



*97 Years of Legislative Reporting in Ohio*

## SPECIAL OHIO REPORT

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*123<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly*

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### **TERM LIMITS CREATE REPEAT OF 1972 ELECTION THAT BROUGHT 43 NEW MEMBERS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

In early January of 1961, 136 members of the Ohio House of Representatives were sworn into office. One was Bob Netzley, a petroleum products dealer out of Laura in western Ohio's Miami County. He arrived in Columbus with an agenda in hand that was chiseled out of the bedrock of Republican Party conservatism that has, like the man, endured through nearly forty years of social experimentation, from President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" to - as it now stands - a President who either will show "compassionate conservatism" or one that will put some social programs in a "lock box."

Six years after Mr. Netzley arrived at the Statehouse, Troy Lee James decamped from one of Cleveland's toughest neighborhoods to join Mr. Netzley in an Ohio House that, by 1967, had been reduced to 99 members as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court's "one man, one vote" decision. Mr. James also had an agenda. It reflected not only traditional Democratic Party themes, but more subtle objectives that could only be achieved by personal conduct and - at times - tolerating personal humiliation.

This month, Messrs. Netzley and James, the only two remaining state lawmakers from the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, will leave Columbus, having defeated all challenges through the years with the exception of term limits and the ravages that age can visit upon a body. They and about a half-dozen other long-serving lawmakers are the last of a breed who now find themselves relegated to the sidelines by term limits. Altogether, 42 Senate and House members are leaving this year due to term limits. Although a few House and Senate members will stay ahead of the game by flip-flopping between the two houses, it won't be easy for anyone to duplicate the records of service that Messrs. James and Netzley have compiled now that no one can serve more than eight consecutive years.

Judged by any political standard, the two men have little in common. Their politics still scare one another, but no longer to the extent that compelled Mr. James to extend a hand to Mr. Netzley years ago in an act that produced an enduring friendship and respect they share for one another that otherwise might never have come about.

The two men are the legislature's bookends. Everything about them defines the purpose of the state legislature: to provide a forum where the political, social, racial, ethnic, economic, geographic, and - notwithstanding constitutional restraints - religious differences among Ohioans can be peacefully reconciled.

Mr. Netzley is the conservative bulldog who hasn't met a state budget he's liked in decades and has always been ready to hammer some common sense into bleeding-heart liberals whose "if there's a problem, government can solve it" pleas before a House committee got his conservative juices flowing.

Mr. James is the good, faithful soldier in the Democratic Party, perpetually on the look-out for a way to ease suffering and replace despair with hope and opportunity for Ohio's citizens with an act of law or kindness.

Mr. Netzley represents a rural western Ohio district where the population is about 96% Caucasian, 80% have a high school diploma, the poverty rate is hardly a blip on the radar screen, and life is relatively serene. Voters there generally neither ask for nor want much from the government other than for it and its minions to get out of their way. Mr. Netzley is a hard-charger, unafraid to buck the Republican Party whenever called upon to do so by his conscience.

Mr. James represents a district that was Cleveland's most hellish inner-city area in the hot summer months of July 1966. Four people died there during a week-long riot that flared from a dispute over a glass of water.

Today, while Mr. Netzley's home town of Laura remains virtually unchanged from the halcyon days of 1961, Mr. James' home turf continues to be plagued by a litany of intractable social ills that gave rise to the race riots of 34 years ago. In Mr. James' 10<sup>th</sup> House District, two-thirds of the population is African-American, half don't have a high school diploma from a school district that's lurched from clinging solvency to bankruptcy for decades, and nearly a quarter of the people live in poverty. Those facts of life combined to create a man who naturally gravitated toward the Democratic Party when he drifted into Cleveland 50 years ago from Chicago on borrowed bus fare from one of his 17 siblings.

There are few Republicans who live in Mr. James' district and fewer still who go out of their way to travel through the district, with the exception of Mr. Netzley who went there with Mr. James shortly after the two met nearly four decades ago. The invitation was offered after Mr. James got a feel for the conservative Republican's agenda and concluded that a dose of how life was survived in Cleveland's lowlier neighborhoods might add a new dimension to Mr. Netzley's view of life in Ohio. Out of that trip came ideas for welfare reform, insurance for high-risk enterprises, tax incentives for jobs and housing, and a new perspective for a man who'd never seen an inner-city neighborhood, but saw the same type of desolation when he arrived at Pearl Harbor nearly 25 years before.

**Over his 40-year career,** Mr. Netzley has had a hand in bringing others to the state legislature, Republicans and, in the view of some, Democrats alike.

In 1971, Mr. Netzley and a band of other conservative Republicans - called the "caveman caucus" by some - boiled over the Republican-controlled legislature's approval of a Democratic governor's proposal to impose Ohio's first state personal income tax. But rather than stew about it, they undertook an initiative giving Ohio voters the opportunity to essentially repeal the tax in November 1972. If there was going to be an income tax, Mr. Netzley didn't want the revenues going into the bottomless pocket of state government, but rather local government pockets that voters at home could keep an eye on.

As state Republican leaders feared, the passion that drove Mr. Netzley and his colleagues to put the issue to the statewide ballot provoked Ohio's sleeping tiger. Organized labor turned its members out in droves to not only defeat the issue but to help bring the House's third-longest serving member to Columbus in 1973.

