

## Ohio chief justice: Trump attacks on judiciary ‘dangerous’

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Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor says President Donald Trump’s ongoing attacks on the federal judiciary are “dangerous.”

The Republican president’s personal attacks on judges and their rulings fuel a growing — and incorrect — public perception that politics play a major role in the courts and how they go about their business, O’Connor said.

“It’s increasing because of the president and his misunderstanding of the role of the judiciary,” the chief justice told The Dispatch editorial board during a Monday interview.

“I think that’s dangerous. He talks about the federal judiciary in a very disparaging and disrespectful way that indicates he has no idea what the co-equal branches of government mean,” said O’Connor.

“I think that is unfortunate. Either he doesn’t know, which would be unfortunate in and of itself, or he knows and he is trying to negatively influence and minimize the importance of the judiciary.

“And, people will, those who listen to him, parrot those criticisms. That’s irresponsible and it’s dangerous.”

Judges of any political persuasion who allow politics to color their role and rulings on the bench do not deserve to be in office, O’Connor said.

O’Connor, a Republican who has served on the court since 2003 and as chief justice since 2011, was lieutenant governor and public safety director under former two-term GOP Gov. Bob Taft. She is serving her last six-year term

on the high court due to the mandatory judicial retirement age of 70.

Trump’s talking points and tweets attacking judges and the courts are a staple after federal judges rule against him and his administration’s policies, particularly on immigration and asylum issues.

The nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice, a New York City-based nonprofit, has the same assessment as O’Connor.

“Donald Trump has displayed a troubling pattern of attacking judges and the courts for rulings he disagrees with,” the center has said. “The courts are bulwarks of our

Constitution and laws, and they depend on the public to respect their judgments and on officials to obey and enforce their decisions. Fear of personal attacks, public backlash, or enforcement failures should not color judicial decision-making, and public officials have a responsibility to respect courts and judicial decisions.”

O'Connor said she had no reservations about Trump's vow to nominate conservative judges and U.S. Supreme Court justices, for example, who he believes might overturn the Roe v. Wade ruling legalizing abortion.

It is the president's prerogative to nominate who he wants, O'Connor said. “That's a political agenda issue.” The same is true for Democratic White House hopefuls, many of whom have pledged to nominate only potential justices who would uphold the 1973 legalization of abortion.

However, if a president is actually asking potential justices how they would vote when a abortion case comes before the high court, that's very bad — both for the president and the nominee, Ohio's chief justice said.

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