



ON THE JOB

CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

COVER STORY

HOME-SCHOOLED IN THE LAW

Father's background, influence helped to fuel AG Wilson's support for law enforcement, commitment to public service

When Andy Wilson became a school crossing guard in the fourth grade in Yellow Springs, Ohio, his father made sure he didn't take the responsibility lightly.

"My dad was a police officer at the time," Wilson said. "He was like: 'Look, if you don't do your job out there — if you're not paying attention or if you're clowning around with your friends — somebody could get hurt. You need to make sure you're doing your part to actually keep everyone safe.'"

The teaching moment was one of many that the oldest of Dave and Cindy Wilson's three boys readily recalls from childhood. His father, who spent five years as an officer in Yellow Springs before accepting a job as a game warden with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, talked often at home about the work he did for a living.

"He taught us the phonetic alphabet; he taught us how to handcuff each other," Andy Wilson said. "He taught us how to be situationally aware and look for suspicious behavior and suspicious activity. He taught us how to read license plates. He just taught us a lot of things."

Dave Wilson's instructional style of parenting helped Andy, from a young age, develop an appreciation for law enforcement work and public service.

"That's just the way I was raised," he said. "Some of these things stuck in my head — the sense of service that I got as a kid."

More than 40 years later, with Wilson now serving as the state's 52nd attorney general, the lessons of the father still resonate.

OHIO PROSECUTORS, LAW ENFORCEMENT LOSE MENTOR AND FRIEND TO RETIREMENT

Had their paths been able to cross in a criminal courtroom, television's Perry Mason may well have met his match — at last — in Carol O'Brien.

The fictional defense attorney of old, after all, inspired the celebrated success that the real-life prosecutor would enjoy decades later.

"I decided in grade school that I wanted to be a Perry Mason," O'Brien said. "He defended dozens of falsely accused people and managed to clear every one of them, usually by drawing out the real criminal on the witness stand through a masterful cross-examination."

"I chose the opposite role — a prosecutor who has never had a witness confess on the stand — but I still love conducting a good courtroom cross-examination."

Indeed, O'Brien excelled at cross-examinations, setting the bar high for other prosecutors statewide and earning 2016 honors as Ohio's Outstanding Prosecuting Attorney. As the Delaware County prosecutor,



Ohio Attorney General Andy Wilson

on Carol O'Brien, pictured above

she won convictions in 2015 against the Amsun Massage Parlor sisters in Powell, a human-trafficking case known for its complexity and impact on anti-trafficking efforts in central Ohio.

O'Brien, 68, recently closed the book on her storied public-service career, retiring on Aug. 14 from the Ohio Attorney General's Office, the second of two stints with the AGO. Besides her prosecutorial prowess, she built a legacy marked by unflagging support of law enforcement and fellow prosecutors. "I've had the opportunity to admire Carol's work from afar for several

years now," said Ohio Attorney General Andy Wilson, himself a former county prosecutor who, before being appointed AG, directed the Ohio Department of Public Safety. "Her reputation as a helpful and brilliant resource for prosecutors has always preceded her, and I'm so grateful to have had these past few months to see her in action up-close."

O'Brien worked most of the past 7½ years as Deputy Attorney General for Law Enforcement — a role in which she oversaw the office's law enforcement and criminal justice

sections, including the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy.

She also helped to create and later supervised the Human Trafficking Initiative and the attorney general's Human Trafficking Commission, coordinating multiagency efforts throughout Ohio to combat trafficking, rescue victims and strengthen anti-trafficking policies.

O'Brien is known for her commitment to collaboration among law enforcement, prosecutors and victims, prioritizing respect, honesty and compassion throughout the justice process.

Before joining the AGO in 2019, she spent 12 years in the Delaware County Prosecutor's Office, the last eight as the prosecutor and the previous four as an assistant prosecutor. During that time, she also served as a special prosecutor in numerous criminal cases in counties throughout the state.