**In November of 1972**, David Hartley, a 30-year old factory worker and union activist from Springfield, won an open Republican district in Clark County by 616 votes. Two years earlier, he had lost to the Republican incumbent by about 3,900 votes. Although his odds in the 1972 election were improved by a Democratic-crafted legislative apportionment plan, in no small measure was he hurt by the income tax repeal issue. The ballot issue brought hoards of voters to the polls that year - about 4.2 million in all. Not only did Mr. Hartley win in a Republican-leaning district, he joined 41 other freshmen lawmakers who came to Columbus in January 1973, including 34 other House members and eight new Senate members. In the process, Democrats reversed Republican's 54-45 control of the House by seating 58 members.

**In 1977**, Bob Corbin emerged from Montgomery County and came to Columbus where joined Messrs. Netzley and Hartley, fellow Sagittarians who had already shown a propensity to balance loyalty with independence, a trait Mr. Corbin would display in the legislature much as he did 32 years earlier.

In the winter of 1945, Mr. Corbin was a 23-year old artillery field officer in the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the 9<sup>th</sup> Army and was occupied with finding the way out of a forest in Bavaria. At the time, he and two fellow officers were traveling light, fast, on foot and at night, constantly dodging Nazi troops that were searching for the escaping prisoners-of-war. Lt. Corbin's flight to freedom began shortly after General George Smith Patton, Jr. ordered 250 soldiers in 66 vehicles on a foray into enemy territory to free the POWs. The Nazis perceived General Patton's advance as a prelude to a major assault, as the American commander had intended, rather than the distraction General Patton knew was needed for POWs to attempt an escape. Mr. Corbin's escape - a harrowing nine-day nightmare punctuated by the voices of Nazi soldiers speaking nearby - ended 35 miles behind American lines. Of the nearly 600 American soldiers who bolted from captivity, only Mr. Corbin and 25 other soldiers succeeded. It was a defining experience for Mr. Corbin who learned that although lousy things happen in life, if you wait long enough and look hard enough there's something good to be found in the debris of personal setbacks.

Although a few of his colleagues in the House were aware of his service record, Mr. Corbin's no-nonsense, occasionally gruff manner would remind many of General Patton's approach to business. And, though General Patton had trouble distinguishing between politicians and the enemy, his remark to the troops of the Third Army on June 5, 1944, that "Every man does his job. Every man serves the whole" seems to have guided Mr. Corbin's legislative career.

**Four years after Mr. Corbin arrived in the House**, Jo Ann Davidson, an Ohio Chamber of Commerce executive, got the opportunity to scratch an itch for higher public office when a House seat that encompassed Reynoldsburg was vacated by a retiring Republican. She was a known commodity in the community, having served on city council, and she easily defeated two opponents and entered the House in January 1981. She was a 54-year old freshman, but she was no rookie nor was she under any illusions about the dismal state of the Republican caucus.

Ms. Davidson knew that playing the part of the “loyal opposition” to majority Democrats was an important fitness exercise to keep Republicans tuned up, focused and involved, even if it meant holding press conferences to announce initiatives that were usually ignored by Democrats and barely mentioned by the media. It would also take a skilled mechanic with unswerving perseverance to reconstruct a dilapidated Republican fundraising vehicle. Republican fortunes rested on three critical principals: aggressive fundraising - perfected by the early 1980’s as an art form by Speaker Vern Riffe for his Democratic caucus - quality candidates, and getting Republicans into key statewide offices so they could redraw legislative boundaries in 1991.

When others called it quits for the day, Ms. Davidson kept at it, late at night, day after day, year after year, getting a last bit of energy from eating bits of chocolate. She steadily rose through the ranks of leadership until she became the House Republican leader in 1993. A reversal of fortunes was now within reach. Two years later, Ms. Davidson - unchallenged - would become Speaker of the House, the first female to hold the office. Although breaking the political glass-ceiling in Ohio was certainly a goal by that time in her career, to Ms. Davidson it was more than a matter of a singular personal achievement. Facing a quick end to her career because of term limits, she also wanted her tenure to be recalled in a way that would keep the door open for other females following in her footsteps.

**In November 1992**, Ohio voters by overwhelming numbers approved amendments to Ohio’s Constitution imposing term limits on General Assembly members, Ohio’s Congressional delegation, and state elected, non-judicial officeholders, with the exception of the governor who already was barred from serving more than two consecutive four-year terms. The term-limit amendment was placed on the ballot by initiative petition. For General Assembly members, the limit was four consecutive, two-year terms in the House and two consecutive, four-year terms in the Senate. The limit imposed on Ohio’s Congressional delegation was quickly dispatched when its minions obtained a favorable opinion from the U.S. Supreme Court that held citizens can’t impose term limits on their Congressional delegates.

The amendment’s advocates claimed that imposing term limits was the only way to end what they regarded as a “pay to play” way of doing business at the Statehouse. Term limits would remove entrenched politicians. Ergo, lawmakers wouldn’t have time to develop cozy relationships with special interests, they would be independent and inured to special interest blandishments, and democracy and the “citizen legislature” would be restored. In advance of the limit’s effect this year, some changes have taken place. Fundraising is now in overdrive as candidates and parties need greater amounts of money to retain legislative seats once held by incumbents who developed long relationships with voters. There’s been a succession of record low voter turnouts as taciturn electors allow time rather than votes to set limits on holding office. Political party leaders bemoan the work of special interests they say are cultivating and hand-picking candidates to run for what will be a constant stream of open legislative seats produced by the term limit amendment. Meanwhile, the special interests continue plying their trade, holding open houses where they put on the feed bag for lawmakers, perform *gratis* research projects here and there, and place their bets in the next leadership race.

