

# [***Ohio GOP Senate candidate endorsed by Trump deleted tweets critical of the former president***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B7P-9XR1-DY7V-G011-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Bernie Moreno, a Republican businessman running for the US Senate in Ohio, once said there was "no scenario" in which he would support Donald Trump. He's called Trump a "fake Republican" who stokes "hatred and fear" and suggested that the former president's popularity is the result of "ignorance in our society."

In several previously unreported audio clips and deleted tweets, uncovered by a CNN KFile review of Moreno's past statements, the Ohio Republican harshly criticized Trump.

But Moreno has since come to praise Trump and earned the former president's endorsement as he tries for a second time to win the Republican nomination for the Senate, this time in an effort to oust Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown.

Moreno [*now attacks*](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/lZcnfFOvlGfheCFRyTnzo-IrtqdZb2VXecIpoTBHACbWhwXvfwTUxLVbkpHnTrHqVb72IsKOmzmOXvAcXMo5Ot8W9C4?loadFrom=Dashboard&openShareModel=False) the "wine-sipping country club Republicans" who are "offended by President Trump's words." He characterizes individuals imprisoned for Capitol riot-related offenses as "political prisoners," claims that the 2020 election was stolen, and alleges collaboration between "big tech," "the swamp," the corporate media, and Democrats [*to*](http://ttps/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1560404847488167936))[*rig*](https://twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1563874539351822337)[*the*](https://twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1551563569354907648) election.

Despite this, he previously congratulated President Joe Biden on his 2020 presidential win and after the attack on the Capitol in January 2021, Moreno [*posted*](https://web.archive.org/web/20210106211340/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1346927874041917440) "[Trump] deserves lots and lots of blame for this," [*adding,*](https://web.archive.org/web/20210114134547/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1349714093956096002) "He didn't calm tensions; no one (and certainly not me) has excuses [sic] that behavior."

Moreno's about-face is stark, but also reflects a broader trend among Republicans across the country, many of whom have been critical of Trump in the past only to later embrace him.

That includes Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance, who Trump endorsed instead of Moreno in 2022's Senate primary. Vance once said publicly he did not vote for Trump in 2016 and suggested in private messages that year that the former president might be "America's Hitler." He later [*called him a "moral disaster"*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/14/politics/kfile-jd-vance-donald-trump-2017/index.html) in 2017. While running for Senate that year, Vance [*said he regretted*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/06/politics/jd-vance-tweets-trump-apology/index.html) his past comments criticizing Trump and has since come to loudly praise the former president.

As Trump closes in on securing the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, allegiance to Trump and his agenda have once again become a litmus test for party loyalty. Both Moreno's Republican opponents, state Sen. Matt Dolan and Ohio's Secretary of State Frank LaRose [*have*](https://www.politico.com/news/2022/04/29/trump-says-matt-dolan-is-not-fit-for-ohios-senate-seat-hes-gaining-ground-anyway-00028824)[*themselves*](https://www.wvxu.org/politics/2023-10-25/analysis-frank-larose-donald-trump-endorsement-bernie-moreno) a history of past Trump criticism. While Dolan has stood by much of his criticism, LaRose has made public gestures to appeal to Trump, including seeking his endorsement and [*firing*](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/ohio/articles/2023-08-16/frank-larose-gop-senate-candidate-in-ohio-fires-a-top-staffer-for-tweets-critical-of-donald-trump) a staffer critical of the former president.

'There's no scenario in which I would support Trump'

A Colombian-born, American-raised car dealership owner and wealthy businessman, Moreno was a prolific Republican donor for years before first running for Senate in 2022.

In October 2016, Moreno [*posted on Twitter*](https://imgur.com/OpSo3Qe)[*in a reply*](https://twitter.com/AlexConant/status/788934002954469376) that he wrote-in a vote for Republican Florida Sen. Marco Rubio - a tweet his campaign spokesman Conor McGuinness tells CNN was meant in "jest," and that Moreno "absolutely voted for Trump in 2016."

Appearing on a now-defunct radio show earlier that year [*he said, "*](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/a9to0bmM7yF4u9ce1a3pPHKX5LAB_lzOX1JSA_J9EKhruJbDzzCUczAWUtXEg5JVDRd_wor3JSpM6-u2OXCgdfqT-Q0?loadFrom=Dashboard&openShareModel=False)There's no scenario in which I would support Trump," adding Trump played to people's "worst emotions." "If Trump is the nominee, I think the Republican party is now a different party and not a party that I want to be a part of."

Moreno was withering in since-deleted tweets from 2016, [*calling*](https://imgur.com/QhHL9c2) Trump a "fake Republican," and saying he was "conspiring" with his [*"ally"*](https://imgur.com/GMjERhv) Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton to take down the Republican Party. He [*mocked*](https://imgur.com/sJtIuKU) Trump's signature red "Make America Great Again" hats and [*disparaged*](https://imgur.com/YmDyYt8) Trump in messages to mainstream media reporters.

"What Trump's message is really about, is that the America that we really want?" Moreno added on the radio show. "...where hatred is stoked and fears are what drive our decision making?"

