



Hannah NEWS SERVICE

Compilation of *Hannah News* Stories on 2022 ‘Races to Watch’

The following is a compilation of *Hannah News*’ stories on those legislative contests it has deemed “Races to Watch.” It will be updated as new stories are added to the series. This also includes stories on the state issues on the ballot.

U.S. Senate Race

[Tim Ryan vs. J.D. Vance for U.S. Senate](#)

U.S. Congressional Races

[Three Ohio Seats Key Battlegrounds for Control of Congress](#)

State Issues

[Issue 1: Proponents Say It's about Public Safety; Opponents Argue It Worsens Broken Bail System](#)

[Issue 2: Proponents Want to 'Shut Door' on Noncitizen Voting; Opponents Say Issue Restricts Voting](#)

Supreme Court of Ohio

[Electors to Decide Political Balance of Supreme Court](#)

State Board of Education

[Voters to Decide 5 Seats on State Board of Education](#)

Races to Watch

[Maharath vs. Reynolds in Senate District 3](#)

[Manning vs. Eliopoulos in Senate District 13](#)

[Roegner vs. Goetz in Senate District 27](#)

[Rulli vs. Hagan in Senate District 33](#)

[Lightbody vs. Rudler in House District 4](#)

[Beach vs. Brown in House District 5](#)

[Dobos vs. Harris in House District 10](#)

[Somani vs. Tarazi in House District 11](#)

[Brennan vs. Austin in House District 14](#)

[Sweeney vs. Lamb in Ohio House District 16](#)

[Brewer, Taylor Vie for House District 18 after Davis' Disqualification](#)

[Troy vs. Phillips in House District 23](#)

[Baker vs. Giroux in House District 27](#)

[Miranda vs. Monzel in House District 28](#)

[Darrow vs. Roemer in House District 31](#)

[Shaughnessy vs. Young in House District 32](#)

[Weinstein vs. Bigam Rematch in House District 34](#)

[White v. Caruso in House District 36](#)

[Plummer v. Jackson in House District 39](#)

[Larson vs. Williams in House District 41](#)

[West vs. Thomas in House District 49](#)

[Manning vs. Phillips in House District 52](#)

[Al Cutrona vs. Bruce Neff in House District 58](#)

[Santucci vs. Peterson in House District 64](#)

[Pavliga vs. Clyde in House District 72](#)

Races to Watch: Tim Ryan vs. J.D. Vance for U.S. Senate

The race to replace U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) could be one of the closest statewide contests in the Tuesday, Nov. 8 General Election.

While Republicans have generally dominated statewide elections outside of U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown's (D-OH) seat and the Ohio Supreme Court in recent years, numerous polls and campaign fundraising numbers indicate that Democrat Tim Ryan is neck-and-neck with Republican J.D. Vance.

Vance, a newcomer to politics, rose to national fame following the publication of his 2016 memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*. He won a crowded Republican primary after receiving the coveted endorsement of former President Donald Trump.

Ryan has represented the Youngstown region in Congress for the last 20 years, and ran a short-lived campaign for president in 2020. He easily won the Democratic primary.

According to the RealClearPolitics.com poll average, Vance is leading Ryan by 2.5 percentage points. Polling averages from FiveThirtyEight.com show Vance with a 0.8 percent lead.

Independent polling has consistently shown the race within a few points, with Vance holding a slight lead in most of the surveys.

The same polls have also consistently shown Gov. Mike DeWine with a double-digit lead over Democratic challenger Nan Whaley, suggesting a significant number of voters are planning to vote for the Democrat in the U.S. Senate race and the Republican in the governor's race.

Ryan has raised significantly more money than Vance over the course of the campaign, but outside spending by the U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)-aligned Senate Leadership Fund has set aside \$28 million to help Vance compete on the airwaves.

Ryan has taken a moderate stance on issues during the campaign, specifically reaching out to voters who supported Trump in the 2020 election. Ryan has also characterized Vance as "too extreme" for Ohio, pointing to his position on abortion and his embrace of the "Big Lie" that the 2020 election was "stolen" from Trump.

"[Ryan] has taken on the challenges facing Ohio communities, working across the aisle to combat the opioid crisis, and investing in clean water infrastructure for Lake Erie. He's also worked hand-in-hand with businesses to revitalize American manufacturing and bring good-paying jobs and opportunities home to Ohio," Ryan's campaign website says. "In the Senate, Tim will fight to raise wages, make health care more affordable, invest in education, rebuild our public infrastructure and revitalize manufacturing so we can make things in Ohio again -- and he'll make sure we're cutting workers in on the deal every step of the way."

Vance, a former Trump critic, has since embraced the former president's policies, putting a heavy emphasis on economic issues and illegal immigration during his campaign. Vance has criticized Ryan for having a voting record that is less moderate than he claims, saying he has consistently supported the policies of President Joe Biden, who is not particularly popular in Ohio according to recent polling.

"J.D.'s business experience taught him firsthand that so many American companies struggle with unfair competition from China and from their own government, which often rewards multinational technology firms over Ohio small businesses," Vance's campaign website says. "The U.S. Senate needs someone who knows what it's like to live in a left-behind community, not a career politician who has done nothing for the people of Ohio."

Races to Watch: Three Ohio Seats Key Battlegrounds for Control of Congress

Three races on Ohio ballots could help decide whether Republicans are able to win back control of Congress in November or whether Democrats will be able to hold on to their slim majority.

Republicans currently hold a 12-4 advantage in U.S. House seats in Ohio's congressional delegation, but Ohio is losing a seat in the next Congress due to a smaller population increase than other states in the latest Census. Among the 15 seats, Democrats are heavily favored in two seats, while Republicans are heavily favored in nine, leaving three toss-ups.

National groups have been pouring money into those three races - District 1, District 9, and District 13. The candidates and the groups have focused on many of the same issues in each race, with Democrats focusing on abortion and threats to democracy and Republicans highlighting crime, immigration, inflation and the economy.

Ohio is currently using a congressional map for this election that has been declared unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court and will likely need to be redrawn before 2024. However, legislative Republicans have appealed that decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing the U.S. Constitution places the issue of congressional redistricting solely in the hands of state legislatures.

Here's how those key races stack up:

District 1

U.S. Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Cincinnati) is fighting for re-election in a redrawn district that now includes all of the city of Cincinnati, but also heavily Republican Warren County like his current district. He faces Cincinnati Councilman Greg Landsman in a bitter battle.

The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) biennial election guide, created with the help of *Hannah News*, gives the district a 48.99 percent Republican political index. Dave's Redistricting App gives it a 47.92 percent Republican political index. 2018 Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray won the district with 51.64 percent over Gov. Mike DeWine's 48.36 percent, and President Joe Biden received 54.29 percent to Donald Trump's 45.71 percent in 2020. Sabato's Crystal Ball rates the district as "Toss Up R."

District 9

U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Toledo), the woman to have served the longest in the U.S. House, hopes to continue her streak of more than 40 years in Congress in a vastly redrawn district.

No longer does she have the infamous "Snake on the Lake" district that combined parts of her home in Lucas County with Democratic portions of Cuyahoga County to give her a safer district. Now she faces re-election in a toss-up district that heads more west than east and includes all or parts of Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Ottawa, Sandusky, Wood, Lucas and Williams counties.

She faces political newcomer J.R. Majewski of Port Clinton who surprised many by defeating more well-established political faces on the Republican primary ballot to win the nomination. Majewski has aligned himself strongly with Donald Trump, the former president whose campaign sign Majewski painted in his yard, getting him national attention. He has recently faced criticism after stories claimed he had exaggerated his military record, which he has denied.

The district has a 49.88 percent Republican political index, according to OMA's election guide, while Dave's Redistricting App gives it a 48.63 percent index. Cordray defeated DeWine by a margin of 52 percent to 48 percent in 2018, while Trump beat Biden 51.48 percent to 48.52 percent. Sabato's Crystal Ball rates the district as "Leans D."

District 13

No longer is Democratic Summit County split among four different congressional districts. Now, a new district includes the whole county as well as going south into Stark County to contain Canton and slightly east to contain a sliver of Portage County.

It is one of two open races on the ballot that don't have an incumbent. The candidates are Democrat Emilia Sykes (D-Akron), the former Ohio House minority leader and member of a long-time Akron-area political family, and Republican Madison Gesiotto Gilbert, a North Canton attorney who is also an author and political commentator.

OMA pegs the district with a 48.12 percent Republican index, while Dave's Redistricting estimates it to be a 46.98 percent Republican lean. Cordray defeated DeWine here 53.84 percent to 46.16 percent, while Biden edged Trump 51.43 percent to 48.57 percent. Sabato's Crystal Ball rates the district as "Toss Up D."

The other races on the ballot for Congress include following:

- U.S. Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Cincinnati) faces Democrat Samantha Meadows, a Chillicothe EMT, in District 2. OMA rates the district as a 70.33 percent Republican index.
- U.S. Rep. Joyce Beatty (D-Columbus) faces Republican Columbus optician Lee Stahley in District 3. OMA gives the district a 31.22 percent Republican index.
- U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Urbana) faces Democrat Tamie Wilson, a consultant from Delaware, in District 4. OMA gives the district a 68.10 percent Republican index.
- U.S. Rep. Bob Latta (R-Bowling Green) faces Democrat Craig Swartz, an Upper Sandusky realtor, in District 5. OMA rates gives the district a 61.61 percent Republican index.
- U.S. Rep. Bill Johnson (R-Marietta) faces Democrat Louis Lyras, the president and CEO of Corcon Inc., in District 6. OMA gives the district a 59.99 percent Republican political index.
- In the second open seat on the ballot, Democrat Matthew Diemer, a small business owner from Streetsboro, faces Max Miller, a former aide to Trump, in District 7. OMA gives the district a 54.82 percent Republican lean.
- U.S. Rep. Warren Davidson (R-Troy) faces Democrat Vanessa Enoch, a West Chester business owner, in District 8. OMA gives the district a 62.81 percent Republican lean.
- U.S. Rep. Mike Turner faces Democrat David Esrati, a Dayton business owner, in District 10. OMA gives the district a 53.53 percent Republican lean.
- U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown (D-Warrensville Heights) faces Republican Eric Brewer, a Cleveland journalist, in District 11. OMA gives the district at 20.47 percent Republican lean.
- U.S. Rep. Troy Balderson (R-Zanesville) faces Amy Rippel-Elton, a Newark Democrat who is on disability, in District 12. OMA gives the district a 64.09 percent Republican lean.
- U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce (R-Chagrin Falls) faces Democrat Matt Kilboy, a Deerfield nurse and health care consultant, in District 14. OMA gives the district a 55.44 percent Republican lean.
- U.S. Rep. Mike Carey (R-Columbus) faces Democrat Gary Josephson, a Columbus educator, in District 15. OMA gives the district at 54.60 percent Republican lean.

Issue 1: Proponents Say It's about Public Safety; Opponents Argue It Worsens Broken Bail System

Proponents of Issue 1, the constitutional amendment that would require judges to consider public safety as a factor when setting cash bail, say it is simply about putting the system of setting bail back to the way it was before the Ohio Supreme Court changed it with its decision in *DuBose v. McGuffey*.

The Court in January found that decisions on cash bail should be limited to a defendant's appearance in court and not on whether an individual could commit future crimes while out on bond.

In response, legislative Republicans, with the backing of Attorney General Dave Yost, announced a constitutional amendment and other legislation to supersede the decision, with the General Assembly later bringing Issue 1 to the ballot through the passage of HJR2 (LaRe-Swearingen).

HJR2 sponsor Rep. Jeff LaRe (R-Canal Winchester) told *Hannah News* that the issue is about returning to the process and procedure that's been around for decades when it comes to setting cash bail amounts that was overturned by the decision.

"Frankly, it shocks people when they hear that because in the past, [judges] had discretionary authority to consider other things like public safety, the level of the crime, their ability to pay - all those things kind of factor into the bail amount when the judge was setting them. This *Dubose* decision basically stripped that authority away," he said.

LaRe said the decision has already had repercussions around the state, with judges' having to lower bail amounts for violent offenders, and in some cases those who had their bail amounts lowered went out and committed violent crimes.

He said lawmakers decided to use a constitutional amendment as the vehicle for the changes because the Court cited the Ohio Constitution in the *DuBose* decision.

Rep. David Leland (D-Columbus), who helped to co-author the official arguments against Issue 1 with Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati), said the problem with the amendment is that it will make Ohioans less safe.

"The problem is that it sounds like it's a good idea but it's not," Leland told *Hannah News*, adding that the "addiction to cash bail that the criminal justice system has in the state of Ohio will be enhanced" by Issue 1.

Particularly, Leland argued that Issue 1 will keep nonviolent offenders and poor people in jail because they can't afford the bail issued against them. Wealthy offenders, he said, will post bail regardless of the amount and go out and commit crimes.

He called bail a guessing game.

"Bail is the illusion of safety," Leland said. "You're guessing as to what is the amount of money if you're concerned about public safety - what is the amount of money that's required to keep this person off of the street? And if you guess wrong, then the results can be terrible for the people of the state of Ohio. And that's why this whole addiction to cash bail by the criminal justice system has to end."

He also said Issue 1 will take away all the responsibilities of the Ohio Supreme Court in dealing with bail issues.

Instead, he said lawmakers should push for the passage of HB315 (Leland-Hillyer), legislation he co-sponsored which he said splits individuals into two groups - people who are accused of nonviolent crimes and serious offenders. For serious offenders, he said the bill gives judges new procedures to add conditions for release on bail or to deny bail altogether.

LaRe said Issue 1 won't have any effect on passage of HB315 other than it may need to be amended to address technical issues and to conform the language should Issue 1 pass. He also criticized efforts in other states to move away from cash bail, saying those states have seen increases in crime. He cited Utah, which he said tried to move away from its bail system only to scrap those changes later and return to its previous system.

Both LaRe and Leland said they were not aware of any organized ballot issue groups for or against the amendment. Those in favor of the amendment include Yost and prosecutors around the state, while opposition groups include the ACLU of Ohio.

LaRe said he believes the plain language of the issue itself is enough for voters to pass it. Leland said opponents will do the best they can to get their message out.

"I don't know what happens at the end of the day, but I know what's right, and I know that Issue 1 is not right. Issue 1 is politics, not bail reform," Leland said.

He said he sees an ulterior motive in the amendment.

"This is all about the Supreme Court. This is all about the Supreme Court election. This is about the Legislature's majority members and the Legislature's view of the Supreme Court in the last year and a half. It has nothing to do with bail even though that's the headline in the proposal," Leland said.

LaRe said he doesn't know how the issue can be seen as political.

"I wouldn't put the safety of our communities at risk to play politics," he said. "That's ridiculous."

Issue 2: Proponents Want to 'Shut Door' on Noncitizen Voting; Opponents Say Issue Restricts Voting

Is Issue 2 a simple constitutional amendment that would shut the door on local municipalities' allowing noncitizens to vote in elections, or is it full of hidden language that restricts the right to vote for 17-year-olds and ties the hands of future legislatures on expanding voting registration?

Proponents of the proposed amendment, which was put on the ballot by the General Assembly as HJR4 (Seitz-Edwards) say it is the former, while one of its biggest opponents argues it is the latter, and that the language was intentional.

Rep. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) a sponsor of the resolution and one of the authors of the official arguments in favor of Issue 2, told *Hannah News* that he saw the need for the amendment after New York and San Francisco began to allow noncitizens to vote on their local issues.

Currently, only U.S. citizens are allowed to vote in federal elections, and state elections are restricted to Ohio residents who are U.S. citizens. But the question of whether local governments could allow noncitizens to vote in Ohio came up when Yellow Springs proposed allowing it in its municipal elections. Secretary of State Frank LaRose stepped in and ordered boards of elections, however, not to accept any registrations of noncitizens.

Seitz said the bill is poignant now, especially with an increase in illegal immigrants crossing the southern U.S. border.

"This is a subject of grave concern," he said. "We hope to shut the door firmly on this."

He said he also learned of other states' adding similar amendments to their constitutions during a convention. Those states include North Dakota, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and Alabama, with the latter three states adopting their amendments in 2020.

He also pushed back on the argument that people who live in cities should have a say in their local issues, saying that it is not just about noncitizens' voting on issues of concern, but also the power of taxation. Many who don't live in those cities pay taxes in those cities when they work there, meaning noncitizens could also have a say on those taxes. He said he believes that runs counter to American ideals.

Rep. Mike Skindell (D-Lakewood), a vocal opponent of Issue 2 and one of the authors of the official arguments against it, said many of the arguments for it such as those cited by Seitz are a "bait and switch." He said noncitizens have not been allowed to vote in elections in Ohio for more than 200 years and were not currently being allowed by communities.

Instead, Skindell said Issue 2 will fundamentally change voting rights in the Ohio Constitution.

Currently, Ohio allows a 17-year-old who will turn 18 before the General Election to vote in primaries during that election cycle. He argued the language of the amendment changes the granting of a right to vote to a restriction on voting.

He said if the sponsors of the amendment wanted to only address the issue of voting by noncitizens, the language would just affect home rule provisions in the Ohio Constitution, but instead the amendment also includes qualifications for voting.

"State laws can be changed, now can't they?" Seitz responded asked about current limits in law on citizens' voting in elections. "Putting this in the Constitution makes it impervious to changes in state law."

Seitz also said it was not the intention of the sponsors to take away the right to vote in primaries for 17-year-olds. He pointed to other provisions of the Ohio Constitution where it refers to voting for 18-year-olds. Those have never been used to challenge the ability for 17-year-olds to vote in primaries before, and he said he doubts anyone would challenge it under Issue 2.

Skindell was skeptical and said he believes the language is purposeful. He pointed to a legal battle in 2016 when then-Secretary of State Jon Husted issued a directive preventing the counting of 17-year-olds' primary votes for president. A judge later ruled that Husted had misconstrued the Ohio Revised Code. Because younger voters tend to vote more for Democrats, Skindell said he believes there is an effort to take that right away.

He also said language in the amendment would keep lawmakers from changing registration timelines, especially preventing a future General Assembly from passing legislation allowing same-day voting registration.

Seitz also said that was not the intent of the sponsors with the language, but added that "if it has that effect, I for one would not be unhappy at all." He said lawmakers have already spoken to the issue when it changed voter registration deadlines to eliminate the overlap of early voting and the end of registration that allowed some voters to register and cast an early ballot at the same time. He said Ohio currently has an extensive amount of time for early voting.

Races to Watch: Electors to Decide Political Balance of Supreme Court

The judicial philosophy of the Ohio Supreme Court could shift on Nov. 8 -- depending whether one believes partisan convictions influence judges -- but not because of Justices Sharon Kennedy (R) and Jennifer Brunner's (D) battle for chief justice. That will not change the high court's primary ideology, if any, leaving it to the two down-ballot justice elections to move the Court to the left or farther to the right.

