

# Republican Ohio Supreme Court justice eyes Democratic colleague's seat

By Jeremy Pelzer  
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COLUMBUS, Ohio—Jennifer Brunner, the lone Democratic justice on the Ohio Supreme Court, says she's expecting to get a familiar Republican challenger when she runs for reelection next year: her fellow Justice Pat Fischer.

Brunner, in an interview, said Fischer came into her office Wednesday and told her he's looking to run against her in 2026, when she's intending to seek a second six-year term on the state's high court.

Trevor Vessels, a political adviser for Fischer, said the Cincinnati jurist hasn't made any decision yet. The Plain Dealer/cleveland.com has reached out to Fischer directly for comment.

Such a move, if Fischer follows through on it, would be unusual, as the Cincinnati jurist's current court term isn't up until 2028.

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

Republican Justice Joe Deters [successfully unseated a colleague last year when he ran against Democratic incumbent Melody Stewart](#), 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 Fischer ends up being elected to Brunner's seat, DeWine would get to appoint someone to finish the final two years of Fischer's term.

An added wrinkle is that [four other Republican lower-court judges](#) are already campaigning for Brunner's seat. It remains to be seen whether Fischer's potential

entry in the race would lead them to abandon their campaigns or run against Fischer in the May 2026 GOP primary election.

Brunner, a Columbus resident who isn't just only the only Democrat on the Supreme Court but the only member of her party currently holding any statewide office in Ohio, said if Fischer challenges her, it would not be good for the court.

"If one justice is running to take out another justice, it's not conducive to collegiality," she said.