

# [***MAGA Senator Takes Aim at Mitch McConnell's Legacy***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BG3-V461-JBR6-9101-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 824 words

**Byline:** Natalie Venegas

**Highlight:** Senator J.D. Vance took aim at Mitch McConnell's leadership following the news he will step down from his position in November.

**Body**

In a Sunday interview on [*Fox News*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fox-news?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)' *Sunday Morning Futures With Maria Bartiromo,* Senator [*J.D. Vance*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/j-d-vance?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), an Ohio Republican, took aim at Senate Minority Leader [*Mitch McConnell*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mitch-mcconnell?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s leadership following the news he will step down from his position in November.

While discussing McConnell's move to step down, Vance criticized his stance on the U.S.-Mexico border amid ongoing debates over additional aid to Ukraine amid its ongoing war with Russia.

"You cannot have a Senate Republican leader who is far more obsessed with securing Ukraine's border than he is focused on the American border," Vance, an ally of former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and a supporter of his "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) movement, said.

**The Context:**

On Wednesday, McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, announced he will be stepping down from his position as Senate minority leader in November. He is the longest-serving [*Senate*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/senate?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) party leader in U.S. history. He first took his Senate seat in 1985 and has been praised for his work as a conservative in [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). But he has also been criticized for not standing up to Trump during crucial moments like following the U.S. Capitol riot on January 6, 2021.

In addition, McConnell, who insisted last year that U.S.-Mexico border policy changes be included in the national security funding package in a bid to overcome opposition from House [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), has faced backlash from his GOP colleagues over the recently struck down bipartisan bill crafted by a coalition of Democratic and Republican senators.

The $118 billion deal, which was struck down last month, [*addressed key concerns at the southern border*](https://www.newsweek.com/senate-border-security-bill-aid-1866774?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). However, conservative hardliners said the bill does not go far enough to end illegal immigration into the U.S.

**What We Know:**

Since launching his political career, Vance has become one of Trump's staunchest GOP [*Senate*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/senate?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) allies and more recently has been floated as a potential running mate to Trump in the 2024 presidential election.

During Sunday's interview, Vance also criticized McConnell for not listening to Republican voters, adding that it's time for the Republican leadership to "turn the page" and for the Senate Republican leader to be someone who listens to GOP voters.

"I think we have to use this leadership election to turn the page on Republican senate leadership," Vance said. "You can't have a Senate Republican leader who seems to ooze hatred and dismay for the very people who vote most of the Republican elected leaders. Our base, I happen to think are good people in that we should be listening to them more than we do, but you can't have another establishment politician who seems to dislike the people who actually vote for the Republican Party."

He added: "Whatever we do, I think we need to focus on getting a Republican leader who is trusted by the broad majority of Republicans. That's the most important thing."

**Views:**

In a press release previously emailed to *Newsweek*, McConnell [*pushed back on critics in his speech announcing the move*](https://www.newsweek.com/mitch-mcconnell-stepping-down-republican-senate-leader-sparks-praise-1874418?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

"I think back to my first days in the Senate with a deep appreciation for the time that helped shape my view of the world," he said. "I am unconflicted about the good within our country and the irreplaceable role we play as the leader of the free world.

"It is why I worked so hard to get the national security package passed earlier this month. Believe me, I know the ***politics*** within my party at this particular moment in time. I have many faults, misunderstanding ***politics*** is not one of them."

*Newsweek* has reached out to McConnell's office via email for comment.

Senator [*Lindsey Graham*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/lindsey-graham?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), a South Carolina Republican, was supportive of McConnell and wrote on X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), "Senator McConnell's announcement that he will not seek Republican leadership in the next Congress is truly a 'passing of the torch' moment for the U.S. Senate. Senator McConnell will be remembered as one of the most effective leaders in the history of the U.S. Senate."

Meanwhile, Senator [*Ted Cruz*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/ted-cruz?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), a Texas Republican, said last month that he believes McConnell's time in leadership should come to an end. When asked by a reporter if it's time for him to step down, Cruz said, "I think it is."

**What's Next?**

Some names that have come up as possible replacements for McConnell in November include [*Senators John Cornyn, John Thune, John Barrasso, Steve Daines and Rick Scott.*](https://www.newsweek.com/mitch-mcconnell-stepping-down-prompts-theories-possible-replacement-1874428?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)

On Thursday, Cornyn became the first senator to announce his plans to run to replace McConnell, saying: "I believe the Senate is broken—that is not news to anyone. The good news is that it can be fixed, and I intend to play a major role in fixing it. From experience, I have learned what works in the Senate and what does not, and I am confident Senate [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) can restore our institution to the essential role it serves in our constitutional republic."

*Update 3/3/24, 11:12 a.m. ET: This article was updated with additional information.*

*Update 3/3/24, 11:28 a.m. ET: This article was updated with additional information.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2356645/jd-vance.jpg)

**Graphic**

J.D. Vance

Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

Sen. JD Vance (R-OH) walks to a luncheon with Senate Republicans at the U.S. Capitol Building on February 27, 2024 in Washington, DC.In a Sunday interview with Fox News Sunday Morning Futures with host Maria Bartiromo, Vance took aim at Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell’s leadership following the news he will step down from his position in November.

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