Democrats likely have given up one seat on the Court already by running former Secretary of State Brunner rather than a non-incumbent for chief justice, as Gov. Mike DeWine is almost certain to appoint a Republican to Kennedy or Brunner's vacated spot as associate justice.

A Chief Justice Brunner might exercise some sway over a Republican majority or a Chief Justice Kennedy over a Democratic majority. But the deciding vote could be the one for seats currently held by Republican Justices Patrick Fischer and R. Patrick DeWine, who are challenged by Democratic Judges Terri Jamison of the 10th District Court of Appeals and Marilyn Zayas of the 1st District, respectively. Regardless of who is chief, a win for Jamison or Zayas or both would tilt the Court left, whether on paper or in substance.

The four incumbents' longest serving member, Kennedy has amassed 10 years on the Court after winning a retention election against former Gov. Ted Strickland appointee Justice Yvette McGee Brown and securing reelection in 2016. She previously sat on the Butler County Common Pleas Court, Domestic Relations Division, for 13 years, including as administrative judge, after seven years of private practice and previous stints as Butler County magistrate, juvenile warrant officer, and director of the victim-witness division. Kennedy was special counsel to former Attorney General Betty Montgomery from 1995 to 1998 and disciplinary counsel to the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 38, from 1991 to 1998. Prior to earning her law degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1991, Kennedy was a Hamilton police officer from 1985 to 1989.

A strong supporter of Ohio's specialty court dockets, she leads an annual statewide summit, "Lean Forward: Advancing the Treatment of Veterans Across Ohio."

Like many jurists, Kennedy keeps her extrajudicial comments to a minimum, though she did respond on camera to a series of questions presented by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce in August.

"Judicial philosophy lives on a continuum. To the far left is activism; to the far right is restraint. Somewhere between is that sliding scale," Kennedy said. "If you're an individual who believes, as I do, that judges should exercise restraint [and] decide only what is necessary to resolve the issue before them ... only say what the law says, not what it should be, distilling the meaning by using the text."

She said that is the only recipe for "stability and predictability" in the law on which businesses rely.

"With judicial activism, you cannot be certain what is likely to come next, because it is outcome-driven," said Kennedy. "Just because you have the power doesn't mean you should exercise it," she added, contrasting that with a lobby-influenced General Assembly.

Brunner has served on the Court since January 2021, ousting former Justice Judith French (R). She previously sat on the 10th District from 2014 to 2021 after her 2007-2011 tenure as Ohio's first female secretary of state, 2000-2005 stint on the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, and 17 years of private practice in courts and administrative tribunals at the state and federal level. She has held other political appointments and served as an international rule-of-law advisor in Benin, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Serbia and Sri Lanka, earning the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award as secretary of state in 2008. She graduated from Capital University Law School in 1983.

Brunner is more forthcoming about her "platform," as her campaign website describes it, and has spoken extensively on camera, including a Sept. 14, 2021 interview announcing her candidacy for chief justice.

"As I watched in horror in 2020 with the murder of George Floyd, I knew that running for the Supreme Court was the right thing to do," she said, targeting "systemic racism" in the criminal justice system. "I have worked with Chief Justice O'Connor on many of her very worthwhile initiatives. I know that we're on the path to starting to do that, but so much more needs to be done."

As chief justice, Brunner said she would appoint a new Commission on Fairness and Equality in Ohio Courts to bring to pass never-implemented recommendations from the 1999 Ohio Commission on Racial Fairness.

"We will examine every facet of Ohio's criminal justice system and identify and create solutions for systemic problems that result in unequal treatment of protected classes of individuals in the criminal justice system," she said during her announcement.

Her website platform highlights continued bail reforms, including the elimination of cash bond as a public safety measure; completion of a criminal justice database with demographics for race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic background and religion to measure their treatment in conviction and sentencing; and improved access to justice through greater use of court technology, including remote proceedings. Brunner also wants to convene a Task Force on Environmental Justice.

A new poll out from Spectrum News/Sienna College gives Kennedy the slightest advantage with 42 percent of the total vote compared to 41 percent for Brunner. That breaks a 40/40 tie in the same poll last month. Kennedy also is gaining among independents, earning 30 percent to Brunner's 39 percent in September and now trailing the Democrat 35 percent to 37 percent in Spectrum/Sienna's latest. Other pollsters have shown a similarly tight race for chief justice. Change Research is the outlier with 45 percent for Kennedy and 40 percent for Brunner.

By comparison, candidates Fischer and DeWine are considerably more reserved in their *ex parte* comments, though both emphasize a "conservative" approach to jurisprudence.

Fischer is completing his first term on the Court after sitting on the 1st District from 2010 to 2016 and working in private practice for many years. He was president of the Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) from 2012 to 2013 and the Cincinnati Bar Association from 2006 to 2007, also serving on the OSBA Board of Governors and on the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission as vice chair of its Judicial Branch and Administration of Justice Committee. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Harvard Law School.

Looking to unseat him, Jamison has sat on the 10th District since 2021 after serving on the Franklin County Common Pleas Court from 2013 to 2020. The Welch, WV native previously worked as a public defender after law school and later in private practice. Prior to graduating from Capital University Law

School in 2004, she owned and operated an insurance office for 16 years after starting her work life in the coal mines.

Jamison's website says she wants to create an "equitable Ohio" and "make equal justice under the law a reality" for all.

"I'm running for Ohio Supreme Court to help restore public trust in our legal system," she says. "The personal beliefs, philosophies and principles of the justices determine the outcomes of cases and shape our society."

In the other Supreme Court matchup, DeWine brings years of private practice and public service as a Cincinnati council member (1999-2005), Hamilton County commissioner (2005-2009), Hamilton County Common Pleas Court judge (2009-2013) and 1st District judge (2013-2017), winning his first race for the Supreme Court in 2016.

DeWine's website points to his defining court decisions and, like Kennedy, calls for judicial restraint and "respect for the constitutional roles of the other coequal branches of government."

His opponent, Zayas, spent 16 years in private practice before winning a seat on the 1st District in 2016. Ohio appeals courts' first Latina, the NYC native was previously a Hamilton County public defender and, prior to graduating from University of Cincinnati College of Law in 1997, an information technology manager for Procter & Gamble.

Rather than judicial philosophy, Zayas's website emphasizes her courtroom experience and published opinions. Among them is her 2018 appointment as visiting Ohio Supreme Court judge in *State v. Vega*, which unanimously upheld police search of a car that uncovered several parcels of marijuana-infused "Sweetstone" candy.

Retiring Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor has acknowledged the purported advantage Supreme Court candidates with Irish surnames have on the ballot -- one she ostensibly has enjoyed. Kennedy and Jamison also are in that camp, though DeWine, son of the sitting governor, might have the biggest name advantage of all.

It's anybody's guess whether "D" and "R" by Supreme Court candidates' names this year - the first time -- will be a bigger boon to Democrats or Republicans, what with a politically contentious Court term particularly considering the many decisions around redistricting, the federal repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, and Ohio's own abortion laws.

Races to Watch: Voters to Decide 5 Seats on State Board of Education

One incumbent has a clear path to re-election while another seat will definitely see new representation in this fall's State Board of Education races.

Five of the board's 11 elected positions are on the ballot in November. At year's end, four of the eight seats fill by the governor will come up for appointment. Since new gubernatorial terms on the board start the second Monday of the new year after an election, Gov. Mike DeWine will get to fill those seats regardless of whether he is re-elected.

Board races are officially nonpartisan, but the political parties often endorse candidates.

Like other races, the State Board of Education contests were roiled by Ohio's protracted redistricting saga. Board districts are supposed to consist of three Senate districts apiece, but General Assembly maps were unsettled for a long time. In addition, Gov. Mike DeWine's designation of which Senate districts corresponded to which board districts was based on a General Assembly map that's since been invalidated and superseded. Board districts, therefore, do not align to Senate district boundaries, but DeWine's office argues it lacks legal authority to designate districts anew.

District 2

In District 2, incumbent Kirsten Hill filed for re-election but subsequently withdrew, citing personal reasons. That leaves a contest between Sen. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo), a veteran legislator, and Sarah McGervey of Avon Lake, a middle school teacher at a Catholic school.

Fedor, a former teacher and military veteran, has served in the House and Senate since 2001. She could not seek re-election to the Senate this year because she instead joined former Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley's ticket in the Democratic primary for governor and lieutenant governor, which former Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley and Cuyahoga County Councilmember Cheryl Stephens won.

According to her campaign website, McGervey supports school choice and limiting government involvement in schools, and opposes teaching of critical race theory and comprehensive sex education.

District 2 includes Erie, Huron, Lorain, Lucas and Wood counties and parts of Hancock and Ottawa counties.

District 3

In District 3, Board President Charlotte McGuire of Centerville has no opponent. She originally joined the board in 2017 as an appointee to replace A.J. Wagner, then won election in 2018 and was subsequently elected vice president. She became president in 2021 after then-President Laura Kohler resigned under pressure from Senate Republicans amid longstanding disagreement over a 2020 anti-racism resolution that the board ultimately repealed over Kohler's objections. McGuire has a long career in nonprofit and local government service.

District 3 includes Butler, Miami, Montgomery and Preble counties and part of Darke County.

District 4

In District 4, incumbent Jenny Kilgore faces challenger Katie Hofmann.

Kilgore instructs college students majoring in education at Miami University and Indiana Wesleyan University. She is a former middle school teacher at a Christian school. Kilgore chairs the board's Integrated Student Supports Committee.

Hofmann is retired after decades teaching music in Cincinnati schools. She is endorsed by the major teacher unions.

District 4 includes Hamilton and Warren counties.

District 9

In District 9, incumbent John Hagan faces Robert Fulton of Streetsboro.

Hagan spent eight years in the House, including time as chair of the House Public Utilities Committee. He has a family heating and plumbing business.

Fulton is a retired teacher and school administrator now serving on the Streetsboro Board of Education.

District 9 includes Ashtabula, Lake, Portage and Trumbull counties and parts of Geauga and Stark counties.

District 10

In District 10, incumbent Tim Miller is seeking election to a full term after being appointed last year to succeed Sarah Fowler Arthur, who was elected to the Ohio House. He has two challengers -- Tom Jackson of Solon and Cierra Lynch Shehorn of Mogadore.

Miller owns an insurance agency and previously served on the Akron Board of Education.

Jackson, a Senate candidate in 2020, also works in insurance.

Shehorn is a consultant with previous experience working for the State Medical Board and the Summit County Domestic Relations Court.

District 10 includes Summit County and parts of Cuyahoga and Geauga counties.

Gubernatorial Appointees

Gubernatorial appointees whose terms conclude at the end of 2022 include Mark Lamoncha of Columbiana, CEO of a manufacturing company; Mike Toal of Sidney, CEO of Rotary Compression Technologies; Paul LaRue of Washington Court House, a former history teacher; and Walt Davis of Lebanon, a retired businessman and aviation technology program instructor.

The State Board of Education is created in the Ohio Constitution. However, aside from appointing the superintendent, all of its powers and duties, as well as details about the makeup of the board, are left to law.

The board establishes by rule the operating standards for Ohio schools, and also votes on regulations to implement other education laws. Board members also decide disciplinary cases against people licensed to work in Ohio schools.

Races to Watch: Maharath vs. Reynolds in Senate District 3

After pulling off one of the biggest upsets of the 2018 election, Sen. Tina Maharath (D-Canal Winchester) is looking to defend her seat against Republican challenger Michele Reynolds.

Maharath won the race for Senate District 3 by 705 votes against former Rep. Anne Gonzales (R-Westerville), giving the Democrats a rare pickup in the chamber. The seat had been held by Republican Kevin Bacon for eight years.

Maharath is hoping for a similar result in the redrawn district, which retains a slight Democratic lean, according to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*.

Senate District 3 has a political Republican index of 48.32 percent. Democrat gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray received 54.36 percent of the vote in 2018, while Gov. Mike DeWine got 45.64 percent. In 2020, President Joe Biden got 53.93 percent of the vote, while former President Donald Trump got 46.07 percent.

The district's top three industries by number of jobs are trade, transportation and utilities (30.2 percent); education and health services (17.5 percent); and professional and business services (17 percent), according to the OMA guide.

In a phone interview with *Hannah News*, Maharath said she expects another competitive race, but believes her hard work and new advantage of being an incumbent will result in her re-election.

"[Being an incumbent] helps facilitate my resume easier when I'm at the door talking to voters, versus last time around, where I was trying to convince people to vote for this little girl from Whitehall, OH who came here as a refugee from Laos," Maharath said. "This time around ... I already have a track record of things I've already done, and things I will continue to do."

Maharath said she's also been able to form relationships with progressive organizations, labor groups and medical groups, which should help her campaign as well.

"They know firsthand about the great work I've already done at the Statehouse, and can vouch that I'm a fighter," Maharath said.

The Senate minority whip said she's proud of her efforts to ensure pandemic relief was provided for small businesses, child care and veteran homes. She also noted her work in co-sponsoring and helping to pass "Esther's Law" SB58 (Antonio-Brenner), which was signed by Gov. Mike DeWine in December 2021.

Discussing legislation she'd like to see move in lame duck or during her next term, Maharath pointed to SB214, which would require K-12 public schools to include instruction in Asian American history.

"With me being Ohio's first Asian American woman elected to the General Assembly, I've come to realize that most of my colleagues never worked with someone like me before, or they're not familiar with

someone like me. So having that introduction early on in K-12 education helps facilitate a lot of conversations and bill-making when it comes down to Asian Americans," Maharath said.

Maharath also discussed SB87, which she is co-sponsoring with Sen. Niraj Antani (R-Miamisburg), to create the Ohio Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs Commission. She said the bill is particularly needed because of the rise in anti-Asian American hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"That way, we can have a voice in our state government. That commission is meant to be the middleman between Asian American Ohioans and our state government. The way we can move forward from the pandemic and move forward from some of the concerns of the Asian American community is to have that bill pass, because we're still the only ethnicity without a commission right now. That's not acceptable, because we need to let the state know that we're an all-inclusive state, and that includes Asian Americans," Maharath said.

Maharath is being challenged by Reynolds, a business owner, nonprofit CEO, Madison Township trustee and director of the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Reynolds also resides in Canal Winchester.

"I am what I like to call an 'addictive problem solver.' I'm someone who has actually been uplifting and serving the community for the last 25 years through my nonprofit work providing housing and providing solutions to needs here in Central Ohio and throughout the state of Ohio," Reynolds told *Hannah News*.

Discussing why she is running for the seat, Reynolds said she is concerned about rising crime, inflation and workforce shortages, among other issues.

"I'm just someone who has been very results-oriented. I lean in. I'm a business owner, so I approach problems from a business perspective, and I just felt like I could really make a difference in this role," she said.

Reynolds said affordable housing is one of the top issues she would like to address.

"It's no secret that here in Central Ohio we have an affordable housing crisis," she said. "I've been in real estate since 2004. I'm a real estate agent, and I see how tough the market is even for just trying to buy a home in Ohio, but also the affordability of it. When you have individuals who have barriers like being formerly incarcerated or addiction and mental health, it's even that much more pervasive. There are some things we need to do differently."

Education policy is another priority, Reynolds said.

"I myself have five college degrees, and I'm currently in law school part-time in a hybrid law program at the University of Dayton, so education has always been a priority for my family," she said. "I am concerned about the challenges our kids are facing post-pandemic. ... I feel like our kids are struggling and lagging behind."

She said she supports public and private school choice.

"I believe that we definitely need to fix our public schools, but we also need to make sure that parents have rights to send their kids to schools that they believe are adequately teaching their kids. I want to be a leader in that space," Reynolds said.

"Another thing that I'm concerned about and will work hard for is safer communities. Criminal justice reform, looking at those collateral sanctions that hold people back from being able to enter the workforce or re-enter society and move forward with their life," she continued. "I have some ideas about the restructuring of our municipal court system and how we can do something a little bit more local and regionalized that will help us take care of crime in our own communities."

Reynolds said she is a moderate candidate who can appeal to Republicans, Independents and Democrats.

"I am someone who has worked across the aisle, and believes that it does take people working together. This is a very urban county, but yet and still, it brings a lot of diversity. We have urban, we have suburban and we have rural. I bring a lot of that to the table -- I'm from Northeast Ohio, from a rural Appalachian

county, Jefferson County -- but I've been here 21 years. I bring diversity to it from the perspective of not just being an African American candidate, but also having worked in the urban community for the last 25 years and understanding the issues," she said.

Races to Watch: Manning vs. Eliopoulos in Senate District 13

The 13th Senate District remains a key swing district in the reconfigured state legislative map, with Sen. Nathan Manning (R-North Ridgeville) hoping to hold off a challenge from Democrat Anthony Eliopoulos.

According to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, which is published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, Senate District 13 has a political Republican index of 50.57 percent. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray received 51.63 percent of the vote in 2018, while Gov. Mike DeWine got 48.37 percent. Former President Donald Trump got 52.85 percent in 2020, while President Joe Biden got 47.15 percent.

Manning's current district includes all of Lorain and Huron counties. The new district still includes all of Lorain County, but now has parts of Erie County and Huron County.

In an interview with *Hannah News*, Manning said he's been working hard to introduce himself to voters in Erie County during the campaign.

"Obviously, Erie County's not as familiar with me, so I'm certainly trying to get out there and meet those voters, and we've done that. It's kind of confusing for constituents. I wish it was still two whole counties," Manning said.

Manning said he's enjoyed chairing the Senate Judiciary Committee, working on policies that are important to lawyers and courts across the state. Manning is also an attorney, and currently owns the law firm Manning & Manning with his sister, Allison.

He said criminal justice reform measure SB288 (Manning) has a chance to pass during the lame duck session, noting he recently met with Rep. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) on potential changes.

"We worked through a lot of possible amendments and everything else. I think we're going to have a sub bill here ready that hopefully threads that needle where we're getting a lot done, but also not upsetting one group too much where we might lose votes," Manning said. "We're trying to thread that needle where we're being smart on criminal justice, and helping people that are either coming out of prison or turning their life around to be productive members of society. Hopefully we'll have a good bill here in the next couple weeks, and hopefully we can get something done."

Manning also discussed his SB203, which would modernize the laws to ensure people being charged with operating a vehicle under the influence (OVI) of marijuana were actually impaired while they were driving.

"Right now in Ohio, it's really not looking at the science that we have on impairment. It's just whether it's in your system or not. I think we need to focus on impairment and make sure people are safe on the roads," he said, noting he's working with the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Ohio State Highway Patrol, defense attorneys and prosecutors.

