CITIZEN INTELLIGENCE ARCHIVE

Senate Race File #003 — Ohio (Special Election)

Session 2 — New File | August 2026

SESSION 2 — FULL PROFILE BUILT (PRIMARY ALREADY DECIDED)

> **STATUS:** Both primaries already happened — this is not primary-pending. Jon Husted (R, appointed incumbent) won his primary in March 2026; Sherrod Brown (D) won his primary May 5, 2026. They are the confirmed general-election matchup for the remainder of J.D. Vance's term (through January 2029), with a full six-year term up again in 2028. No AIPAC money found for either candidate.

> **WATCH THIS SPACE:** The retrial of two former FirstEnergy executives on bribery charges tied to the HB 6 scandal — the case in which Husted testified as a defense witness this spring — is scheduled for September 2026, squarely in the middle of the general election campaign. This profile should be revisited when that trial produces a verdict or new testimony.

This is a special election to fill the remainder of J.D. Vance's Senate term after he resigned to become vice president. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine appointed Jon Husted, then lieutenant governor, to the seat in January 2025. Husted must now win a special election to keep it. Trump carried Ohio by more than 11 points in 2024, but Sherrod Brown — Ohio's best-known Democrat, who lost his prior Senate seat to Bernie Moreno by 4 points in 2024 — is seen as Democrats' strongest possible recruit for this specific race. General election: November 3, 2026.

JON HUSTED (R)

Republican incumbent (appointed) | U.S. Senator since January 2025 | Former Ohio Lt. Governor 2019–2025 | Former Ohio Secretary of State 2011–2019 | Age 58 | Montpelier, Ohio

Husted was appointed by Gov. Mike DeWine to fill Vance's vacated seat. He has a long résumé in Ohio Republican politics — Ohio House Speaker, Secretary of State, and Lieutenant Governor across more than two decades. He has Trump's endorsement and faced no serious primary challenge.

THE FACTS — THE FIRSTENERGY / HB 6 BRIBERY SCANDAL

Husted championed House Bill 6 as lieutenant governor-elect and lieutenant governor — a 2019 law that forced Ohio utility ratepayers to bail out two nuclear plants (roughly $1 billion) and two aging coal plants, while gutting the state's renewable-energy standards. Federal prosecutors called the scheme behind HB 6's passage the largest bribery and money-laundering case in Ohio history: FirstEnergy funneled roughly $60 million through a dark-money nonprofit to install a friendly House speaker, pass the bill, and defeat a citizen repeal effort. Former House Speaker Larry Householder is serving a 20-year federal sentence for racketeering; former Ohio GOP chair Matt Borges was also convicted. The DeWine-appointed utility regulator at the center of the case, Sam Randazzo, died by suicide in 2024 after being charged in connection with allegedly accepting $4.3 million from FirstEnergy.

Husted has not been charged and has denied wrongdoing. He testified remotely as a defense witness in the executives' bribery trial in March 2026, saying he did not recall the substance of a pivotal 2018 dinner

with FirstEnergy executives and Gov. DeWine. Separately, public records reported by Cleveland.com show FirstEnergy made a secret $1 million payment to a group supporting Husted's campaign before the scandal became public; Husted has declined to say whether he knew about the contribution at the time. Ratepayers have paid more than $500 million in coal subsidies alone under the law, and a November 2025 regulatory order added $250.70 million in customer restitution obligations for FirstEnergy. The retrial of the two executives is scheduled for September 2026 — during the general election.

THE FACTS — FOLLOW THE MONEY

SOURCE	NOTES	FLAG
Pro-Israel PAC money	No AIPAC or pro-Israel PAC contributions found in itemized FEC records or TrackAIPAC's database. His documented top organizational donors are entirely domestic industry PACs.	**NO EVIDENCE FOUND — genuinely clean on this specific flag**
Corporate PACs	Top organizational contributors include GE Aerospace PAC, General Dynamics PAC, Centene Corporation PAC, CSX Corporation's Good Government Fund, and the National Automobile Dealers Association PAC — each giving $10,000. AT&T and Comcast are also reported among his PAC contributors.	■ **FLAGGED**
Senate Leadership Fund (GOP super PAC)	Committed $79 million to support Husted — the single largest investment in the group's $342 million, eight-state Senate strategy for 2026.	■ **FLAGGED**
FirstEnergy-linked dark money (historical)	Public records show a secret $1 million payment from FirstEnergy to a group supporting Husted's campaign before the bribery scandal became public. Husted has not said whether he knew of the contribution at the time.	■ **FLAGGED — historical, tied directly to the bribery scandal**
Total raised (Q2 2026)	$3.4 million in direct donations plus $4.3 million from affiliated PACs; $11 million cash on hand. Narrower donor base than Brown — 584 unique itemized donors vs. Brown's 6,700+.	**NOTE**

AIPAC MONEY: **NO EVIDENCE FOUND** — clean on this specific flag.

DARK MONEY / CORPORATE PAC: **FLAGGED** — the historical FirstEnergy $1 million payment is the standout item here, directly tied to Ohio's largest-ever bribery case, layered on top of a heavily PAC-and-large-donor funding model.

