Now in his second stint as speaker, Ohio native reflects on the immense challenges, policy choices now facing state governments and their leaders.

**Q**: You’ve talked about how state governments are facing “the perfect storm.” What is your perspective on how legislators should be thinking about and managing all of the challenges that lie ahead?

**A**: State legislatures need to recognize that the largest impact on their budgets will be 120 to 180 days away. If they begin now planning and preparing for that large hole in their budgets, it will be much smoother. If they wait until then, it will be much more difficult. Prior to that, state governments should look to utilizing infrastructure construction projects to restart their economies. These projects can be bonded and repaid over decades, yet provide an immediate infusion of government expenditures.

**Q**: Even before this coronavirus outbreak hit, you were focused on some institutional goals for the legislature that seem particularly important to have in place for a time like this one. Can you talk about some of those institutional goals?

**A**: We’ve worked very hard to make our body a lot more bipartisan. We spend a lot of time on the other side of the aisle trying to make certain that the bills that we pass have a lot of support on both sides, and then we work through a lot of the issues in order to make it that way. I think more than one-third of the bills that we passed this General Assembly have had both Republicans and Democrats as lead sponsors. And we work toward [that kind of bipartisan cooperation] on a daily basis.

**Q**: This is your second stint in the Ohio House. What have been some of the rewarding parts of the job?

**A**: We are called the “People’s House” in Ohio, and we are the closest to the people because we represent the smallest number of people. There’s a tremendous opportunity by running every two years. Some folks see that as a detriment because it seems like you’re on the ballot all the time, but I don’t really believe that. It keeps you close to the people that elect you. You’re out at the county fairs and you’re on Main Street a lot. That gives you the opportunity to talk to your constituents and find out really what’s on their mind and what’s important to them.

**Q**: What has been some of the policy accomplishments that you are most proud of?

**A**: During my first tour of duty, in the early 2000s, Ohio was a very litigious state. Hospitals and doctors were not wanting to do business in the state because of lawsuits. We ended up passing 24 separate tort reform measures that took Ohio from being one of the worst states to do business to being one of the top five in regards to tort law. That’s made a tremendous impact.

I’ve also always worked on education issues, and we’ve done an awful lot for school choice and an awful lot to address school funding and the plight of public schools. We have a lot more to do, but we made a lot of strides here in the state. Lastly, from a more conservative standpoint, I was speaker when we first passed concealed-carry gun laws here, and that’s been improved upon through the years.

**Q**: What changes in the legislature have you observed from when you first served, from 1997 to 2004, to your second stint, which began in 2017?

**A**: When I was speaker before, term limits had just first kicked in in Ohio. ... And in looking back, what’s changed the most with our term limits is that you see more influence by the executive branch, more influence by lobbyists, more influence by the bureaucrats. And you see a lot less of the legislators working together. It used to be that legislators from a certain part of the state would all work together on certain projects. Now they’re sort of eyeballing each other because maybe they’re going to run against each other for the state Senate or maybe a congressional race down the road, so you don’t see those delegations work quite as well together as they used to.

“Respect for each other and respect for the institution. We try to instill that in our staff and our members.”

**PROFILE:** OHIO SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

LARRY HOUSEHOLDER

Bio-Sketch: Ohio Speaker Larry Householder

- First elected to House in 1996; served as speaker from 2001-2004; re-election to House in 2016 and elected speaker in 2019
- An entrepreneur who for over 40 years has owned businesses in the agriculture, insurance, finance, energy and construction sectors
- Lives on family farm in Perry County with wife, Taundra; they have five sons (10 generations of his family have lived in Perry County)
- Graduated from Ohio University

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