"I think everybody agrees that we don't want to be punishing people that aren't impaired," Manning said. "I think it's a fairness issue, and it's also a safety issue. We want to make sure that people who are impaired aren't driving, but we also want to make sure -- especially with medical marijuana, and marijuana has been legalized for recreational purposes across the country -- it's important that we're not punishing people with a very serious charge if they're not actually impaired. ... You could be using it perfectly legally, being responsible and not driving while under the influence of it, but still ... technically breaking the law. So we need to change the law."

On the legalization of marijuana for adult use, Manning said he's interested in the debate, but isn't pushing for or against it.

"I think it's coming no matter what, eventually, whether that's a ballot issue or legislation, but I think we need to be careful ... and not rush it," Manning said.

Manning also mentioned his work on legislation legalizing sports gambling, saying that issue often comes up when he's out knocking on doors during the campaign.

"At a door, it will actually come up quite a bit," Manning said. "There are a lot of people who maybe aren't passionate about politics, but they're passionate about this issue. ... If I'm going to a Republican club meeting or maybe a meeting that's really involved on some of these bigger issues like guns, abortion, taxes, you don't hear about it a lot. But when you're at a door with a normal voter that maybe isn't super politically passionate, this is like a top issue for those people."

Manning said abortion also comes up often on the campaign trail, noting that while he's voted in favor of some abortion restrictions, he didn't support 133-SB23 (Roegner), which bans abortion when fetal cardiac activity is detected.

"I consider myself pro-life, but I realize that it's a sensitive issue and there's a lot of difficult decisions to be made. I'm certainly not pro-choice by any means, but I understand that we need reasonable exceptions, and we need to work with doctors and experts on it, and not just listen to the far right and the far left on this issue. When I'm talking to voters -- both Republican and Democrat -- at the door, most of them are not 100 percent pro-choice and most of them are not 100 percent pro-life. I think that's the majority," Manning said.

Eliopoulos, a first lieutenant in the Ohio Army National Guard and former veterans and military affairs liaison for U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), told *Hannah News* that he's running for the seat to help meet the needs of the district's constituents, emphasizing his love of public service.

"That public service started back when I enlisted in the Army in 2016. This part of my life was probably one of the most challenging times of it -- my dad was diagnosed with cancer, and I decided to enlist to help with medical bills because they were helping me pay for college," he said.

"At basic training, he unfortunately passed away from cancer, so I had to go through this whole process of going home on emergency family leave and ... the Army kind of messed up the whole process. I realized that I was probably one of the many people that this happened to, right? I could have easily quit the Army while I was going home, or I could be the solution to the problem," Eliopoulos continued. "So I decided to later commission as an officer, and now in the Army I do personnel staff services -- make sure service members are getting the pay and benefits they deserve -- and I do equal opportunity and sexual harassment stuff, anything regarding personnel in the Army and my unit is what I do. Really, running for office is an extension of that. I want to be a state senator that's there for the community."

Eliopoulos said he worked for Brown for three years, and spoke with veterans across the state about ways to improve the bureaucracy they frequently have to deal with.

"I saw people in deep red counties when I reached out to them and said, 'Hey I'm from Sen. Brown's office and I want to hold a veterans roundtable,' people were just shocked that anyone from Sherrod Brown's office would want to reach out to them. Their first inclination was, 'Well, is this an election year for him?' And I was like, 'No, he was just elected in 2018. He's got a six-year term, and he sits on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. We want to meet the veterans in your county to learn about what the VA is doing and what we can do better as a country to care for our service members.' That right there just showed me the lack of public service that's happening right now. If people have their guard up when official offices reach out to help, you know something's wrong," Eliopoulos said.

He said Brown was a great boss and has shown him how to serve constituents across the ideological spectrum, so he's trying to follow his example on the campaign trail.

"We see Sherrod winning, one, because he's such a personable guy. He can connect with anyone. It doesn't matter their life experiences. And that's what makes a good officeholder and elected official, is your ability to connect with others," Eliopoulos said. "That's what I've been trying to do on the trail. We've been hitting the doors of Independents and Republicans as well, and I just tell them what I'm doing and what I'm running for. Honestly, most of the conversation is, 'What's the state Senate? What does the

Statehouse actually do? You're the first one to ever come to my door.' So it's kind of a civics lesson first before I can get into the policy and what I want to do."

He said he likes to ask voters what they want from a state senator, and what issues are most important to them. The issues that have come up include infrastructure, education and local government funding.

"You reach out to any council member in any city in Ohio and ask them why can't they fix the roads, and they say it's because of the lack of funding. These are basic things that our cities and our communities need to be able to do. If we can't do that, then how are we going to be able to invest in a new park or a new marina in Lorain?" he said. "The state holds so much of the state income tax in the General Revenue Fund, and isn't giving it to our local communities."

Eliopoulos said the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is a great example of how to help local communities with funding issues.

"County commissioners who I've talked to that are Republican say, 'We needed that ARPA funding because we could fund our police. We could invest in our roads, invest in our infrastructure.' That was needed for so long, and that's because the state has abandoned our local governments," he said.

Eliopoulos said he's also passionate about defending the freedom of all Ohioans, including the freedom to choose whether to give birth.

"I think it's time for politicians to start listening to experts in the field," he said, pointing to the American Medical Association's position in favor of abortion rights.

On education, Eliopoulos said the state has not been providing enough funding for local public schools.

"That forces communities to pass new levies and increase property taxes on residential homeowners, and that puts a burden, locally, on our people," he said.

Eliopoulos said he doesn't have anything against Manning personally, but said he hasn't done enough to restore local government funding and hasn't stood up enough against the "extremists" in his party.

Eliopoulos said comedian Jon Stewart helped get him interested in politics, noting he had to convince his parents to let him stay up late to watch *The Daily Show* on school nights.

"I would have to bribe my mom -- 'I'll brush your hair!' And she would let me stay up past 11:30 so I could finish *The Daily Show*. I was probably 10," Eliopoulos said.

Races to Watch: Roegner vs. Goetz in Senate District 27

Sen. Kristina Roegner (R-Hudson) is hoping to hang on to her seat against Dr. Patricia Goetz, who is eyeing a pickup for Democrats in the reconfigured 27th Senate District.

While the district has leaned Republican over the last decade, the newly-drawn district has a slight Democratic lean.

According to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, the district has a political Republican index of 49.08 percent. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray received 52.87 percent of the vote in 2018, while Gov. Mike DeWine got 47.13. In 2020, President Joe Biden won 51.48 percent of the vote, while former President Donald Trump got 48.52 percent.

In 2020, according to OMA, the 27th Senate District had a 57.28 percent political Republican index. DeWine beat Cordray 53.5 percent to 43.66 percent in 2018, while Trump beat Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton 55.47 percent to 40.16 percent in 2016.

"The district has changed substantially. Currently I represent all of Wayne County, which of course is primarily very rural -- there's Wooster in there, and Orrville -- but it's generally very rural. Then there's Western Stark County and some portions of Summit County. So that's the current district. Now it has

changed ... to be contained entirely in Summit County, minus a few areas," Roegner told *Hannah News* in an interview.

Despite the change in the electorate, Roegner said her campaign strategy would remain mostly the same as past elections. Roegner served in the House for eight years before moving to the Senate, taking over Frank LaRose's seat after he was elected secretary of state.

"Does that change how we campaign? No, it doesn't, except for the fact -- Wayne County was rural and you don't really do a lot of door-to-door down there. Now, in all of Summit County we've been knocking on doors everywhere," Roegner said. "There's also a large portion of the district that is new to me ... like Barberton and Green. Cuyahoga Falls I did represent for one General Assembly way back in 2011-12 when I was in the House. ... But it's been over a decade, so Cuyahoga Falls, for all intents and purposes, is new as well. So I'm really getting out there and meeting the voters, knocking on doors and going to football games. Pretty much anywhere anyone will invite me, I will gladly go and speak to groups and get to know as many of these people as possible, and I enjoy that."

Roegner noted that when she goes door-to-door, she writes her cell phone number on her literature and encourages potential voters to contact her.

"I'm accessible. You kind of catch them off-guard -- when you're going right up to the door the first time and ring the doorbell, they're not necessarily expecting you to show up. So I point that out and say, 'Listen, if you have any questions or concerns or you want to talk to me or text me, you can do it directly,'" she said.

Roegner said the top issues on the campaign trail have been gas prices, food prices, supply chain bottlenecks, worker shortages, abortion and guns. She noted that the top issues differ based on where she is in the district.

"Areas that are more economically challenged, for them, when they go to fill up their gas tank ... \$100 to fill up a gas tank? That matters to them. So all of a sudden, these issues of inflation, the price of gas and food, that shoots right to the top, because it affects them every day, and it affects their wallet directly," Roegner said. "Maybe the areas that are not so sensitive to the price of gas, sometimes they'll be more interested in what's happening with immigration, even though we don't really have anything to do directly with that in the state Legislature, but they still want to talk about it. And what's happening overseas in Russia and Ukraine, and maybe the abortion issue. They may want to talk about some bigger, broader topics."

Roegner said she loves serving in the Senate, pointing to the high number of bills she's been able to push across the finish line over the last four years.

"Just in this last General Assembly, I've had 10 bills signed by the governor, and have become law. It's just so exciting. And five of those 10 are occupational licensure bills," she said. "Those make a difference in these people's lives. So now, all of a sudden, that occupational license, if you got it in Missouri and you want to move to Ohio, you can."

Roegner then told a story about a woman she met on the campaign trail.

"I thought she wasn't home, but as I'm turning to leave her doorstep, she pulls up in her car. She gets out, she looks like she's exhausted -- you can tell just by looking at her. She's not really interested in the conversation. So I was just going to hand her my lit and go, and I see her badge, and it looked like a nurse's badge. I said, 'Hey are you a nurse?' She said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'Hey, do you know anything about that nursing compact?' And her eyes lit up. I go, 'I'm the sponsor of that bill.' She literally started jumping up and down in her yard, and she goes, 'My sister is a nurse out-of-state and she's been dying to move back to Ohio, and now she can.' And she gave me this great big hug," Roegner said.

"That is what excites me -- when I'm able to get stuff done," she continued. "I've had more bills signed by the governor this General Assembly than any other rep or senator, and I have a lot of wonderful, productive colleagues out there. It's just my thing. I love to get policy done. It's just satisfying."

Goetz - a child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist -- said she's running for a number of reasons, focusing on issues such as education, health care, reproductive rights, economic opportunity, public safety, criminal justice reform and the environment.

Goetz said she recently ran for Hudson City Council and lost by 187 votes out of 20,000 ballots cast, so she is hoping to come out on the winning side of a tight race this time around.

"When this seat became open and there were no [confirmed] districts, and it was hard for people to consider running ... I pretty much figured they wouldn't cut the city in half. Roegner and I both live in Hudson, so I figured that was safe," Goetz said. "I've knocked on over 10,000 doors and have met with a lot of people at various events. There certainly is a lot of enthusiasm."

Goetz criticized Roegner for being the main sponsor of 133-SB23, which prohibits abortion when fetal cardiac activity is detected. That law was implemented after *Roe v. Wade* was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court, but has since been blocked by the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas for likely violating the Ohio Constitution.

"I am a physician, and I have been very concerned about how physicians have been criminalized with the six-week ban. You can have a woman who has serious heart disease, and is pregnant at six weeks but is stable, and by 16 weeks is in congestive heart failure, and they cannot do an abortion until that point," Goetz said. "Doctors are put in a position where we're supposed to do no harm, and yet, this law is putting doctors in a position of doing harm, because who wants to go to jail? The decision about this should be between a woman, her family and her doctor. The government should stay out."

Goetz also criticized Roegner's SB132, which would prohibit transgender women and girls from participating in women's and girls' sports. Goetz said SB132 and HB151 (Jones) "target all girls that are scholastic athletes."

"Anyone can go up to a girl athlete and say, 'We don't think you're a girl.' And the House bills says you have to prove that with external and internal genitalia exams, chromosomes and testosterone," Goetz said. "Girls' sports are important for girls' self-esteem. This will ruin girls' sports. Plus, psychologically, it would be terrible to be a 14-year-old girl and somebody suddenly say, 'We don't think you're a girl.' And then in order to play sports, you would have to prove that you're a girl."

Discussing her professional career, Goetz said she's one of the few child psychiatrists who regularly performed home visits.

"I did that for 20 years with a special team called 'multi-systemic therapy' and I was able to see how parents lived, and families lived, and how they struggled. Some of them would work two or three jobs, and that's why their kids got in trouble. Nobody was monitoring what the teenagers were getting into. But I so respected how hard they worked. We have to support families more, the working class," Goetz said, noting she worked her way through medical school.

"I worked as a waitress, lifeguard and clerk. I know from personal experience that service people do not get paid enough, but I was able to scrape together enough money and scholarships that I was able to pay my own way, which is much harder today for other people, so I was fortunate," she said.

Goetz said she has worked for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) for six years, and Stark County Mental Health & Addiction Recovery for eight years.

"So I have worked on the state and county level. I've worked with courts. I've worked with schools. I've personally gone to probably 100 IEP meetings in schools to support parents," she said. "I have a different background for state government, and I think that my background would really serve the citizens well, because I come from a whole different way. I see things differently. I'm not a professional politician."

On another issue, Goetz said she supports legalizing and regulating marijuana like alcohol.

"I've really struggled, I'll be honest, with legalization. But now that so many people are getting tainted marijuana that has fentanyl in it, I think it has reached the point where yes, we should legalize it so people can get safe marijuana," Goetz said, noting she is concerned about potential negative consequences for

children, even though it would still be illegal for children to use the drug. "Alcohol is just as bad, but we've got it legal, and it's not a safe thing either for anybody. But it's there."

Goetz said she is optimistic about the campaign, noting she is focusing on persuadable voters with direct mail and digital ads.

"I've got a great one that is a *Roe* mailer to persuadable women. We have a comparison mailer between what she stands for and what I stand for. We have one on girl athletes and one on health care. We have one on gun-free schools. We have been very good about figuring out who are the persuadable voters," she said.

Races to Watch: Rulli vs. Hagan in Senate District 33

After taking over the former Democratic stronghold four years ago, Sen. Michael Rulli (R-Salem) is hoping to fend off a challenge from well-known political veteran Bob Hagan, who represented the Youngstown area in both the House and the Senate for decades.

Rulli defeated former Rep. John Bocchieri (D-Poland) in 2018, replacing former Senate Minority Leader Joe Schiavoni (D-Boardman), who held the seat for about 10 years.

The redrawn Senate District 33 now includes Carroll County, in addition to Mahoning and Columbiana Counties.

The district has a political Republican index of 54.87 percent, according to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*. Gov. Mike DeWine received 51.44 percent of the vote in the 2018 election, while Democratic candidate Richard Cordray got 48.56 percent. Former President Donald Trump got 58.89 percent of the vote in 2020, while President Joe Biden received 41.1 percent.

Rulli did not respond to messages seeking comment for this story, but did sit down for a wide-ranging interview with *Hannah News* shortly after taking office.

Rulli's campaign website focuses on the issues of jobs, energy independence and election integrity.

"When GM announced they would close down their Lordstown plant, Michael led the charge to find a new landlord to keep the factory running. He work with Lordstown Motors so they could help the Mahoning Valley become a leader in electric vehicles," the website says.

Natural gas production is essential to provide energy independence for the U.S., Rulli's campaign says.

"By creating jobs and keeping energy costs low, the oil and gas industry has reignited American innovation in the Mahoning Valley," the website says. "Rulli will fight the radical attempts by the left to ban fracking that dramatically raise energy prices for working people."

On elections, Rulli's campaign says, "Ohio politics rely on free and fair elections to preserve the voting process. Michael has pushed for new legislation to secure our elections and keep our elections governed by laws, not bureaucrats who change the laws to benefit themselves."

In an interview with *Hannah News*, Hagan said he's running for the seat to continue fighting for working and middle-class families.

"I'm also standing up against the attacks on democracy by my extremist opponent, and his party, and their attack on reproductive freedom and a woman's right to protect her health care choices. His heartless 'heartbeat' bill that he sponsored sent a 10-year-old that was raped and impregnated by a sexual predator to another state for health care. It was barbaric," Hagan said, also criticizing Rulli's support of permitless concealed carry law SB215 (Johnson), saying it will endanger the state's first responders.

"It's one of the most dangerous bills to come out of the Legislature via the NRA. And I'm running to remind people that it was his vote that will tell teachers to arm themselves in our kids' classrooms with less than 48 hours of training instead of requiring more background checks and mental health testing," Hagan said, referring to HB99 (Hall). "I sat back ready to retire, and thought, with all these issues, how can I ignore

what he's been doing and what they're doing in incredible ignorance and extremism in some of those bills?"

Hagan also criticized Rulli for being "silent" on Ohio Republicans' failure to draw constitutional congressional and state legislative maps, as well as the 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) nuclear bailout scandal. He also chided the senator for failing to debate him.

"He will not debate, engage or attend any candidate forum. He's even ignored the League of Women Voters' request," Hagan said, counting eight forums to which they've been invited to speak.

"Democracy, I think, works best when people have a choice, and he's not giving voters anything but the TV ads paid for by corporations that have donated to him. Hiding from voters does nothing to promote honest discussion of issues confronting all Ohioans," he continued. "If you just have people that feel like they're entitled to the job, and don't have to defend it, then we have trouble with our democracy."

Asked how he is planning to convince voters in his district to return to the Democratic Party after supporting former President Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020, Hagan said he's working to gain support from people across the ideological spectrum.

"I've been trying to reach out in a way that expresses the same issues that I've always talked about, and that's fighting for working men and women and the middle class. Those individuals -- for some reason or another, which can be debated from every newspaper on down -- have abandoned the Democrats because they feel very strongly that the issues have not been answered. I think that in some cases the Republicans have turned their back more so. Democrats are trying desperately to recover those individuals," he said.

Hagan also discussed his use of social media, saying it's an important way for him to interact with voters and make his positions known.

"I communicate with everyone. I talk with everyone. Quite frankly, if they're right-wing assholes, I let them know. I'm not going to sit back and allow them to criticize me or my record, or to make stuff up," Hagan said.

Races to Watch: Lightbody vs. Rudler in House District 4

Northeast Franklin County's House District 4 will see a contest this fall between a two-term legislator who flipped the area for Democrats in 2018 and a well-known real estate agent.

Rep. Mary Lightbody (D-Westerville) is seeking a third term. The retired science educator won an open seat election in 2018 to succeed Rep. Anne Gonzales (R-Westerville) to represent what's currently the 19th District. Republicans have nominated Jill Rudler, a top-selling agent in the region and state for decades.

