

## **Ohio Chief Justice Thomas Moyer burnishes his legacy by pushing for changes in how the state selects its top judges -- editorial**

**By [The Plain Dealer Editorial Board](#)**

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As he nears retirement, Ohio Chief Justice Thomas Moyer continues to look for ways to improve the state's judiciary -- and public respect for those who comprise it. To that end, he has joined forces with the Ohio State Bar Association and the League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund to organize a seminar on judicial reform Thursday and Friday in Columbus. They have invited leaders from both parties and key interest groups to hear from judges and legal scholars from other states who will lead discussion on two ideas:

- Should Ohio stop electing its seven Supreme Court justices and move to a system of merit selection by the governor followed by retention elections?
- Or should it introduce public financing for Supreme Court elections?

Moyer, a Republican who is 70 and thus unable to seek re-election next year, has been earnestly pushing such changes since the savage special-interest campaign to defeat Democratic Justice Alice Robie Resnick in 2000. He now thinks the timing may be right. Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court used a West Virginia case to signal that expensive election campaigns can undermine the judiciary's credibility. Also, Speaker Armond Budish, speaking for himself if not his Democratic caucus, has told Moyer he is interested in merit selection.

Ideally, these discussions would aim to change how Ohio chooses judges at all levels and would focus on the merit option. Still, either idea, even narrowly crafted for now, would be a step forward for Ohio. Let's hope Moyer and his allies are right, and that this is the time that reform finds traction.