



Consumers' Counsel Board, Colleagues Bid Farewell to Weston – Gongwer News

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Bruce Weston's sendoff during his final board meeting as the Ohio Consumers' Counsel was an all-hands affair.

From current and former lawmakers to the state's inaugural consumers' counsel, Bill Spratley, colleagues turned out in force to wish Weston well as he wraps up his final month as the state's top consumer utility advocate.

"'David' is Bruce and 'goliath' is the utilities," Sen. Mark Romanchuk (R-Ontario) said to those assembled. "I can't thank you enough for being Ohio's David."

Weston will depart at the end of the month after 45 years with the agency. Effective Oct. 1, Acting Legal Director Maureen Willis will assume the mantle. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, July 18, 2023)

Participating in his final meeting of the Consumers' Counsel Governing Board, Weston received a lengthy and at times emotional send off from current and former colleagues as he prepares to depart an agency he has served in various roles for more than four decades.

"My mom wanted me to be a doctor, but she liked this job of helping the public," Weston told board members. "It's the greatest job in my career. It's the kind of job I went to law school to do. I'm very grateful you gave me this one-in-a-million opportunity to serve the public."

Among those turning out was Spratley, the state's first consumers' counsel, who hired Weston as a legal intern in 1978. Spratley and others urged board members to stay the course as the agency seeks to represent consumer interests before the legislature and regulatory bodies.

"This office needs to continue," Spratley said. "There's more need now than ever."

Weston credited Spratley with instilling in the agency and its staff an emphasis on empathy for disadvantaged customers – a legacy Weston said continues.

"We're still doing that 47 years later, nearly half a century later," he said.

Several individuals jokingly recalled Weston's penchant for late night phone calls and early morning emails. Among them was Melissa Yost, one of several former deputy consumers' counsels present to praise Weston's leadership.

"Everyone knows the amazing work ethic Bruce has, but that work ethic is unsustainable unless you have a true passion and dedication to doing the right thing like Bruce has," Yost said.

Like Spratley, former Governing Board chair Gene Krebs also urged the agency and incoming Consumers' Counsel Willis to remain vigilant in the post-House Bill 6 landscape.

"You're going to need to be ready, keep fighting," Krebs said.

Turning to Weston, the former lawmaker imparted further advice.

"Enjoy it," he said. "There is life after retirement. Then they end up pulling you back."

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