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Trump Picks Toepfer as U.S. Attorney for Northern Ohio

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President Donald Trump has nominated David Toepfer, a seasoned federal prosecutor, to become the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, a position that oversees federal prosecutions across 40 counties. If confirmed by the United States Senate, Toepfer would be the first Mahoning Valley native to hold the post in more than a century.

Toepfer, who currently supervises the Youngstown and Akron branches of the United States attorney's offices, has built a reputation as a diligent and skilled prosecutor. His career includes handling a range of high-profile cases such as wire fraud, drug trafficking conspiracies, money laundering, and a \$2.8 million food stamp fraud scheme involving dozens of defendants. Reflecting on the nomination, Toepfer said he feels honored and is prepared to move through the confirmation process with patience, acknowledging that political considerations may slow the timeline.

One significant hurdle could come from United States Senator Dick Durbin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, who has openly warned he might block nominations in response to holds previously placed by then-Senator and now Vice President JD Vance during the last administration. These holds were intended as leverage during disputes over federal judicial nominations and policies, not specifically over indictments against Trump, which are ongoing in multiple jurisdictions. If Durbin exercises this tactic again, it would force the Senate to hold a roll call vote rather than confirming the appointment by unanimous consent, potentially delaying Toepfer's installation for weeks or even months.

Toepfer's career began in the late 1990s, when he clerked for the Portage County Prosecutor's Office before moving to the Trumbull County Prosecutor's Office. He has credited longtime Trumbull County Prosecutor Dennis Watkins for shaping his development, calling Watkins an exceptional mentor. Watkins, in turn, praised Toepfer as an "amazing employee" whose dedication and legal expertise made him one of the most accomplished prosecutors to serve in the office.

Toepfer's record includes successful prosecutions in capital murder trials and significant federal investigations, demonstrating a commitment to upholding the law without regard to political influence. His wife, Mary Toepfer, noted that while many consider the U.S. attorney role a political appointment, her husband's nomination stands out because of his decades of hands-on experience in prosecutorial work rather than political maneuvering.

If confirmed, Toepfer would succeed Justin Herdman, who was appointed during Trump's first term and resigned in January 2021; the role has since been filled by acting officials. The seat has been filled on an acting basis since then, most recently by Michelle Baeppler, who has been serving as Acting U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio. Notably, Toepfer would be the first person from the Valley to hold the job since John J. Sullivan, appointed by President William McKinley in 1899 and later reappointed by President Theodore Roosevelt.

Supporters of the nomination argue that placing a career prosecutor in this crucial post strengthens public confidence in the justice system and signals a return to appointing individuals with proven records over political insiders. While Democrats may attempt to obstruct the process for partisan reasons, many see Toepfer's qualifications as undeniable and his confirmation as an important step in reinforcing the rule of law in northern Ohio.

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