She was an active member of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA) for more than a decade, serving as president in 2019, and gave presentations on numerous prosecutorial matters and other legal topics.

"On a personal level, Carol was a constant source of advice and support for me when I first started and she was in OPAA's leadership," said Louis Tobin, the association's current executive director.

"I can remember a number of times when a prosecutor would call me about something, and my first call would be to Carol to see what she would do or what advice she had. No matter how busy she was, she always made time to talk and to help work through problems."

O'Brien's influence, which has long extended beyond Delaware County and central Ohio, cannot be overstated, Tobin said.

"Ohio is a better place — and a safer place — because of her."

Earlier in her career, O'Brien served as an assistant attorney general in the AGO — her first stint with the office — and as an assistant prosecutor in Franklin County.

Her retirement, AG Wilson said, leaves him with some sizable shoes to fill.

"Carol has certainly left her mark on me and on this office. The wit and wisdom that made her leadership style so remarkable will be greatly missed."

crimes in your jurisdictions, you also likely know that many victims of romance scams — also called sweetheart scams — are older adults.

Older adults may have significant investment savings; they generally tend to be trusting, viewing most people as good and honest; and many are lonely, even some who see family members regularly. These and other factors make them desirable targets for scammers.

My own family has not been immune.

Last year, we learned that a loved one had been communicating for long periods at a time with a man who said he was an attorney and living overseas.

Our loved one was slow to share the online relationship with us. When she finally did, alarm bells began to sound. This relationship isn't real, we told her; it's a scam. This man isn't who he says he is.

Whatever you do, we cautioned, do not give him money.

Rittman PD 'healing' after sergeant's death

Scott Ries, a 54-year-old sergeant with the Rittman Police Department, was killed in the line of duty on July 5 as he and other law enforcement officers responded to a 911 call about a break-in and shots fired in Wayne County.

Sgt. Ries died at the scene, 90 Chippewa Trail, at about 10 p.m. — the first Ohio peace officer killed in the line of duty this year.

Four other peace officers — all deputies and members of the SWAT Team from Medina and Wayne counties — were also struck by gunfire in the ambush, as was a K-9.

Earlier in the night, the suspect had fatally shot two civilians — his former partner, Christine McWilliams, 44, and her 13-year-old daughter, McKinley — before he took his own life.

Sgt. Ries, a 10-year veteran of the Rittman PD, had worked in law enforcement for 30 years. He began his career with the Sugar Grove Police Department, in Fairfield County, then spent 19 years with



Officers from the Rittman Police Department stand at attention during Sgt. Scott Ries' funeral.

the Wayne County Sheriff's Office before moving to Rittman, about 20 miles southwest of Akron.

He is survived by his wife, Michelle, and two daughters.

After the sergeant's funeral on July 10, Rittman Police Chief Robert Shows expressed his gratitude on social media.

"The list of those who have supported us is simply too extensive to recognize individually, and we are still working through hundreds of messages and gestures of support — many of them given anonymously," he wrote. "We have been touched

by the compassion shown not only from our own community but from people across the country."

More recently, in a July 31 statement, he wrote: "As we enter a new month, our officers have removed their mourning bands, and the American flag in front of the police department has been returned to full staff. While these actions represent a step toward healing and a return to our daily duties, they do not mark an end to our grief. We will continue to honor the life and service of Sgt. Scott Ries and keep his family, along with the McWilliams family, in our thoughts as they endure an unimaginable loss."

Taking aim at cold-hearted romance scammers

In 2025, Americans age 60 or older reported losing \$584 million to romance scams — a 50% increase from losses reported the previous year, according to the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center.

Authorities believe that the actual losses were much higher, largely because many scams go unreported by victims who are reluctant to admit that they were taken in by a thieving impostor — and so they don't seek help.

This growing exploitation of our older population is infuriating. No one should lose his or her life savings to someone pretending to care about them.

