

# Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice

## CANDIDATES



**JENNIFER  
BRUNNER**

DEMOCRAT



**SHARON L.  
KENNEDY**

REPUBLICAN

## Nonpartisan Candidate Guide to the 2022 Ohio Chief Justice Race

This election for the Ohio Supreme Court is to decide which sitting Justice, Jennifer Brunner or Sharon Kennedy, will become the next Chief Justice of the Court. The current Chief Justice, Maureen O'Connor, is stepping down because of an age limit.

The Ohio Supreme Court [is currently regarded as conservative](#), with a 4-3 Republican majority. [All three seats on the ballot](#) this year are held by Republicans. Ohio Supreme Court justices, including Brunner and Kennedy, have previously been elected in nonpartisan elections. This year justices are running under partisan labels, with Brunner a Democrat and Kennedy a Republican. The winner will become Chief Justice, with the governor appointing a new justice to replace them.

The Ohio Supreme Court decides questions of state law that often have a significant impact on state policy and individual rights. The Court recently decided cases involving the [validity of the Ohio State Legislature's redistricting](#) (the process of redrawing the boundaries of Ohio's political districts), [reduction of bail for a man accused of murder](#), [infringement of the First Amendment by an education board's ban on picketing](#), and [whether a fine is unconstitutionally excessive](#). The Court is also [set to rule on whether individuals accused of violent crimes may possess guns](#). Recent state legislation that may come before the Court ranges from [a ban on abortion after six weeks](#) to restrictions on discussion of sexuality or gender in schools. The election for this position will not change whether the Court leans conservative or liberal (although the races for other Court positions could).

Ohio's other Supreme Court races are addressed in [here](#) and in [this overview](#).

### JENNIFER BRUNNER [justicebrunner.com](https://justicebrunner.com)

#### Background

Justice Jennifer Brunner currently sits on the Ohio Supreme Court. She [was elected to the Court in 2020](#). Brunner has [a bachelor's degree from Miami University and a law degree from Capital University Law School](#).

### SHARON L. KENNEDY [kennedyforohio.com](https://kennedyforohio.com)

#### Background

Justice Sharon Kennedy currently sits on the Ohio Supreme Court. [She was elected to the Court in 2012 and was re-elected in 2020](#). Kennedy has a [bachelor's degree from University of Cincinnati and a law degree from University of Cincinnati College of Law](#).

## BRUNNER (cont.)

Prior to joining the Ohio Supreme Court, Brunner [served as a judge on Ohio's Tenth District Court of Appeals](#), originally elected in 2014 and reelected in 2016. Prior to this, Brunner was a [judge on Franklin County Common Pleas Court](#), in [private practice](#), and served as Ohio's [first woman Secretary of State](#).

### Judicial Rulings

- In 2022, Brunner joined the Supreme Court majority in rejecting [a congressional redistricting map](#) and [state legislative district maps](#) as unduly partisan, both created by the Ohio Redistricting Commission, with 5 Republican and 2 Democratic members.
- She joined a unanimous Ohio Supreme Court in [ruling unconstitutional](#) a state law that prohibited encouraging picketing at public officials' homes over labor disputes.

### Statements

- Brunner said, "[We work to make the law work for everyone and we do it to the best of our understanding and our ability.](#)" ... "[If judges take a public service attitude, then every morning they have to look at themselves in the mirror and say, 'Did I do right by people today? Did I do right by the law? Did I do right by my promises?' And they don't have to try to pigeonhole themselves into I'm this or I'm that.](#)"
- She writes, "[I am committed to examining our criminal justice system to identify and root out systemic racism so that people are treated fairly and equally in the state's criminal justice system. And this includes implementing a criminal sentencing database to help judges understand more about their sentencing practices.](#)"

### Endorsements

Brunner has been endorsed by [the Ohio AFL-CIO](#), the [Ohio Women's Alliance Action Fund](#), the [Ohio Legislative Black Caucus](#) and [Vote Pro Choice](#). Here's [a list of her other endorsements](#).

## KENNEDY (cont.)

From 1985 to 1989, Kennedy worked as a [police officer](#) for the City of Hamilton Police Department, and after law school, worked [in private practice](#). From 1999 to 2012, Kennedy [served on the Butler County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations Division](#).

### Judicial Rulings

- Kennedy dissented from the Court's rejections of [a congressional redistricting map](#) and [state legislative district maps](#), both created by the Ohio Redistricting Commission.
- In a separate opinion, she joined a unanimous Ohio Supreme Court in [ruling unconstitutional](#) a state law that prohibited encouraging picketing at public officials' homes over labor disputes.

### Statements

- Kennedy writes, "[As Americans we are free. Free to say, write, dream, achieve and do what we desire. Our freedom comes from our Creator, and is protected against the over-reach of government by the Constitution.](#)"
- She describes herself as a [conservative](#) and supports judicial restraint, a philosophy, she says, most closely aligned with that of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett. "[We want our judges to uphold the law, not rewrite it or legislate from the bench.](#)"
- Kennedy supports a criminal sentencing database as part of a variety of methods; "[I will use all resources.](#)"

### Endorsements

Kennedy is endorsed by the [NFIB Ohio PAC](#), the [Ohio Business Roundtable PAC](#), the [Ohio Chamber of Commerce PAC](#), the [Ohio Right to Life PAC](#), the [Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio](#), and [Buckeye Firearms Association PAC](#). Here's [a list of her other endorsements](#).

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