

Overview

According to Secretary of State Frank LaRose, more than 3.4 million Ohioans voted early or by absentee ballot, breaking the state’s previous record of 1.89 million set during the 2016 November presidential election. A record-breaking 5.8 million Ohioans voted in total, surpassing 5.7 in 2008 and 5.6 in 2016. Here in Franklin County¹, 609,416 total ballots were cast, 40% of which were on election day. The total number accounts for 69% of registered voters and 60% of the county’s voting age population of just over 1 million people. Many countries around the world have much higher voting rates, and counties in Wisconsin had voter turnout around 90%. With 58,835 votes needed to change the outcome of the presidential race by one point, and a rapidly growing population, Franklin County has the ability to make a greater impact on future elections.

The urban-rural divide is palpable here in Ohio. Counties representing nearly all of the state’s major metropolitan and most populated areas were the only 6 that went in Biden’s favor + Athens County, the seat of Ohio University. All of Ohio’s least populous areas favored Trump by incredibly high margins north of 70%.

The *suburban*-rural divide continues to deepen in the Columbus region. With 96% of the vote in, President Trump has won Ohio by 8 points and a slightly larger margin than in 2016, demonstrating once again, that Ohio is no longer the swing state we once were. However, Joe Biden won Franklin County with 65% of the vote. This is 5 percentage points higher than Hillary Clinton in 2016, continuing the trend of Franklin County moving to the left. This trend was further illustrated by the highly competitive Ohio Senate District 16 and other races, and also by the fact that adjacent Delaware County moved down from a +16 republican margin in 2016 to a +7 margin in 2020.

Needless to say, this has been an unprecedented election as part of an unusual year caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thankfully, Ohio’s election was carried out smoothly. The Columbus Chamber thanks the thousands of poll workers that stepped up to serve our community and to ensure a safe and secure process. We encourage patience as other states carry out their own laws and count all valid votes.

Local Ballot Issues

The Columbus Chamber endorsed passage of Columbus Issues 1 and 2, and Franklin County Issue 24. We launched a full campaign in support of these issues as part of our Vote For US voter engagement initiative, which contributed to their strong passage.

	Issue 1 (energy aggregation)	Issue 2 (Civilian Police Review Board)	Issue 24 (ADAMH Levy)
Yes	76%	74%	71%
No	24%	26%	29%
Outcome	PASSED	PASSED	PASSED

¹ Please note that while Franklin County is the focus of this report, the Columbus Chamber represents the 11-county region.

Local Races

The major upset in Franklin County is one of interest to the business community: 24-year incumbent republican prosecutor Ron O'Brien lost to democrat Gary Tyack. Despite his strong name recognition and long tenure, he lost by an additional percentage point than 4 years prior. However, in 2016, a green party candidate took nearly 6% of the vote, allowing him to win against then-challenger and now City Attorney Zach Kline.

Incumbent Franklin County Commissioners John O'Grady and Kevin Boyce won handily, as did unopposed incumbents Franklin County Recorder Danny O'Connor and Engineer Cornell Robertson.

Ohio Legislature

In the 134th Ohio General Assembly, the House Republican Caucus will hold a historically high margin of 65 to 34 seats, matching a previous mark set only in the 131st General Assembly. Republicans picked up four seats, while Democrats only flipped one seat in Cuyahoga County. Current Speaker Cupp is expected to retain his speakership, as is Minority Leader Emilia Sykes.

Senate Republicans will continue to hold a historic majority with 24 out of 33 seats. The race between incumbent Republican Senator Stephanie Kunze and Democrat Crystal Lett is too close to call. Senator Matt Huffman of Darke County won handily and is slated to be the next Senate President with Senator Larry Obhof's pending departure due to term limits.

There will be 21 incoming freshmen in the House and six incoming freshmen in the Senate. The turnover in positions outside the Columbus region, such as those selected for leadership and chairmanship positions, are of great import to the business community. The Chamber will continue our efforts to build and strengthen relationships with key legislators to ensure the best representation of our members and the advancement of our public policy priorities.

Franklin County Ohio Legislative Delegation

Senate District 16 (House districts 21, 23, 24)	Steph Kunze: 102, 474 votes	Crystal Lett: 102,433 votes
House District 17	Adam Miller (D)	West Columbus, Hilltop
House District 18	Kristen Boggs (D)	Central Columbus, downtown, Short North, Italian and German Villages
House District 19	Mary Lightbody (D)	Gahanna, Westerville, New Albany
House District 20	Rich Brown (D)	Canal Winchester
House District 21	Beth Liston (D)	Dublin
House District 22	David Leland (D)	Clintonville
House District 23	Laura Lanese (R)	Grove City
House District 24	Allison Russo (D)	Upper Arlington, Hilliard
House District 25	Dontavius Jarrells (D)	Linden
House District 26	Erica Crawley (D)	E & SE Columbus

Rep. Laura Lanese was successful in her bid for reelection. With Rep. Lanese serving as the *only* republican representative in Franklin County in a strongly republican-led state, the Chamber will continue to work closely with her, as well as other legislators throughout the entire 11-county Columbus region. We must continue to view public policy through a regional lens in order to be successful. This regional approach also makes your Chamber membership more valuable than ever. Businesses located in democratic districts will still be able to have their voice heard by the majority caucus through the work of the Chamber.