That's why the Ohio Attorney General's Office has gone on the offensive to combat these crimes. On July 23, we kicked off a multi-pronged initiative to help Ohioans identify romance scams, ward off

financial losses, to urge people to report suspected schemes to authorities, and to support victims.

As part of this effort, we established a dedicated hotline — 1-855-961-SCAM — for those who have been victimized or who believe a loved one may be the victim of a romance scam.

Hotline users can share information with our Constituent Services Section, which will coordinate with experts from across the office, including specialists who will try to recoup at least part of any money lost by victims. Information provided to Constituent Services will be reviewed by forensic investigators with the Ohio Bureau

of Criminal Investigation (BCI) for indicators of fraud. Cases believed to warrant criminal charges will be referred to local law enforcement.

Simultaneously, victims and/or their loved ones will receive educational resources and guidance from our Consumer Protection Section to help them prevent additional financial losses and better understand available options.

Above all else, we want victims to know this: They are not alone — and we want to help.

Romance scammers typically choose their victims carefully, researching what they can about them and then reaching out online. They often

spend a lot of time "grooming" victims emotionally, working to gain their trust. The more scammers communicate with their victims, the more the victims believe that a special relationship is developing.

Once scammers have victims where they want them, they ask for money, sweet-talking them for as long as it might take until, ultimately, their targets may acquiesce.

My guess is that your law enforcement agency is hearing increasingly from victims of romance scams. The more I talk to Ohioans across the state, the more I realize how prolific these crimes have become.

If you are hearing more about these

Are you a victim of a
ROMANCE SCAM?
WE CAN HELP:
1-855-961-SCAM

She hadn't given him money, she assured us, nor had he asked for money.

Keep in mind that, in many ways, this relative was an unlikely victim. She was fiercely independent and managed her finances as well as anyone I know — excellent at both investing and protecting her money.

In other ways, though, she was a likely victim: She was older, living alone and, like most other human beings, eager for companionship.

As time passed, we began to see and hear from her less frequently. When we were in touch, this "suitor" and their future together tended to dominate the conversation. He had talked his way into her heart, convincing her that he would soon be coming to the United States to be with her.

Ultimately, she did give the scammer money. Unfortunately, we learned this after the fact — too late to retrieve any of it.

As for the suitor, he had done what every other romance scammer does: He disappeared, never to be heard from again.

The emotional toll exacted by these thieves is downright cruel; the financial toll, criminal and often devastating.

We need to turn the tide on these types of offenses — and we need law enforcement's help to do that. Please send tips about possible scammers to my office, and my staff will refer cases that merit criminal charges back to you.

Together, we can fight back. Together, we can reprioritize dignity and respect for our elders.

They have earned at least that.

Let's go!

Andy Wilson
Ohio Attorney General



On the Job is typically published four times a year by the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

To offer story ideas, contact Mary Lynn Plageman at MaryLynnPlageman@OhioAGO.gov. Sign up for the electronic edition at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/EmailUpdates.

SUMMER 2026
Volume 18, Issue 3

Copyright 2026

by Ohio Attorney General's Office
30 E. Broad St., 17th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/OnTheJob

Continued from Page 1

“The people of Ohio deserve an attorney general who fights crime, who seeks justice and who wakes up every morning with a focus on keeping them safe,” he said in May after Gov. Mike DeWine announced that Wilson, effective June 8, would fill the seven-month vacancy created by the resignation of Dave Yost.

Wilson’s professional background, DeWine said, made him well-suited for the role.

“I wanted someone who has high energy, someone who has real experience in the criminal-justice area,” the governor said. “So Andy Wilson is clearly, in my mind, the right person.”

Wilson, a graduate of the University of Dayton School of Law, began his professional career as an assistant prosecutor in Montgomery County before accepting a similar job in Clark County, where he focused on cases involving sex crimes and violence against children. He was later appointed Clark County prosecutor and then twice won election to the same position, serving until 2019.

Thereafter, DeWine tapped him as his senior adviser for criminal-justice policy, as a special prosecutor for the Pike County mass-shooting case and, in December 2022, as director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS), the position he held most recently before replacing Yost.