> **ARCHITECT ANALYSIS — JON HUSTED:** AIPAC isn't part of this story at all — the money question here is entirely domestic, and it's a serious one. Husted has not been charged with a crime, and voters should hold that distinction clearly. But the facts that are established — his proximity to the dinner prosecutors treat as pivotal, the secret $1 million payment to a group supporting his campaign, and his championing of the law at the center of Ohio's largest bribery case — are not in dispute. The September retrial happening mid-campaign means this story is not finished; voters deserve an update when it concludes, not a frozen Session 2 snapshot.

SHERROD BROWN (D)

Democratic nominee | U.S. Senator 2007–2025 | Former Ohio Secretary of State | Age 73 | Mansfield, Ohio

Brown served 18 years in the Senate, chairing the Banking Committee, before losing his seat to Republican Bernie Moreno by about 4 points in 2024. He is Ohio's best-known Democrat and immediately became the frontrunner for this nomination.

THE FACTS — RECORD & POSITIONING

Labor & Economic Populism

Brown has built his career and this campaign around a "dignity of work" message, positioning himself as a blue-collar champion for Ohio manufacturing and union workers. He founded the Dignity of Work Institute after his 2024 loss.

Israel Policy

Brown has consistently affirmed Israel's "right to defend itself" and voted for military aid packages to Israel. He took a relatively hawkish position on Iran as Banking Committee chairman, pressing for re-freezing Iranian funds after October 7, 2023. J Street PAC — a pro-diplomacy, pro-Israel group distinct from AIPAC — has endorsed him and describes him as "strongly aligned with our pro-Israel, pro-peace, pro-democracy values."

Labor Endorsement Shifts — Worth Noting

Several unions that backed Brown in 2024 — including the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 66 — have since endorsed Husted instead, a notable erosion of Brown's labor base heading into this race.

Populist Framing vs. Donor Base — A Real Tension

Brown's campaign emphasizes his blue-collar, anti-billionaire message. However, FEC filings show he has received at least $1.2 million from actors, producers, writers, and industry executives concentrated in wealthy California zip codes tied to the entertainment industry, and is attending Hollywood fundraisers (including one hosted by Sony Pictures' CEO) that reportedly suggest $10,000 donations. This is a legitimate tension for a campaign built on a "fighting billionaires" message, worth naming plainly rather than ignoring because it cuts against a sympathetic figure.

THE FACTS — FOLLOW THE MONEY

SOURCE	NOTES	FLAG
Pro-Israel PAC money	No AIPAC contribution found. J Street PAC has endorsed him but no dollar figure is attached to the endorsement in available records. Notably, AIPAC's own super PAC (United Democracy Project) and allied crypto group Fairshake spent heavily to help defeat Brown in his 2024 race — the opposite of a funding relationship.	**NO EVIDENCE FOUND — genuinely clean, and there's a documented history of AIPAC-aligned spending working against him, not for him**
		■ WATCH — framing vs. record gap

Hollywood / entertainment industry donors	At least $1.2 million from California entertainment-industry donors, per FEC filings reviewed by Fox News. In tension with his working-class campaign framing.	
Total raised (Q2 2026)	$14.1 million in direct donations plus $3 million from an affiliated PAC — more than double Husted's haul in the same quarter. Over 6,700 unique itemized donors.	**NOTE**
Labor union PACs	Historically strong union base, though several key unions have shifted their endorsement to Husted this cycle (see above).	**■ WATCH — base erosion**

AIPAC MONEY: **NO EVIDENCE FOUND** — clean, and AIPAC-aligned spending has actually worked against him previously, not for him.

BILLIONAIRE / DARK MONEY: **WATCH** — no traditional dark money found, but the Hollywood-donor pattern sits in real tension with his populist framing.

> **ARCHITECT ANALYSIS — SHERROD BROWN:** Clean on AIPAC specifically, and unusually so — the pro-Israel lobby's spending arm has actually worked to defeat him before, which is a genuinely different pattern than most candidates in this archive. The Hollywood-donor tension is worth naming with the same directness the framework applies to every other candidate: a "fighting for the working class, not billionaires" message sits awkwardly next to $1.2 million from wealthy entertainment executives, even if the underlying dollar amount is modest next to Husted's corporate PAC and super PAC totals.

STATUS: SESSION 2 NEW FILE. Both candidates clean on AIPAC. Husted's FirstEnergy exposure is the dominant story and is unresolved — the September 2026 retrial will produce new material mid-campaign and this file should be updated when it does. Brown's Hollywood-donor tension is a smaller but real flag worth tracking against his messaging.

CHANGELOG (Session 2, August 2026):
— NEW FILE: Ohio was not previously built out beyond a placeholder in the archive index
— Husted profile built: FirstEnergy/HB6 bribery scandal background, AIPAC status (clean), corporate PAC and super PAC funding
— Brown profile built: labor record, Israel positioning, AIPAC status (clean, notably including AIPAC-aligned money working against him in 2024), Hollywood-donor tension flag
— Flagged September 2026 FirstEnergy retrial as an open item requiring a follow-up update

"I don't tell you how to vote. I give you the X-ray. You decide."

— Uma | PixelMagic / MindTraveler | People Over Party