

Meet Representative Batchelder – by Kate Feeks

“As I said in my farewell speech in ’98 I was known as the child of the House of Representatives. I was the youngest member for years so I kind of grew up with everything that goes on there. It really was a wonderful opportunity.” State Representative William G. Batchelder explains that it was The House of Representatives that he considers the most rewarding public service job that he has ever held.

A State Representative is an elected official whose job is to serve as a lawmaker. In this capacity you introduce legislation and explain how it functions. A State Representative attends committee meetings and studies the committee in order to provide solutions through legislative action to better help serve his constituents and their concerns.

Also as Minority Leader, he is elected by all members of the House to lead the party in the minority. His responsibilities are defined by what you and your caucus should need. “I work at the Minority Leader job full time” explains Batchelder.

Representative Batchelder is a native of Medina, Ohio. He graduated from Medina High School in 1960, and went on to Ohio Wesleyan University in 1964 and received a bachelor’s degree. In 1967, he also received a Juris Doctorate from The Ohio State University College of Law. While still in Law school, Representative Batchelder started working in the Senate. He was elected and became a member of the House in 1968. He has been a member of the House of Representatives for thirty three years.

In 1998, Batchelder came back to Medina to run as judge for the Medina County Common Pleas Court. He was elected and went on to the Ninth District Court of Appeals in Akron from 1999-2005. In 2006, he was again reelected to the House of Representatives where he serves today.

The history of the Ohio House of Representatives dates way back to the days of Thomas Jefferson. In 1802, Ohio became a state while Thomas Jefferson was President. During this time there wasn’t a question about Legislature. “The Legislature was the most important branch” explains Batchelder. Ohio territory was ruled by military governor and three judges. Residents of Ohio had no voice in government and were represented in the U.S. Congress by a non-voting delegate.

It wasn’t until 1850 that the people of Ohio held the first constitutional convention. This constitution called for a bicameral legislature, consisting of a House of Representatives and Senate. The focus of this convention was on levying taxes, creating counties and appropriating money for state operations. During the second constitutional convention some of the issues that were addressed were; rapid population growth, an inadequate judicial system, legislative power, and tax reform.

Finally, in 1853, the legislature had changed the constitution. Two more conventions were held to construct today's government. Each one placed more legislative power in the hands of the voters. "We went back to a more "Jeffersonian model" explains Batchelder.

In 1912, the fourth constitution convention was held for the state of Ohio. The Progressives were the dominate people in the state who put in the ability to give the public the initiative to make laws and appeal what the Legislature had done. If they got enough signatures the public could vote over the Legislature. "The Legislature got a power haircut" Batchelder said.

During Representative Batchelder's many years as a State Representative, the most significant laws he has voted on were vouchers for Cleveland, "I fought for vouchers for a number of years" explains Batchelder. His determination was to get the kids out of the failing public schools and put them into parochial schools. Today 82% of the kids in the Cleveland Catholic schools are not Catholic but they are getting a much better education. Batchelder was one of the first in the country to get this done.

Another significant law he passed was a new criminal code for Ohio. Up to this point there had never been a code thrown out and redone. Batchelder also sponsored most of the major anti abortion bills; one for example, is the parental notification of a minor having an abortion.

Representative Batchelder still lives in Medina today with his wife Alice. "I am proud to say that I am very proud of my wife Alice." His wife currently serves as chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. Together they have two children.