

# [***Ohio Supreme Court primary with 2 Democrats kicks off long campaign over court's partisan control***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BKD-X5J1-JC5B-G232-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Tuesday's [*Democratic primary*](https://apnews.com/article/election-2024-ohio-supreme-court-abortion-primary-0f2b7df8332a52a804e2a1a7ac177773) for one of three contested seats on the Ohio Supreme Court will kick off a high-stakes battle for partisan control of the court this fall.

The court, which currently has a 4-3 Republican majority, holds sway over how to implement an [*amendment to the state constitution*](https://apnews.com/article/ohio-abortion-amendment-election-2023-fe3e06747b616507d8ca21ea26485270) protecting abortion rights that voters overwhelmingly approved last year.

Ohio is one of 33 states with [*supreme court races*](https://apnews.com/article/state-supreme-courts-abortion-redistricting-2024-931a453131fac282815ae31b4f0ea271) this year and among the few where voters have an opportunity to flip partisan control of the court.

To do so, Democrats must sweep all three races in November, retaining two incumbents — Justices Michael Donnelly and Melody Stewart — and winning an open seat. That will be a difficult task, given that the state Supreme Court has been under Republican control since 1986 and the former swing state's overall ***politics*** have [*tacked right in recent years*](https://apnews.com/no-longer-mirror-of-us-ohios-electoral-bellwether-quiets-dab40fe319d7c13b17fe309caaf09a67).

But Democrats see an opening after 57% of Ohio voters backed a reproductive rights measure last fall. They plan to draw attention to the [*court's influence over the amendment's future*](https://apnews.com/article/abortion-ohio-constitutional-amendment-republicans-courts-fb1762537585350caeee589d68fe5a0d) and see the races as a possible way [*to chip away*](https://apnews.com/article/election-2024-senate-race-ohio-sherrod-brown-873f34413637043dc6b1ff6edb83d181) at the Republican Party’s longstanding control of all three branches of government in Ohio.

Only one seat is contested in Tuesday's primary. In the Democratic primary, Lisa Forbes, a judge on the 8th District Court of Appeals, faces Judge Terri Jamison, who sits on the 10th District Court of Appeals.

The winner will face Dan Hawkins, a Republican judge of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, for the one open seat in November. Before becoming a judge of that court, Hawkins worked in the Franklin County prosecutor’s office and as a judge in the Franklin County Municipal Court.

Forbes, who is endorsed by the Ohio Democratic Party, has served on the 8th District Court of Appeals since 2020. Before then, she was a partner at a Cleveland office of a national law firm, where she focused on business and consumer class-action law.

Jamison, who won 43% of the vote in a 2022 race against Ohio Supreme Court incumbent Pat Fischer, a Republican, has served on the 10th District Court of Appeals since 2020. She also served two terms as judge of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Domestic Relations and Juvenile Division, was a public defender in Franklin County and started her own law firm. If elected, Jamison would be the third Black woman to serve on the Ohio Supreme Court.

During their campaigns, both candidates have hinted at the importance of building a Democratic majority on the court.

“The Supreme Court needs to be an effective firewall to protect our democracy, our constitutional rights and the rule of law," Forbes said in a campaign ad. “I will never bend to political pressure, and I will always stand up for your rights.”

Jamison said in a campaign ad that the Ohio Supreme Court “should be accessible to everyone, not just the wealthy or powerful.”

"It can provide checks and balances to those who overreach or abuse power,” she said.

Besides abortion, [*redistricting*](https://apnews.com/article/redistricting-political-maps-lawsuit-ohio-8007ca46e3c7602d14ee0fa7f1ea8208), public education, health care, the environment and criminal justice may also arise as campaign issues.

Forbes and Jamison are seeking their party's nomination for the seat to which [*Republican Joe Deters*](https://apnews.com/article/ohio-mike-dewine-851ed03cd83a96cb5b65df87db8a0f19) was appointed by the governor in 2022.

Deters has decided to challenge Justice Melody Stewart, a Democrat, for her seat instead, where the term runs through 2030 — four years longer than what's available on his current seat. The incumbent-versus-incumbent primary would tend to favor the Republican, given the state's ***politics***.

In the third court race, Democratic Justice Michael Donnelly will face Hamilton County Common Pleas Court Judge Megan Shanahan, a Republican, in November's general election. Stewart and Donnelly were elected to the then-all-Republican court in 2018.

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