Most members elected in 1992 have departed. Currently, 36 House members who were elected that year remain in office, while in the Senate, where members serve staggered, four-year terms, 12 are left including six who are gone this year and six who will be out in 2002 if none leave beforehand.

**For Mr. Netzley**, this 20<sup>th</sup> term in office probably would have been his last regardless of the term limit. He has had a series of hip surgeries in recent years, so the brisk, purposeful gait he had when he arrived in Columbus on January 2 nearly 40 years ago has slowed considerably. On that January day in 1961, the 39-year old Mr. Netzley joined 82 other Republicans and 53 Democrats who were sworn into the House of Representatives by Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Kingsley Taft. Three members - two Democrats and a Republican - were absent. Robert Taft, Jr., father to Governor Bob Taft, was elected House Speaker Pro Tem.

Although Mr. Netzley was new to the state legislature, he had plenty of political savvy, having put three years of service as Miami County Republican Party chair under his belt. He got the job in 1958, just in time to reap the whirlwind from an ill-fated initiative backed by business called "Right to Work," a proposal viewed by organized labor as union-busting in what was then a heavily-unionized state. Paradoxically, while at home in Miami County, Mr. Netzley was a political creature, but when in Columbus he usually didn't give a hoot for politics. He charted a course and stuck to it, indifferent to the politics of whoever would join him in a cause for a day, a week, a year, or a decade.

**The Netzley game plan** was self-evident and quickly became familiar to his colleagues and the Statehouse crowd. Not so evident, however, was Mr. Netzley's distinguished service record, one that began - as it did for so many other Americans - on his birthday in December of 1941. As his family dined and prepared to light candles on his birthday cake, the radio came alive with reports of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Netzley promptly enlisted in the Navy. As it did then for Messrs. Netzley and Corbin and so many others of that generation, entire lives were quickly changed.

The Navy sent Mr. Netzley back to school at Miami University, then shipped him out to Cornell for further studies. He was commissioned an officer, got married and then was shipped off to California for further training on how to bring a landing craft into port while under hostile fire and dodging mines. He spiced up his Navy training in California with a little baseball. His talents with the glove in the outfield caught the eye of his superiors who put him on the waiver wire to Hawaii where Mr. Netzley next landed. His superior officers kept him under wraps in the outfield as long as they could, but were finally forced to relinquish him for the assault on Okinawa. It was there that Mr. Netzley picked up his slight limp. One of the 3,500 kamikazes who was not shot down during the invasion made it through, dive-bombing his plane between two American landing crafts. The plane's bombs exploded beneath the water, sending up a geyser of water that damaged Mr. Netzley's boat and his hip. He spent two days in a hospital and was awarded the Purple Heart. Over the years, the hip injury has flared up, requiring surgery and a period of rest to reflect on that long-ago day that still is fresh in his mind.

Mr. Netzley will now have time to also reflect on his career in the House and the five governors (including 16 years under one) he saw pass through the Statehouse. He'll put away the gloves he wore while having fought the good fight with Democrats and Republicans alike over his unswerving conservative conviction that elected leaders have an inviolate pact with voters to narrowly restrict the role that government plays in their lives. Although the conservative philosophy that Mr. Netzley lived by will be carried on by a goodly number of like-minded Republicans who currently serve and will serve in the next legislature, none will keep the fires burning as did Mr. Netzley.

His political career took root during an era that was perfectly suited for a man who embraced the idea of a passive government and feasted on battles with those who wanted a paternalistic government. In 1961, it was a rough-and-tumble, take-no-prisoners time in American politics. In Ohio, the gloves never got put on in early 1961 as Republicans, newly restored to majorities in both houses, squared off against Mike DiSalle, the New Deal Democrat who, Republicans believed, was loaned the governor's office in 1960.

As he began building his unapproachable record of service in the House, Mr. Netzley watched seasoned politicians take up the fight against the man Republicans called "Tax Hike Mike." Mr. DiSalle's activist agenda would cost plenty, but the governor didn't have the political capital he needed to do battle with a Republican-controlled legislature. Mr. DiSalle also managed to rankle Republicans by continuing to question the moral imperative that compelled state Senator John Brown - the only man in Ohio history to return to the legislature after having served as lieutenant governor - to commute the sentences of five convicted murderers during the eleven days he served as governor in 1957.

**Mr. Netzley was a fast learner.** Early on, he came to know that the surest way to keep the government at bay was to deny it its lifeblood - money. He knew that the legislature could enact laws until kingdom come setting forth noble goals, but whoever controlled the purse-strings dictated when, if ever, those goals would be achieved. Although he would have to wait a session to get a spot on the House finance committee that wrote the state's budget, he did manage in 1961 to secure places on the standing committees on public welfare and government operations. When the circle of committees he wanted to serve on was completed in 1963 by his appointment to the finance committee, Mr. Netzley was positioned to learn about government from the outside in. And, although he voted for the first three state operating budgets, he hasn't seen one he's liked in nearly 35 years.