According to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, Democrats have an advantage in the district, with a 46.84 percent Republican index. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray won the district by about 10 points in 2018, and President Joe Biden improved on that in 2020, getting nearly 59 percent of the vote to former President Donald Trump's 41 percent.

Lightbody said she works hard to be helpful and visible in the district, frequently attending public events, the meetings of city councils, school boards and township trustees, and holding office hours. She said she prides herself on constituent service and recently retired from her faculty position at Ohio State University-Newark to give herself more time for the Statehouse position.

"I want to go to sporting events, I want to go to school plays, I want to go to social events in the districts, gymnastics performances, just events that constituents are holding, more for the leadership meetings so I can share more of what's going on in the Statehouse a little more frequently," Lightbody said.

The incumbent says her experience as an educator resonates with the generally well-educated populace of the area she represents and equips her well to understand and debate issues of science coming before

the General Assembly. "If we have an energy bill in Energy and Natural Resources [Committee], I know and understand the science."

Lightbody said she also has greater familiarity with health care issues based on the plight of her late husband, who underwent years of dialysis for kidney failure. "His death at a relatively young age -- he was 59 -- is part of what triggered me to want to give back to my district in a more significant way," she said.

Rudler said after a successful career in real estate, she's ready to turn over her business to a new generation of professionals. "I looked around for how I could serve for the next 20 years," she said.

Rudler got her real estate license at age 20, following in the footsteps of her mother, who she said was Ashtabula County's first woman real estate broker in the late 1960s. "That was not a woman's world at the time; it was a man's."

Rudler said she rose to the heights of the industry by investing in more staff to be able to use her time efficiently and make sure the business was highly responsive. "I realized it wasn't selling anything. It was serving people," she said.

"I've sat across the table one-on-one listening to people's issues that they have, why they're moving, why they want a different neighborhood," she said. "When I look at the community as a whole, I feel like this is something I can step up and help with, because I've spent my career negotiating with people and listening to them, helping them solve their problems."

With her background in housing, Rudler said she sees an opportunity to address today's cost and supply issues in the many under-filled office buildings of the COVID-19 era. "We have empty office buildings and in turn we have businesses near them that are not doing as well, because there's no one there to go to their restaurants, use the dry cleaners," Rudler said. "Those buildings could be repurposed quickly, quicker than building a lot of individual homes ... they would be using the services around them, the restaurants, which would flourish as well."

Lightbody and Rudler are vying to represent an area that will be heavily affected by the Intel mega-development in nearby Licking County. Lightbody spoke of a meeting she recently convened to try to get everyone on the same page about the growth prospects and challenges, inviting Intel, economic development officials, regional planners, the county engineer, AEP, local government representatives, school and public safety leaders and many others. "We have time to make plans. It's not maybe the same timeframe that most city planners like, which is usually five to 10 years out," she said.

Rudler said her listening and negotiating skills will help her represent constituents' interests as Intel ramps up. "It's an incredible opportunity for Ohio. Not just Central Ohio, but Ohio," she said. "The really cool part about that is the workers who are here in Ohio are going to maintain good jobs."

In comparing herself to Rudler, Lightbody touts her experience. "There's a significant difference between somebody who's brand new and someone who has a couple terms under their belt," she said.

"The fact that I have two terms of experience means that I really understand and know the job. I know the lobbyists. I've known the key members of the House and have got personal relationships with both Democrats and Republicans, and know and like members of the other party and my own party. I'm a little bit more savvy about how you get a bill through," Lightbody said.

Rudler argues Lightbody does not have accomplishments to show from four years in office, and that she is a better fit for the district.

"We don't have effective representation that reflects the values of the majority of the residents of our district," she said.

"We need representation in this community that shares the values of the community," Rudler said. "I have spent my career listening to people. Listening to people and solving their problems. My opponent has spent time as a teacher, lecturing."

Races to Watch: Beach vs. Brown in House District 5

A member of Democratic leadership faces off against a political newcomer in the horseshoe-shaped House District 5, which runs along the borders of the southern half of Franklin County.

Rep. Richard Brown (D-Canal Winchester), an attorney who serves in Democratic caucus leadership as assistant minority whip, is seeking a third full term. He first joined the House in 2017 to replace former Rep. Heather Bishoff, who left office early. Republicans nominated Ronald Beach IV, a medical assistant and public administration graduate student whose Ohio National Guard service saw him assisting in nursing homes during the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic.

House District 5 now runs in a U shape along the southwestern and southeastern borders of Franklin County, picking up some territory previously in the same district as Grove City, which is now in House District 10. The *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, assigns it a Republican political index of 49.23 percent. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray won the district by more than 10 points in 2018, while Joe Biden had a narrower victory of about 3 points versus Donald Trump in 2020.

Brown says he is a middle-of-the-road, straightforward person who fits the characteristics of the district.

"I'm just honest with people. I'm a straight shooter. I still think of myself as a lawyer first and an accidental politician," he said.

"I'm not a doctrinaire kind of super progressive or super liberal person," Brown said, saying he's in the mainstream on hot-button topics like abortion and guns.

"There's a lot of gun owners in my district, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with being a gun owner. But that doesn't mean anybody and their brother should be able to walk into a day care center with an AR15," Brown said.

Beach ties his interest in state legislative service to a high school trip to the Statehouse at the invitation of former Sen. Kevin Bacon (R-Minerva Park). "I got to go down and sit in his seat in the Senate chamber, and I decided then that one day I wanted to be a state legislator," Beach said. From there he pursued a political science degree at Ohio State University and is now in graduate school for public administration -- a program that bolstered his desire to be on the policymaking side of things.

"During grad school, I realized there's a ton of bad policy, and so I didn't want to be an administrator administering bad policy," he said.

By bad, Beach said, he means overly complex and inaccessible to everyday people.

"There are too many arbitrary policies. There's a lot of bureaucratic and administrative paperwork that makes it hard for people to interact with their local and state government and for businesses to thrive," he said.

Brown also touts his experience as an attorney, saying it's helpful particularly when serving in the minority, where it's harder to steer the agenda of the House.

"When you're in the super-minority, or even if it just a regular minority, it's frustrating and it's difficult ... What we can do is be prepared in committees and ask hard questions of witnesses, particularly witnesses with regard to some of the more contentious bills, and that's what I do," Brown said.

"As an attorney, I've developed an ability I believe to question people and question them vigorously," he said. "You can successfully point out some of the inconsistencies and irrationalities of some of the positions espoused by witnesses who come before you on some of these bills."

Brown said he's been able to help make progress on legislation despite his minority status, arguing House Democrats' consistent support helped to enable expansion of PTSD coverage for first responders without an accompanying physical injury in 133-HB308 (Patton). He also touts his proposal to create a drug policy office within the governor's office, which would codify a variation on what Gov. Mike DeWine has created with RecoveryOhio. "I think it could save lives of Ohioans who are dying needlessly because of opioid overdose deaths," he said.

With both clinical and administrative experience under his belt as a medical assistant, Beach said health care is one area in need of policy simplicity to give people a better understanding of what their insurance covers and what services will cost.

"Keeping things simple for regular people to understand, because most people are not going to be able to dig into their insurance policy that's pages and pages and pages long to find every single little benefit, and having an easy way to search who takes your insurance ... those things can really streamline the process to people getting access to care," he said.

Otherwise, he said he is focused on everyday issues - jobs, safety and schools.

"While there's a ton of partisan and dividing issues that people care about, I think most people care about making sure they have a good school for their kids to go to, making sure they have a good job with a livable wage, and making sure their community is safe," Beach said.

Brown said his experience - in law, in the Statehouse and in life generally - makes him the better candidate. "The older you get, the more you realize what you don't know," Brown said.

"It's not just that I'm older, and I have nothing against younger people wanting to get involved in politics, but at age 22, when you have limited life experience and no experience in governance at any level, I think the difference is stark," Brown said.

Beach said his youthful candidacy represents "an investment in the future of District 5," and that the job of the legislator is not to have all the answers but to listen to those who know best.

"What I lack in life experience, that is where I can look to the community and really work with the community and leaders and different business owners to craft solutions for the district," Beach said.

Races to Watch: Dobos vs. Harris in House District 10

Two candidates with backgrounds in education face off this fall in southern Franklin County's House District 10, a reconfiguration of the Grove City-area seat that incorporates sections of Columbus to make for a more competitive landscape.

Democrats nominated Russell Harris of Grove City, a retired Ohio Education Association (OEA) consultant and lobbyist with a long history in Ohio's school funding debates and litigation. Republicans nominated David Dobos of Columbus, a former Columbus City Schools Board of Education member and president who now runs an educational products and services company. Incumbent Rep. Laura Lanese (R-Grove City) withdrew from contention ahead of the August legislative primary.

The district covers Grove City and parts of Columbus' West and South sides. The *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, gives the district a Republican index of 49.34 percent. Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray won the district with almost 55 percent in 2018, while Donald Trump had a two-tenths percent edge over Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

Harris previously made a run for the seat, which before this cycle was House District 23, against Lanese. "For 30 years I've worked in government relations for OEA, and I wanted to keep advocating for public education in particular ... I know that one person can make a difference, and I wanted to do it from the other side. Even though I knew coming in as a Democrat in these last few General Assemblies would be coming in as a minority, it's still important to have the voice of public education and the advocacy for public education in front of people, and I thought I could do that," he said.

At the time of the first race against Lanese he was still working for the Ohio Education Association, but retired shortly after that election. His interest in running was renewed by what he saw as troubling developments at the Statehouse.

"I looked at what was happening. I looked at all of this extreme legislation, I mean crazy legislation, and I came to the conclusion that it's real simple -- I'm pro-choice, I'm pro-labor and I'm pro-public education,

and I saw that none of that was happening in the Statehouse. And in fact all of that was under attack. So I thought, if not me, then who?" Harris said.

Dobos wasn't necessarily looking to get back into elective office after his school board stint in the '90s and early 2000s, but the first set of maps approved by the Ohio Redistricting Commission grabbed his attention with a district that largely unified Columbus' West side, where he's served in leadership for the Greater Hilltop Area Commission, Hilltop Business Association, Hilltop Historical Society and West High School Alumni Association. "It was an open seat, about a 50-50 Republican-Democratic split, and I said, this seat is tailor made. I never thought I would run for anything again ... but when I saw this district, I said, 'Oh my gosh,'" Dobos said.

"We haven't had effective representation of the West side from a West sider since Mack Pemberton," Dobos said. "We've had some good people, but they weren't from the West side ... no one had real responsibility for the West side."

Dobos figured he'd shelve his ambitions when later maps drew him in with Lanese, whom he did not want to challenge, but didn't withdraw formally because political allies told him it was uncertain how the final boundaries would shake out given litigation in the Ohio Supreme Court. Then in early June, Lanese decided not to seek re-election. "I went through the entire winter and spring assuming I would not be a candidate," Dobos said.

Harris connects an initial interest in government and politics to the time his mother brought him with her to the office - she worked for a physician in downtown Dayton - because John F. Kennedy was scheduled to speak just outside. "I remember that crowd; I remember that day. I remember just the magic of seeing JFK speaking in downtown Dayton. It was unbelievable to me as a child seeing just the happiness," he said, describing Kennedy as "so powerful, yet quiet-spoken."

Dobos said his political role models include both Republicans and Democrats, naming the "practical, pragmatic" George Voinovich, Jo Ann Davidson, Jim Rhodes, former Columbus Mayor Jack Sensenbrenner and fellow West sider Michael Stinziano Sr. He's adopted a mantra similar to Rhodes'.

"To him it was always about what it is with me -- jobs, jobs, jobs. If people are working at good-paying jobs, a lot of other problems take care of themselves," he said.

While Harris has made a career of education advocacy, he said his No. 1 issue upon taking office would be providing more mental health resources for young people. He said he hears about it regularly from parents and grandparents when he's campaigning. "I can't even begin to tell you how serious and pervasive the problem with mental health with our school children, our teenagers and our young adults is," he said.

"What I'm describing now is the inner pandemic ... all of our kids, they're traumatized by the isolation, the no school, being away from friends, the pressure of constantly being with parents and family," he said.

He said OhioRISE, a specialty managed care program for children with complex needs launched as part of larger Medicaid reforms pursued by the DeWine administration, is a good start toward that end. "That's the right direction, exactly," he said.

Dobos, an MIT graduate and small business owner, is focused on economic revitalization for his West side neighbors.

"We have languished over the last generation. Basically, when I was a kid growing up in the '60s and early '70s, we had Westinghouse, we had General Motors, we had International Harvester, and between those three companies, they employed over 10,000 people at good paying, blue collar jobs, and this was a reasonably prosperous end of town, still a working class end of town, but people were owning homes, it was a good place to live," he said. "All three of those companies shut down, and they haven't been around for a generation ... and nothing has come to replace them," Dobos said. "I won't argue with the casino being here, because they play ball with us, but that's 1,000 jobs."

He hopes to help the General Assembly anticipate and act in a way that will encourage development of high-tech manufacturing and biomedical businesses, and enable his home neighborhood to land some of the suppliers and partners of the Intel mega-development in Licking County.

"I have an understanding of the interrelationship between very important academic institutions, research, this type of sponsored research that is being done at [higher education institutions], and how that can turn into new companies emerging and new jobs emerging. And so what can we do to maximize that, what can we do to make sure that prosperity is shared with all of Central Ohio, and not just New Albany? Not that there's anything wrong with New Albany, but they couldn't absorb all of this anyway," Dobos said.

Policies he'd support toward that end include incentives for employers to train existing or new employees, and efforts to make sure school districts understand the types of jobs coming to the area and the skills young people need.

Dobos touts his experience on the Columbus school board, saying a focus on academic achievement helped the district raise graduation rates, test scores and Advanced Placement course offerings. "I was, if you will, the synthesizer on the board, in that I didn't have all the ideas ... but I developed good relationships with all of my colleagues," he said.

Dobos also has a business background. His current company, Next Level Prep, provides SAT and ACT preparation for high school students, partnering with schools to offer day-long, in-school sessions that can bring down the costs usually associated with college admissions exam preparation services. He said the service helps achieve "the dual, elusive goals in education" - increased achievement and closing of performance gaps among students from minority communities. "I think I can be helpful in the discussion about education as we, of course, want all of our kids to achieve more," he said.

Harris said the new funding formula adopted in the most recent state budget, HB110, sets the right policy but must be fully funded to succeed. "The truth is, Bill Phillis, the coalition, the attorneys from Bricker, myself, all the people who have been around school funding for the last 30 years, we support Cupp-Patterson, but they need to fund it," he said, referencing parties involved in the *DeRolph* litigation, which gave rise to the new formula, developed under the leadership of now-Speaker Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and former Rep. John Patterson (D-Jefferson).

"I often say to people, you know, that I want you to read my lips: I don't want any new taxes, I just want the old ones back ... I watched in the '90s when for no reason the Republican Senate systematically, budget-after-budget, cut the highest marginal rates of the Ohio income tax and made it much less progressive just because it suited their members and their wealthy supporters," Harris said. "If we hadn't taken all those hits to the highest marginal rates in the '90s with the Republican senators, we'd have the money to fund Cupp-Patterson without question."

Harris said he wants to stand against a trend toward vouchers and "privatization" of public education. He recalled his service on former Gov. Bob Taft's Blue Ribbon Commission on school funding. "I think this question of vouchers and privatizing wasn't as strong. At that time we were still talking about preserving a system of common schools and public education in Ohio, and maybe thinking about how to come up with the resources for it. The conversation is way changed today. It's honestly the question of, are we going to privatize public education and put it in the hands of investors and hedge funds, or are we going to preserve it as the institution of democracy?" he said.

A recent bout with throat cancer has also shaped Harris' outlook and motivations.

"Cancer teaches you one thing. It teaches you how to fight, and I don't mean in a trivial sense. I mean cancer teaches you how to fight with your whole being, physically, mentally, emotionally. It really teaches you how to be determined and to fight," he said. "The other thing that cancer does: it changes the way you look at the world. Now, each day to me is such a gift, and I use each day to do everything I can possibly do."

"In whatever amount of time I've got left, I want to give back. I want to give back to school children, and to my labor family, and certainly, if I can do anything to protect basic human rights, and to protect women's rights, that's what I want to be known for," Harris said.

Asked why voters should choose them versus their opponent, Dobos' and Harris' answers expressed variations on a theme -- the influence of the House Republican majority.

"Right now that supermajority is the most dangerous thing in politics in Ohio," Harris said.

"A vote for me will be a vote for choice, a vote for me will be a vote for public education, and a vote for me will be a vote for labor. If you vote for my opponent, you will only be strengthening the supermajority that has attacked all of those things and will continue to attack those things until they no longer can," Harris said.

Dobos described Harris as "a great guy," but added, "Here's why I think I am a better choice. First of all, I have produced before. I have served on the board of education in Columbus and helped get important things done. That's really key. He's never held elective office. I have. I'm not saying he can't be effective, but boy oh boy, I can point to things that we got done when I was on the board in Columbus," said Dobos.

"No. 2 is this: no matter what happens this fall, whether he wins or I win, the Republicans are going to maintain the majority in the Legislature, and probably a pretty strong majority. And I can tell you the majority party has an opportunity to get a lot more done than the minority party," he said.

Both candidates see a path to victory in the competitive district. Harris said the maps in place now have flipped the usual advantage Republicans have enjoyed in the Grove City area. In Grove City proper, he said, younger people have moved into condo and apartment developments, changing the demographics. Surrounding townships and other western Franklin County areas are no longer included in the district with Grove City, but South Columbus is.

"If I were drawing the maps, I would have put those [South side] people in, because they're mostly blue collar, they're very much union people. It's predominantly Black, Hispanic and Vietnamese, and those are exactly the voters I want to advocate for. So the maps, in my mind, even though they may only last two years now, are ideal for a Democrat to run in," Harris said.

Dobos said his campaign's analysis of the data shows an almost perfect split between high-propensity voters for both the Democratic and Republican parties, meaning independent voters and those who show up less frequently will make the difference. He sees Grove City as still a "bastion" for GOP voters, thinks his West side roots will serve him well there, and says his campaign themes will play well in traditionally Democratic South Columbus.

"We know that a message of economics, of economic growth, grow the economic pie and make sure all of us have a fair shot at sharing in the benefits - that type of message resonates with people. They're tired of the acrimony, they're tired especially at the national level of folks emphasizing issues that don't really matter as far as the pocketbook or the cost of living are concerned," Dobos said.

Races to Watch: Somani vs. Tarazi in House District 11

An open House seat in the Northwest corner of Franklin County will see a long-time physician face off against a suburban city council member.

