

FOREWORD

WHEN I JOINED the Ohio House of Representatives in June 1992, its halls oozed history. Stories told by, and about, longtime members helped me learn institutional history as well as think about the kind of legislator I wanted to become. I learned the power of resourcefulness and creativity in overcoming setbacks by watching Mike Fox (R-Hamilton) at work. From Otto Beatty (D-Columbus) I learned how to withstand pressure and remain true to one's principles—an infinitely harder task as a member of the legislative majority. Bill Batchelder (R-Medina) told stories of debate in the pre-Vern Riffe legislature and taught me to value the persuasiveness of the argument over the status of the person making it. Although our stories would no doubt be different, all of my colleagues, whether Democrat or Republican, House or Senate, had similar opportunities to learn about the art of legislating.

Not only veteran legislators modeled a crucial appreciation for historical context. Members of the statehouse press corps also conveyed a strong sense of living history. I learned a great deal by listening to veteran statehouse reporters like Sandy Theis and Tom Suddes, both of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and former statehouse reporters like Mike Curtin, who then headed the *Columbus Dispatch*. The rise of Internet journalism and the shrinkage of newspaper budgets have also changed the nature of statehouse reporting; all of these reporters have now moved on to pursue other opportunities.

The passage of legislative term limits in 1992, along with shifts in media coverage, has greatly diminished that sense of living history. Institutional memory became weaker with every retirement and defeat in the 1990s, culminating in the first forced, mass departure when term limits became effective for the entire House and half of the Senate in 2000. Two years later, the pre-term limits era truly came to a close with the retirement from the state Senate of Senate President Richard Finan (R-Evendale). A twenty-four-year member of the Senate who had previously served six years in the House, Finan was president of the Senate from 1997 to 2002. His personal integrity, pragmatic approach to governing, and principled dedication to long-term fiscal responsibility played a major role in

shaping the views and ethics of many who work or have worked around Capitol Square, whether as legislative staff or members, including this writer.

In his honor, a group of statehouse participants and observers, contemplating the end of the pre-term limits era with the forced retirement of the second half of the Senate, and lamenting the tremendous loss of historical perspective, decided to commission this scholarly work, the first ever on the history of the Ohio General Assembly. We believe that this book will give scholars and the general public, as well as future state leaders, a perspective on Ohio history that has heretofore been available, if at all, primarily through the recollections of the individuals directly involved and the pages of Ohio newspapers. We hope that this book will be a starting point for additional efforts to study Ohio history, and in particular we strongly encourage the establishment of an oral history project while we still can learn from the major actors in the pre-term limits legislature.

As a student of, and participant in, that history and as chair of the committee that commissioned this work, I would first like to thank the author, David Gold, for his intense and prodigious effort in producing such a masterful book. Thanks and a great deal of admiration also go to the distinguished Ohio scholars who oversaw the work as members of the editorial board: Professors Herb Asher and David Stebenne, both of the Ohio State University; Professor Andrew Cayton of Miami University; Professor Barbara Terzian of Ohio Wesleyan; and Professor Alonzo Hamby of Ohio University. I also want to commend the work of the managing board, who assisted in fund-raising as well as in planning this project: former state Senate president Stan Aronoff, Herb Asher, Mike Curtin, then-state senator Eric Fingerhut, Joyce Garver-Keller, Victor Goodman, former state representative Keith McNamara, Tom Suddes, Paul Tipps, and former senator Nick Zimmers. Greg Saul from my Senate office staffed this project. Senate President Bill Harris and House Speaker Jon Husted provided important support as well. A final thank you is to the donors, without whom the project would never have been possible: our lead donor, the Institute for Collaborative Research and the Public Humanities at the Ohio State University; AT&T (both the “new” and the “old”); Altria Corporate Services, Inc.; the Ohio State University; the Ohio University Foundation; Wolfe Associates, Inc.; Matt and Nancy Diggs; Cox Ohio Publishing; and Keith McNamara.

In honor of Richard Finan, and the thousands of Ohioans who have served in or were employed by the General Assembly during the past two hundred years, we are proud to present their history.

State Senator Jeff Jacobson