Even today, there's hardly any item in an appropriations bill that doesn't come up on Mr. Netzley's radar screen. Through the years, bureaucrats would cringe when they saw Mr. Netzley's hand shoot up during a committee hearing. He could be and on occasion was unmerciful. He came to understand the role of the media in the legislative process. Relations with the press were generally good, although he once became so frustrated with what he regarded as a general misunderstanding on the media's part of the mind-numbing phalanx of numbers and verbiage in the biennial budget bill, he wanted Statehouse reporters to pass a math test before getting a press pass to get on the House floor.

While in Columbus, Mr. Netzley never got into the kinds of personal scrapes that seem to always plague elected officials in the nation's capital. The news he made was mostly mischief in pursuit of his cause. In 1971, he and a group of kindred spirits brought lawnmowers to the Statehouse grounds and began but did not complete cutting the grass during a budget deadlock that a one-term Democratic governor sought to break by cutting back government operations.

In 1977, Mr. Netzley allowed his ardor to overrule his judgment when, to demonstrate his view that a new instant voter registration law was susceptible to fraud, he registered two voters under the names of "Harry I. Balls" and "Ruben A. Fraud" in Franklin County. He was found out and duly reprimanded. The law was subsequently repealed by popular referendum with help from voters who were franchised on the day they voted.

Mr. Netzley never shied away from his belief that hard work by the able-bodied produced good results and good citizens. Sloth wasn't to be tolerated and certainly not rewarded. In Mr. Netzley's House district, farmers worked dawn-to-dusk and acted like New Orleans gamblers by betting the farm that they could win a crap game against nature. So it was with growing dismay that Mr. Netzley watched as a welfare system meant to help widows and children grew exponentially in the 1960's, due largely to President Johnson's "Great Society" programs passed by an obliging Congress.

Any government program that gave tax money away without requiring anything in exchange - not even work, educational improvement, or some inkling of a contribution to self and society as a whole - didn't make sense to Mr. Netzley. Poverty and despair were ephemeral setbacks, something that healthy, willing adults could bootstrap themselves out of with desire and hard work and not simply by increasing the size of the welfare family. Mr. Netzley saw the welfare check as short-term measure, something to counteract a reversal of fortunes for citizens who needed a little time and money to get things righted around, but surely not an entitlement to support a lifestyle that would be embedded in the psyche of generations of families.

Mr. Netzley's record reveals his propensity to introduce, session after session, a stream of bills that hit the social hot buttons. But it was reforming the welfare system and keeping taxes low and local that became his *raison d'etre* in the legislature.

Over the years he proposed giving welfare mothers a cash payment to undergo sterilization, an idea one lawmaker would call "genocidal." It was never likely to be enacted, but Mr. Netzley intended such proposals to keep the debate over what he regarded as an imperfect welfare system alive and moving forward. He saw a system where those who added to their families got more welfare money as self-defeating when the system should give incentives to get people off welfare. But that, he found, was sometimes easier said than done. The system could and did have nuances no one could imagine, he found.

For example, years ago a bill was enacted requiring social welfare workers to inform welfare mothers of the availability of birth prevention devices, drugs and methods. During his trip to Cleveland with Mr. James, Mr. Netzley was obliged to ponder the question of how a law like that can be enforced when the statutory law collides with the law of God as followed by a social worker who had attended Xavier University and John Carroll University. In good conscience, Mr. Netzley was asked, could she give such advice and counseling. Could she tell a mother of eight - who stood nearby as they talked and who had given birth while her husband was doing a ten-year stretch in prison - how to go about getting birth control devices. The exchange gave Mr. Netzley another piece of a puzzle he was trying to fit together in Columbus.

At the least, Mr. Netzley wanted mothers to undergo child care training before leaving the hospital with their newborns. He wanted to privatize Medicaid. He wanted change in a system he saw going down a blind alley and taking its beneficiaries with it. Lost in the media glare of his constant battle, however, were ideas that have taken root in one form or another. Work programs, a certain end to welfare benefits for the able-bodied, child care for working welfare families, control of welfare programs by local officials who could fit them to the needs of their communities, a way for low-income families to buy their own homes were, in one way or another, embodied in the dozens of the Netzley welfare bills introduced into the House over four decades.

Although his approach was often harsh, Mr. Netzley never let the welfare debate die and forced the system's supporters to continue looking for ways to improve it in order to save the social safety net.

Although Mr. Netzley worked to fix what he regarded as a broken welfare system, he also believed that free enterprise generally was the best solution to society's woes. He was convinced that a free market propelled by capitalism would eventually reduce the need for many social welfare programs. High taxes would frustrate hard workers and send business fleeing the state. Layer-upon-layer of government regulation only served the bureaucracy and not economic growth. He railed against interference in the marketplace and regarded government functionaries not only as a nuisance, but a hindrance that drained the life out of the economy. He had an interest in the insurance industry, helping when needed, sometimes to the consternation of consumer advocacy groups, but also having a hand in the creation of a mechanism that secures insurers that become insolvent and helping high-risk enterprises like the ones he found in Mr. James' district get insurance by spreading the risk around. Often, Mr. Netzley could be found as a co-sponsor of a bill introduced by a member who'd just days before had felt his conservative wrath. And, unlike some lawmakers who have passed through the Statehouse, he never seemed to take his many political setbacks personally.

