



2021 General Election results

November 3, 2021

Election day 2021 featured two special congressional elections, as well as mayoral races in several large cities, including Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton and Toledo. City councils, judicial seats and ballot issues were also decided. Nationally, Republicans enjoyed strong victories in Virginia, winning the Governor's office and other statewide offices. Historical data shows the political party opposite the sitting President often enter mid-term elections with an electoral advantage and when combined with last night's strong showing in New Jersey and Virginia, Ohio Republicans enter the critical 2022 election cycle with potentially strong tailwinds. Ohio Democrats, however, saw solid showings by young, up and coming candidates in mayoral and city council races across the state.

Below is Bricker & Eckler's overview of the 2021 General Election with details on races of particular interest. All percentages and vote totals are based on the results available at the time this summary was drafted.

Congressional special elections

Ohio's 11th Congressional District: Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Shontel Brown (D) defeated Laverne Gore, receiving nearly 80 percent of the vote in the race to replace former Congresswoman and current Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge (D).

Ohio's 15th Congressional District: In the special election to replace former Congressman Steve Stivers, Republican Mike Carey prevailed 58.3 percent to 41.7 percent over Democrat State Representative Allison Russo. Carey emerged from a crowded Republican primary thanks, in part, to an endorsement from former President Donald Trump.

Mayoral elections

Ohio's mayoral elections in 2021 could be described as a changing of the guard, thanks to retirements and term limits. Notable retirements from office included Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson, after four terms, and Lima Mayor David Berger, who served 32 years in office. Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley was term limited and Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley decided to run for Ohio governor in 2022. Mayors Cranley and Whaley are both competing for the Democratic nomination for governor.

Cincinnati: Hamilton County Clerk of Courts Aftab Pureval (D) defeated David Mann, also a Democrat, in the race to replace term-limited Mayor John Cranley. Pureval becomes the first Asian American mayor in the city's history.

Cleveland: Newcomer Justin Bibb defeated Cleveland City Council President Kevin Kelly.

Dayton: Jeffrey Mims Jr. defeated Rennes Bowers in the race to replace Nan Whaley, who announced she is running for governor in 2022, rather than run for reelection. Mayor-elect Mims previously served on the City Commission, the Dayton Board of Education and the Ohio School Board.

Toledo: Current Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz (D) defeated former Mayor Carty Finkbeiner (I), who was seeking a return to the office he previously held for three terms. In the end, Mayor Kapszukiewicz cruised to reelection.

Kettering: Former State Senator Peggy Lehner returns to elective office as she ran unopposed to be the next mayor of Kettering.

Lima: Longtime Lima Mayor David Berger, who served in the office for 32 years, announced earlier this year that he was not running for reelection. In addition to electing the first new mayor since 1989, the contest guaranteed a historic result, the city's first female mayor in its history. Sharetta Smith defeated Elizabeth Hardesty 3,180 to 2,678. Mayor-elect Smith also becomes the city's first African American mayor.

City council elections

Cincinnati: A field of 35 candidates was winnowed to nine. Council members Jan Michele Lemon-Kearney and Greg Landsman led the field. Also elected were Reggie Harris, Meeka Owens, Victoria Parks, Scotty Johnson, Jeff Cramerding, Mark Jeffreys and Liz Keating. Keating is the lone Republican on council.

Cleveland: Current State Representative Stephanie Howse won her race for Ward 7 on Cleveland City Council, and in a very close race first-time candidate Rebecca Maurer bested longtime incumbent Anthony Brancatelli in Ward 12. Other successful candidates include: Joe Jones, Kevin Bishop, Kerry McCormack, Deborah Gray, Richard Starr, Blaine Griffin, Michael Polensek, Kevin Conwell, Anthony Hairston, Brian Mooney, Kris Harsh, Jasmin Santana, Jenny Spencer, Brian Kazy and Charles Slife.

