



## University Employees Serving in Public Office

*Nick Nussen*

The University of Akron's faculty and staff members have a long and illustrious history of serving the community as elected and appointed public officials.

UA Professor of Education Oliver R. Ocasek (1925–1999) was elected state senator for the 27<sup>th</sup> Senate District in 1958, which was instrumental in paving the way for the University to acquire state status in 1967. He also served as president of the Ohio Senate from 1974 to 1980. In recognition of his contributions, the Oliver R. Ocasek Government Office Building was opened at 161 S. High St. in 1984, and the Ocasek Natatorium opened on campus in 1988.

Akron native and World War II veteran John F. Seiberling (1918–2008) served eight terms as a US representative from Ohio's 14<sup>th</sup> district (1971–1987), during which time he helped establish the Cuyahoga Valley National Park; participated in the Watergate hearings; and opposed an attempted takeover of The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., founded by his grandfather. After retiring from Congress, he taught at the School of Law and directed UA's Center for Peace Studies (now the Center for Conflict Management). In 2006, President George W. Bush honored Seiberling by naming Akron's federal building and US courthouse the John F. Seiberling Federal Building and United States Courthouse.

UA alumnus Roy Ray '62 succeeded Ocasek in the 27<sup>th</sup> district and served as a state senator from 1987 to 2001, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee for six years, and mayor of Akron from 1980 to 1983. After receiving the University's Alumni Honor Award in 1987 and its Frank L. Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni Award in 1998, he served as the University's vice president for business and finance and chief financial officer from 2002 to 2007.

Vernon Sykes, who for twenty years taught as an adjunct and then assistant professor of social science at the University (1981–2001), is currently the state senator for the 28<sup>th</sup> district and formerly a state representative and Akron City Councilman. Sykes also received his doctorate in public administration from UA in 2001.