**Mr. Netzley never ran for higher office.** He never publicly expressed any interest in being considered as timber for the governor's office. There was a year in the early 1970s that he might have had some luck in carving out a seat in Congress for himself, giving Miami County its first Congressman. That passed when politics intervened, leaving just a faint trace of disappointment in him that persists to this day. In any event, Mr. Netzley was utterly at home in the House. He would occasionally bad-mouth the Congress just to stay in practice. Many of his former colleagues had gone Washington, but he was always there to remind them of their roots in Ohio, particularly when it came to one of Congress' routine mandates, usually unfunded, sent out to the states. Unlike indignant freshmen lawmakers, however, Mr. Netzley knew that the state eventually would cave in.

Since the new year, Mr. Netzley has slowed some of his activities. This year, he gave up the chair of the Miami County Republican Party, something he'd been wanting to do for some years. He left, however, on a somewhat sour note. This year, he and other party officials were pressured to endorse a candidate in the Republican primary. Mr. Netzley always held the opinion that primary election endorsements create bad blood and divisions in the ranks. Let the chips fall where they may was his view. He quit as party chair, contributed a few dollars to the unendorsed candidate, and then watched as she won his House seat.

When Mr. Netzley relinquishes his seat this month and heads back to Laura, it may be one of the few trips where he gets better gas mileage. On that last trip as a state lawmaker, he will finally have off-loaded from his vehicle most of the studies, reports and other literature that have accompanied him on his trips to and from Columbus over the past 40 years. He may drop off a few choice bits of memorabilia at the Netzley Room in a township house in West Milton, a place that one day may be visited by conservatives and liberals alike who want to learn more a man who was consistently, unerringly one of Ohio's leading conservative thinkers.

**If a vote were taken,** Troy Lee James would be elected the legislature's nice guy. By most accounts, he's tried to treat all with respect and understanding. He's helped dozens of incoming members get established. He's handed the ball off to other, younger members when he could have drawn the spotlight to himself. He's a member from a comfortable Democratic district who could do his work without worrying about fanfare.

Mr. James' legislative career hasn't been seriously threatened since he beat a rich undertaker in the 1966 Democratic primary and then cruised to a victory in the November election. At the time, he was a Democratic ward leader. He didn't have consultants, media gurus and spin doctors to help with his campaign because his money - what there was of it - was needed to buy the essentials of life. Mr. James was the poster child of his district: a near-pauper living with other poor Blacks and whites who were under-educated, unemployed or under-employed, and getting by on an income that's considered spending money today. Crime - often violent - was a constant companion.

The irony of arriving in Columbus only to be told the hotels around the Statehouse were full wasn't lost on a black man who months earlier had survived Cleveland's race riots. It was precisely that sort of thinking he had come to Columbus to change anyway he could, whether by law or by example.

Mr. James had in hand an agenda guaranteed to turn up the heat in Columbus. Affordable and fair housing, education, jobs, health care, a better welfare program and benefits, child care, protection by and from police, fair and reasonably priced credit, economic development, equal employment opportunities - an endless list of needs for a part of Ohio that by mid-1966 resembled the European war zones. It would take help from the government and plenty of it for a long time if the Ohioans Mr. James represented could ever achieve the level of security and well-being he knew was being enjoyed by the citizens of Mr. Netzley's Miami County.

Mr. James didn't go homeless that first year in Columbus. He lucked into a place to stay when he found out that Dr. W.O. Walker, the renowned publisher of *The Cleveland Call & Post* and the first black man to serve in the cabinet of an Ohio governor, was giving up his apartment.

At the onset of his career, the odds that Mr. James might have some success had marginally improved despite continued Republican control of state government. The U.S. Supreme Court had issued its landmark "one man, one vote" decision, forcing a restructuring of the state legislature that reduced the House's membership to 99 from 139, while cutting the Senate membership from a high of 38 to the current 33. That court decision would begin the shift of influence and power wielded by the "cornstalk brigade" of Ohio's rural counties to the state's urban counties.

Mr. James was joined in Columbus in 1967 by a man who helped to sharpen his political thinking and show him how an agenda, particularly one that would move the fortunes of Ohio's Black population forward, could be achieved. Mr. James and C.J. McLin, a Dayton Democrat, were deeply influenced by the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Although neither possessed the oratorical skills of Dr. King, Messrs. James and McLin knew that when it came to fundamental change, votes often were more important than speeches. It was during those early years that Messrs. McLin and James worked with others to form the black legislative caucus. An agenda was established and then pursued and refined over the years. Battles were won and lost. There was affirmative action, minority set-aside contracting, money to diagnose and treat sickle cell anemia, health care for the poor, low-income housing support, and even, perhaps to the satisfaction of Mr. McLin, an undertaker, a law prohibiting discrimination in burial lots.

**For Mr. James particularly,** Mr. Netzley was a puzzlement in those early years, especially when it came to social issues. What perplexed Mr. James is that both had grown up during the Great Depression, yet it

seemed as though Mr. Netzley had forgotten the misery and hopelessness that unemployment, bank failures and foreclosures, petty and serious crime, and homelessness can engender in man, woman and child. But rather than having Mr. Netzley remain an object of conjecture, Mr. James invited his Republican colleague to see firsthand life as he knew it in Cleveland. It must have been a bizarre sight the day Mr. Netzley toured the tough, dangerous neighborhoods where Mr. James lived. There may have been an "other side of the tracks" in Laura, but nothing like the mean streets he rode down that day with Mr. James.