Columbus: Columbus City Council President Shannon Hardin was easily reelected and Nick Bankston and Lourdes Barroso de Padilla, all Democrats, were elected for the first time replacing Priscilla Tyson and Mitchell Brown, who are retiring from council. Former local reporter Tom Sussi, an Independent endorsed by the Republican Party, was the other candidate running for council.

Dayton City Commission: Incumbent Darryl Fairchild and Shenise Turner-Sloss campaigned together and defeated Stacey Benson-Taylor and Scott Silver for two seats on the Dayton City Commission.

Toledo: Nick Komives, Cerssandra McPherson, Katie Moline and Tiffany Preston Whitman all won and retained their seats on Toledo City Council. Former member of council, George Sarantou, also won a seat. Rounding out the six seats, from a field of twelve, is newcomer Michele Grim. All except Sarantou were endorsed by the Lucas County Democratic Party.

Judicial races

Cleveland Municipal Court: Cleveland residents voted for four judicial seats on the municipal court. Andrea Nelson Moore prevailed in her race against Michael Sliwinski. Judge Ann Oakar, Judge Lauren Moore and Judge Suzan Sweeney all were unopposed for reelection.

Franklin County Municipal Court: Franklin County residents voted for seven judicial seats in 2021.

For the Franklin County Environmental Judge, the competitive race featured incumbent Judge Stephanie Mingo who prevailed over Scott Kirschman. Judge Gina Russo and Mary Kay Fenlon also won close races for the Franklin County Municipal Court.

The other successful candidates for Franklin County Municipal Court were Mike McAllister, Bill Hedrick, Judge Cynthia Ebner, Judge Jim O'Grady, Judge Mark Hummer and Judge Eileen Paley.

Hamilton County Municipal Court: Hamilton County residents voted for just one judicial seat in 2021. Donte Johnson prevailed in a close three-way race for municipal court judge district 2 over Elizabeth Tye and incumbent Judge Bertha Garcia Helmick.

Other issues of interest

City of Columbus Issue 7: Voters overwhelmingly rejected Issue 7 in Columbus, which would have directed \$87 million from the city to an Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency Fund, a Clean Energy Education and Training Fund, a Minority Business Enterprise Clean Energy Development Fund and a Columbus Clean Energy Partnership Fund. A group called ProEnergy Ohio LLC, who represents the petitioners, would have controlled the various funds with little to no oversight. Earlier this year the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the city abused its discretion when it rejected the petition. Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and other city elected officials campaigned against the issue, arguing it would jeopardize the city's finances and ability to provide essential services. ProEnergy Ohio LLC filed paperwork with the city in October 2021 for a similar ballot issue that directs \$107 million to the organization. The filing is still undergoing legal review by Columbus City Attorney Zack Klein.

City of Cincinnati Issue 3: Cincinnati voters rejected a proposed charter amendment that supporters claimed would address the recent scandals that have plagued city government. Opponents of the amendment said it was overly complicated and could bring more chaos and uncertainty to the city. The proposal included eight anti-corruption measures, including tying city council member's salaries to the city's median household income, allows for recall of the mayor and changes the process for filling a council opening so that the 10th place finisher assumes a vacant seat, instead of councilmembers appointing a replacement. The proposal was defeated 56 percent to 44 percent.

School funding issues

The passage rate for school funding ballot issues rose to 81 percent compared to 56 percent in the 2020 General Election. Ninety nine requests were on the ballot, with 80 passing. New funding requests, which are historically less successful, saw a 52 percent passage rate (16 of 31 ballot issues). In 2020, only 36 percent of new funding requests passed. The Ohio School Boards Association maintains a [database of levy results](#).

Conclusion

With the 2021 elections finished and the Ohio General Assembly nearing the end of its 2021 work period, we turn to 2022, where addressing the ongoing recovery from the pandemic, a possible capital budget, and, of course, the 2022 general election all loom. Next year's election features an open U.S. Senate seat, all statewide constitutional offices and the partisan balance of the Ohio Supreme Court on the ballot next year, in addition to new state house, senate and congressional districts. 2022 is shaping up as an action-packed year.

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