The candidate lineup in House District 11 was among those left in flux for a while amid Ohio's redistricting saga. Democratic nominee Dr. Anita Somani of Dublin, a gynecologist, had to sue to get on the ballot. Republicans nominated Omar Tarazi, a member of Hilliard City Council and an attorney. According to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, the district has a Republican political index of 46.92 percent. Democrats have seen an advantage there recently, with Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray getting 54.5 percent of the vote in 2018, and President Joe Biden getting nearly 59 percent versus former President Donald Trump in 2020.

Tarazi said he wants to bring to state service the type of cooperation and problem-solving he pursued in local government. Achievements he touts from his time on the Hilliard council include a charter amendment that requires city government to collaborate with school and township officials on tax increment financing (TIF) decisions for residential development, adoption of a city manager form of government, and an economic development approach to stop "runaway apartment development" in favor of a better mix of commercial and residential development.

"Now that we've sort of got Hilliard in a really good place, I'd like to see if I can get to the state level and try to make big, positive changes at the state level. That's the kind of person I like to be. I like to get stuff done, and I like to get stuff done on a strategic level, improving the community," Tarazi said.

Tarazi said he got into local government in the first place to try to expand his ability to help people beyond what he could in private law practice.

"I've been doing business and family law as an attorney for years, and helping families and small businesses with their problems," Tarazi said. "You're helping a lot of people, but you're helping at a very private level. Our whole family is very big in the servant leadership ethic. Four of our kids are Eagle Scouts. It was just time to see if I could go beyond the micro, essentially, of helping families and businesses, to see how much good I could do at the city level."

Somani has been doing more advocacy at the Statehouse in the past decade to push back against abortion restrictions, and is concerned by "extremist legislation" lacking scientific basis. She said she was encouraged to run by her current representative, Rep. Beth Liston (D-Dublin), who won't represent her any longer under new maps that created an open seat where she lives.

"This kind of translates into a bigger advocacy," Somani said. "Whether it's gender-affirming care, whether it's exams for athletes, any of those things that impact a larger group of people that are health care related, I think that I can be a voice that can help make sense of those bills, and say, 'None of this makes sense.' These are not medically driven bills," Somani said.

"I never set out to become a politician. I set out to become a doctor ... When I got into this, I did not get into it to run on any Republican or Democratic and conservative or liberal platform. I really got into the race to support an agenda that crosses political lines. I think that health care policy is important to everybody, whether you're a Republican or Democrat. I think that safe schools and mental health for your children is going to be something that's valuable to everybody. How people approach that may be different, but we all want our schools to be safe, we all want our kids to be safe. We as a society should want our kids to grow up feeling secure and have good mental health support," Somani said.

Somani's family has multiple generations of doctors. Her father, Dr. Peter Somani, was director of the Ohio Department of Health during the Voinovich administration. In medical school, Somani developed an interest in the specialty of women's health because it combined surgery, long-term patient relationships and preventive care.

"I think medicine should be more about preventive care and less about treatment," Somani said.

The doctor says reproductive rights are tied into economic security. "If I can choose when I have a child, it helps me complete my college education, it helps me keep a job or get a promotion," Somani said.

One policy change Tarazi said he would like to explore is creation of municipal court districts in Franklin County, putting the courts closer to people and problems in the suburbs. He noted Hilliard's creation of diversion programs, including one for teens caught in school vaping, and said having a full municipal court would be the next step.

He is also interested in education policies to address controversies over instruction in school.

"I'm against some of the bills that called for, essentially, censorship, but I do think that we can produce maybe some better mechanisms and remedies. I believe that parents have a right [to know] that schools will provide instruction on controversial topics in an education-oriented, balanced manner, versus a manner that presents only one side of a perspective," he said.

Asked why their qualifications outmatched those of their opponent, Tarazi cited his governance experience versus Somani's lack of it, while Somani mentioned her service to the community via medicine and criticized Tarazi's multiple recent candidacies.

"I have a track record of producing real results that have improve the quality of lives of the community, and I do look for a moderate approach that balances the conflicting opinions. And I have a track recording of listening to all sides, and I will continue to do so. My opponent doesn't have any of that, lacks any real-

world efforts that she's done to improve our community, and actually supports and sides with some rather extreme positions and people. I don't think that's where we need to go," Tarazi said.

Somani noted Tarazi had just mounted an unsuccessful congressional bid for the seat now held by U.S. Rep. Mike Carey (R-Columbus) before running for the Statehouse.

"I haven't run for three different offices in the last four years," Somani said, "because I actually believe in helping people, that's been my whole career. This isn't a stepping stone for me. I hope to be successful, I hope to do a good job.

"I'm a doctor first and politician second," she said.

Races to Watch: Brennan vs. Austin in House District 14

Democrat Sean Brennan and Republican Jolene Austin, both newcomers to state politics, are vying for Ohio House District 14 this November.

The district, previously House District 15, covers Parma and has been redrawn to cover Parma Heights but no longer includes the village of Brooklyn Heights or the city of Brooklyn.

According to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, the district has a political Republican index of 46.60 percent. It's top three industries by number of jobs are education and health services (32.8 percent); trade, transportation, and utilities (16.5 percent); and professional and business services (11.5 percent), according to OMA.

In 2020, President Joe Biden won the district with 51.01 percent, according to OMA, and current incumbent Rep. Jeff Crossman (D-Parma) won the district with 52.2 percent of the vote, according to Ballotpedia.

Brennan has severed in numerous local government roles, including as Parma City Council president since 2011. Before becoming president, Brennan served as the Ward 2 councilman for seven years. He has been a public school teacher for nearly 30 years, teaching American government, law, history, and economics courses to middle and high schoolers.

Despite his long public service history, Brennan said he never seriously considered a run for the Statehouse, not seeing himself as much of a "political animal." But after winning reelection as Parma City Council president, Brennan said the time seemed right. Crossman, who is running for state attorney general this year, approached him about running, and now that his children are older, Brennan said he has the time to make trips down to Columbus.

Brennan's family history, he said, is a major reason why he got involved in public service and became a teacher. His father left the family when he was about 9 years old, sending his mother, sister, and himself into "pretty hard times."

"Going through those tough times informs why I'm running," he said. "I'm running for that single mom or dad. I'm running for that child from a broken home. I'm running for that child and single parent whose former spouse is not paying child support, like my dad didn't. I'm running for our farmers [after] growing up on my grandma's farm. ... I'm running because I've got almost 20 years of experience in local government and I know what cities need. ... I'm running because I've been a public educator for almost 30 years and it just astounds me how there seems to be an attack on our public schools," he said.

Austin said she became interested in local politics after dealing with transparency issues with her local school district. She began by restarting the "Parma Republicans Club," which she said has grown from eight members when she started about six years ago to now over 750. Austin ran unsuccessfully for the Parma City Council Ward 5 seat in 2021. She has been a member of the Cuyahoga County Republican Party's Central Committee for the last six years.

Additionally, Austin said she was inspired to run after noticing that few incumbent politicians in her area were being challenged and suggested they were becoming "complacent."

Austin said voters she's spoken with have major concerns over the economy, particularly around inflation, taxes, and health care costs. She said she understands where voters are coming from because she feels the economic pressure too.

"If there's a job out there, I've done it," she said. After her husband, who works in manufacturing, faced layoffs, she worked as a medical assistant, though she said the pay wasn't enough to cover child care costs. Austin said she has worked nights as a bartender and has experience in real estate.

She said she hears stories of economic hardships while knocking on doors in Northeast Ohio "every day."

"We're not rich, so when they talked about their struggles, I can understand exactly what they're going through because they're in the same boat as ... my family," Austin said.

Brennan said voters he talked with are concerned about public safety, education and the economy.

Brennan said too many lawmakers in the Statehouse are focused on the "politics of division." He discussed the challenges facing Parma, including an aging infrastructure and aging population, and said the work to "transform" the suburb has involved people across the political spectrum and "wasn't done by petty politics."

He added that he is inspired by Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) because of his "demeanor of not being a bomb thrower or being a bridge burner ... He has truly been effective."

"I style myself and I want to go down to Columbus as another kind of Kenny Yuko type person who wants to go down there and get things done. I'm a pragmatist. I'm a middle of the road guy. I'm not an extremist. I think we've got to start electing adults who want to work together," Brennan said.

Austin, meanwhile, said voters are frustrated with "lifetime career politicians." She also took issue with political rhetoric suggesting Republicans can't "compromise" or work together as well as a specific political advertisement suggesting she favors banning abortion without exception. She emphasized that is not her stance.

"There's always going to be exceptions with abortion," she said, adding doctors need exceptions for the life of the mother and she would never want to see a federal ban.

Brennan said he is focused on issues like education and education funding, job creation, local government funding, and health care accessibility.

Austin emphasized the economy, education and school funding, saying she is a proponent of school choice. Austin also said she supports Issue 1, which would require judges to consider public safety as a factor when setting cash bail, and Issue 2, which prohibits local municipalities' allowing noncitizens to vote in elections.

In her free time, Austin works on the board of a Dobermann adoption agency as well as fosters and adopts the dogs. She also called herself a "sports fanatic."

In his free time, Brennan is an avid runner. Since 2009, he said he's run 110 marathons, often serving as a marathon pacer for others. Since campaigning for the Statehouse, though, he has had less to run.

"Right now, I'm running a different marathon because I feel so passionately about serving at the Statehouse," he said.

Races to Watch: Sweeney vs. Lamb in Ohio House District 16

After a difficult primary, incumbent Democratic Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney (Cleveland) is facing off against Republican Michael Lamb for Ohio House District 16.

Sweeney, who is in her second term, faced freshman Rep. Monique Smith (D-Fairview Park) in the only Ohio House primary with two incumbents pitted against each other. The two were drawn together in redistricting. While the redrawn Ohio House District 16 bears little resemblance to Sweeney's previous district, she won the primary with 56 percent of the vote. Lamb did not face a primary challenger.

Ohio House District 16 includes the cities of Bay Village, Westlake, North Olmsted, and Olmsted Falls. It leans toward Democrats by just over 52 percent, according to the *2022 Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*. The district went for President Joe Biden by 55 percent in 2020, according to OMA.

Sweeney, who is the daughter of former Rep. Martin Sweeney, touted her record of passing bipartisan legislation.

Looking toward what will likely be a busy lame duck session, Sweeney highlighted two bills she hopes to see pass. Her HB68 (Cross-Sweeney) requires private construction projects to make timely payments to contractors, and her HB163 (Cutrona-Sweeney) which prohibits hospitals from requiring nurses to work overtime that wasn't pre-planned. Both bills have passed the House but still need Senate approval.

As a Democrat in the super-minority, Sweeney said getting legislation passed requires compromise and "being willing to do maybe all the work, majority of the work, and not really worrying about the credit."

"You have to put some of your own ego and personal feelings about how people have voted or how they legislate [aside] and understand that my job is to stand up for what my community believes in, but also to get things done," she said. "There's no magic wand ... It's just sheer work ..."

Sweeney said she is also focused on creating more transparency around the distribution of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), noting that lawmakers have allocated billions without public input. Sweeney said she's also plans to try to stop "extreme" legislation from passing in lame duck.

"A lot of my colleagues can be pretty shameless already, and it kind of gets even crazier after the election, so I wouldn't be surprised if they try to do a total ban of abortion before the end of the year," she said.

Of her legislative accomplishments, Sweeney said she's most proud of her work on HB1 (Callender-Sweeney), which overhauled the state's school financing system.

"I can easily say, in terms of policy, I have never worked harder on anything," she said, adding that the law affects every person in the state and that providing for common schools is the only enumerated duty of the Ohio General Assembly.

Lamb, a resident of Westlake, spent 25 years as a police officer, first for the city of Cleveland and later in Shaker Heights. He said he also has experience running small businesses. This is Lamb's first run for statewide office, though he has held an elected role in Westlake.

While speaking with voters, he said he's heard three major concerns from people: the economy, education, and safety and security.

Both Sweeney and Lamb said they have spent considerable time speaking with voters. Sweeney said voters she's heard are concerned about "extremist" legislation around abortion and lawmakers pursuing culture war issues, particularly in education.

Asked about how they try to win over voters of the opposite party, Lamb said he's been working on getting out the vote of Republicans and particularly Independent voters. Sweeney noted her endorsements from business groups and said that she is working "first and foremost" for the people in her district.

Lamb emphasized the economic opportunities in front of his district, saying that with Intel's plans to create semiconductor factories near Columbus, Cuyahoga County is poised to become the "logistics center" of the state.

He said his priorities are job creation and improving job-preparedness for students, both through K-12 education and creating more pathways for students who don't necessarily want to pursue a college degree. He added this is particularly important given the Intel announcement, saying the state needs a ready workforce. He also discussed the need for more public-private partnerships between the state and businesses.

Lamb said he started considering a run for the Statehouse about 25 years ago, but didn't pursue it because he was satisfied with his representation. Like with his role as a police officer, Lamb said he wants to improve people's lives while in the Statehouse.

"It's all kind of inter-connected. It's to help people, and part of what you should do [as a police officer] as well as in Columbus is try to change people's lives for the better," he said.

If elected, Lamb said he hopes to take his experiences from Westlake to the Statehouse, particularly around budgeting and saving for economic downturns.

"You need to have the mindset going down to the Statehouse to make sure that we're good stewards of everybody's money and making sure that it is spent well to make sure that the state, all the way back to the 16th District, benefit," he said.

Races to Watch: Brewer, Taylor Vie for House District 18 after Davis' Disqualification

Upheaval in Ohio House District 18 sidelined one incumbent to leave two newcomers to vie for the district, which is heavily favored for Democrats.

After former state Rep. Stephanie Howse won a seat on the Cleveland City Council, the House Democratic Caucus appointed Rep. Shayla Davis (I-Garfield Heights) to fill the seat for the remainder of the term. Davis initially appeared to be a placeholder for former state Sen. Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland), who applied to fill the vacancy and said she was offered the seat, but ultimately declined the appointment. Williams had said her plan was to run for the seat, previously Ohio House District 11, but the prolonged redistricting process made it unclear how the district seats would change. Davis was reportedly appointed to the seat at the recommendation of Williams.

Williams, however, never ended up running. She bowed out of the race and resigned her Senate seat to take a job as director of government affairs at Charter Communications.

Davis got caught up in Williams' decision not to run as it came after the deadline for Davis to pull petitions to run for the seat herself. Davis then sought to run as an independent, which required her to "separate" from the Democratic Party.

This decision ultimately came under scrutiny when the Republican candidate for the district, Shalira Taylor, filed a challenge to Davis' candidacy after the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections had certified her as an independent to the ballot, claiming that Davis' independent status was not made in good faith and that she still sided with the Democratic Party.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections ultimately tied on the challenge, with Democratic members voting to dismiss Taylor's claims and let Davis appear as an independent, and Republicans voting to uphold the challenge and remove Davis from the ballot.

When the issue went to Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose to serve as a tie-breaker, he sided with fellow GOP members and ruled Davis off the ballot, concluding that she continued to identify as a Democrat between the time she signed her nominating petition and statement of candidacy on June 10, 2022 and the filing of her petitions on July 29, 2022.

Davis has not indicated she plans to challenge LaRose's decision.

LaRose's ruling leaves two candidates to compete for the district: Taylor and Democrat Darnell Brewer, who originally applied to fill the seat after Howse announced her departure.

The district, which covers parts of Cleveland and all of Garfield Heights and Maple Heights, leans heavily toward Democrats, according to the *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*. In 2020, the district went for Joe Biden by over 88 percent, and for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray by over 89 percent in 2018. The guide estimates the district leans Republican by just 11 percent.

None of this upheaval seems to have affected Brewer, who said he always intended to run and in fact filed even before Williams filed to run for the seat.

A service coordinator at a Cleveland senior citizens complex, Brewer said it was his residents that encouraged him to run and even helped him gather petition signatures.

"It was my residents and people I work with and my family who put me on a ballot," he said.

Brewer first ran for office at the age of 17 for the Cleveland School Board, though he said he was kicked off the ballot due to certain age requirements. His latest bid for elected office was an unsuccessful run for Cleveland City Council in 2009.

Brewer said this campaign, which he refers to as the "we campaign," has been "personal" to him because of the support he's received from his residents and co-workers, and also because of the politics at play. He highlighted a myriad of issues that he said are "on the line" this election cycle, from abortion laws and gun safety to school funding, juvenile justice and voting rights.

Brewer said his voters have highlighted public safety, women's rights, voting rights and affordable housing as the issues most important to them.

He emphasized that he's not doing any less to reaching out to voters just because his district leans heavily Democratic.

"Just because it's a safe district or Democratic doesn't mean that I'm taking anything for granted. I'm out there every day knocking on the doors, talking to people, going to community meetings, shaking hands, making sure I know what type of things are important in my district. I just don't want to go down there and just sit there. I want to make sure I shine a light on a lot of the issues and good things that are in district 18," Brewer said.

Taylor ran for the seat twice before in 2016 and 2018, both times against Howse. According to her campaign website, she was appointed in 2016 and elected in 2020 to the Central Committee for the Cuyahoga County Republican Party.

Taylor emphasized issues like public safety, addiction recovery, school choice, housing availability and the lack of some "essentials" in her community like the availability of healthy foods.

She said Democrats in the Cleveland area have been in control on the local level for too long and said they're running on a message of "vote for Democrats because we're not Republicans," adding that her community is tired of being asked to vote for Democrats without seeing results.

Taylor suggested the district would get better representation with Republican in the Statehouse.

"The majority of the Statehouse is Republican, and forever we've always had a Democrat representative going in there who have no power -- they have no power in the Statehouse. So if you keep voting Democrat, you don't have a voice. They don't have a voice or connections to get things done," she said.

Earlier, Taylor suggested that while other candidates might need to "fight" to be heard in the Statehouse, she, as a Republican, would have more influence and connections to get bills passed and have her community prioritized.

Taylor owns a small business called Ammo By Us that sells ammunition. If elected, she said one of the first pieces of legislation she would work on passing would be HB708, co-sponsored by Rep. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), who Taylor said she admired for working across the aisle, and the district's outgoing representative Shayla Davis.

The bill would provide that "if a penalty for an offense has been imposed on an offender and if the penalty for that offense is subsequently reduced by a change in [law], the penalty previously imposed on the offender may also be reduced."

Races to Watch: Troy vs. Phillips in House District 23

Democrat Rep. Dan Troy (Willowick) and Republican George Phillips will get a rematch in competitive Ohio House District 23 this November.

The pair faced off in 2020, with Troy winning House District 60 by just 800 votes. The seat was previously held by term-limited Rep. John Rogers (D-Mentor-on-the-Lake).

The *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, gives the newly drawn House District 23 a political Republican index of 50.47 percent. In 2020, former President Donald Trump took the district by 51 percent, and President Joe Biden got 49 percent, according to OMA. In 2018, the race was still heated -- Democrat Richard Cordray took the district by 50.68 percent, and Gov. Mike DeWine got 49.32 percent.