The trip didn't convert Mr. Netzley into a "softie." He didn't stop introducing bills that would shock some of his colleagues. But Mr. James didn't expect to convert Mr. Netzley into anything other than what he was - a conservative Republican. But Mr. James did accomplish what he set out to do: expose the underbelly of society to a person who was willing to gain a better understanding of life's sometimes hard condition and then help do something to improve that condition.

To this day, Mr. Netzley continues to complain about the drag welfare and Medicaid programs imposes on the economy and the taxpayers. But the record reveals that Messrs. James and Netzley have often worked together to come up with ways that help people who have the desire to fend for themselves. They have been recognized, most recently by a dinner held in their honor in the Statehouse. In return for a gesture many years past, Mr. Netzley asked that Mr. James also be honored when he was first told about plans for his honorary banquet. The two men, even to the last, remained bookends.

**Mr. Hartley** began his political career 27 years ago as a majority party caucus member, which he and a sometimes rowdy band of like-minded freshmen lawmakers saw as the green light to undo a plethora of pro-business laws written by a Republican-controlled General Assembly and endorsed by a sympathetic Republican governor. From the start in 1973 to the finish this year, Mr. Hartley was the David to the Fortune 500's Goliath, taking on company presidents and their platinum-carded lobbyists over worker's and unemployment compensation, workplace safety, employment rights, minimum wage, industrial diseases and the like, winning some battles and losing others. While the other "young turks" who entered the House with him have bailed out to pursue monied-careers or other interests, Mr. Hartley kept at it, hammering away on the CEO's door on behalf of men and women on the assembly line, secretaries who worked outside the CEO's office, citizens living next door to a polluting factory, and other causes he believed cried out for justice.

Early on, Mr. Hartley got himself assigned to House committees that had jurisdiction over a mountain of issues he couldn't wait to delve into. During his first session, he either sponsored or co-sponsored 91 bills. He supported the creation of a child abuse registry and crime victims compensation programs, a statewide K-12 reading proficiency test, consumer protection laws, expansion of voter registration, improvements in workers compensation benefits, and a strong state civil rights bill. He was and remains one of the House's strongest environmental advocates, evidenced in one of his final floor speeches this year when he characterized legislation reducing the tax burden of large manufacturing electricity users as a green light to waste natural resources. But the crusade of Mr. Hartley and his roguish colleagues to right the Republican wrongs ran headlong into a man who would prove himself to be one of Ohio's most skilled lawmakers.

Vern Riffe, Ohio's longest-serving House Speaker, knew that allowing his cadre of young activist Democrats to legislate with abandonment - regardless of the righteousness of the issue - would put Democrats back in the minority. Over the next two decades that Democrats controlled the House, an occasional ideological tug of

war would end with Mr. Hartley being sent to Mr. Riffe's "doghouse" for a period of reflection followed by redemption.

While serving in the legislature, Mr. Hartley earned his law degree by attending school part-time and studying at nights and on weekends. While serving in the legislature and attending law school concurrently might seem to give students like Mr. Hartley a leg up on the rest of the class, it didn't, he once commented, noting that it seemed to him that laws were made in the courtroom anyway.

In the latter part of his legislative career, Mr. Hartley has been plagued by health problems that put him on the sidelines for some time and limited his ability to fully participate in the kinds of battles he'd win and lose, but which he never tired of. Although he's softened his position on certain issues over the years, he remains a union man. Last month, as prepared to leave a House district that still leans Republican, Mr. Hartley pulled from his pocket a news story about his successor, another labor man who beat the odds and will replace him in Columbus.

**In 1976, the door to the state legislature opened for Mr. Corbin**, but in fairness to the freshmen lawmakers that year the veterans should have hung a sign on House and Senate chamber doors that read "weak-kneed need not apply."

Mr. Corbin began his rise in the restaurant business in the early 1950s, joining a firm as a \$125 per week buyer and ultimately becoming one of the firm's owners and its CEO. He gained a working knowledge of the legislative process through his work on behalf of the state's restaurant association for years, serving as a teacher in training classes and later as an association director. He testified before legislative committees and knew it could be a rough place for the uninitiated and for Republican-leaning business advocates such as himself.

Political life for Mr. Corbin began with the decision of Fred Young, the incumbent Republican, to leave the House in order to become a judge. Mr. Corbin, by 1976 a successful businessman, surveyed the political scene and, in his typically blunt fashion, concluded that the candidate Montgomery County Republicans had in mind for the House wasn't up to the job. He shared his thoughts with Mr. Young who encouraged him to enter the race. Mr. Corbin filed for the primary, thumped his opponent by 3,300 votes and cruised home in the November 1976 election.

What awaited Mr. Corbin when he took his House seat in Columbus in January 1977 was cold weather and confrontational politics. Record cold temperatures that pounded Ohio produced an energy shortage that put 750,000 Ohioans out of work and prompted one lawmaker, believing government officials incapable of developing a sensible energy policy, to propose eliminating the winter heating months of January and February. The state's prison population was growing out of control and lawmakers were warned that 115 of the 600-odd school districts were running out of money, including Cleveland school district. For good measure, Youngstown's steel industry was coming apart.

