

# [***Arizona GOP chair resigns amid leaked Kari Lake audio controversy***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B5T-JSS1-DY7V-G002-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; The chairman of the Arizona Republican Party said Wednesday he is resigning, claiming he was doing so amid pressure from GOP Senate candidate [*Kari Lake*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/10/politics/kari-lake-senate-arizona/index.html).

Jeff DeWit's resignation comes after The Daily Mail published an audio recording of a conversation between DeWit and Lake in which he explained to her that there were financial benefits to staying out of the state's 2024 Senate race. DeWit said Lake threatened to release a "more damaging" audio recording if he did not resign Wednesday.

Lake senior advisers Caroline Wren and Garrett Ventry described DeWit as making "false claims."

"No one from the Kari Lake campaign threatened or blackmailed DeWit," Wren and Ventry said in a statement. "It is unfortunate that Dewit hasn't recognized how unethical his behavior was and still hasn't apologized to Arizona Republicans."

DeWit, a former Trump campaign chief operating officer and NASA chief financial officer, said that the conversation had taken place in Lake's home 10 months ago, while she was an employee of his private business.

[*In a statement posted Wednesday*](https://twitter.com/AZGOP/status/1750234611890971064) by the Arizona Republican Party on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, DeWit said he believes he "was set up" in a bid by Lake "to have control over the state party."

"This morning, I was determined to fight for my position. However, a few hours ago, I received an ultimatum from Lake's team: resign today or face the release of a new, more damaging recording. I am truly unsure of its contents, but considering our numerous past open conversations as friends, I have decided not to take the risk. I am resigning as Lake requested, in the hope that she will honor her commitment to cease her attacks, allowing me to return to the business sector - a field I find much more logical and prefer over ***politics***," DeWit said in the statement.

In the audio recording published Tuesday, DeWit says he was asked by "very powerful people" from "back east" whether there are companies that could put Lake on their payroll and keep her from running. He also says he would like to see a "fresh face" in the Senate race.

"Is there a number at which," DeWit begins to ask in the audio recording.

"I can be bought? That's what it's about," Lake interjects.

"Not be bought," DeWit says. "You can take a pause for a couple of years. Then go right back to what you're doing."

"No," she says. "$10 million, $20 million, $30, no. $1 billion, no. This is not about money, this is about our country."

"The tape speaks for itself: The Arizona GOP Chairman Jeff DeWit attempted to bribe Kari Lake," Lake's aides, Wren and Ventry, said. "Thankfully Kari is an extremely ethical person who rejected DeWit's multiple attempts to offer her money and corporate board seats in exchange for Kari not running for public office. She will be an incredible senator for Arizonans."

Lake said in a livestreamed campaign event on Wednesday she thought DeWit's conduct on the recording was "disgusting" and said she felt DeWit "did a horrible job" as head of the Arizona GOP.

"It came very late," Lake said of DeWit's resignation letter, which was released Wednesday afternoon. "I didn't see an apology to the people of Arizona. He tried to act like the behavior you heard on that audio is normal communication amongst friends. It's disgusting."

"I think he did a horrible job, and he should have just apologized, resigned and apologized and said he's going to work to do better," she added.

The former Arizona gubernatorial candidate did not respond to the allegations made by DeWit in his resignation letter in which he claimed Lake threatened to release a "more damaging" recording if he did not resign on Wednesday.

In his resignation statement, DeWit said, "Contrary to the accusations of bribery, my discussions were transparent and intended to offer perspective, not coercion."

DeWit's resignation is the latest chapter in years of turmoil atop the Arizona GOP, which has been divided between onetime establishment Republicans and a faction aligned with Donald Trump that is committed to pursuing the former president's false claims of widespread fraud in the 2020 election.

A former Arizona state treasurer, DeWit was seen as a bridge between those factions - in part because of his work for Trump's campaign and administration - when he was tapped as state GOP chairman in January 2023.

He said his conversation with Lake was "intended to offer perspective, not coercion," adding that it had been an "open, unguarded exchange between friends in the living room of her house." DeWit said he advised Lake, who lost the 2022 gubernatorial race, to seek the governor's office again in 2026 instead of running for the Senate seat of independent Sen. [*Kyrsten Sinema*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/09/politics/kyrsten-sinema-leaves-democratic-party/index.html).

Since that conversation, he said, Lake "has been on a mission to destroy me."

"The release of our conversation by Lake confirms a disturbing tendency to exploit private interactions for personal gain and increases concerns about her habit of secretly recording personal and private conversations. This is obviously a concern given how much interaction she has with high profile people including President Trump," DeWit said. "I question how effective a United States Senator can be when they cannot be trusted to engage in private and confidential conversations."

Arizona is poised to play a pivotal role in 2024 as one of the nation's most competitive presidential battlegrounds, and with a key Senate race on the ballot, as well.

Lake is among several GOP contenders for the seat currently held by Sinema, who has not yet said whether she will seek reelection. The leading Democratic candidate for the seat is US Rep. [*Ruben Gallego*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/23/politics/ruben-gallego-arizona-senate-kyrsten-sinema/index.html).

This story has been updated with additional details.

CNN's Aaron Pellish contributed to this story.

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