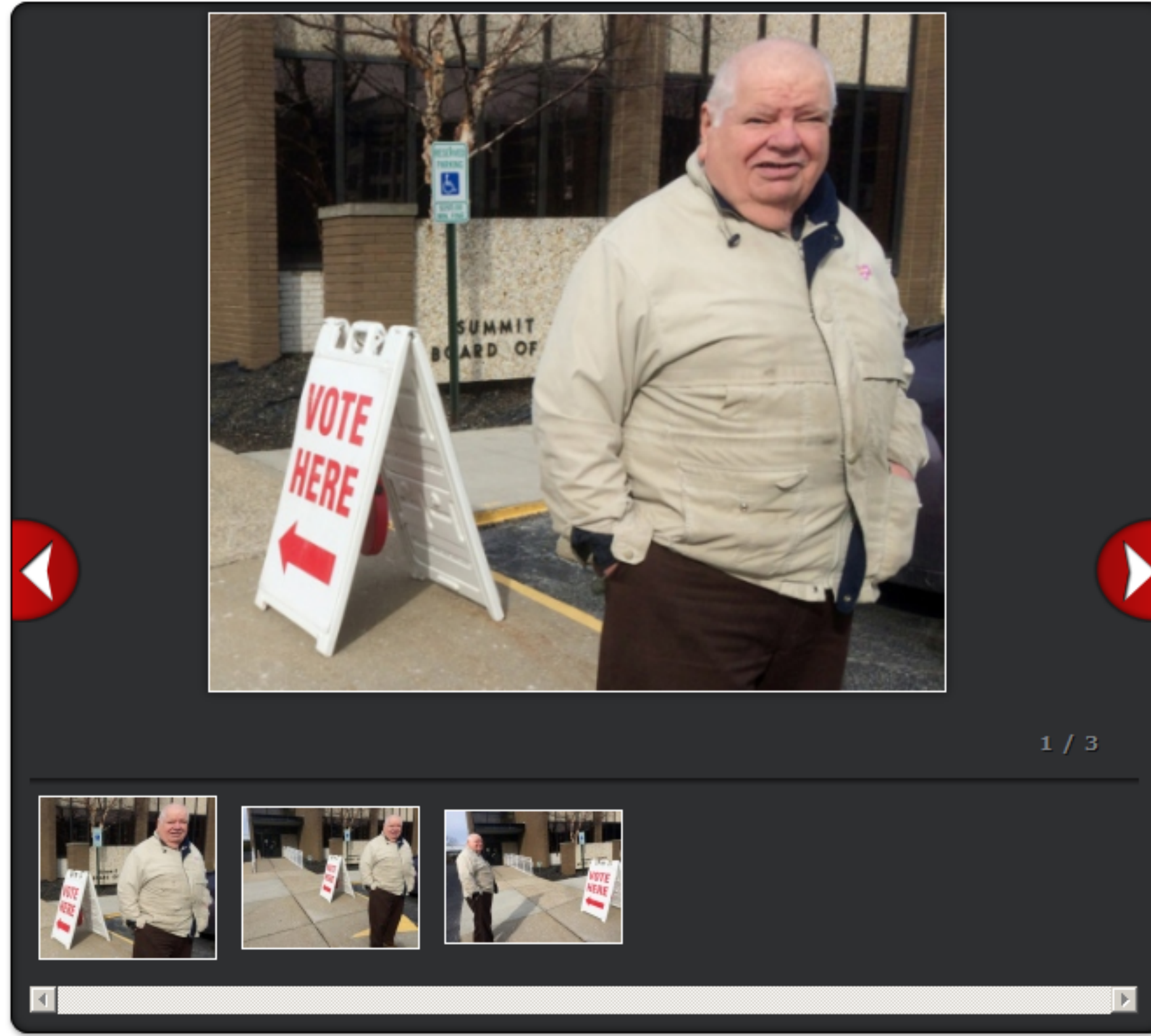


## Ohio Republicans give Donald Trump a cold welcome

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Don Bennington isn't your typical Democrat.

Sure, the Akronite has voted liberal his whole life. But the retiree is proud of his concealed carry permit and doesn't trust Hillary Clinton's tough stance on gun control.

Above all else, he distrusts politics, lobbyists, both major parties and the Super PACs that fund them.

"I'm one of those people who is sick of the establishment," Bennington said Tuesday on his way out of the Summit County Board of Elections, where he cast an early ballot for Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Democratic socialist running for president.

"If he doesn't get the nomination, I will probably vote for Donald Trump," Bennington said of his next ballot this fall.

The prospect of a Democrat voting Republican for the first time in his life should have Ohio Republicans jumping for joy. They're not.

With early voting under way in Ohio, Republicans are encouraged by their party's higher-than-usual turnout. But they're concerned about for whom people are voting.

A one-off

Ohio's Republican leaders loathe Trump for his policies and his personality.

During a press conference call Tuesday, they explained that nominating Trump — who decided to visit Ohio on Tuesday instead of the 13 states voting on Super Tuesday — would destroy their chance to retake the White House and negatively impact other races.

"I am growing increasingly concerned about the state of affairs here in Ohio should Donald Trump become the nominee," said Matt Borges, chair of the Ohio Republican Party.

Borges dismissed the possibility of Bennington and other Democrats, or independents, flocking to Trump this fall. The opposite, he said, is more likely.

The largest share of Republican primary voters — who now support Trump — account for a mere 10 percent of the American electorate, Borges said. But in the general election, where voters tend to be more moderate, polls show Ohio Gov. John Kasich does much better than Trump, who loses in hypothetical match-ups with Sanders or Clinton.

Borges is still hopeful Kasich can take Ohio, though he did not elaborate on a plan to overcome the growing lead Trump racked up across mostly Southern, conservative states on Super Tuesday.

#### Getting personal

Auditor Dave Yost, whose Twitter traffic peaked this weekend after coming out against the billionaire, reiterated his charge that he will not support Trump for president, regardless of how many delegates the New York real estate tycoon racks up before the Republican National Convention in Cleveland this July.

"I'm not going to vote for the man," Yost said, "not in the primary, not in the general election. And for people who say that gives the presidency to Hillary Clinton, I say nominating Donald Trump gives the presidency to Hillary Clinton."

Yost said Trump would undermine the Constitution and play favorites with newspapers, toying with libel law and weakening the First Amendment.

Franklin County Auditor Clarence Mingo, another Republican, condemned Trump for personal reasons.

As a man of color, Mingo criticized Trump for not clearly rejecting the support of former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke during an interview Sunday on CNN. Trump later said "I disavow" Duke's endorsement on Twitter.

Mingo, who has Parkinson's disease, was critical of Trump's depiction of a disabled New York Times reporter last fall.

And as a veteran, Mingo said he could not support a candidate who criticized veterans who got captured, such as Sen. John McCain in North Vietnam.

"He has offended me on multiple levels, multiple times over," Mingo said.

"My pledge is to do nothing that will harm our party or our country," Mingo added. "And supporting Donald Trump would do both."

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