Democrats controlled the legislature and a Republican was in the governor's office. Mr. Corbin went to school as he watched two of Ohio's canniest politicians - Republican Governor James A. Rhodes and Speaker Riffe - alternately work together and defy one another. Dozens and dozens of issues would come down the pike

during Mr. Corbin's career that he might have grabbed to popular acclaim and perhaps ridden into higher office. But of hundreds of issues he's worked on, one of his proudest legislative achievements is an act that seems utterly mundane. It shows how a bright legislative light can stay hidden under a sort of policy-wonk hat when a member concerns himself with the dreary yet important nuts-and-bolts side of public policy.

This esoteric act passed in 1985 and changed the way Ohio funds its public libraries. Who could possibly care - much less attach any significance - to the fact that Mr. Corbin worked hard to sell the state's librarians on the idea of letting go of their comfortable, old-shoe share of the intangibles tax for a piece of the state income tax as a funding source? Librarians by nature seem risk-averse, but what they got was the equivalent of an original, unpublished Mark Twain manuscript in exchange for a dog-eared, dime-store romance novel.

The library funding idea was developed by Mr. Corbin and the man who he credits with helping to show him the ropes around the legislature - Rep. Ben Rose from Lima. Although the library plan took several years to properly ripen, getting the job done demonstrated the tenacity that Mr. Corbin brought to his job. It also helped to produce one of the nation's finest public library systems. Suddenly, libraries located in what politicians now call the "under-served" areas could move out of their storefront quarters, have normal operating hours - even to the extent of remaining open during lunch and providing additional services for their communities. In areas where librarians once shuttered as they listened to jokes about someone having colored in the pages of their book, they now had enough money to acquire the kinds of books that end up on blacklists.

**Mr. Corbin's legislative portfolio** assembled through nearly 24 years of legislative service obviously includes more than the library act. Although there's not the kind of sizzle in his legacy that grabs newspaper headlines, there's a cornucopia of laws that paint a picture of a pragmatic politician with a chief executive officer's instincts. Mr. Corbin never set out to get the "Legislator of the Year Award" from any of Ohio's trade unions. While he served in the minority and as chair of the House's Commerce & Labor Committee, there were moments of extreme tension between him and labor representatives. Voices and blood-pressure went up. He was in the hot seat, perhaps the House chair where Republican and Democratic ideas collide more frequently than any other. He tried to be fair but knew that in every game, there's winners and losers.

Mr. Corbin couldn't tolerate lawmakers who embraced unyielding political philosophies, particularly when an issue would improve the quality of life, maybe not for everyone but for those who needed a boost or a little help in the face of adversity. Some members he served with he regards as having built their reputations on saying no to positive things. And, having served in the minority and majority, Mr. Corbin came to understand that honest disagreements are resolved by a vote; if you're in the majority, you win; if you're in the minority, you work to make the inevitable better.

**In 1945, House Speaker Davidson** was a freshly minted Findlay high school graduate when she joined the local chamber of commerce. The war was drawing to a close and the nation's war-time economy was poised to begin satisfying years of pent-up consumer demand for the good things in life. It was the job of the local chambers of commerce to nail down a piece of the coming economic boom.

During her nine years in Findlay, a forward-looking man named Floyd Habien gave Ms. Davidson a chance, showed her the ropes and nurtured her budding interest in politics she had absorbed while growing up in a

Republican household. Floyd Habien regarded partisan politics as mostly eyewash, believing instead that a public officeholder was obliged to get things done. When he suffered a heart attack, Ms. Davidson ran the show in Findlay for a few months, meeting Republican Governor Thomas Herbert and “Mr. Republican” himself, U.S. Senator Robert A. Taft. Both made indelible impressions on the future Republican leader, but Mr. Habien’s influence would be even more lasting.

By 1980, Ms. Davidson had worked her way up through ranks of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, been elected to Reynoldsburg city council, been named to the Ohio Turnpike Commission and served on the Ohio Constitutional Revision Commission. Then, the door opened to a seat in the Ohio House and in she walked to join a downtrodden lot of 42 other Republicans. In her first term, the freshman lawmaker was greeted by a state fiscal crisis of epic proportions and a big-time economic recession. For an avid student of politics and government like Ms. Davidson, it was the best of times; for lawmakers serving in swing districts, it was the worst of times.

Various gimmicks a Republican governor who was loathe to raise taxes had used in 1980 to patch-up the state budget that was to expire in June 1981 weren’t working. He then submitted an executive budget proposal that lawmakers learned shortly after was underfunded by about \$500 million. It would take a couple of interim budgets and a lot of partisan finger-pointing and fighting before the budget issue was settled later in the year, albeit temporarily as it turned out. The icing on the cake in 1981 was the impending bankruptcy of the Cleveland school district that was operating under a desegregation order. A fine edge was added to the Cleveland problem when a federal judge threatened to freeze some state bank accounts to force the state to cough up money for the school district. And there was an unemployment rate that was racing toward a record high 11% as the nation’s economy tanked, forcing Ohio to borrow upwards of a billion dollars from the federal government just to pay unemployment benefits.