Phillips, who also ran unsuccessfully against Rogers in 2014, said the district has become more favorable to his "side of the fence."

After his close loss in 2020, he said "2022 started two days later for me, you know, mentally. Obviously the late primary and the redistricting maps and all that fun stuff that was beyond my control made for an interesting 'hurry up and wait' kind of mindset, so I did what I could while that was going on. I just kind of concentrated on areas, and I did start campaigning even before the maps were out."

While speaking with voters in his district, Phillips said he's heard two major themes: concerns about inflation and the rising cost of groceries and energy, and concerns about education, with voters asking for more parental control.

Phillips said his background positions him well for the Statehouse. He has worked in health insurance, banking, local government, higher education, and is a small business owner. Currently, he also teaches graduate school courses at Lake Erie College and runs a program with the college assisting veterans.

Troy, an Army veteran, has a long public service record. In his first tenure in the Statehouse, Troy served seven terms, during which he chaired committees including House Ways and Means and the Joint House-Senate Education Oversight Committee. Later, he served as Lake County Commissioner for five terms and has served as a city councilman, along with numerous other local government roles.

Voters he's spoken with are also concerned about rising prices and workforce shortages, Troy said, but some are also worried about increasing "dissension" politics. While campaigning this time around, Troy said the "attention span of the citizens is somewhat reduced from what it was in my day," and it seems that people are examining party labels more than the candidates.

"I come from Lake County, where people were fierce ticket splitters. They would vote for the person ... We'd have a Democrat treasurer, Republican clerk of courts. The last few elections in my county, the nationalization has come down. Everybody with an 'R' next to their name gets elected. I am the only remaining Democratic office holder in Lake County."

Despite their political differences, Phillips agreed politics have become too divisive.

"We need to get people in [the Statehouse] that get along and work together. This polarization is ridiculous," he said.

When speaking with voters of the opposite political party, both candidates said they are honest about their views and try to listen to what the person has to say.

"I own my position on things and sometimes they agree with it, sometimes they disagree with it, but they respect the fact that I'm not dancing, and I'm telling them the truth," Phillips said. "My campaign approach has been pretty simple ... We live in a representative republic, so my job is not to go down there for me. My job is to go down there for the people of the district that elected me to go down."

"I basically tell them you know, I'm an old school, Kennedy Democrat. I'm a Democrat the way it used to look. I'm not way out in left field, and I'm not way out in right field," Troy said.

Phillips and Troy, however, emphasized different economic issues.

Troy emphasized issues related to aging communities, noting his bill HB207 that would increase the homestead exemption for elderly or disabled homeowners and index the exemption to inflation.

He also said the tax code needs to be made fairer.

"I'm not a big fan of general across the board tax cuts. I'm a big fan of targeted tax cuts, in other words, targeted tax cuts [for seniors] to help them pay their property taxes ..." he said. Troy also discussed tax cuts to help businesses train employees as well as the need for greater child care access as a means of reducing the workforce shortage.

Phillips, who in his spare time is a national professional sports broadcaster in boxing and mixed martial arts, emphasized career readiness for high school and college students, saying he wants to keep young people in Ohio.

He also said he is a "big proponent" of lowering taxes.

"Give people more of what they earn. Keep our families financially stable. You know, you got more money in your pocket, you got more money to spend, save, invest -- that helps small businesses."

Races to Watch: Baker vs. Giroux in House District 27

While their views on issues related to education and gun legislation are far apart, both candidates in the 27th House District have a background in the nursing field and each told *Hannah News* they've attracted support from independents and voters across the aisle.

Democrat Rachel Baker is a nurse researcher and adjunct professor who volunteers as a court-appointed special advocate. Republican Jenn Giroux co-owns a Catholic-focused book and gift shop, continues to work as a nurse and previously served as assistant to the president at Citizens for Community Values.

The 2022 *Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, gives the district a Republican index of 48.57 percent. Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray won the district with 51.7 percent in 2018, and Joe Biden carried it with 57.53 percent in the 2020 presidential election.

Both candidates are running for office for the first time this year, though Giroux previously considered a run for the U.S. House if there had been at-large seats due to redistricting issues. As a result, she had to sue to be placed on the ballot for the Ohio House.

Each candidate had a primary challenger, and they told *Hannah News* that helped them prepare for the general election. Baker defeated her single challenger with 62.4 percent, while Giroux received 47.89 percent of the vote in a three-way race.

Giroux said the primary gave her a "firm perspective" of views in the 27th District and showed she had similar life experiences with voters in terms of raising a family and running a small business. Baker said it helped her campaign build up a volunteer base to help canvass for the general election.

As far as the issues discussed with potential voters, Giroux said they're concerned about public safety and the rising cost of inflation. She added that education is important to her, saying teachers have "gotten out of control and political" as test scores have declined amid pandemic disruption. They should instead focus on the basics of reading, writing and math, Giroux said, and also encourage job training programs rather than just college. Specifically, she supports the "backpack" bill, HB290 (McClain-John), where state funds would follow a child. Giroux said she believes in "very strong" public schools but called it "reasonable and fair" for parents to use their tax dollars to choose the school they want their child to attend.

Baker in turn said the issues she hears about include attacks on public education, the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision and gun safety. She said she was motivated to run due to "extremism" by local elected officials including school board members, as well as legislation offered in the Statehouse. Baker added that didn't seem "reflective of the values of the community" to her. If elected, she wants to use "reason versus rhetoric and emotion" given her background as a researcher and children's advocate.

Neither candidate had a specific person they identified as a political mentor, though Baker said she has received help and advice from many people in support of her campaign. Giroux spoke favorably of

actions by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and also said she wanted to carry on the legacy of incumbent Rep. Tom Brinkman (R-Cincinnati), who is term-limited.

In regard to how they would represent the district if elected, Giroux said people have similar concerns on crime and the economy regardless of political affiliation. She added that "medical freedom" had emerged as an issue during the pandemic and she also wants to reduce government regulation of business. Baker said redistricting had made the 27th District a "true tossup" and her goal would be to advocate on issues for the entire district while increasing local engagement.

Asked about her message to voters, Giroux said she uses the slogan "Your Family, Your Freedoms, Your Future" and believes that speaks to their desire to feel safe in their communities and have their children stay in Ohio rather than moving to other states for work. Baker said she would be a "voice of reason" and listen to all sides rather than pushing a personal agenda.

Both candidates criticized the other as having extreme views, with Giroux saying Baker presents herself as centrist and Baker saying a "Republicans for Rachel" group began supporting her after the primary.

Races to Watch: Miranda vs. Monzel in House District 28

This year's race in the 28th House District features the same candidates as in 2020 -- incumbent Rep. Jessica Miranda (D-Forest Park) and Republican nominee Chris Monzel, a former Hamilton County commissioner and Cincinnati city councilman. Miranda won their previous race by a margin of 2,314 votes, receiving 51.69 percent compared to Monzel's 48.31 percent.

Under the map being used for this election, the district now has three less precincts -- a change that Miranda told *Hannah News* eliminates several thousand votes that likely would have gone to her. An earlier map would have drawn her out of the 28th District entirely. Miranda, who was first elected in 2018 by a 56-vote margin, said the election will be "very competitive" as a result.

When asked how this year's race will be different, Monzel talked about how the pandemic disrupted his campaigning during the 2020 election. Now he is re-engaged in canvassing and connecting with residents at events, the style Monzel used when previously running for local office.

The *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, gives the district a Republican index of 48.76 percent. Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray won the district with 51.86 percent in 2018, and Joe Biden carried it with 56.2 percent in the 2020 presidential election.

In regard to why she is seeking a third term, Miranda said she wants to continue serving the people of her district and described re-electing her as a check against "extremism" by the Republican supermajority. Monzel told *Hannah News* he wants to use his local government experience to help the district have the same opportunities he had when growing up there.

Regarding the top issues voters discuss with them, Monzel talked about how rising costs of inflation affect everything from grocery bills to retirement accounts and said there is increased concern on public safety, including senior citizens who feel worried about where they live for the first time in their lives. He also hears concerns about making sure children have opportunities to be successful academically.

Monzel added that his work to reduce government spending during the Great Recession would inform his efforts at the Statehouse if elected, as he wants to help "right-size" government and eliminate waste and inefficiencies while keeping taxes and fees low.

Miranda said the most prominent issue for her is abortion rights, saying that as a survivor of rape she believes "wholeheartedly" that Republican legislators "need to stay out of our personal decisions." Many people will be voting in this year's election because of that issue, she continued. Miranda further talked about keeping communities safe, saying enacted bills on arming teachers, concealed carry of firearms without a license and the "stand your ground" law make communities "less safe."

Those have suburban voters "fired up," according to Miranda, and were opposed by law enforcement and first responder groups. She added that the Ohio Fraternal Order of Police had endorsed her, along with firefighter and veteran organizations which "know I stand up for them."

Miranda is also concerned about education and the economy, noting she previously served as president of a local school board before running for the Legislature. One of her highest priorities if part of the next General Assembly is to ensure the fair school funding plan remains, and she said it is important to ensure a quality education for all students regardless of zip code.

On the economy, she said she was proud that 3,330 new jobs were either retained or created in her district in 2021 alone through collaboration at the state and local levels. "Good-paying" jobs help keep people in Ohio, she said, and support them during this time of rising costs. She also said her role as a small business owner and mother provides an awareness of what working families are facing now.

When it comes to people who have inspired him politically, Monzel discussed U.S. Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Cincinnati), who also previously served in local government, along with Rep. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) and Sen. Bill Blessing (R-Cincinnati).

Miranda in turn said she tries to emulate the constituent outreach of U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and has mentors including former Reps. John Patterson, Jack Cera and Denise Driehaus as well as former Senate President Dick Finan, now mayor of the village of Evendale in her district.

In regard to why she tells voters they should support her, Miranda said she has been a "pragmatic leader" representing them and opposing "extremist" policies that are bad for Ohio communities and businesses. She noted her role in creating the Gun Violence Prevention Caucus with Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati) to focus the conversation on gun safety rather than gun control and make Ohio safer for communities and its first responders.

Monzel's message has been that he is "a commonsense engineer who solves problems for a living" with local government experience as well. He further expressed a commitment to "always be available, approachable and accountable," including in neighborhoods which are often forgotten. That would include regularly providing reports to them on what is going on at the Statehouse and learning what they need.

Both candidates also told *Hannah News* they will serve as a "strong voice" for the district if elected.

Races to Watch: Darrow vs. Roemer in House District 31

The two candidates for the new 31st House District both have a history in local government for Summit County, as Rep. Bill Roemer (R-Richfield), the current representative of the 38th District, was previously on Summit County Council and his Democratic opponent Rita Darrow is a current county council member and past Macedonia city councilwoman.

Under the new maps, the district is located entirely within Summit County, and Roemer previously held an at-large seat on the county council, giving him familiarity with the new district's communities and elected officials. Darrow told *Hannah News* she was motivated to run for the Statehouse because of redistricting, as she had previously been in the district represented by Rep. Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson).

Other factors that motivated Darrow include the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and state laws which ended the requirement for a concealed handgun license and allowed teachers to be armed in schools. Darrow said the question of whether abortion is legal in Ohio should be put on the state ballot for a vote, rather than being decided by the Legislature.

She also said local residents -- including Republicans and independents -- have voiced concerns with her about those issues as well. Primary issues which Roemer said he's heard about are supply chain issues and inflation, particularly with higher prices for gas and electric utility costs.

The *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, gives the district a Republican index of 49.62 percent. Democratic

gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray won the district with 51.8 percent in 2018, and Joe Biden carried it with 51.72 percent in the 2020 presidential election.

Asked why he is seeking another term, Roemer told *Hannah News* he has a "whole plethora" of bills on financial topics that he wants to work on if re-elected. Those include another reduction in the personal income tax and additional work on reducing the municipal income tax, as Ohio's is second-highest in the nation. As a CPA, Roemer said he often hears from people he works with about the municipal tax issue.

Roemer previously worked with Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Monclova) on an earlier reduction to personal income tax that he said was the largest in state history, and his goal is "gradual elimination" of the tax altogether.

"[The elimination] makes Ohio much, much more competitive -- it makes it better for families, it makes it better for businesses, it makes it better for working people," Roemer said. He also told *Hannah News* he has had more bills passed out of the House than any other member.

Darrow stressed that she would be able and willing to work with Republicans at the Statehouse, as her time on Macedonia City Council and now Summit County Council both involve efforts on a bipartisan basis. That crosses over into her personal life, as she said her longtime boyfriend is a Republican and they each serve as precinct committee members for their respective local parties.

"If there's anybody who knows how to compromise, it's me," Darrow quipped. She also holds a leadership role in the Federated Women of Summit County, which supports local Democratic candidates and meets to discuss issues affecting the community.

Roemer said his time in the Legislature has benefitted from advice and input from Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton) given his over 30 years of experience and role as House Finance Committee chair.

Darrow attributed her interest in politics to being raised in a Democratic home, with a father who worked at Ford and a mother who worked at the Modern Tool and Die company. Her father was also involved in unions, and Darrow said she's "always paid attention to government."

"I've really been kind of born and raised into politics but I never did anything about it until 2012 when I actually ran for city council," she said. In her time on city and then county council, Darrow said she has worked hard to study opinions of the local law directors and other relevant documents. She also added that she doesn't let others influence her when it comes time to vote and tries to be able to explain her reasoning for each position she takes.

"You're never going to please everybody, I learned that early on -- everybody's going to have a different opinion of how you vote. You have to do what's best for you and how you think the constituents want you to represent them, and you do it the best way you know how," Darrow said.

Regarding the bills he's introduced and had passed in the Statehouse, Roemer told *Hannah News* he tries to understand the issues before a bill is introduced, identify any "roadblocks or pitfalls" related to that, and seeks bipartisan support and co-sponsors.

"The things that I do really resonate with making Ohio a better place to live. And that's neither Democrat nor Republican, that's just me trying to work to make people's lives in Ohio better," he said. Roemer also said he feels "very good" about certain bills he's introduced moving forward during lame duck session.

Both candidates described a similar approach in their door-to-door campaigning, with Darrow saying she introduces herself as a member of county council who is running for state representative and giving them campaign literature that shows the new district lines. Darrow also discussed how she has been targeted by literature attacking her as "radical" that she said was funded by "dark money from energy companies."

Roemer in turn identifies himself either as their representative, if they are in the area that overlaps with his current district, or says that he wants to be their representative. He also provides campaign materials with his contact information for residents to follow up, and said many have been "pleasantly surprised" to see a state representative at the door.

Races to Watch: Shaughnessy vs. Young in House District 32

Voters in the new 32nd House District will have a choice between two candidates who ran against each other in the previous legislative election, but due to redistricting that was for the prior 36th District.

Current Rep. Bob Young (R-North Canton) faces off against Democrat Matt Shaughnessy, an attorney. Both candidates are former members of Green City Council. While Green remained in the area they seek to represent, about 75 percent of the new 32nd District was added from outside the former 36th District.

Young said that has meant "a lot of work to get name recognition and introduce myself to people where I've never been on their ballots." Shaughnessy also told *Hannah News* he has been campaigning the way he always has for local office by getting out into the community and talking to potential voters.

He also called the new district lines a "mixed bag." The 2020 race between them ended with Young taking 52.31 percent, but Shaughnessy said the 32nd District represents "more of a tossup" now.

The *2022 Ohio Election Guide*, published by the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and compiled with assistance from *Hannah News*, gives the district a Republican index of 49.39 percent. Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray won the district with 54.1 percent in 2018, while former President Donald Trump carried it with 52.29 percent in 2020.

Young said he is running again because he "really enjoyed" his first term and that once he got past the learning curve as a representative, he felt there was "great opportunity to make a difference to people being at the Legislature."

"So long as I feel like I can continue to contribute and leave something better than when I found it, I'd like to have another term," he continued. Young has been working to balance his campaign with family and running a small business as an auctioneer, but said the new district has the benefit of being densely populated so most residents are within a 25-minute drive from where he lives.

Politics, like his auction work, involves being in "the people business," and Young said that includes being a middleman who helps find a "happy medium." In the Legislature, it applies to working across the aisle to make "a majority of the people" happy.

Shaughnessy pointed to his work in local government as experience that would prepare him for the Ohio Statehouse. On Green City Council, Democrats were in the minority so he had to "find ways to accomplish things for people in my ward and for the city." Shaughnessy also helped a citizen initiative effort to make the city's law director an elected position, and said similar steps would be needed at the state level to address redistricting and abortion access issues.

Now, Shaughnessy's legal work involves helping victims of crime receive state funds, including on appeals when their claims are denied by the state. A former firefighter as well, he said public safety and funding for local governments were major priorities. The Local Government Fund (LGF) should be restored to the level of 20 years ago, before cuts by the state which required higher local taxes, he continued.

Abortion is another major issue for Shaughnessy, and he said that is one where he and Young are "diametrically opposed." He believes the government should not be involved in abortion-related decisions and pointed to Young's co-sponsorship of HB480 (Powell-Hall) which would allow a private right of action against those who perform an abortion or help with one. Education and "culture wars" related to them were also an issue Shaughnessy discussed, saying he didn't want teachers to fear losing their jobs.

Young said his top issues are to make sure the economy is strong and improve public safety. As a father, education is important to him as well. Young discussed the need to ensure school safety and provide career opportunities in both higher education and technical schools, saying he wants to focus on those in his potential next term and that voters discuss those issues every day.

Highlights of his first term include legislation updating business taxes and one that would designate April as "Autism Acceptance" month, along with a bill to require health insurance coverage of Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS) and

Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS). Young further hopes to see passage of his HB408, which would close "loopholes" around theft and subsequent sale of catalytic converters.

Both candidates said they've benefitted from working with colleagues, with Shaughnessy discussing how former legislator and Green city councilman Steve Dyer is an "expert on school funding." Young listed Reps. Jay Edwards (R-Nelsonville), Don Jones (R-Freeport) and Bill Roemer (R-Richfield), as well as Sen. Kristina Roegner (R-Hudson).

Asked about his message to voters, Young said he discusses how he has a "track record" as a current legislator, saying \$1.6 million in capital funding projects came to the 36th House District during the past two years. He described himself as the candidate "most like" voters there.

"I'm a small business owner. I'm a husband. I'm a father. I've lived in this community my entire life so I know the district. And I think there's underlying benefits to being all of those things," Young said.

Shaughnessy in turn said he works to hear from potential voters about what their concerns are for the community and state as a whole.