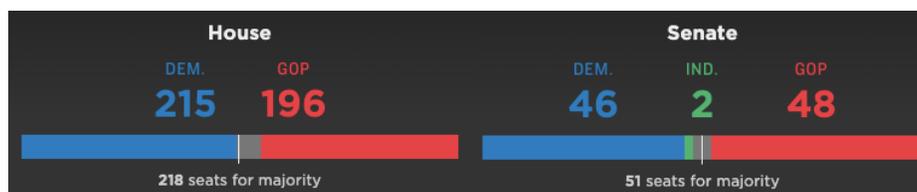
The fight for Ohio Senate District 16 between incumbent Stephanie Kunze and Crystal Lett is too close to call, with Kunze holding a 41-vote lead. The race is within the margin to trigger an automatic recount if the totals remain that close during the counting of absentee and provisional ballots currently underway. **There are still approximately 300,000 uncounted votes across Ohio, with thousands within the 16th district. The outcome of this race should be clear by November 13, if not before.** The Chamber will continue to monitor this race closely and update as results are finalized. Sen. Kunze won the district with 59% of vote in 2016. With the exception of this district, the other suburban districts didn't see a much of a change in the percent of the vote as compared to 2018, with most staying within less than a percentage point difference. The biggest shift in voting came between 2016 and 2018, with numerous Franklin County republicans losing their elections to democratic challengers, all of which held onto their seats handily this year.

While the region is incumbent-heavy, we do welcome to the delegation Dontavius Jarrells, a young leader from the Linden area of Columbus. With job creation as a top legislative priority, the Chamber looks forward to working with him.

Ohio Supreme Court

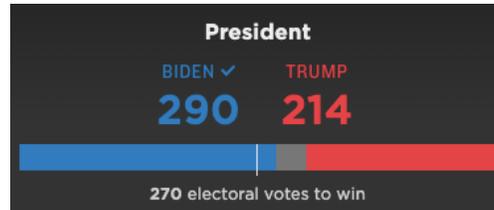
The Ohio Supreme Court will remain in Republican control but with a more balanced 4-3 majority. Justice Sharon Kennedy was reelected, but Democrats picked up a seat with Judge Jennifer Brunner, who defeated Republican Justice Judi French. The Ohio Supreme Court is significant because of its role in reviewing appeals of the redistricting of congressional and legislative lines. Democrats and or voting rights groups are likely to challenge the 2022 proposal if they believe the districts were drawn with an unfair advantage to the party in power. It benefits Ohioans and the business community when districts are competitive, so we encourage Chamber members to take an interest in this process when it is debated.

Congress



All Ohio incumbent congressional representatives won reelection, including Columbus region's Joyce Beatty (OH-3), Steve Stivers (OH-15) and Troy Balderson (OH-12). Democrats are expected to maintain control the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate is not likely to flip, although a runoff in Georgia will not occur until January 5 and will be determinative. Neither of Ohio's senators were on the ballot this year. Senator Portman will be up for reelection in 2022, along with all of the Ohio constitutional officeholders. **Congresswoman Beatty is running to lead the Congressional Black Caucus, with the election to be held next week. This would be a significant role and a tremendous endeavor for the Columbus region to support her in.**

President



Update: As of Saturday, November 7, Joe Biden has secured enough electoral votes to become the 46th President of the United States. As of the time this report was written, the states of Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Georgia and North Carolina. Biden has the edge here. If Trumps wins Georgia and North Carolina, and if Biden wins Arizona and Nevada, he wins the presidency regardless of the outcome in Pennsylvania. If Trump wins Arizona, Pennsylvania will be the deciding state. All these states have announced they will have completed their counts by Friday of this week, if not before.

State legislatures have the authority to regulate their own elections. Ohio law (R.C. 3511.11) states that absentee ballots returned by U.S. Mail must be postmarked no later than Nov. 2 and received by boards of elections by November 13 in order to be counted - 10 days after the general election. All valid votes legally submitted before but received after election day according to state law across the United States should be counted. In 1876, the electorate had to wait until February for Congress to finalize the outcome of a disputed election that ultimately made Rutherford B. Hayes president. Democracy is worth the wait, so we encourage Chamber members to remain patient and calm while states work to uphold the law and individuals' rights to have their validly cast votes counted. **President Trump has yet to concede, and continues to pursue law suits against some of the most competitive states, such as Pennsylvania to discount votes and challenge elections processes. Republican-led competitive states are also forming committees to examine the outcome of the election. However, with Biden having secured so many electoral votes and bi-partisan recognition of his win, the Biden-Harris team has already begun his transition, which we hope and expect to be carried out smoothly.**

As always, the Columbus Chamber is here to guide our members through new and uncharted political territory. We serve as the voice of the Columbus region small business community at the local, state, and federal levels. Do not hesitate to contact Holly Gross with questions about the information contained herein, or anything else relating to government relations: HollyGross@Columbus.org.