With his time in the Attorney General’s Office limited, Wilson — who is partial to the mantra “Let’s go!” — has hit the ground running.

“My No. 1 priority is keeping people safe,” he said. “That means working with BCI, focusing on its fundamental mission of supporting local law enforcement, and leveraging our experts in the BCI Laboratory to assist local law enforcement with resources and expertise that might otherwise be unavailable.”

In prioritizing public safety, he said, his office will be protecting the communities that it has a duty to protect — “which, ultimately, are our family, friends and neighbors, right?” — and bringing to justice those seeking to do others harm.

“So that’s really what it’s all about — keeping people safe and holding accountable those who are creating chaos in our communities.”

More specifically, Wilson said, he wants to improve turnaround times in the BCI Lab, focus BCI agents on traditional casework, and build on the office’s relationships with local sheriffs and local police departments.

Part of his public-safety priority involves protecting Ohio’s most vulnerable residents.

“When it comes to our elderly and children, we need to look at what we can do to prevent crimes before they occur,” he said. “The best way to deal with crime is to stop it before it happens.”

Attorney General Andy Wilson, with other law enforcement officials, discusses the Siders case with reporters in Vinton County.



AG Wilson, a supporter of law enforcement learning defensive tactics, at a training session held in a Steubenville gym.

To that end, Wilson recently introduced an initiative to bolster Ohio’s response to romance scams and similar forms of financial exploitation of older adults.

“Romance scams are among the most devastating crimes targeting older Ohioans because they steal more than money — they exploit trust,” he said. “This new initiative will strengthen our ability to identify offenders, connect intelligence across jurisdictions and provide Ohioans with an easier way to report suspected scams before more victims are harmed.”

The initiative emphasizes digital forensics in the fight against these growing crimes.

In July, Wilson established a dedicated hotline (1-855-961-SCAM) for reporting suspected scams — calls that, in turn, will help BCI investigators identify patterns across jurisdictions and provide support for law enforcement agencies with such cases.

Also in July, Wilson was thrust into a crisis involving another vulnerable population when BCI and Vinton County officials uncovered 16 children living in squalid conditions in a small home in the rural village of Hamden. The kids, ranging in age from 18 months to 18 years, had been confined to a small room contaminated with human waste.

On Aug. 21, a Vinton County grand jury indicted the children’s grandparents, Gary Siders Sr. and Christina Siders, and their parents, Gary Siders Jr. and Elizabeth Siders, on extensive child endangerment charges in the case.

“The children’s recovery and justice are paramount here,” Wilson said.

Coinciding with his crimefighting goals, the attorney general wants to improve training for Ohio’s peace officers, including the continued use of virtual reality and scenario-based training.

“I believe wholeheartedly that the best training that law enforcement can get is realistic, scenario-based training,” he said. “So, where we can, we need to make those opportunities available — whether that’s at the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy in London, at the Tactical Training Center, up in Richfield or through mobile training — you know, sending our instructors out across the state to work with local agencies — or whether that’s supporting local agencies and public/private partnerships through the regional concept.”

A longtime devotee of fitness and wellness, Wilson is also a vocal proponent of instructing peace officers in defensive tactics, a subject he has addressed on the podcasts “DPS Safe and Sound” and “Chewjitsu.”

“*Jui-jitsu* is called ‘gentle art’ because it allows you to use technique and really leverage that technique to subdue or to control people who are much larger, much stronger than you,” Wilson said.

And the benefits, he noted, are unmistakable. “We know, without a doubt, that law

enforcement officers who are confident in their ability to go hands-on if they have to are less likely to have use-of-force claims against them. They’re less likely to be hurt themselves, less likely to hurt the people they’re trying to take into custody and less likely to escalate situations.”

Soon after becoming attorney general, Wilson traveled to a gym in Steubenville to spend time learning and “rolling” with some local peace officers — a personal approach to the job that helps him better appreciate the challenges officers face on the streets of Ohio’s communities.

