

Coshocton Tribune

LOCAL

Coshocton County leaders ask for Householder to be replaced

Letter with 25 signatures sent to Speaker of the House Bob Cupp on Monday.

Leonard L. Hayhurst Coshocton Tribune

Published 7:37 p.m. ET Feb. 10, 2021 | Updated 12:09 p.m. ET Feb. 11, 2021

Story Highlights

A letter signed by 25 Coshocton County leaders was sent Monday Ohio Speaker of the House Bob Cupp.

It outlined issues with 72nd District Rep. Larry Householder and asked for him to be replaced.

Householder is currently charged in a federal case related to bribery for bailout of nuclear power plants.

Recently, it was announced Householder will serve on no committees this session, limited his ability to influence policy.

COSHOCTON - More than two dozen elected officials in Coshocton County, including several Republicans, are asking for Rep. Larry Householder to be removed from office due to his inability to effectively serve the district while he faces state bribery charges.

A letter signed by 25 officials in Coshocton County was sent to Bob Cupp, Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, on Monday. It outlines the issues with Householder, a Republican from Glenford in Perry County, and asks for Cupp to appoint a replacement representative.

Those signing the letter include all three Coshocton County Commissioners; Coshocton Mayor Mark Mills; West Lafayette Mayor Stephen Bordenkircher; Coshocton County Prosecutor Jason Given; Coshocton County Recorder Susan Turner; Coshocton County Engineer Fred Wachtel; Coshocton County Auditor Christine Sycks; Coshocton County Treasurer Janette Donaker; City Auditor Sherry Kirkpatrick; City Treasurer Denell Skelton; City Law Director Robert Skelton; City Council President Cliff Biggers; City Safety Service Director Max Crown; city council members Roger Moore, Glenn Mishler and Michelle Turner Ganz; Franklin Township Trustee Dennis Balo; and several members of the Coshocton Republican Central Committee.

"Ohio and Coshocton County are at a critical point. As the state recovers from the coronavirus pandemic, it is vitally important that Coshocton County have an effective voice in state government," the letter reads.

Editorial: Ohio GOP must share plan for Larry Householder

Householder and four others were arrested on charges in July for allegedly taking \$60 million in kickbacks in exchange for a \$1.3 billion bailout through House Bill 6 for two struggling nuclear power plants. Recently, two of Householder's associates have pleaded guilty to federal charges and a pro-Householder political group filed a plea agreement admitting participating in the bribery scheme.

More: How FBI says Larry Householder plotted return to power with utility company's support

More: How the FBI claims Householder parlayed \$60M into a \$1.3B energy bailout, personal gain

"These are very serious allegations that cast a shadow on the institution of the House and Representative Householder's integrity. The United States Constitution guarantees citizens a fair trial and a presumption of innocence until proven guilty. This is a key pillar of our judicial system," the letter stated. "That said, holding an elective office is not a right, it is a privilege and a sacred trust. The State of Ohio deserves to proceed with the work of the people and it is clear to us that Representative Householder cannot effectively serve the interests of Coshocton County while the criminal charges are ongoing."

Householder, who represents the 72nd District in the Ohio House, was stripped of the House speakership after charges were filed. However, he won re-election in November against four write-in candidates. It was announced recently that Householder would serve on no House committees, which the letter said highlights the lack of voice Coshocton County has in key policy matters, especially as the state deliberates the next biennium budget.

The letter mentions that Coshocton County received less funding than similarly sized counties in the 2020 State of Ohio Capital Budget, most likely due to the lack of an effective advocate in the House.

"Our county cannot afford to be left behind. Rural communities like ours always struggle to compete for resources with larger urban areas. Without a credible voice in the House of Representatives, our county will be left to fall further behind," the letter said.

The 72nd District features all of Coshocton and Perry counties and parts of Licking County. Householder previously served in the House from 1997 to 2004, leaving due to term limits, and served two terms as Speaker of the House during that period. In 2004, Householder and several top advisors were under federal investigation for alleged money laundering and irregular campaign practices. No charges were ever filed.

"Should Representative Householder be found innocent, he will be free to once again pursue elective office," the letter stated in relation to the current case. "In the meantime, the needs of the entirety of our community must come before any single public official."

llhayhur@coshoctontribune.com

@llhayhurst

740-295-3417