"I would say mine is more of a listening tour than a talking tour, because that's how you learn what's going on in the community and what people are concerned with," he continued. "It's conversational. I introduce myself, tell them where I'm coming from -- that I'm a retired firefighter, that I'm an attorney that helps crime victims and I'm here to hear them, listen to their concerns."

Races to Watch: Weinstein vs. Bigham Rematch in House District 34

The last time Rep. Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson) faced off with Republican Beth Bigham for state Legislature, he won a tight re-election in the 37th House District. The map and number have change with redistricting but not the closeness of their exurban rematch in north Summit County's new District 34.

As current and former members of Hudson City Council, respectively, Bigham and Weinstein bring a grassroots sensibility to the swing district, previously held by Republicans before his election in 2018. A married father of three young children, Weinstein questions his rival's support for eliminating the state income tax and its potential impact on local schools, roads and first responders.

"Is she going to raise sales taxes? I she going to raise property taxes? I don't think either of those would be a popular position," he says.

Bigham, with a husband and two children of her own, says Weinstein's own record on public revenues is mixed, and that he skipped a vote on a local income tax increase as a former council member. Rejecting that proposal, her colleagues nevertheless funded completion of new sidewalks and other basic services, including improved water quality and reduced stormwater runoff, she says.

"We've got a good, strong, fiscally conservative majority on city council right now," says Bigham.

The candidates also raise larger policy issues appropriate to the Statehouse. They include more divisive ones like abortion and its restriction, which have only become more explosive since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June.

"I think she is wrong on abortion," Weinstein says of his opponent's opposition to the practice. "On the one hand, she wants government out of our lives, On the other hand, she wants government involved in our most intimate decisions."

A board-certified nurse practitioner with an MBA in medical administration, Bigham says she is concerned with Ohioans' real health care needs.

"We've seen these crazy, out-of-control prices where one test costs tens of thousands of dollars," she says, citing her son's own medical challenges. "I'm passionate about health care and helping people get the services they need without being chained by limited options."

Weinstein says one need look no further than state-sanctioned coal subsidies to the Ohio Valley Electric Corp. (OVEC), along with other fossil fuel emissions, for genuine threats to public health. Bipartisan

legislation to repeal the last major piece of 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) to survive has stalled in the Republican-led Senate. He supports a continued push to defund OVEC as part of a "21st Century" energy policy and has sponsored HB429 in the current General Assembly to create the Governor's Office of Energy Justice.

Bigham's interests extend to school safety through increased security and mental health supports for marginalized children.

"The folks with the problem are probably always the ones with the best information on how to fix it," she says of her local model for campus security and behavioral intervention. "Where are our risks?"

Bigham supports teacher training to help recognize isolated children and potential warning signs rather than "psychiatrists in schools" that could overshadow parental supervision. She says any additional state funding would be targeted rather than a per-child increase.

"We've got really well funded schools right now. We certainly do in Hudson," she says.

Among his other concerns, Weinstein has just introduced HB721 to prohibit the outside employment of Ohio Supreme Court justices and statewide executive officeholders.

"The corporate bank board position Lt. Gov. Jon Husted now holds is a dereliction of duty of statewide office -- and the best paid one at \$176,000," he says.

He also has introduced HB628 (Weinstein-Upchurch) to legalize "adult-use cannabis."

"We're reaching the point where a majority of Americans will live in decriminalized states. The positives outweigh the negatives," says Weinstein, pointing among other things to a new public revenue stream. "I feel like this would pass easily if it goes to a ballot initiative. I think that's where this is heading over the next few years."

Bigham has yet to sponsor legislation at the state level but, if elected, would back Republican efforts to phase out Ohio's income tax. She says expanding the business tax base rather than individual taxation is future-looking rather than regressive.

"You look at unleashing the competitive economy in Ohio. We're on the precipice of some really good things," she says, pointing to Intel's decision to build in Central Ohio.

Bigham says she would eschew "childish fights" and "endless political games" if promoted to the Statehouse.

"I think we are in a very divisive time in America. Some people, like my opponent, thrive in that environment. People are ready to move beyond that," she says.

Weinstein, an Air Force veteran, says he looks for a repeat win on Nov. 8 and a return next year to the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs, Higher Education and Career Readiness, and Energy and Natural Resources committees, the latter of which he serves as ranking minority member.

"I won against her in 2020 in a rough year for Democrats in Ohio. It's a toss-up district designed for Republicans," he says. "I'm confident it will work again for me in 2022."

Races to Watch: White v. Caruso in House District 36

Rep. Andrea White (R-Kettering) and Democrat Addison Caruso are battling for a different legislative district than the one the first-term legislator won by double-digit margins in 2020. House District 36 includes new areas of Dayton and a more diverse constituency that could yield a tighter vote on Nov. 8.

White admits her electorate is not the one her husband, former Rep. John White, represented two decades ago.

"The district has changed. We have some areas that have been underrepresented in our caucus because there aren't as many Republican office-holders in urban areas," she says, noting her family is still characterized by the same values as when the couple got involved in politics while dating.

"My husband and I are both motivated to make a difference. And that's part of why we love each other and got married. We have a lot in common," White says.

She invokes the same pragmatic focus as when she first entered the Legislature in 2021.

"I have a pretty wide diversity of experiences," says the former behavioral health professional, communications consultant and Kettering Municipal Court clerk, a position she held for 17 years before coming to the Statehouse. "I want to bring people together to solve problems. That's my skill set. We need commonsense leaders in Columbus. I'm all about investing in data-driven policy decisions."

New or old district, White remains committed to thriving neighborhoods, accessible employment, safe schools, and prevention in mental health and addiction. Her jointly sponsored HB145 augured budget changes to poverty guidelines and public child care, capped by the Study Committee on Publicly Funded Child Care and Step Up To Quality Program. It has just issued preliminary recommendations.

"My main focus was to raise the conversation and the dialogue about the importance of quality early learning for our children, and that we needed to provide access to child care for every person that wants to enter the workforce," she says, also calling for improved skill sets. "Career tech is very important to me and looking at pathways, particularly in our urban areas, giving children hope."

Several other pieces of legislation White has sponsored or joint-sponsored could see final passage in Senate lame duck after Nov. 8. HB333 (Miranda-White), to better utilize school counselors in vocational guidance and mental health, and HB343 (White), to expand victims' rights, have both passed the House and await action in the upper chamber.

"We have a solid bill, and we hope we are going to move it forward for the victims of this state," she says of HB343.

White she is working on several new pieces of legislation in the hope she returns to the General Assembly.

"I'm concerned about the juvenile crime and chronic absenteeism rates climbing in our cities and schools. We need to do more to come alongside our children and our families, as well as holding schools accountable for public safety," she says, adding substance abuse treatment, recovery and prison reentry to that list.

"I'm not here to divide people. I'm here to unite and bring people together to solve problems we all have in common," White concludes.

Caruso is equally passionate about the legislative district he hopes to represent and the policy priorities he says have been abandoned by the Statehouse majority. They include gun safety, abortion access, education funding, affordable housing, and clean energy. An attorney at Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE), he says even professionals his own age have difficulty finding accommodations they can afford.

"In talking to developers in the region, there is a problem. There is demand and there is supply. The housing stock is just not being replenished quickly enough," he notes, saying the Legislature must have some skin in the game on local housing needs. "I think it really has to be a partnership between the state and the city in order to get something done."

Citing his past work with the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC), Caruso says the Buckeye State is trailing many others, whether Republican- or Democrat-run, in clean energy. They include Texas and Oklahoma, not generally regarded as progressive strongholds.

"It's not a blue or red issue. It's an economic issue. We have an opportunity to be a leader in the new economy," he says of renewable energy production, equipment manufacturing, installation and maintenance in Ohio.

Caruso says that is a very different vision than Republican's support for coal and nuclear subsidies in 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin), which also was supported by a number of Democrats.

"This is not where the state needs to go, and they want to continue investing in fossil fuel generation," he says of Republicans.

Caruso says many of the solar projects submitted at the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) are being defeated by county commissioners and township trustees under SB52 (Reineke-McColley). Instead, he says, the state should provide tax incentives for solar installations on apartment buildings and other businesses that currently may not be able to afford the cost.

In addition to expanded state school funding, Caruso says school boards, parents and teachers -- not Columbus -- should have the most say in K-12 education, at the same time conceding the larger debate over messages children may receive in the classroom.

"I don't necessarily see it as a zero-sum game. I think all groups need to have input. All three [teachers, school boards and parents] should have the best interest of the child at heart," he says. "I think the school board should be accountable to parents."

Caruso shares White's support for career-technical education and says Kettering is home to vocational programs that could be a model for the state.

"There definitely is a skills deficit. We have this mentality now that college is the be-all and end-all," he says. "That's not necessarily the case."

Like his opponent, he acknowledges the challenge in gaining the trust of all electors in the realigned 36th District.

"This is a very competitive district. At the end of the day, I just think we need more voices in the state," Caruso says. "I think we've got a real shot."

Races to Watch: Plummer v. Jackson in House District 39

Two-term Rep. Phil Plummer (R-Dayton) is hoping a four-point swing for Democrats in his former Republican-leaning district does not result in a redistricting win for his opponent on Nov. 8. Challenger Leronda Jackson, who won her August primary after the state's highest court placed the late filer on the ballot, hopes it does.

Like some other redistricted House seats, Plummer's Dayton-area constituency has absorbed more urban areas than the seat he was first elected to in 2018.

"My district was plus a few. It wasn't too far right-leaning. It was fair as it was," he says of his seat prior to redistricting. "Now it's a few points left-leaning. The intent was 50-50 districts," he observes.

Plummer says Jackson only filed as a write-in last June after she recognized Democrats' advantage in the new 39th, but she describes her candidacy quite differently.

"I don't know that the community feels supported. I think people feel like politicians are terrible. They don't feel any cohesiveness," Jackson tells *Hannah News*, pointing to a "livable wage" as one of her key economic concerns.

"I really hate when people are working two jobs to survive. We do see higher wages now. We see the cost of goods up as well," she adds, "so I don't know if people really benefited."

Jackson has called for cost-of-living "vouchers" administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) to help families that don't earn a livable wage but make too much for current state assistance, though she hasn't put a price tag on the idea. Plummer says executive agencies are wasteful enough as it is and should be regularly measured for data-driven results -- one of his key targets for revenue reform if reelected to the 135th General Assembly.

"We hand all these organization buckets of money. We have to start tracking to see what we're getting in return. If it isn't working, we defund. It's time to stop wasting people's tax dollars," Plummer states.

"The finance committee should be tracking every administrative agency we give money to to see if we're getting a return on our investment," he says of the majority's larger push for an income tax phase-out. "They meet more often and hold these directors accountable. The infrastructure is there with all the finance subcommittees."

Jackson also supports fiscal responsibility, though with a different focus.

"A balanced budget is important. I know cutting taxes is important. If your budget is four times more for police funding than education funding, that's something to look at," she notes, offering the comparison more as a hypothetical example of value-added spending.

Both candidates call for a rational K-12 funding system that does not make parental choice and successful school districts an either-or.

"I have very good schools, and I have struggling schools. You go from a good district to a struggling district by crossing the street. I think the driving force -- a lot of it -- is poverty," Plummer says of his realigned House seat. "If we don't educate these kids, there's a good chance you incarcerate them."

Jackson is seeking adequate per-child funding for classroom resources, small class sizes, and teacher recruitment and training without standardized testing and without a reliance on local levies for academic excellence.

"We know which districts are failing. They are the bottom of the list all the time. Why are we allowing them to remain at the bottom?" she asks.

Plummer notes that, under House Speaker Bob Cupp's (R-Lima) school funding reform, the Legislature already has provided new dollars for wraparound services to students that include mental health.

"We've invested the money. Now we need to see that it's being done," he says, again stressing accountability in state expenditures.

Both support school choice in principle but say it should not hamstring school districts.

"We need to even the playing field with charters. We have a standard everyone strives for. There are certain testing requirements they have to follow. There are certain qualifications for leaders lacking," Plummer says of community schools that "cherry-pick good students" to avoid increased scrutiny.

On the other side of school choice, Jackson says she opposes the expanded school voucher program.

"If the local school district is not failing, if they're average or above, there should not be voucher dollars," she says, reserving support for vouchers in below-average districts. "My child can't be the sacrificial lamb while your schools are becoming great."

Plummer says the state should have a separate line item for vouchers that does not leach funding from school districts.

On other issues, Jackson says the state should promote small business with zero- to low-interest loans for disadvantaged groups and paid advisors to help entrepreneurs get up to speed.

"People with lower credit, they can get credit but at a higher cost. Don't overcharge them because of maybe something in their background," she says, calling for scrutiny of the state's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending. "I believe that the Small Business Administration and other loan programs should go out on a limb for minority-owned and women-owned business that have faced obstacles."

Jackson says sole proprietors also should have access to health insurance group plans to make start-ups more feasible.

One of four apparent challengers to become the new House speaker, Plummer says party fundraising is not the determining factor for leadership that it once was.

"We need to get away from a dictatorship and have something more like a quarterback that lets people do their jobs," he says, emphasizing the work experience and skill sets legislators bring to committee assignments.

"At times, only a few people are making decisions -- if being made at all," Plummer says of some familiar approaches to House leadership. "I've worked for a living. I've seen the good and bad. I know what needs to be changed."

Races to Watch: Larson vs. Williams in House District 41

The House minority hopes to retain at least one seat after redistricting consolidated two Democratic strongholds in northwest Ohio and their incumbents bowed out for very different reasons. Newcomers Nancy Larson and Josh William are vying for the reconfigured 41st District north and east of Toledo, roughly comprising term-limited Rep. Michael Sheehy's (D-Oregon) expiring District 46 as well as District 45 held by Rep. Lisa Sobecki (D-Toledo), who is running for Lucas County commissioner.

Larson, a former Air Force wife, retired social worker and mother of two, is an outspoken critic of Republican control over the Ohio General Assembly and all statewide offices.

"These folks are elected to be leaders, and they're the opposite of leaders," she says, noting she was "intimately involved" in the 2021-2022 redistricting fight. "They're not people that have the moral standing and the policy positions I uphold. Their job is to preserve the status quo for themselves and moneyed interests."

She likens "laboratories of democracy" to a Republican talking point and says the GOP is really interested in turning the 50 states into "laboratories of autocracy."

"All of these processes have been replicated in Statehouses across the country," Larson says.

She says Ohio's current partisan majority is "running the state into the ground on every measure possible," including gun laws, abortion rights, factory farms and health care. She says 40 years of working with dialysis patients, probated sex addicts and others eroded her confidence in the state and nation's "piecemeal" medical system. She recalls the Ohio General Assembly heard legislation to institute a single-payer system of "Medicare for all" only a few years ago.

"That has not gone where it needs to go, but it is the best and cheapest way to provide medical care as a basic right to all Ohioans," says Larson.

She says the U.S. Veteran's Administration is a good model for medical cost containment and uniformity of care.

"The basic concept of Medicare for all is new and improved Medicare, vision, dental, etc. You take out the private insurance companies and the waste that goes to doctors filling out all the paperwork and insurance companies fighting coverage. We would not be supporting the bureaucracy that has done nothing for health services and outcomes. There would be plenty of money pay for health care," she says, adding that small businesses would regard Medicare for all as a "huge advantage."

Larson says her legislative agenda includes state abortion guarantees to counter *Roe v. Wade's* repeal by "partisan hacks" on the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Take that six-week abortion ban and throw it in the dustbin," she says of "heartbeat" bill 133-SB23 (Roegner).

Among other priorities, Larson says 90 percent of Ohioans want background checks on all gun sales. Larson also supports the "dismantling" of large-scale farming operations.

"That is the only permanent solution to restoring Lake Erie," she says of a major concern for Toledoans at the lake's algae-plagued west end. "If we don't do that, the lake will only get sicker and sicker."

Redoubling her critique of Republicans, Larson calls the scandal-plagued energy subsidies of 133-HB6 (Callender-Wilkin) another instance of Statehouse corruption, though she says Democrats bear some of the blame for supporting that bill and its chief apologist, the former, indicted House speaker.

"There are a lot of bargains being struck to keep right-to-work off the table. Larry Householder was one of them," she observes, saying some legislators were worried about the loss of school and union jobs from

closed nuclear plants. "The folks that broke ranks and voted for HB6, I don't necessarily agree with their judgement. All the Democrats in northwest Ohio that voted for HB6, I don't think that's okay."

Larson says her campaign's overarching theme is "democracy, and educating people on how democratic norms have been suppressed already." To that extent, she says not all Democrats support her candidacy.

"I'm an independent thinker and voice. It's not special interests but working for what's in the majority of people's interests," she says. "I'm not looking at this as a career in politics. That's something that differentiates me from most of my potential colleagues."

Her Republican challenger is something of a survivor, having grown up in a fatherless home after his dad died of cancer, dropping out his senior year after taking honors classes, suffering permanent disability from a 30-foot fall on the jobsite, lying in bed for years from debilitating back injuries, growing to 458 pounds, caring for a young son, losing weight and earning his G.E.D. along with associate's, bachelor's and law degrees.

"It made me realize that no matter what you've been through, you have to take ownership over your life. It may not be fair, you may not start from the same place as your peers, but that doesn't excuse you from personal accountability," Williams says.

He describes a process of personal recovery that afforded him certain advantages as a disabled person while at the same time forcing him to negotiate with the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) to fund more surgeries.

"The state of Ohio did not want me to go to college. They wanted me to work minimum wage jobs and pay me the difference," says Williams. "The state finally conceded after we threatened to sue."

He includes survivor benefits in his top priorities for public service.

"I see the importance of government programs being available. It's part of my mission to promote those programs to help individuals who are willing to help themselves," Williams says. "I want to work with the governor and the lieutenant governor to improve workforce development in the state."

He points to the challenge in getting workforce development authorities and career-tech providers to partner in ways that can cut into their own bottom line.

"Unlike Govs. Kasich and DeWine, in the Legislature, we have the power of the purse. There's no requirement on those agencies' budgets whether they coordinate with other agencies or with the governor's office. That's part of what we mean by draining the swamp. We have bureaucrats in these state agencies, whether Republican or Democrat, that like control," he says, returning to his critique of BWC.

"They didn't want me to become the best version of myself. They wanted me to become a version that would get me off their payroll. The government understands that as I climb the ladder and become the best version of myself, I need less government," he says. "I see it as a bipartisan issue."

Williams hopes to introduce legislation that would return a small portion of BWC payments so employers can retrain workers for increasingly demanding jobs. He says that would open up entry-level positions to those working elsewhere in minimum wage jobs.

Among other issues, Williams says the debate over gun rights and public safety is often misunderstood.

"The 2nd Amendment was to allow us to fight back against a tyrannical government. We want a government, one, that fears its people because we have the ability to overthrow it," he says. "The solution is tougher gun laws when it comes to people using guns in a crime."