“I want to work with and support the men and women who are in the profession — it’s an honorable profession — and make sure they have the resources and the training to do the job we ask them to do.”

Wilson’s in-person approach doesn’t surprise Ben Suver, who was appointed by the governor to replace Wilson as director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

“Andy is super-passionate about being out and hearing about problems firsthand,” Suver said. “He’s very committed to that, and that’s not an easy job.”

Before they both landed at DPS, the two worked together 25 years ago in Clark County. “Practically his first day on the job as an assistant prosecutor, I met him,” Suver said. “I was working as a detective for the Clark County Sheriff’s Office. I think Andy’s first assignment over there was crimes against children. And so he came over, we were introduced, and then we quickly became friends professionally. He was an aggressive prosecutor, and I was an aggressive detective — and so we would work a

In his own words

Andy Wilson’s thoughts on a sampling of topics:

The 2016 Rhoden family homicides

“It was obviously the most tragic case I’ve ever worked on. From a prosecution point of view, I can’t imagine a case more challenging or more intellectually stimulating. It was so stressful but so rewarding. It was incredibly rewarding to be able to go down, to work with the families, and to be a part of providing some sense of justice to families who have lost so much.”

The SAUSA role

“I think there’s value in having state prosecutors designated as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys. A lot of times, in bigger cities, courts just aren’t handing out sentences that truly hold people accountable, sentences that have a deterrent effect. Federal courts are just a lot tougher, really. I want to maximize the way we’re using SAUSAs to really help some cities deal with some of the violent crime they’re experiencing.”

The death penalty

“Having personally handled several death-penalty trials, I understand the value of the death penalty as an option for prosecutors and victims in very limited circumstances. In a small percentage of cases, the death penalty is the only option that can bring a measure of justice and closure to the families of victims who rely on the criminal-justice system to help them through the worst moments of their lives.”

lot of cases together.”

Suver thinks Wilson’s drive and passion will serve him well as attorney general.

“His first love is to be a prosecutor,” he said, “and so to be sort of the chief prosecutor for the state is not only meaningful for him but impactful for Ohio. It was a role he was born to do, and he will do it well for the time he has been appointed.”

Beyond the next several months, Wilson said, he isn’t sure what his future might bring. Until his tenure as attorney general ends on Jan. 11, though, he plans to focus squarely on the task at hand.

“The way I work, I just do the best job that I can in the position I’m in — and I believe that by doing the best job you can, doors will open for you,” he said.

“So I’m working as hard as I can — I’m serving the people of Ohio, the people of the Attorney General’s Office and our law enforcement partners — and whatever doors open up as a result of that, I’ll consider those options when they become available.”

LET’S GO.

Mark Your Calendar

Upcoming VR Courses



VIRTUAL REALITY INSTRUCTOR

Courses are 16 hours

When: Nov. 16–17 | **Cost:** \$275

Where: Lorain County Community College

When: Dec. 8–9 | **Cost:** \$275

Where: OPOTA Main Campus (London)

INTRODUCTION TO VR

(reserve and auxiliary officers only)

Courses are 16 hours

When: Nov. 17–18 | **Cost:** None

Where: OPOTA Main Campus (London)

When: Dec. 1–2 | **Cost:** None

Where: OPOTA Main Campus (London)

COMING IN 2027

Registration is now open for a new, four-day

OPOTA driving course: **Advanced Vehicle**

Operations and Pursuit Intervention.

Sign up via the OPOTA Portal.



N THE JOB

CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

COVER STORY

RAISED ON THE LAW

The son of an officer,
AG Wilson saw virtue
in public service | 1

FROM THE AG
PRIORITY INITIATIVE
AIMS TO ERADICATE
ROMANCE SCAMS | 2

IN THE LINE OF DUTY
RITTMAN COMMUNITY
'HEALING' IN WAKE OF
SERGEANT'S DEATH | 3



ANDY WILSON
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

