice Jennifer Brunner, the lone Democrat left on the state's high court.

"I'm running to earn the support of the Ohio Republican Party State Central Committee and Republicans across Ohio, and I'm going to beat the sole remaining statewide Democrat on Election Day in 2026," said a statement from Fischer, a Cincinnati resident who's in the middle of his second six-year term in office.

Ohio Supreme Court spokeswoman Lisa Colbert previously stated that, to her knowledge, no Ohio Supreme Court justice has previously run for another court seat during the middle of their term.

Republican Justice Joe Deters [successfully unseated Democratic incumbent Melody Stewart last year](#), but Deters – who was appointed to the court by Gov. Mike DeWine in 2022 – had no time left on his court term.

Fischer, 67, can't run for reelection when his term expires in 2028, as the Ohio Constitution prohibits people age 70 or older from being elected judge. But if he ran and won next year, he could continue serving on the court until 2032.

If he loses to Brunner, a Columbus resident who's seeking a second term, Fischer would keep his current court seat. If he wins, DeWine would get to appoint someone to finish the final two years of Fischer's term.

Fischer's move doesn't come as a surprise: Brunner [told The Plain Dealer/cleveland.com earlier this month](#) that Fischer came into her office and told her he's looking to run against her.

Brunner, a former Ohio secretary of state, isn't just the only Democrat on the Supreme Court but the only member of her party currently holding any statewide office in Ohio.

[Four other Republican lower-court judges](#) have already been campaigning for Brunner's seat. It remains to be seen whether Fischer's entry in the race will lead them to abandon their campaigns or run against him in the May 2026 GOP primary election.

It's not yet clear who, if anyone, the Ohio Republican Party might endorse. The party has a judicial screening committee that interviews and evaluates court candidates, then makes an endorsement recommendation to the party's State Central Committee.

That vetting process will begin soon, according to Ohio GOP spokesman Nick Johnson.

In his statement Wednesday, Fischer portrayed himself as "a reliable Christian Conservative voice" on the Ohio Supreme Court who is "known as an excellent writer for strength on law enforcement and upholding the Ohio Constitution.

"Ohioans deserve a Justice who will fight for Conservative values, respect the Constitution and not legislate from the bench," Fischer stated. "I have a record of this and look forward to once again earning the support of the Ohio Republican Party and all Ohioans."

Brunner, in a statement following Fischer's announcement, said that if the two end up running against each other, "the differences will be stark and obvious" between them.

"Party affiliation should be our last concern as judges," Brunner stated. "It's clear that this is the primary aim in my colleague's approach — and that's unfortunate."