Williams also is on the other side of the spectrum from his opponent when it comes to abortion, which he says should not be legal in the case of rape and incest.

"When does the victim of a rape have a right to take the life of the rapist? You tell me we protect the life of the rapist more than the innocent child who was the product of that rape?" he says, allowing one abortion exception for "immediate threat of death or great bodily harm" to the mother.

The candidates might be less far apart on one aspect of criminal justice reform. Williams says he and many Ohioans have been the victim of false charges.

"I want to bring fairness back into the courtroom and provide an opportunity for those falsely accused of a crime to prove their innocence before trial," he says. "This would allow our state to concentrate on the real criminal offenders in our society and allow our law enforcement to end this spike in violent crimes."

Williams reserves a partisan critique of his own for other political views and Democrats in particular.

"We believe we have room for all of them to exist, and we allow voters to decide who will represent them," he says of Republicans. "Democrats have taboos."

Races to Watch: West vs. Thomas in House District 49

A redrawn district and the national spotlight on a key congressional race has given the Assistant House Minority Leader a bigger obstacle for re-election this November.

Rep. Thomas West (D-Canton) is looking to win re-election for his final term before term limits kick in for him. He faces a new 49th Ohio House District that includes the city of Canton and extends north towards the Summit County line, encompassing McDonaldsville and Lake Cable. Dave's Redistricting App gives the district a 50.09 percent Democratic lean, while the Ohio Manufacturers' Association Election Guide, created with the assistance of *Hannah News*, gives it a 48.73 percent Republican index. Richard Cordray won the district with 52.49 percent in 2018, while Joe Biden edged Donald Trump 50.77 percent to 49.23 percent in the 2020 presidential race.

He faces Jim Thomas, an attorney and Jackson Township trustee, as well as a former professional tennis player.

West said families and the issues that face them are paramount to the district and the race. He said inflation has hit district residents hard, and issues such as medical care remain, leading some to choose between medical care and putting food on the table. He said those are the type of issues he can tackle in the Legislature.

Additionally, he said education is not stabilized and lawmakers will have to make sure schools are constitutionally funded. While lawmakers adopted the Fair School Funding Formula in budget bill HB110 (Oelslager), West noted it was only funded through this biennium.

"We're going to provide some stability along educational lines and making sure our education system is adequately funded and constitutionally sound," he said.

Thomas said he was born and raised in the district and graduated from Stanford University with a degree in American studies. After college, he played professional tennis for 12 years, and said he played in 50 countries. He said while he was traveling, he had the opportunity to talk to people in those countries and learn more about their culture and values, adding he did his best to take advantage of those learning opportunities. After his professional career ended, he returned to Ohio and got a law degree from Case Western Reserve University, noting one of his professors was Sen. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls). He currently is in private practice.

He said he has had his eye on the Legislature for a while.

"This is something I've wanted to do. I've been trying to prepare for it over the last 10 years. I've been trying to learn as much as I can. I want to make a difference and I think the work of the Legislature is super important," Thomas said.

Thomas said he believes economic development and education are the most important issues, followed by inflation. He said those are the top issues he is hearing from residents of the district.

He said as a member of the Legislature, he wants to assist various economic projects in the district and get through the red tape they may face. One of the projects he pointed to is the Hall of Fame Village, which could bring in more tourism to the district. He noted that the project wants to offer sports betting,

and there may be issues related to that as well as other issues with government entities that he would expect to help the project work through.

Additionally, he wants to provide more support for manufacturers in the district, noting that if the district can make more locally and send it out, that brings more money back to the district, which leads to more growth.

On education, Thomas said districts are different, and "we have to make sure students are getting the best experience they can no matter where they are located."

West said he has also heard about concerns with the economy, but women's issues are also more prevalent on the campaign trail with the U.S. Supreme Court overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.

When it comes to inflation, West said state lawmakers can work to ease the pain by providing subsidies that help Ohio residents meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. He also noted the impending end of the federal emergency related to COVID-19, which could kick some residents off of Medicaid, as well as end support for housing. He noted there are still American Rescue Plan Act funds at the state level that can be used to help Ohioans navigate through the bureaucracy.

Additionally, West said those funds should help foodbanks and other ways to make sure residents have access to food.

"Money only goes so far, and then they maybe need a foodbank to help supplement or food stamps to help supplement them," West said.

"All of these things will play a major role, and I'm not one those people who believe people are sitting on their butts. I see it every day. There's people who are working, and they're struggling," he said.

The race could be affected by outside forces as well. West noted a competitive 13th Congressional District race between Democrat Emilia Sykes and Republican Madison Gesiotto Gilbert, which is bringing in national money, which he said could boost Thomas, as well as a more competitive district and a shorter cycle between the primary and general election.

"That's why it's important for me to continue to knock on doors and get to know my new district, and talk to them about why I feel I am the best candidate in this race. I can talk about all of the awards that I've gotten. I could talk about all of the legislation I've passed, but at the end of the day, it comes down to whether or not my constituents vote my way or vote the other person's way," he said.

Thomas said he has been working to get his name out in the district more through radio ads, signs, and knocking on thousands of doors. He said that he grew up in Plain Township in the district in addition to his current role as Jackson Township trustee as well as his business in the city of Canton, so he is familiar with the district.

As a former professional athlete, Thomas said the race "gives me another avenue to compete."

West also sees himself as competitor, noting his time as a track athlete. He said he wants to finish the race as strong as he started.

"I don't know whether I am up front, or whether I am behind, I just know in the end I need to finish first," West said.

Races to Watch: Manning vs. Phillips in House District 52

Rep. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville) is seeking her third term in the Ohio House of Representatives in a newly drawn district that is a true tossup thanks to redistricting.

According to data from the Ohio Manufacturers' Association's (OMA) 2022 election guide, created with the assistance of *Hannah News*, the district, which includes the cities of Elyria and Avon in addition to Manning's home in North Ridgeville, has a 49.54 percent Republican political index, while Dave's Redistricting App giving it a 48.32 percent Republican index. Democrat Richard Cordray won the district in the 2018 gubernatorial race over Gov. Mike DeWine with 52.10 percent of the vote, while Donald

Trump edged Joe Biden with 50.44 percent in the district in 2020 while winning the state overall by 8 percentage points.

Manning's opponent is Regan Phillips, an executive administrative assistant with Elyria City Clerk of Council, whom the House Democratic Caucus in the OMA guide called "an emerging leader who currently serves as the second-vice chair of the Elyria NAACP as well as president of the NCNW Lorain Section and president of the Community Foundation of Lorain County - African American Community Fund."

In an interview with *Hannah News*, Manning points to her accomplishments as a legislator including making sure businesses are succeeding so they can offer good paying jobs. She noted one of her first bills she worked to pass took away regulations on businesses in her county that would have left otherwise. She also said she has talked to businesses about providing more flexibility for employees and their families.

She said when she is talking with voters while knocking on doors, most bring up issues with the economy and inflation and are concerned about the costs to their families. She said they also know her background as a teacher and want to talk about their children, what they are learning in school, and the loss of education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have also complained about the lack of quality day care in their neighborhood.

"I talk to them about things that I have done that I am hoping is making a difference and I think has made a difference in Ohio," she said.

Manning said she also tells voters that she has worked to make sure their taxes are lowered, adding that governments should always tighten their belts and give the decisions on tax levies to the local residents rather than the state's deciding it for them.

On family issues, she said she talks about safety, including school safety. She said she worked to have schools establish a tipline for potential school threats and making sure there is better training for school response teams.

She also noted that suicide had been increasing among juveniles and she worked to make sure suicide prevention was taught more in schools. The law went into effect just before the pandemic hit in 2020.

"That is a conversation they can now have in the classroom and have a better connection on what to do and how to respond," she said.

Infant mortality is another issue she said she has talked to families about, having served as a co-chair on the Infant Mortality Commission, making sure there is better housing, improved tobacco cessation programs, and making sure pregnant women have better prenatal care. She said they have made progress but not enough.

"To me, we should try to find a way of not losing one baby," she said. "I know that's probably impossible, but we've got to get to better numbers, so we are constantly looking at other states that are having better success than us."

If re-elected, she said she hopes to continue to serve as chair of the House Primary and Secondary Education and said she also enjoys working on higher education, especially with Lorain Community College on workforce training issues. She noted the Intel project in Licking County and said she believes her community can benefit from it. The community college will be able to train workers for the plant and small businesses will come to Ohio and the district because of the project, she said.

Asked if she believes some of the divisive hot button issues such as abortion will have an effect on the race, Manning said she believes it was more a factor in the primary, noting she was one of the Republicans who voted against the state's "Heartbeat Bill" because it didn't include exceptions for rape and incest, and because she said had talked to residents of the district and knew where they were on the issue.

"I always try to think of what it would be like if it was my family," she said. "I think most people in the district would want [an exception] if it is rape and incest."

She said she isn't taking the race for granted and has been knocking on doors and has made herself available to voters to discuss any issues.

Phillips' campaign did not respond to email requests for an interview. On her website, she touts her work as an advocate for the community on issues such as victim's rights, youth advocacy, mental health and social justice.

"I'm running for state representative in the 52nd District because I believe representation matters, and representation is exactly what this district has been missing for far too long," she said in a video posted to her campaign site.

Phillips said she will advocate for livable wages, accessible health care, and safer schools and communities at the Statehouse.

"I believe in a balanced government, and that the decisions made in Columbus should be debated in the House and Senate, not at the Manning Family dinner table," she said, referring to the fact that Rep. Manning's son, Nathan Manning, serves in the Ohio Senate.

Races to Watch: Al Cutrona vs. Bruce Neff in House District 58

Democrats are hoping to recapture a Mahoning Valley seat they lost in 2018 that on paper should be more advantageous to them this year.

Rep. Al Cutrona (R-Canfield) is running for re-election in the 58th House District after serving his first full term in the House. He was appointed to the seat in 2020 to succeed the late Don Manning, who won the seat in 2018, flipping it from red to blue. Cutrona went on to win the General Election that year with nearly 61 percent of the vote.

This year he faces Bruce Neff, a Canfield councilman first elected locally in 2017. In 2021, he lost a bid to be Canfield mayor.

Cutrona currently serves as the chief operating officer for an infectious disease medical practice that covers three counties in the Mahoning Valley and is also a practicing attorney at the law firm of Amourgis & Associates.

The Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) biennial election guide, created with the help of *Hannah News*, gives the district a 49.54 percent Republican political index. Democratic gubernatorial nominee Richard Cordray beat Gov. Mike DeWine with nearly 55 percent of the vote in 2018, but Donald Trump beat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential race with 53 percent in the district in 2020. Dave's Redistricting gives the district a 48.57 percent Republican lean.

Both candidates did not respond to email requests for interviews. In interviews with local media, Cutrona touts his record of passing more bills than any other legislator and bringing more money back to the district.

He told the *Youngstown Vindicator* editorial board that economic and community development and infrastructure investments are his priorities if re-elected. He also said he wants to work to remove the state's income tax to drive more investment to the state, and to maximize energy production in Ohio to reduce high energy costs.

Neff said he also has experience, whether it is his time living in the district, working on council and following politics over the years. He told the *Vindicator* that while he is "not a leftist," he would support restoring a woman's right to an abortion and opposes the availability of assault weapons to the public.

Races to Watch: Santucci vs. Peterson in House District 64

Both candidates seeking to succeed Rep. Michael O'Brien (D-Warren) in the 64th House District cite their experience as the reason they are the best qualified candidate in the race.

The district as currently drawn contains the city of Warren as well as the southeastern portion of Trumbull County. It has about a 54 percent Democratic index, with Joe Biden winning 51 percent of the vote in 2020 and Richard Cordray winning nearly 59 percent of the vote for governor in 2018.

With O'Brien unable to run due to term limits, the race sees Democrat Vincent Peterson facing off against Republican Nick Santucci.

Peterson said his interest in public service goes back to a period when he worked in law enforcement for five years until 2018, including a stint as a SWAT officer. He said he also served as an instructor in the community, but said he felt like he could do more.

"I was kind of tired of seeing people come out with the same situation -- the same kind of environmental situations I felt weren't being addressed," he said.

After meeting with U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan (D-Niles) during a community event, he asked Ryan if he had advice on how to do more. Two weeks later, Ryan called and offered him a job working constituent services, which he accepted and has now done for the past few years. Recently, he said he found himself in the same position asking what more he can do, and threw his hat in the ring for the 64th House District.

Santucci said he worked for the Youngstown Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce and then in education. He said the relationships he has built in those spaces with state and federal legislators are an advantage allowing him to hit the ground running and giving him the opportunity to have the largest impact for the district.

"I decided to run because I think I am the most qualified with my background and relationships that I have," he said.

Peterson said improving education is a top priority for him, including not letting the culture influence the type of education students are getting. He said lawmakers need to make sure the education system is up to par and students can compete with kids across the globe.

He also wants to build up infrastructure, especially broadband access.

"We shouldn't be living without broadband. We see we're all a pandemic away from our kids having to learn at home, from some of us having to work from home. We need to have broadband, especially in a place like Trumbull County where we do have a lot of rural areas, you know, or lower income neighborhoods that maybe don't have wi-fi capabilities," he said. "We should be fixing roads, bridges, highways, we should be laying down broadband internet, all these things need to happen and we need to be focusing on them so that we can help bring the future to Trumbull County."

Even as a Democrat who would be coming into the minority should he win, Peterson said he believes he can get these issues addressed, saying they aren't the type of issues that both parties normally argue over.

"We should all be coming together on these issues because it's going to benefit a lot of our communities," he said.

Noting the construction of the new Intel plant in Licking County, Peterson said there will be a number of supply chain factories coming with it, and said there is no reason that those plants can't be spread out throughout the state.

He also criticized the House Republican majority's passage of gun bills, saying that some "are absolutely ridiculous as someone who's worked in law enforcement." He said as someone who used to train in school shooter response, he believes it is not a good idea to arm teachers to try to handle a school shooting situation.

Santucci lists inflation as a top issue for him, saying he has heard from business owners and people in the district how increased prices are affecting them. Restaurant owners have told him that they are concerned about their businesses staying open.

"I knocked on someone's door the other day...she said she can only afford two meals instead of three because inflation is crushing her on her fixed income," he said.

Additionally, he said crime and high gas prices are also concerns for residents of the district.

"I plan to really work and support our police and ensure that crime is cracked down on and that we focus on these criminals that are committing these crimes," he said.

Santucci said the state could work with the federal delegation to address inflation and to support policies that would help those who are hurting. He criticized federal spending as a factor in increasing prices. He again pointed to his existing relationships with members of Congress, saying he will be easily able to pick up the phone and call someone about an issue in the district.

"We have to have an all hands on deck approach because people are really hurting," he said. "The continued spending and the continued policies we are seeing at the federal level through the White House is really alarming and it's not helping anybody."

Asked if current divisive issues such as abortion or what is taught in the classroom will have an effect on the race, the candidates differed on the degree of such an effect.

Peterson said he believes the Supreme Court ruling striking down *Roe v. Wade* will be a factor, adding that women woke up one day and found they have less rights than their mom or grandmother had. He also said people are aware of the battle over redistricting. But he said in the end he believes the connection he makes with voters will be the biggest factor.

Santucci said many of those issues are important and should be talked about, but he said most voters are concerned about economic issues and how their livelihoods have changed because of inflation.

Both also said they believe they are in a good position to win in November. Peterson noted that he won overwhelmingly in the Democratic primary earlier this year, and credited his campaign's ground game.

"I can't tell you how many people I met at the polls that said, 'Hey, I'm only coming out because of you.' And I don't even like the credit myself, but just the campaign that myself and my team are running. I think it's just one that really touches people, and we're really excited to keep doing it moving forward," Peterson said.

Santucci said he believes voters are going to see that he is the most qualified and can really have an impact on day one.

"My plan is to continue to meet voters, to continue share our message that we have a different course, and ultimately work our best to help families in our area," Santucci said.

Races to Watch: Pavliga vs. Clyde in House District 72

Freshman Rep. Gail Pavliga (R-Atwater) is hoping to hold on to her seat as she faces a challenge from former Rep. Kathleen Clyde, who is considered a "rising star" by the national Democratic Party.

Pavliga currently represents House District 75, which includes central and southern Portage County. Clyde represented House District 75 during her time in the chamber before being term-limited in 2018.

The newly-drawn House District 72 includes mostly northern and central Portage County.

According to the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) 2022 Election Guide, House District 72 has a political Republican index of 50.75 percent. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Richard Cordray got nearly 52 percent of the vote in 2018, while Gov. Mike DeWine received about 48 percent. In 2020, former President Donald Trump got nearly 53 percent of the vote, while President Joe Biden received about 47 percent.

The district's top three industries by number of jobs are education and health services (30.6 percent); trade, transportation and utilities (19.9 percent); and manufacturing (18.1 percent), according to OMA.

In a phone interview with *Hannah News*, Pavliga said she hopes to continue addressing mental health and addiction issues if she is re-elected, pointing specifically to her work on the OneOhio Recovery Foundation.

"That's something that has been near and dear to my heart, because we have such a problem with opioids, overdoses and suicide," Pavliga said. "It's not going to be one thing that eradicates the opioid epidemic. It's going to be hitting away at it in chunks."

Pavliga said she also hopes to continue working on efforts to reduce taxes, support public safety and help military veterans.

"There had been a Democratic stronghold on this seat for nearly two decades, so it was quite an honor to be elected last time. I think I've come out of the gate running, with multiple bills already on the governor's desk and signed, and many more through the House," she said.

Pavliga said she has focused on the ground game during the campaign, hoping to once again attract votes from moderates to win the election.

"You have get the message out there that they have somebody that's working for them in Columbus, and I think that is noticed when you're seen at events and at trustees' meetings and community events, and you're able to talk with constituents," Pavliga said. "Mental health, opioid recovery, lower taxes, workforce development and higher education are very central, and they're also very middle ground, so I think that is something that I have really tried to focus on."

Clyde didn't respond to interview requests for this story.

In addition to serving as a state legislator from 2011 to 2018, Clyde ran for Ohio secretary of state in 2018, losing a close race to Secretary of State Frank LaRose. She was later appointed to the Portage County Board of Commissioners, but lost that seat in 2020.

According to her campaign website, Clyde is running for the House because she wants to make a difference in her community.

"Young parents trying to figure out how to afford child care, I'm fighting for you. Workers trying to earn a living wage and equal pay, you have an advocate in me. Seniors struggling with rising costs on a fixed income, I am on your side. New graduates buried under student debt, I understand your struggle," Clyde said. "Empathy and a determination to make things better than we found them should inform our politics today. That is who I am, and that is what I hope to accomplish."