**Things got worse in 1982.** Unemployment skyrocketed to over 14%. Special examiners reported that someone in the state treasurer’s office copped \$1.1 million from the till. And, the \$1.3 billion tax increase passed by lawmakers in 1981? Not enough. A budget shortfall approaching \$1 billion was being forecast, requiring a constant flow of budget cuts applied retroactively that would reach more than 25%. However bleak the outlook, it was perfect for a Speaker-in-training like Ms. Davidson.

Those first 24 months of her freshman term yielded lessons for Ms. Davidson that would serve her well 14 years later. She saw how confrontational politics delay problem solving and, in many cases, serve to compound the misery until the powers-that-be work together to build a consensus. Ms. Davidson saw how quickly an economy gone haywire can sack government coffers, impairing its ability to deliver services, whether it be money to run schools properly or help the desperate put food on the table. Ms. Davidson learned that unless government tucks away some money and holds it inviolate until circumstances rise to the level seen in 1981 and 1982, government teeters and the bond of trust with its citizens becomes suspect. In her last year as Speaker, Ms. Davidson was pushed and pulled by her own caucus to spend some of the state’s billion dollar “rainy day fund” by reducing taxes. Recalling the experiences of her first term and advice given by Floyd Habien years before, she reasoned that the political capital gained by spending

Ms. Davidson doesn’t plan to kick back when she joins Messrs. Netzley, James, Hartley, Corbin and her other colleagues who will leave the House in December. As her legislative career draws to a close at age 73,

the usual Statehouse insiders have her future planned: she's going to be the next state Republican Party chair, or maybe the local Republican Party chair, maybe a political campaign consultant or perhaps a spot in cabinet of Mr. Republican's grandson. Ms. Davidson intends to remain active, perhaps looking for a way to pass on Floyd Habien's lesson that business people need to be politically active. She'll devote time to her legacy scholarship program that encourages females to get involved in politics, having been made aware of the barriers a female often must overcome in achieving goals, particularly in politics. Although she's proud of having been elected Ohio's first female Speaker, the legacy she wants is to be known as a Speaker who served ably, fairly and honestly who also just happened to be a female.

### **Term-limited Members of the Ohio Senate**

Robert Cupp (12<sup>th</sup>, R-Lima)  
Grace L. Drake (22<sup>nd</sup>, R-Solon)  
Charles F. Horn (6<sup>th</sup>, R-Kettering)

Merle Grace Kearns (10<sup>th</sup>, R-Springfield)  
Eugene J. Watts (16<sup>th</sup>, R-Dublin)  
Anthony Latell (32<sup>nd</sup>, D-Girard)

### **Term-Limited Members of the Ohio House of Representatives**

Ron Amstutz (7<sup>th</sup>, R-Wooster)  
Sam Bateman (71<sup>st</sup>, R-Milford)  
John Bender (62<sup>nd</sup>, D-Elyria)  
Barbara Boyd (9<sup>th</sup>, Cleveland Heights)  
Charles Brading (86<sup>th</sup>, R-Wapakoneta)  
Jim Buchy (84<sup>th</sup>, R-Greenville)  
Robert Corbin (42<sup>nd</sup>, R-Centerville)  
Jo Ann Davidson (24<sup>th</sup>, R-Reynoldsburg)  
June (Lucas) Ferderber (67<sup>th</sup>, D-Mineral Ridge)  
Randy Gardner (4<sup>th</sup>, R-Bowling Green)  
Ron Gerberry (65<sup>th</sup>, D-Austintown)  
Diane Grendell (68<sup>th</sup>, R-Chesterland)  
David Hartley (73<sup>rd</sup>, D-Springfield)  
William Healy (54<sup>th</sup>, D-Canton)  
Jeff Jacobson (40<sup>th</sup>, R-Phillipsburg)  
Troy Lee James (10<sup>th</sup>, D-Cleveland)  
Gene Krebs (60<sup>th</sup>, R-Camden)  
Jerry Krupinski (98<sup>th</sup>, D-Steubenville)

Sean Logan (3<sup>rd</sup>, D-Lisbon)  
Jerry Luebbers (33<sup>rd</sup>, D-Cincinnati)  
Priscilla Mead (28<sup>th</sup>, R-Upper Arlington)  
Don Mottley (41<sup>st</sup>, R-West Carrollton)  
Jon D. Myers (6<sup>th</sup>, R-Lancaster)  
Robert Netzley (43<sup>rd</sup>, R-Laura)  
Jacqueline O'Brien (37<sup>th</sup>, R-Cincinnati)  
Barbara Pringle (13<sup>th</sup>, D-Cleveland)  
Tom Roberts (39<sup>th</sup>, D-Dayton)  
Bill Schuck (29<sup>th</sup>, R-Columbus)  
Robert Schuler (36<sup>th</sup>, R-Sycamore Township)  
Betty Sutton (47<sup>th</sup>, D-Barberton)  
Vernon Sykes (44<sup>th</sup>, D-Akron)  
George Terwilliger (2<sup>nd</sup>, R-Maineville)  
Pat Tiberi (26<sup>th</sup>, R-Columbus)  
Dale Van Vyven (32<sup>nd</sup>, R-Sharonville)  
Rose Vesper (72<sup>nd</sup>, R-New Richmond)  
Cheryl Winkler (34<sup>th</sup>, R-Cincinnati)

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