During [*a local forum*](https://ywcagreaterclevelandblog.wordpress.com/2015/12/01/ywca-greater-cleveland-announces-bernie-moreno-as-keynote-speaker-for-2016-its-time-to-talk-forum-on-race/?utm_source=hootsuite) on race relations in February 2016, Moreno criticized the rise of populism in the election cycle, subtly alluding to candidates such as Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump, and implied that their support stemmed from a deficiency in education.

"We're living in an interesting year of populism on both sides of the aisle," Moreno [*said*](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/NCt1wNVk3eFn2e7GdmlB-YoP7vxwyYtrGomSrj19QI1ypeyz1zSEiRCyiVP1lDPz7fcMhFhgUgIezmBq0XIHDm6nxWk?loadFrom=Dashboard&openShareModel=False) at the forum, comparing it to ***politics*** in South America. "And the best defense against that populism is education. Really being aware, because people do take advantage of ignorance in our society all the time."

Moreno's spokesman told CNN, "It's no secret that Bernie, like many others, was initially skeptical of President Trump, but he has never been so happy to be proven wrong about something."

"By the time the 2020 election came around, he was an avid supporter and is proud to have been the first candidate for US Senate to endorse President Trump in the 2024 race," the spokesman said.

In an interview with local news in Cleveland in April 2019, Moreno disputed that he supported the Trump campaign when asked.

"My daughter works on the Trump campaign," Moreno [*said*](https://www.youtube.com/live/7n1_r_Ex5p8?si=DEkpIIWjN1yZjqjN&t=1380). "That doesn't mean I support the Trump campaign. Different story. You can interview my daughter if you like."

In response to a request by CNN for evidence of his support for Trump in 2020, Moreno's campaign [*provided a picture*](https://www.instagram.com/p/CGnRwMRAsbf/?igsh=cTk5ZjVzZ3oxbnhl) of the back of a man's head they purported to show Moreno attending a speech in October 2020 by then-Trump campaign surrogate Richard Grenell at a Trump Victory Committee event in Cleveland.

Election acceptance, then election denialism

Right after the 2020 election, Moreno repeatedly criticized election deniers, urged Republicans to accept the results and even debunked fraud allegations. But these days, Moreno says the 2020 election was stolen - a conversion that appears tied to his Senate campaigns.

In December 2021, Moreno's [*campaign released*](https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/#/viewer/94c4325a-598a-4d6d-a1e6-0aba76332449/) an ad in which Moreno embraced election denialism.

"President Trump says the election was stolen, and he's right," Moreno said directly looking into the camera.

In early February 2022, [*Moreno dropped out of the*](https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/politics/elections/2022/02/03/ohio-senate-race-bernie-moreno-drops-out-after-trump-meeting/6657995001/) Senate race at Trump's urging; Trump eventually endorsed Vance for the Senate seat. In this race, Moreno has continued to embrace false election claims.

"Anybody who had eyes and ears knows what happened in 2020," Moreno said at an October forum.

Moreno deleted [*tweets*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201104132422/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1323979346978156545) he posted before the 2020 presidential election urging Americans to "accept the results," and [*deleted*](https://web.archive.org/web/20240000000000*/https://twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1317565286900502528)[*tweets*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201010015644/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1314746590926643205) praising mail-in voting - which Trump has falsely claimed is rife with fraud. Moreno removed a post saying he would accept the results [*himself*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201104174124/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1324043993806721025).

In one removed tweet from November 29, 2020, more than three weeks after the election, Moreno attacked Trump directly.

"For @realDonaldTrump to make claims of a fraudulent election without proof. Potentially irreparable harm to US," he [*said*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201129152519/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1333068918013964289).

Also among Moreno's deleted posts is a November 7, 2020 tweet, where he [*acknowledged Biden's win*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201107014038/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1324889387457449990) and called for unity. He purged tweets where he [*urged conservatives*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201107183803/https://twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1325145308318273536) to accept the outcome and debunked fraud allegations by [*highlighting Republican gains in the House*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201129152726/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1333069691997315072). He also said that he himself voted by mail in 2020, [*calling*](https://web.archive.org/web/20201017203713/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1317565286900502528) it "safe" and "convenient."

As rioters poured into the Capitol on January 6, 2021 and in its aftermath - Moreno again broke with Trump. He praised Republican South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a prominent Trump supporter in the Senate, who declared "count me out" in [*an impassioned speech*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfQfcURNM0E) on the Senate floor the night of the riot.

"Lindsay [sic] brought the heat! Nicely said," [*wrote*](https://web.archive.org/web/20210107025919/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1347014811788443648) Moreno.

In [*another since-removed tweet*](https://web.archive.org/web/20210107004222/https:/twitter.com/berniemoreno/status/1346980313344454657) from January 7, 2021, Moreno wrote that the rioters "made a "quite a horrific embarrassment for our country."

McGuinness, Moreno's spokesman, said he did not see contradiction in Moreno's past comments.

"Bernie has also been tremendously clear that January 6th has exposed a two-tiered justice system in this country," he said. "People who burned down buildings in June of 2020 faced minimal retribution; grandmothers who walked down the wrong hallway on January 6th are still sitting in federal prison. That is appalling."

By Andrew Kaczynski and Em Steck, CNN

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